

Erasing The Distance and Sexual Health Education in Chicago Public Schools

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Abstract:

Throughout the Spring 2021 semester, I have been working closely with Heather to initiate research on Chicago's current sexual education policy in CPS schools, especially high schools. After conducting research on the current existing policy, we planned to create and send out a poll to high school students and graduates to ask them what kind, if any, sexual education they got. Once we received their feedback, we would incorporate this into an already existing policy brief I made in 2019 for a psychology class and ideally send it to Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot for consideration regarding a change in the existing policy.

Introduction:

The purpose of this study was to ideally make a change in current policy for sexual health education in CPS schools. While the program is comprehensive, interviews with several counselors has informed me that whether or not the school utilizes that policy is solely dependent on the principal's discretion. Heather and I wanted to change this factor and make sure more schools were actually teaching adolescents about sexual health.

Methods:

Heather and I hit a roadblock in our research when we realized that, had we made a poll to disperse among people who already graduated high school, there was a chance the participants would not remember exactly what education they were given, if any. This would result in a skewed/no generalizable statistics, thus lowering our credibility for the inevitable policy brief. This paired with the fact that we could not simply get into contact with high school students for the poll, we decided to halt these efforts and take the research into a new direction. Given that these variables are out of the control of both Heather and I, we in turn molded this research to be more in line with the work that Erasing the Distance does.

Results:

Heather has given me a handful of stories to read and listen to of past volunteers who worked with Erasing the Distance. While I am not working closely with the target audience of adolescents perse, I am using the stories that Heather gives me to incorporate into my policy brief which I still hope to send to Mayor Lori Lightfoot.

While I may not have the power to change policy, I will at least try to get her attention by continuously attempting to get into contact with her by sending her multiple policy briefs with changing data and statistics.

Discussion:

I plan to some day work as an LPC and will then hopefully have more authority to carry out the experiment portion of this research and simultaneously have the opportunity to influence and perhaps even change the policy surrounding sexual health education for CPS students.



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