

Sex Ed by Brown Med: A Community Engagement Project to Improve Sexual Health Literacy of Middle-School Students in Central Falls, Rhode Island

CENTRAL FALLS
SCHOOL DISTRICT



BROWN
Alpert Medical School

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Program Overview

Sex Ed by Brown Med was founded in Fall 2014 to provide a comprehensive sexual health education program in Central Falls, RI. The curriculum was developed by Brown medical students in partnership with the RI Department of Education, Calcutt Middle School, and researchers at Brown's School of Public Health and Memorial Hospital. The lessons were adapted from the FLASH curriculum, which was developed by the Public Health Seattle-King county. FLASH is a science-based curriculum designed for teachers with diverse backgrounds and based on the Theory of Planned Behavior which links beliefs with behavior.



The curriculum incorporates 12 lessons covering a range of sexual health topics, including: healthy relationships; puberty; pregnancy and teen parenthood; contraception and abstinence; and gender and sexuality.

Community Context: Central Falls, RI

- Size: 1.2 square miles
- Total Population: 19,376 (16,173.6 people per square mile)
- Median age: 30.1 years old
- Language: 72.2% of people speak a language other than English at home

Community Partner: Dr. Earl F. Calcutt Middle School

- Public middle school in Central Falls school district serving grades 5-8
- Feeds into Central Falls High School, which houses a Title X clinic through Blackstone Valley Community Clinic
- 710 students
- 68% of students identify as Hispanic¹
- 15% of students identify as African American¹
- 20% of students receive ESL/Bilingual Education services (vs. 8% statewide)²
- 86% of students are eligible for subsidized lunch (vs. 48% statewide)²

Identifying A Need

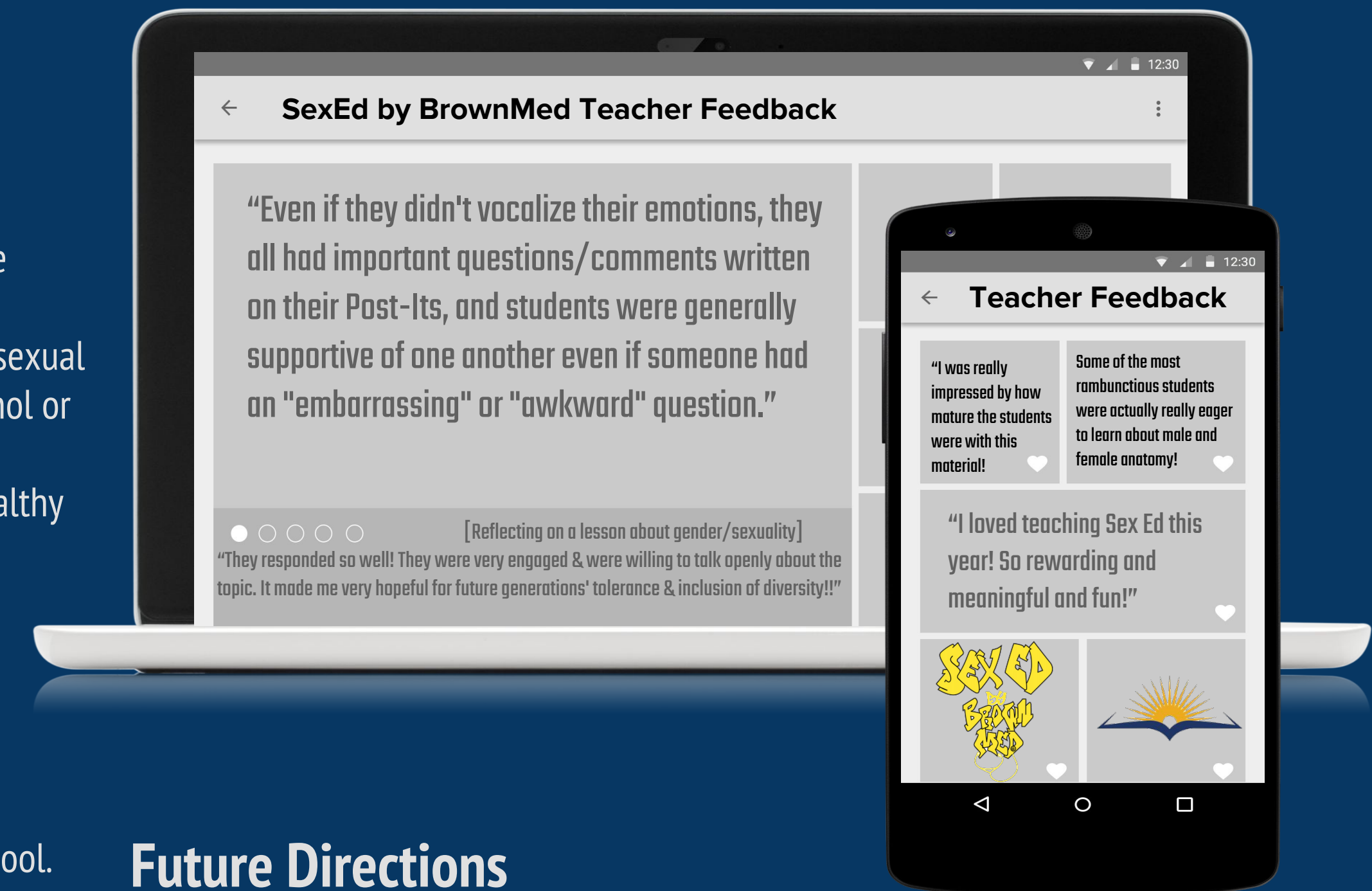
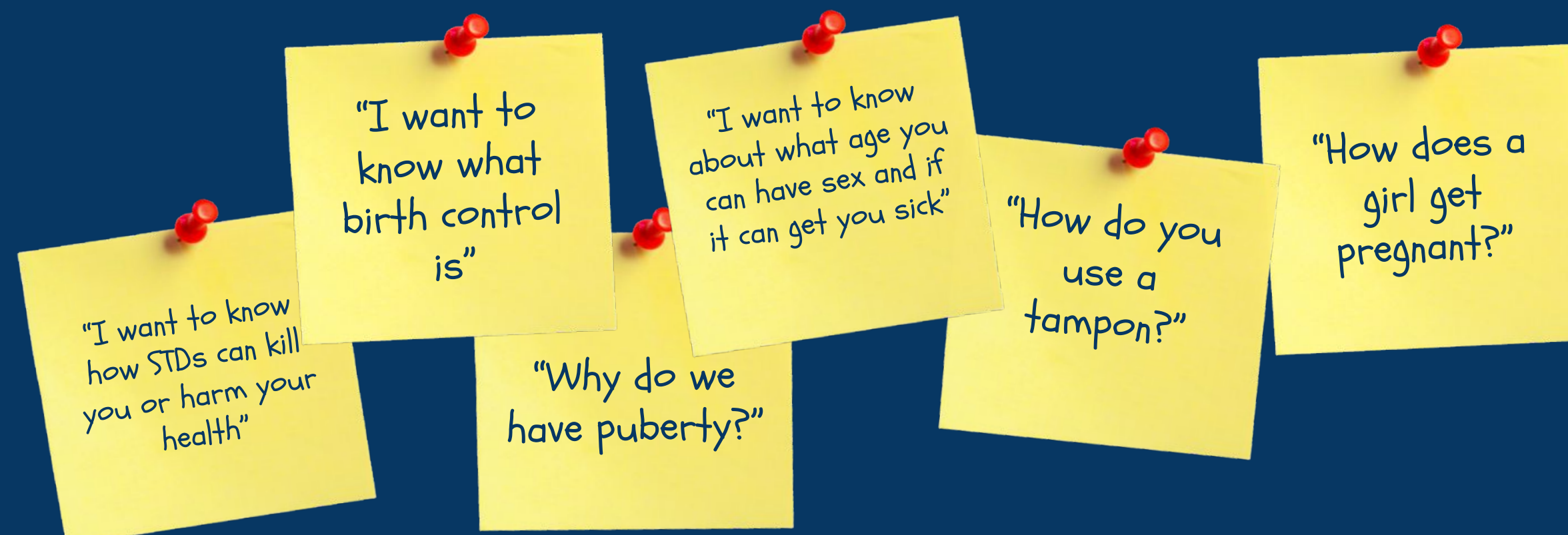
- Between 2011-2015, Central Falls' teen birth rate was ~4x the state average²
 - Central Falls - 65 per 1,000
 - RI average - 17 per 1,000
- In addition to teen pregnancy, early and risky sexual activity contributes to high dropout rate and the incidence of Sexually Transmitted Diseases in teens.³
- Among RI high school students who are sexually active, 38% did not use a condom during their last sexual encounter (40% in U.S.), 12% did not use any form of birth control (13% in U.S.) and 21% drank alcohol or used illicit drugs before their last sexual activity (22% in U.S.)⁴
- Early and comprehensive sexual health education has been reported to be effective in promoting healthy sexual decision making among adolescents.⁵

Results and Impact

Sex Ed by Brown Med teaches **170-180 7th grade students per year** with the support of **40 dedicated medical student volunteers**. The program has had tremendous impact on Calcutt Middle Schoolers and medical student teachers alike, and has served as the **foundation for several other health education programs**, including Parent College classes for Central Falls parents and "Be Real" at the RI Training School.

- **Impact on Students:** Most importantly, Sex Ed by Brown Med provides evidence-based sexual health education for the entire 7th grade at Calcutt Middle School. Now in its fourth year, Sex Ed by Brown Med has served over 600 Central Falls students - and counting! Sex Ed by Brown Med teachers facilitate open dialogue through small group discussions and serve as role models for the middle school students they serve.
- **Impact on Teachers:** Sex Ed by Brown Med is an impactful, hands-on, and fun service learning opportunity for medical students at AMS. The experience offers the chance to meaningfully get involved with the community while instilling AMS students with communication and health coaching/education skills that will be foundational to their future practice.

Sex Ed by Brown Med helps students address questions such as:



Future Directions

- Continue to improve student assessment outcomes
- Expand to Calcutt High School
- Measure students' beliefs and attitudes about sexual health topics
- Collaborate with Parent College to support parents to have discussions about sexual health topics with their children

Acknowledgements

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