

17 Characteristics of Highly Effective Programs

Based on the *Tool to Assess the Characteristics of Effective Sex and STD/HIV Education Programs*. Found at ETR.org.

	Program Characteristic	REAL Essentials Alignment
DEVELOPMENT	1. Involve multiple people with different backgrounds in theory research in sex education and STD/HIV to develop the curriculum.	The curriculum developer involved public health experts in sex education, positive youth development, best practices in prevention, child pedagogy, and adolescents who were asked what they wanted and needed to learn and know. Additionally, every activity in the developing curricula was demonstrated to the end user in middle and high school with an ongoing feedback loop, critiques and comments as well as focus group reporting.
	2. Assessed relevant needs and assets of target population group.	The curriculum developers administered pretest assessments measuring knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of several diverse population groups of youth ages 10-19. These assessments were reviewed extensively to ascertain the gaps in knowledge skills, assets, resilience, protective factors, and support systems of youth in high need communities. Once reviewed and analyzed, the developer then had a framework of what gaps needed to be addressed in the curriculum. Additionally positive youth development and psychosocial literature was studied and applied to the curriculum along with learning theories and best practices in pedogeological interventions.
	3. Used a logic model approach to develop the curriculum that specified the health goals, the behaviors affecting those health goals, the risk and protective factors affecting those behaviors, and the activities addressing those risk and protective factors.	REAL Essentials utilizes a logic model approach identifying the links between health goals, and the behaviors and skills needed to meet goals.
	4. Designed activities consistent with community values and available resources.	Designed with basic needs of the heart for universal human needs and values. Staff is well trained and agency highly resourced.
	5. Pilot tested the program.	REAL Essentials pilot tested, focus-grouped and evaluated with and by youth and adults; updated annually for effectiveness and research alignment.
CONTENTS	6. Focused on clear health goals — the prevention of STD, HIV and/or pregnancy	REAL Essentials focuses on the need for healthy prosocial connections and support, the desires of the human heart and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Not having needs met leads to many deleterious behavioral choices including STD, HIV and pregnancy.
	7. Focus on specific behaviors, gives clear messages about these behaviors, addresses situations that might lead to them and how to avoid them.	REAL Essentials teaches the skills to avoid risk behaviors by building resilience, self-confidence, and protective factors to avoid, not reduce, unhealthy behaviors.

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8. **Addresses multiple sexual psychosocial risk and protective factors affecting sexual behaviors (e.g., knowledge, perceived risks, values, attitudes, perceived norms and self-efficacy).** page 23
9. **Creates a safe social environment for youth to participate.**
10. **Includes multiple activities to change each of the targeted risk and protective factors.**
11. **Employs instructionally sound teaching methods that actively involved the participants, that helped participants personalize the information, and that were designed to change each group of risk and protective factors.**
12. **Employs instructional methods and behavioral messages that were appropriate to the youths' culture, developmental age and sexual experience.**
13. **Topics are covered in a logical sequence.**

REAL Essentials is a relationship and leadership skills based curriculum that increases knowledge, skills, healthy intentions, goal setting, self-efficacy, pro-social norms, and hope for a positive successful future.

REAL Essentials starts with class agreements and expectations creating a safe space for all youth to participate, engage, become motivated, captivated, learn, grow, flourish and thrive. REAL Essentials includes multiple activities to change each of the targeted risk and protective factors. REAL Essentials includes 54 lessons in the REAL Essentials Starting Point Middle School curriculum and 84 lessons in the REAL Essentials Advance High School curriculum to decrease risk factors and increase protective factors.

REAL Essentials provides multiple activities to increase protective factors, assets, resiliency and positive youth development as well as reducing risk factors by providing extra assistance and resources to those who have extra needs and have or are experiencing trauma.

REAL Essentials includes several teaching methodologies to engage all participants. The activities were developed based on educational theories and frameworks as well as best pedagogical practices for personalizing the information and applying relationship development and life skills increasing protective and resiliency factors.

Since REAL Essentials was designed by experts in behavioral health and teaching methodologies and informed by the life experiences and stated needs of diverse population groups of young people, it is relevant, respectful and reliable.

REAL Essentials suite of curriculum encourages education and youth serving professionals to create a customized scope and sequence of lessons that are covered in a logical sequence and that align with best practices in educational and curriculum development.

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IMPLEMENTATION

14. Secured at least minimal support from appropriate authorities such as ministries of health, school districts or community organizations.

The Center for Relationship Education has program partners across the nation working with health departments, school districts, health and human services and community based organizations. CRE has ongoing community outreach efforts to build a coalition of community partners.

15. Select educators with desired characteristics of serving youth, train them, provide monitoring, supervision and support.

CRE recruits and retains educators, youth serving agency personnel, medical professionals, counselors, social workers and, case managers. We provide a train the trainer model of service delivery, provide ongoing professional development, monitoring and continuous program improvement.

16. Recruit and retain youth and overcome barriers to their involvement.

CRE recruits and retains youth in schools, community organizations, after-school programs, parks and recreation centers, juvenile justice programs, foster care transitional housing programs, summer camps, etc. and works to ensure participation by helping them overcome barriers to engagement.

17. Implement activities with fidelity.

CRE values training and certification to ensure professionalism, passion and fidelity to programming.