

## HORIZONS DEVELOPS AND PILOTS AN ABSTINENCE (A) AND BEING FAITHFUL (B) LIFE SKILLS CURRICULUM FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Population Council's Horizons program, in cooperation with local stakeholders and the Mpumalanga Department of Education, conducted a study to explore the feasibility and acceptability of the integration of a life skills curriculum centered around abstinence and faithfulness into the Department of Education's Life Orientation Program for learners (aged 10–14) in grades 6 and 7 in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa.

**H**orizons recognizes the importance of a balanced ABC strategy for HIV prevention, with an emphasis on the importance of A (abstinence) and B (be faithful) for very young youth. As the number of youth between the ages of 15–24 being infected with HIV continues to rise in South Africa, the years of 10–14 present a window of opportunity for HIV prevention among youth. This is the critical time before most youth have engaged in sexual activity and when they may be receptive to messages about abstinence, delaying sex, and faithfulness as positive and achievable behaviors.

The South African Department of Education has prioritized HIV education through life skills training. Life skills training is administered to all learners in South Africa between grades one and nine via Life Orientation classes. As students may receive a majority of their information on HIV and AIDS through these classes, targeting them is one of the best ways to reach youth in South Africa with HIV prevention messages.



To guide the development of an AB focused life skills curriculum, Horizons conducted a formative meeting with key stakeholders; a rapid assessment of the National Department of Education's Life Skills and HIV and AIDS Education Programme; a literature review; a series of advocacy meetings with representatives of the Mpumalanga Department of Education, community members, teachers, parents, and learners; and a pre-test with 38 learners and 5 teachers. This led to the development of the Dare to Be Different (D2BD) curriculum.

Following D2BD curriculum development and pre-testing, a pilot was conducted in three primary schools in Mpumalanga Province. Results from the pilot indicated that the D2BD curriculum filled a gap in the Life Skills and HIV and AIDS Education Programme and that the D2BD curriculum can be accepted by learners, teachers, and parents.

An expanded pilot of the D2BD was conducted among 6th and 7th graders at 9 primary schools in 3 sub-districts of Mpumalanga Province in order to assess the fea-

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sibility and acceptability of incorporating an AB curriculum into the existing Life Orientation curriculum among teachers and learners; to assess the comfort of both teachers and learners with the AB curriculum messages; and to build the capacity of teachers to integrate and AB curriculum into the existing Life Orientation curriculum in pilot schools. Data analysis is currently being conducted. Dissemination is planned for October 2007. A full report will be available in November 2007.

The Population Council plans to expand the curriculum to over 30 schools, reaching an additional 3,000 learners and 80 teachers during the 2007–2008 school year.

#### Source

Jones, LeeAnn and Tobey Nelson. 2007. "Horizons develops and pilots an abstinence (A) and being faithful (B) life skills curriculum for in-school youth in South Africa," Horizons Featured Study. Washington, DC: Population Council.



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