Supporting Educators in Working with Parents

Remind educators of what their role is and what it is not:

- Educators are not the front line, or they shouldn’t be. When it comes to parent orientation nights, or a great amount of pushback, educators should always feel confident in the principal or school/organization administration to back them up and shoulder the responsibility of engaging in many of these conversations.
- Educators are there to teach the curriculum- in this case, the sex education curriculum. Educators provide medically-accurate, age-appropriate facts to young people, and turn them to parents/caring adults for values and beliefs. When in doubt, go back to the facts.
- Not every parent will support comprehensive sexuality education, and that’s okay. It is not the job, or responsibility of educators to change parents’ minds or convince them to support the teaching of sexuality education in school.
- Hear the parent/caring adult and provide space for them to share their fears and anxieties. If parents feel strongly about the content being taught, remember that they are not attacking the educator directly. Simply listening to a parent can help build alliance and trust. Truly listening and hearing parents, and letting them know that educators hear them, is vital to building a trusting relationship. Saying things like: “I hear you,” “This is challenging for you,” or “I hear how concerned/worried you are,” can help build bridges between educators and parents and other caring adults.
- Remember that parents always have to right to opt their child out of class, and remember that this actually happens infrequently.
- We all have fears and anxieties, and educators may have many around interacting with parents. It’s helpful for educators to examine their own feelings/triggers around this topic.
- Remember that more than 90% of parents and caring adults WANT their children to learn about comprehensive sexuality education in school. It’s the loud, vocal minority that educators fear the most. Be prepared for the overwhelming support as well as the challenges.
- Remember that educators are already amazing and doing a wonderful job. And part of being a fantastic educator is the ability to be flexible and to figure it out as they go along.
- Educators already have all the tools that they need to be successful in working with parents and other caring adults— they have passion for providing their students with information, and want to support their growth. Remind them of all that they are already doing.