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## To curb unplanned pregnancies, teach sex ed (and start early)

Davon Russell

To the editor,

While it's true that access to contraception is critical in order for women to take charge of their reproductive health ("[New York has work to do on unplanned pregnancies](#)," op-ed), we can't forget another crucial element in this effort: comprehensive sexuality education.

As an organization that provides youth services in the South Bronx, WHEDco sees first-hand how students' lack of information about their bodies and healthy relationships leads to unplanned pregnancies. In fact, the Bronx has persistently high teen pregnancy rates despite declining numbers citywide.

While current city law requires sex education to be included in schools' health curriculum, there is a lack of detail as to what that should include, or how extensive the lessons should be. That's assuming it happens at all: the city comptroller's office has determined that it often does not.

On top of that, by the time students receive their first sexual health lessons in middle school, it can be hard to change narratives about sex that they have already internalized from popular culture and their peers.

In order to give students opportunities to learn about and discuss their sexual health in age-appropriate ways, WHEDco includes sexuality education in our after-school programs, starting in third grade and continuing through eighth.

### ADVERTISING

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The feedback from students has been incredibly positive. It turns out that kids—and their parents—are hungry for this information that helps them take charge of their bodies, their sexuality and their futures.

All students in this city deserve the same opportunity.

**Davon Russell**

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Link: <https://www.crainsnewyork.com/letters-editor/curb-unplanned-pregnancies-teach-sex-ed-and-start-early>