



SEX EDUCATION

A Day-Long Conference Exclusively for Parents of Adolescents

Michigan is a pioneer when it comes to engaging parents as partners in sex education. For more than a decade, Parent Action for Healthy Kids (PAFHK), with support from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), has been reaching out to parents to equip them with knowledge and skills to talk to their adolescent about sex. PAFHK also partners with schools to provide quality sex education instruction in the classroom.

LISTENING TO PARENTS!

Over the years a statewide parent survey, parent focus group data and evaluations from the *Talk Early & Talk Often* parent workshops indicated that parents were thirsty for more information on this topic and wanted to connect with other parents. Because Michigan parents have been acknowledged and respected as the primary abstinence and sexuality educator of their children, the time had come to finally give parents what they had been requesting, a Statewide Sex Ed Conference just for them. To ensure the conference was truly parent driven, five parents from five school districts in five counties (urban, suburban and rural) served in an advisory capacity. Topics suggested as a "must have" from the advisory committee were Sexting, Texting & Social Media, The "411" on Gay Youth, and Sex Ed for Special Needs Youth.

GETTING THE WORD OUT!

It's the Digital Age - Electronic and social media was the primary method for getting the word out to parents of middle and high school youth about the conference. Facebook and Twitter were used extensively, including running ads on Facebook three consecutive weeks prior to the conference. Conference registration was on-line.



www.facebook.com/parentactionforhealthykids



@ParentAction, #TPCC2013

Relationships Are Key - Personalized emails and updates about the conference were sent to more than a thousand email addresses. These contacts are a result of years of on-going reciprocal work with schools, parents and communities.

Support from State Leaders is Vital - The respect shown to parents from our partners at MDE and MDCH is evident in their willingness to spread the word about the conference. For example, the State Superintendent at the MDE, Michael P. Flanagan, included information about the conference in his weekly communication to Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents and Public School Academy Directors.

PARENTS WERE INVITED AND THEY CAME!

A warm welcome was given to the 120 parents (19% male) from public, private and charter schools who attended the day-long conference. They represented nineteen (19) counties and forty-six (46) urban, suburban and rural school districts in Michigan.

GIFTS!

Gifts to parents were better than the traditional raffle of gift cards or iPads. They received compassion, connection, knowledge and skills and enjoyed a fun and nurturing environment. They were provided with a warm welcome, quality food, snacks and all the materials they needed to learn from each of the presentations. Parents were charged to take what they learn and transfer it into action. The inter-active skills based workshops helped parents to "take action" and start talking with their adolescent when they returned home.

SPEAKERS!

The conference presenters all possessed a profound respect for the role of the parent. Their expertise came through in their content, and their delivery was in a very warm "parent-to-parent" style. All questions from parents were "great" questions and all verbal and non verbal communication was compassionate and most importantly absent of any shaming, blaming or judging.

Rattle & Roll – Setting the Stage for Parents!

From our opening keynote on the adolescent brain to the closing where parents heard the voices of youth, it was a rich day of learning. It was suggested to parents that no speaker or resource would be a perfect fit with their value system and parenting style. Rather, we suggested that they let information rattle around in their head and roll with what they deem appropriate for their family.



what parents said...



I loved how nurturing the conference was. There was wonderful food, fun playthings & yummy treats in our bags. Friendly guides were placed strategically to offer us help finding wherever we needed to go. Encouraging words were offered to help us feel welcomed & comfortable all day long. So I not only learned a lot but also felt very cared for throughout the day.

~Stacy Grossman, Parent

Opening Keynote: The Adolescent Brain: UNDER Construction!

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

What's the Real Deal on Sex Ed in the Classroom?

The How To on Talking to Teens About Sex

Sexing, Texting and Social Media

Sex Ed for Special Needs Youth

The "411" on Gay Youth

Closing: MyVoice Youth Panel: Find Out What Teens are Really Thinking!

SHOW ME THE MONEY!

The \$25 registration fee covered the cost of food. Funding sources were: • Parent Action for Healthy Kids • The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Coordinated School Health and Safety Programs (CSHSP) unit with supplemental HIV funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health as well as supplemental funding from the Safe & Supportive Schools grant • The Michigan Department of Community Health Division of Family & Community Health, Adolescent and School Health Unit, Taking Pride in Prevention Personal Responsibility Education Program. *Select parent resources were provided at no cost from The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.*

EVALUATION COMMENTS

One thing parents plan to do as a result of the conference:

- Listen more. Tell them I am proud of them!
- Spread the info! Share, share, share.
- I plan to attend our very next PTSA and share the info.
- Get talking to my kids. Check the iPad for secret stuff.
- Research more. Then talk to my children about their sexuality.
- Get on the net. Look up privacy laws (GLBT).
- Make plans to attend a local "Talk Early/Talk Often" workshop.
- Advocate for more sex education awareness. Continue with talking with my kids.
- Consider parent presentations to encourage talking.
- Try to transfer what I learned and put into action!
- Have good follow-up conversation with spouse and then children.
- To talk to my teen more openly and try not to be judgmental.
- Tell others (parents). Work on communication with my children.
- Talk with my 3 kids.
- Help the youth that come to me and need information.
- Be more aware of what's going on in social media and what my kids are doing.
- Get this put on a bill for education. Should be inside of school as a part of their application.
- Definitely a conversation regarding social media.
- Restrictions on computer.
- Share info with other parents at the high school and my own children. Work on improving our Sex Ed Advisory Board.
- Talk with my kids about internet use.
- Have the presenters do workshops at my school.
- Start questioning more, look for teachable moments and listen!
- Understand that my kids' brains are far more underdeveloped than their bodies and to act accordingly.
- Talk to my kids and my wife.
- Pass out more hearts.
- Reconsider our family's/my daughter's use of social media. Talk about healthy relationships.

Most Valuable

- Knowing that people are working hard to make the word a better place.
- For me as a parent, information supplied regarding special needs children (I have 2 - ASD).
- I enjoyed the chance to be with other parents.
- Information and examples of ways to speak to my teen.
- The entire experience was wonderful.
- It was all so valuable - hard to pick just one.
- Stressing the constant communication with our kids. Talking with other parents.
- Honestly, all of it was excellent!
- Interacting with other parents. Hearing tips from them and presenters.
- Info on brain research. Wonder facility, well organized program.
- Safe place to talk about this topic overall.
- Lots of resources.
- The reminder that parents are often the most important people in their children's lives. An open attitude about sex and trust is so important.



To see pictures, video clips and resources from the conference go to:
[Talk Early & Talk Often Parent Connection Conference](#)



For more information email Barb Flis, Founder Parent Action For Healthy Kids at barb@parentactionforhealthykids.org