What's going on in the classroom?
Tips for assessing the implementation of sexuality education

If your aim is to improve the quality of sexuality education in schools, one of your top priorities is likely to be to provide a high quality curriculum or set of lesson plans. You'll also want to know how the lessons are being implemented in the classroom.

You may already be assessing implementation through fidelity logs or other means, but you probably recognize the need to interview teachers and conduct observations for a more complete picture of implementation.

Including teacher interviews and observations in efforts to assess implementation can feel daunting, but there are some very specific benefits that make it worth your while. Collecting this information can help you:

- demonstrate support for teachers, which can in turn improve their support for the curriculum;
- pinpoint areas that should be prioritized in professional development for teachers;
- collect specific information to educate administrators about the need for adequate instructional time and professional development;
- conduct more in-depth evaluation of your professional development efforts;
- improve the curriculum to make implementation easier and more effective; and most importantly,
- achieve successful student outcomes!

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What steps can I take to interview and/or observe teachers?

By following the process described below, you can work through some common challenges and achieve real results from your efforts.

I   DEVELOP A PLAN.

1. Clearly outline what you hope to learn from interviews or observations. Some possible items to assess include:

   - which lessons are being implemented or skipped;
   - whether or not appropriate teaching styles are being used to cover topics (e.g., lecture, video, activities, etc.);
   - whether scripted lessons are implemented as written;
   - which activities or topics are most challenging to implement;
   - the extent to which students seem engaged;
   - the extent to which teachers seem to have the knowledge and comfort they need to teach the content; and
   - the extent to which teachers are using best practices for facilitating sexuality education (e.g., setting a comfortable climate, answering questions appropriately)

2. Develop an assessment plan. Keep in mind that you do not have to interview or observe every teacher to benefit from an assessment! Identify instructors to include in your assessment, keeping in mind that you can conduct interviews at any time with teachers who have previously implemented the sexuality education lessons/curriculum you are assessing.

II   DEVELOP TOOLS TO CARRY OUT YOUR PLAN.

3. Develop a draft set of questions to use when interviewing teachers. You can use or modify the questions on the sample instructor interview tool we have provided or design your own from scratch.

4. If your plan includes teacher observations, develop a draft observation form to use. We have provided a sample instructor observation tool you can use or modify. If you design your own tool, be as specific as possible about what you want the observer to document. Also include space for open-ended notes.

III   SECURE SUPPORT FOR YOUR PLAN.

5. Meet with staff who supervise teachers and administrators to explain the purpose of your efforts. Reassure them that your efforts are not part of a formal teacher evaluation. Share the draft questions and observation forms you plan to use, and ask for feedback. Ensure that you have their support before you proceed.

6. Identify the people who will conduct the interviews and/or observations, and ensure that they understand their role and responsibilities. Offer to accompany them to their first interview if you sense they would benefit from this type of support.

7. Communicate with teachers either individually or as a group, explaining the purpose of your efforts. It's best if you can do this in person, if possible. Reassure them that you will not be gathering information for a formal teacher evaluation. Explain that you are trying to learn more about what implementation of sexuality education looks like in the classrooms at their school, so you can help plan ways to showcase successes and/or provide more support where it's needed. Tell them that you will not be sharing information you collect with supervisors or administrators, except in aggregate form.

IV   CARRY OUT YOUR PLAN.

8. Interview teachers, using the questions you developed. When you finish the interview, ask them if they would allow you to observe a lesson in action. If they agree, share the form that you will be using to document your observations, and reassure them that your observations will remain confidential. Arrange a date for an observation, and send them a reminder of your agreed date a few days prior to the observation. Ask for confirmation from the teacher.

9. Conduct the observation, and arrange to meet with the teacher individually afterward to review the results of your observations with them. Ask them what they believe went well, and what (if anything) they would do differently. Also ask them again about any additional needs they have for support. Be sure to let them know how you plan to use the information you learned from your observation.

V   SHARE YOUR RESULTS AND PLAN NEXT STEPS.

10. When your assessment is complete, summarize the data into a few key take away points. Develop recommendations for next steps, and share these with supervisors and administrators.

11. Set a date for the next cycle of assessment when you have completed this one. Regular assessment will help you stay on top of changes to staff, schedules, and other factors that can affect implementation.