

A Message to Parents from the author of *Positive Choices*

First and foremost, what we want for our children is that they be healthy and happy. As they mature, we want them to make safe decisions, particularly when it comes to their relationships and sexuality. You already know that your child is a sexual being and that he/she will need guidance in this aspect of development just like many other aspects.

Positive Choices is a program designed to increase judgment about relationships and to provide information about sexuality that is adapted for students with particular learning needs. Based on my years of experience and the successful outcomes of a pilot program with students in the Greater Hartford area, Positive Choices has a strong emphasis on skill rehearsal and application to daily life.

As a parent myself, I know that the topic of sexuality is a sensitive one for any family. Our personal values, life experiences, religious principles, family traditions, all shape our beliefs about what and how our children should be taught about sexuality. and yet, I have found that parents unreservedly want appropriate sexual health information offered to their children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and appreciate that there are professionals with the commitment and expertise to do so.

You have the opportunity now to partner with your school to impart this valuable information to your child, information that I hope will lead him or her to safe, satisfying relationships in adulthood. This program will be most successful for your child if you are closely involved in the educational process. You can do this by attending informational meetings, becoming familiar with the program content, regularly reviewing the student manual with your child, and practicing the concepts and skills when incidental teaching opportunities arise. The student manual provides you with a script for discussions with your child and you can use it as a springboard for further conversation about family values and safe decision-making.

Chief among the concerns of parents is always how to protect our children from exploitation and abuse. In my opinion, what makes each one of us less vulnerable to abuse over time is what we learn through life experiences, sometimes difficult ones, coupled with a protective support system we create around us. For it is by participating in many, varied relationships that we learn about such complicated interpersonal dynamics as trust, consent, assertiveness, self-protection, and intimacy. In the same way, your child will learn to negotiate and make safe decisions through practicing skills in this program, through life experiences, through exposure to many varied relationships, and through the continued guidance and strong support you provide.

My wish for you is that you will witness your years of advocacy, perseverance, and yes, anguish, come to fruition as your child develops reciprocal friendships that are a source of comfort and joy for him or her, and perhaps pave the way for the possibility of a safe, enduring, loving relationship in the future.

Lucille Duguay



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Dear Families:

As part of our curriculum this year, we will be using a program called Positive Choices; a social and relationship curriculum designed to give students the tools they need to make good choices in their interpersonal relationships.

Please read the attached message to parents that provides information regarding the program. As a parent or guardian, I would ask your permission to have your son/daughter participate in the program.

Feel free to contact me if you have further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Mary Sharma
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I hereby give my permission for my son/daughter _____ to participate in the weekly relationship curriculum, Positive Choices. You can withdraw our consent at any time.

___Yes, my son/daughter will participate.

___No, my son/daughter will not participate

Signature _____ Date _____

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