

## Kink Education Must Be Adult-Focused and Expert-Led

The recent article from Hot Air, "California: BDSM Training for LGBTQ+ Students Is Great!" ([published May 29, 2025](#)), highlights a concerning situation at Sage Creek High School in Carlsbad, California. While the article clearly criticizes the school's actions, it also raises important issues that deserve thoughtful consideration beyond the politically charged framing.

### Kink Education Belongs in Adult Spaces with Qualified Educators

Let me be absolutely clear: kink education, including discussions of BDSM (bondage, discipline, dominance, submission, sadism, and masochism), is exclusively for adults. These are complex topics involving consent, risk awareness, power dynamics, and personal boundaries that require emotional and psychological maturity to navigate safely.

The situation described in the article—where a self-described "science of BDSM expert" was scheduled to speak to high school students during lunch—is deeply problematic, regardless of one's political stance. High school students are minors or very young adults who lack the life experience and developmental maturity to contextualize such information appropriately.

A 2013 study has noted that adolescent brain development, particularly in areas responsible for decision-making and risk assessment, continues well into the mid-20s (Arain et al., 2013). This developmental reality makes discussions of high-risk sexual activities inappropriate for high school settings.

### Affirmative Consent and the Model Penal Code

The American Law Institute's Model Penal Code (MPC) on Sexual Assault, Section 213.10, includes important age criteria for activities involving erotic force or restraint

(American Law Institute, 2022). This model law requires individuals to be at least 18 years old to consent to activities that may involve heightened physical or psychological risks, or potential harm (DeLaney, 2023). This legal standard called Explicit Prior Permission exists to protect vulnerable individuals, particularly young people, from potential harm in situations where power dynamics may be complex (Wright, 2023).

Research demonstrates that cognitive capacity develops progressively, with significant implications for consent education. Studies show that cognitive capacity typically reaches adult levels around age 16, while psychosocial maturity continues developing beyond age 18. This creates what researchers call a "maturity gap" - where adolescents may have the intellectual capacity to understand concepts but lack the emotional maturity to fully apply them in real-world situations (Icenogle et al., 2019).

## College "Sex Week" Events Need Qualified Educators

Even at the college level, where students are generally legal adults, "sex week" events often suffer from choosing presenters who lack proper qualifications to discuss kink or polyamory. These topics require expertise to address responsibly, so care must be taken to choose qualified professional educators with the appropriate training and experience. These professionals can help ensure that the discussion will be handled appropriately. For example, a qualified educator for a college setting will typically use their real name, not a pseudonym.

### **Education for teenagers should focus on:**

1. Affirmative consent concepts that go beyond "yes" or "no"
2. Healthy relationship dynamics
3. Communication skills
4. Setting personal boundaries and limits
5. Assessing physical and emotional safety
6. Critical thinking about media messages involving sexuality

College events addressing kink or non-monogamy practices should consult with established organizations. These resources can help identify experts who understand kink and how to present information in educational contexts that emphasize consent, safety, and ethical behavior:

- The National Coalition for Sexual Freedom (NCSF)
- The Kink and Polyamory Aware Professionals Directory
- Certified sex educators with specific training in alternative sexuality

## The Importance of Age-Appropriate Education

Research published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* has shown that age-appropriate consent education can reduce rates of sexual coercion and improve communication skills among adolescents (Coker et al., 2017). Teaching teenagers about basic concepts like respecting boundaries, communicating clearly, and understanding that they have the right to say "no" provides essential life skills that extend beyond sexual contexts.

The UNESCO International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education emphasizes that sex education should be "age and developmentally appropriate" and should "respect the role of parents and families" (UNESCO, 2018). That's why education must be developmentally appropriate, and school-sponsored events should not include explicit discussions of skills involving kink practices, such as how to tie a rope.

## Parental Transparency

The article notes that parents were denied the opportunity to review the content or opt their children out of the presentations. A meta-analysis published in the *Journal of School Health* found that parental involvement in sex education leads to better outcomes, including more effective parent-child communication about sexual topics (Widman et al., 2016).

Parents have the right to be informed about what their children are being taught, especially regarding sensitive topics like sexuality and consent. This right is recognized in numerous educational policies and laws, including the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA; U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

**Schools should:**

- Clearly communicate to parents when sexuality-related topics will be discussed
- Provide age-appropriate content overviews
- Allow for parental review of materials
- Offer opt-out options as a standard practice
- Respect that parents are the primary educators of their children on matters of values and morality

## Opt-Out Rights

Informed consent needs to be obtained from those involved to discuss erotic force or restraint, so mandatory school settings are not an appropriate venue. The UNESCO International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education emphasizes that sex education should "respect the role of parents and families" (UNESCO, 2018).

The article notes that Sage Creek High School officials argued they had "no obligation or even a role in providing an opt-out opportunity for students whose parents disagree with the content on religious or moral grounds." This position is deeply problematic and dismissive of parental rights in education.

Both parents and students should have opt-out options for such education, respecting diverse cultural, religious, and personal values. The American Academy of Pediatrics, while supporting comprehensive sex education, acknowledges the importance of respecting parental values and rights in educational decisions (Breuner et al., 2016).

**Schools should work collaboratively with parents, providing:**

- Advance notification of sexuality-related curriculum
- Clear outlines of what will be covered
- Straightforward opt-out procedures
- Alternative educational activities for students who opt out

**Providing LGBTQIA+ Support Without Inappropriate Content**

Supporting LGBTQ+ students and preventing bullying are important goals that can and should be accomplished without introducing inappropriate content. Research from GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) demonstrates that anti-bullying policies and gay-straight alliances can significantly improve school climate for LGBTQ+ students without introducing explicit sexual content (GLSEN, 2021).

Schools can create supportive environments by:

- Enforcing anti-bullying policies
- Providing age-appropriate education about diversity
- Creating safe spaces for all students
- Connecting students with appropriate mental health resources
- Training staff on inclusive practices

**Conclusion**

The situation at Sage Creek High School represents a failure of educational judgment that does a disservice to students, parents, and the broader LGBTQIA+ community. Kink education has an essential place in adult spaces with qualified educators. By conflating support for LGBTQ+ youth with inappropriate content, such incidents unfortunately provide ammunition for those who wish to restrict all LGBTQ+ content in schools.

As a society, we must balance providing young people with the information they need to develop healthy relationships while respecting developmental appropriateness and parental rights. This balance must include transparent communication with families and meaningful opt-out provisions that respect diverse values. Organizations like NCSF and certified sex educators can help navigate these complex issues in ways that are ethical, responsible, and truly educational—but only in appropriate contexts with proper consent from all involved, including parents when minors are concerned.

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