



## Teen instructors tackle sex ed in Bronx school

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**SOUTH BRONX** — The sixth graders at PS 218 in the Bronx have a lot of questions about sex and they're getting their answers from an unlikely source - teenagers.

In this classroom, the adults are on the sidelines.

The group of 15 is taking part in an after school sex ed program with WHEDco - a nonprofit organization which provides access to services to communities in the south Bronx.

The peer-to-peer model is designed to make what would typically be an awkward conversation, easy going.

“When the students come in the classroom they see not only older role models, they see people who look like them and understand their experience,” Sarah Cyr-Mutty, a health educator with WHEDco told PIX11 News.

The students meet twice a week for three weeks for the two-hour class that covers a variety of topics.

They discussed puberty and anatomy on Wednesday.

“What if someone kicks you in the testicles?” one student asked.

“It really hurts,” peer educator Melkyn Acosta responded, to a classroom of chuckles.

Acosta took the course himself when he was in middle school. Now a senior, the 17-year-old is fielding questions that range from condoms to consent.

“They don’t know that just because somebody is like saying ‘yes’ but their body is like weird - that really means that they are not really comfortable,” he said.

The innovative approach to sex education in the Bronx comes at a time when educators nationwide find themselves doing more with less after the Trump administration cut \$214 million in funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs. The administration argues the best approach to tackle sex education is with abstinence-only programs, a method that’s long been debated.

“Just say no doesn’t work for drugs, it does not work for sex,” Cyr-Mutty said. “We need to give young people the tools you actually have conversations to not just say no.”

In recent years, teen pregnancy rates have dropped significantly in New York City.

Some attribute that to mandatory health education, which incorporates sex ed for middle and high school students.

For 11-year-old Kiana Peprah, the program has made a difference, giving her a better perspective of things she’s seen on TV or heard on the radio.

“I’m comfortable asking the teachers different questions and then answer it without you like getting in trouble this time.”

Link: <https://pix11.com/2019/05/08/teen-instructors-tackle-sex-ed-in-bronx-school/>