



CLASSROOM OBJECTION-HANDLING GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

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Responding to students who bring anti-CSE messaging from home

While school is the primary setting where children receive CSE in its various forms, parents and communities have taken an active role in sharing this type of information for centuries. Therefore, children walking into a classroom may have been exposed to varying levels of sexuality education with different world views informing how they receive or implement CSE in their lives.

It is important that teachers and school administrators realise that when a student brings a question or concern to you, they are most likely repeating something that they heard at home, from a pastor, or from a community elder. They are not usually looking to engage in an argument, but are instead often testing what is safe to say, in front of their classmates, about something their family believes. YPAR findings show that learners already fear judgement and ridicule from peers when sexuality-related topics come up and worry that teachers might disclose what they say to parents or other authority figures. That means your response as an educator should address the subject matter calmly while still protecting the student from being publicly put on the spot, or from feeling that they should choose between you and their family in front of the class.

RECOGNISING ANTI-CSE MESSAGING

Anti-CSE messaging in the classroom tends to have a few recognisable features:

- ✓ It's usually attributed to an outside source rather than the student's own experience or curiosity. For example: "my parents said", "I saw a video...", "someone gave out a pamphlet".
- ✓ It often uses absolute, alarming language such as "evil," or "illegal," rather than a specific worry such as "I'm worried about X".
- ✓ It tends to repeat phrasing you've heard before, sometimes almost word-for-word, rather than describing something specific to that student's own life or question.
- ✓ It's also frequently pitched to the room rather than asked as a private question. The student may seem to be testing the class's reaction, or repeating something to see if it lands, rather than genuinely seeking an answer.

None of this means the student is being dishonest or difficult; it usually just means they're carrying someone else's concern into the room, which is exactly why the response should be calm, brief, and non-confrontational rather than treated as a challenge to be won.



A suggested pattern to follow (**A**cknowledge **R**espond **I**nvoke and **M**ove)

ACKNOWLEDGE the question or concern, briefly and without judgement. Do not dismiss it. For example, avoid phrases such as “that’s wrong” or “whoever told you that is wrong” even if the underlying claim is inaccurate.

RESPOND to the substance of the question or concern in one or two sentences, calmly and factually. It is useful to keep your answers short so that the moment doesn’t take over the lesson or turn it into a debate about the student’s personal family or faith.

INVITE Further conversation privately, rather than continuing the topic in front of the class.

MOVE the lesson on. Don’t let one exchange become the whole class’s focus, and don’t repeat or amplify the specific claim more than necessary to respond to it.



Scripts for common statements

Student:



My parents/pastor said this is against our culture and religion.

Teacher:



I hear that, and I know your family’s beliefs matter to you. What I can tell you is that this lesson is about keeping you safe and healthy, which most families and faiths care about too. Let’s talk more after class if you’d like. I’d rather answer that properly than rush it now.

Student:



My parents said talking about this will make us want to have sex.

Teacher:



That's a common worry, and it comes from wanting to protect you, which makes sense. What the evidence actually shows is the opposite, that knowing more tends to help young people make safer choices, not riskier ones. Let's come back to this if you have more questions.

Student:



This isn't what my church/mosque teaches.

Teacher:



That's alright. My job isn't to tell you what to believe, only to make sure you have accurate information to keep yourself safe. Those two things can sit alongside each other.

Student:



My parents said teachers shouldn't be talking about this, only they should.

Teacher:



Your parents are right that they play the biggest role in this. What we cover in class is meant to support what you learn at home, not replace it. If your parents want to know exactly what's taught, they're welcome to ask the school for the syllabus.

Student:



Someone shared a video/pamphlet saying this teaches bad things.

Teacher:



Thank you for telling me. I'd like to see exactly what that says, so I can respond properly rather than guess. Can you bring it to me, or tell me where it came from, after class?

What not to do

- ✗ Do not mock, dismiss, or criticise the parent, pastor, or community member the student is quoting, even indirectly.
- ✗ Do not turn it into a class-wide debate on the anti-CSE material itself as this risks amplifying a claim that most of the class hadn't otherwise heard.
- ✗ Do not force the student to defend or explain their family's views in front of peers.

Following up privately

A brief, low-key check-in after class such as “I wanted to make sure you're okay after our conversation earlier”. This type of response does more to protect a student's willingness to engage than any amount of correction in front of the class. Keep these check-ins short, informal, and away from other students where possible, consistent with YPAR findings on the importance of private space for sensitive conversations.

**Connection comes before
correction, and trust
creates space for learning.**

