

2026 SIECUS State Report Cards



Executive Summary

Sex education in the United States remains a patchwork of state and local policies dictating what, if any, sexual health instruction young people receive in school. Where a student lives still determines whether they get medically accurate, complete information, harmful abstinence-only ideology, or nothing at all. As of 2026, 32 states and the District of Columbia have laws requiring sex education, either explicitly in statute, through health education, or through enforced state standards; however, even when sex education is required, that does not always ensure quality instruction. Only 5 states (California, Colorado, Illinois, Oregon, and Washington) have laws requiring comprehensive sex education (CSE).

Despite widespread support among Americans, state lawmakers continue to attack the existing sex education patchwork.¹ At the midpoint of 2026, SIECUS tracked 174 sex education bills, 54% of which were restrictive.² In Alabama, Colorado, Indiana, Louisiana, South Dakota, and Wisconsin, restrictive legislation became law. These policy shifts change what's legally required to be taught (or not taught) in classrooms, impacting young people's well-being today and for generations.

The State Report Cards exist to make these shifts visible and trackable, so advocates aren't fighting in the dark. We encourage advocates to use the Report Cards to understand the current state of sex ed in their community and to use our [Community Action Toolkit](#) to drive change.

SIECUS has published policy analysis on state sex education for decades, historically through the State Law and Policy Chart and, since 2023, through a rubric-based grading system. The State Report Cards and companion State Profiles translate that analysis into a letter grade for each state, built from two components: a Sex Ed Requirement grade and a Content Requirement grade.

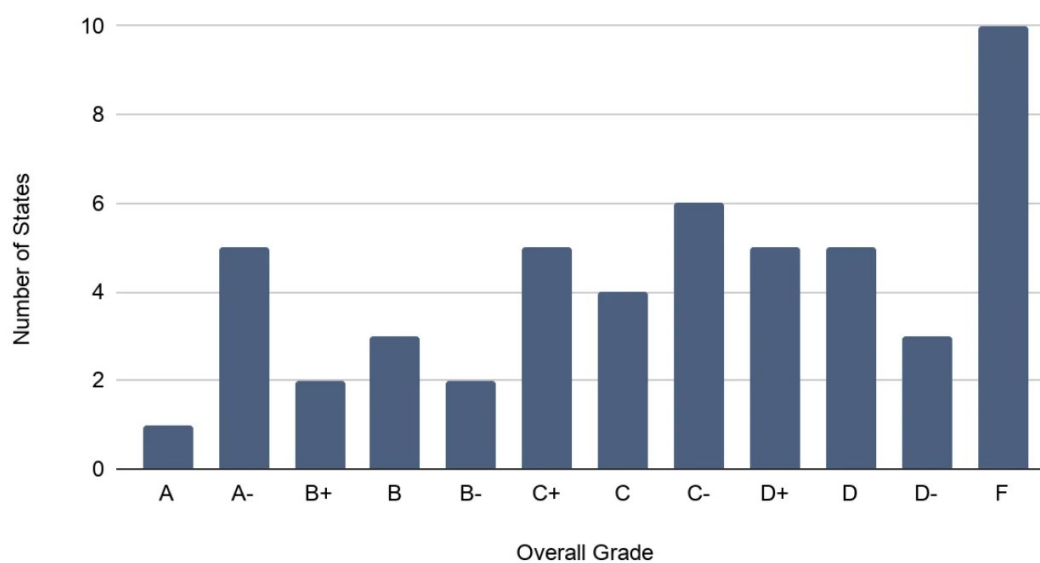
¹ Friedman, Jaclyn. "EducateUS Polling." EducateUS, 2026. <https://educateusaction.org/resources/polling/>.

² Umar, N. and Estes, M. (2026). The State of Sex Ed: SIECUS 2026 Mid-Year Legislative Analysis. Sexuality Information and Education Council of the US (SIECUS). Washington, DC.

The Landscape in 2026

This year, 6 states received an “A” (including A-) and 10 states received an “F”. Figure 1 shows the full distribution of state letter grades in 2026.

Figure 1: 2026 SIECUS State Sex Ed Policy Grade Distribution



Three states (Alabama, Montana, and Texas) changed their letter grade this year due to policy changes. In addition, 24 additional states had a minor change in letter grade (e.g., from a D- to a D) because of changes in our grading methodology, rather than policy. Those changes are detailed in the methodology and include consolidating criteria on stigmatizing information about LGBTQIA+ identities, removing a separate criterion on menstrual health instruction because instruction on puberty is reflected in other categories, and shifting the scores associated with each letter grade to be more evenly distributed and consistent moving forward. For this reason, please assess any minor changes in grading with caution and review full-length state profiles to see if any laws have changed the sex education policy landscape in a respective state.

As in prior years, this grade reflects law and policy on the books, not what is actually happening in classrooms. Enforcement and implementation vary widely by district even in states with strong laws. Additionally, most sex education laws primarily apply to public schools, so the score doesn't necessarily reflect the sex education that occurs within private and charter schools. The Report Cards are meant to help advocates understand current law and policy; they do not reflect the actual student experience.

For more information on policy analysis and methodology, contact us at info@siecus.org.

Methodology

Sex Ed Requirement

SIECUS State Profile Grades were calculated using 2 categories that added together make up the overall grade. The first category, **Sex Ed Requirement**, delves into what policies exist that mandate instruction of sex education and any limitations to enrollment in sex education. This category has 3 criteria, and each response is assigned a score. The sum of these scores equals the letter grade assigned. The corresponding scores are listed after the criteria.

Is sex education required by state law?

Sex education is mandated (3)

Health education mandated and includes sex education or some sexual health concepts (2)

HIV/AIDS instruction or detailed healthy relationships education mandated (1)

No instruction mandated (0)

Is sex education opt-in or opt-out?

Opt-in (-2)

Opt-in for some topics, for example sexual orientation and gender identity (-1)

Opt-out (0)

Is sex education explicitly prohibited in specific grade levels?

Yes (-1)

No (0)

Total Sex Ed Requirement Grade:

3 = A

2 = B

1 = C

0 = D

-1 or below = F

Content Requirement

The second category, **Content Requirement**, covers state policies that regulate the quality of sex education and which topics must be taught in sex education curricula. These requirements must be mandated by law or by state health education standards. This category consists of 13 criteria. Key terminology is defined below.

Is sex education required to be age-appropriate?

Yes (1)

No (0)

Is sex education required to be evidence-based?

Yes (1)

No (0)

Is sex education required to be culturally relevant?

Yes (1)

No (0)

Is sex education required to be medically accurate?

Yes (1)

No (0)

Does sex education instruct on HIV/AIDS and other STIs?

Covers STIs, including HIV/AIDS (1)

Covers only HIV/AIDS (0.5)

Not covered (0)

Does sex education require instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI)?

Yes (1)

No (0)

Does sex education require instruction on false and/or stigmatizing information about LGBTQIA+ people (inclusive of Don't Say Gay laws which prohibit or restrict classroom discussion of SOGI)?

No (0)

Yes, implied (-0.5)

Yes (-1)

Does sex education instruct on consent?

Yes (1)

No (0)

Does sex education require instruction on healthy relationships?

Yes, detailed (1)

Yes, some topics (0.5)

No (0)

Does sex education require instruction on condoms and/or contraception?

Yes (1)

No (0)

Are the National Sex Education Standards explicitly named in statute?

Yes (2)

No (0)

Does sex education teach abstinence?

Abstinence covered (0)

Abstinence stressed/emphasized (-1)

Abstinence-only (-2)

Does instruction cover abortion?

Discusses abortion in a positive or neutral way (1)

Instruction on abortion not required (0)

Stigmatizing or false information on abortion required, including “Baby Olivia” and biased “adoption instruction” laws OR instruction prohibited (-1)

Total Content Requirement Grade:

12-11.5 =A+, 11-10.5=A, 10-9.5 =A-

9-8.5 =B+, 8-7.5 =B, 7-6.5=B-

6-5.5 =C+, 5-4.5 = C, 4-3.5 =C-

3-2.5 =D+, 2-1.5 =D, 1-0.5=D-

0 or lower =F)

Overall State Grade:

15-14 =A+, 13.5-12.5=A, 12-11=A-

10.5-9.5=B+, 9-8=B, 7.5-6.5=B-,

6-5=C+, 4.5-3.5= C, 3-2=C-

1.5-1=D+, 0.5 = D, 0 =D-

-0.5 or lower =F)

What's Changed in our Methodology in 2026?

For this year's report card, we made four key changes.

1. We consolidated the following criteria on sex education requirements. This change was purely structural to reduce duplication in our backend analysis and has no implications for state scores.

Previous criteria:

Is sex education required by state law?
Sex education mandated (3)
Health education mandated and incorporates some sexual health concepts (2)
HIV/AIDS instruction or detailed healthy relationships education mandated (1)
No instruction mandated (0)

Is sex education required by proxy (via mandate to abide by health education state standards)?
Yes (2)
No (0)

2026 criteria:

Is sex education required by state law?
Sex education is mandated (3)
Health education mandated and includes sex education or some sexual health concepts (2)
HIV/AIDS instruction or detailed healthy relationships education mandated (1)
No instruction mandated (0)

2. We consolidated the criteria on stigmatization of LGBTQIA+ in sex education and "Don't Say Gay" legislation to avoid redundancy in grading.

Previous criteria:

Does sex education require instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity to include false and/or stigmatizing information about LGBTQIA+ people?
No (0)
Yes, implied (-0.5)
Yes (-1)

Does the state have a "Don't Say Gay" law that restricts discussion on sexual orientation and gender identity?
No (0)
Yes (-1)

2026 criteria:

Does sex education require instruction on false and/or stigmatizing information about LGBTQIA+ people (inclusive of Don't Say Gay laws which prohibit or restrict classroom discussion of SOGI)?
No (0)
Yes, implied (-0.5)
Yes (-1)

3. We removed the criteria on menstrual health instructional requirements. Puberty education, including instruction on menstruation, is already covered in other grading criteria, such as sex education requirements and alignment with the National Sex Education Standards. Menstrual health was previously added as its own category to capture a new legislative trend. However, upon further consideration, SIECUS determined that we do not need to award points to states that have added menstrual health in their sex education policy as compared to states already teaching puberty instruction in alignment with the NSES.

Previous criteria:

Does sex education instruct on menstrual health beyond puberty?

Yes (1)

No (0)

4. We changed the scoring allocation corresponding to each letter grade. We did this to make the score distribution more uniform across letter grades and enable more consistent interpretation in future years. As a result, 25 states saw a shift in their grading, outside of any policy change. While these changes affected several states in this year's edition of State Report Cards, many are minor and limited to +/- changes in grading (for example, B to B+ or C- to C).

Previous Distribution:

Total Content Requirement Grade:

13 = A+, 12.5-11.5 = A, 11-10 = A-
9.5-8.5 = B+, 8-7 = B, 6.5-5.5 = B-
5-4.5 = C+, 4-3.5 = C, 3-2.5 = C-
2 - 1.5 = D+, 1 - 0.5 = D, 0 - -0.5 = D-
-1 or lower = F

Overall State Grade:

16 - 14 = A+, 13.5-12.5 = A, 12-11 = A-
10.5-10 = B+, 9.5-8.5 = B, 8-7 = B-
6.5-6 = C+, 5.5-4.5 = C, 4-3 = C-
2.5-2 = D+, 1.5-1 = D, 0.5-0 = D-, -0.5-
-8 = F

2026 Distribution:

Total Content Requirement Grade:

12-11.5 = A+, 11-10.5 = A, 10-9.5 = A-
9-8.5 = B+, 8-7.5 = B, 7-6.5 = B-
6-5.5 = C+, 5-4.5 = C, 4-3.5 = C-
3-2.5 = D+, 2-1.5 = D, 1-0.5 = D-
0 or lower = F)

Overall State Grade:

15-14 = A+, 13.5-12.5 = A, 12-11 = A-
10.5-9.5 = B+, 9-8 = B, 7.5-6.5 = B-
6-5 = C+, 4.5-3.5 = C, 3-2 = C-
1.5-1 = D+, 0.5 = D, 0 = D-
-0.5 or lower = F)

Definitions

These definitions are for scoring policy in this project and may not apply in other contexts.

Abstinence-only: laws (or standards that have force of law) require stressing/emphasizing abstinence until (heterosexual) marriage AND do not require covering contraception OR restrict contraception from even being taught OR failure rates of contraception AND/OR purport a certain moral ideology re: sexuality.

Abstinence-plus: laws (or standards that have force of law) require stressing abstinence AND also require contraception AND/OR STI prevention and can purport a certain moral ideology re: sexuality.

Age-appropriate: Suitable to particular ages or age groups of children and adolescents, based on the typical developing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacity typical for the age or age group.

Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE): Instruction on human sexuality and sexual health that is medically accurate, age-appropriate, inclusive and/or culturally relevant, and evidence-based or evidence-informed. This instruction must encompass STI and pregnancy prevention through contraception, healthy relationships, adolescent development, assault prevention, anatomy, sexual orientation and gender identity, and more.

Culturally-relevant: Affirming of culturally diverse individuals, families, and communities in an inclusive, respectful, and effective manner; including materials and instruction that are inclusive of race, ethnicity, language, cultural background, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and different abilities.

Detailed Healthy Relationships education: Instruction on healthy relationships which may include topics such as consent, healthy communication, signs of toxic relationships, physical boundaries, assault/abuse prevention, but does not include any sexual health topics.

Evidence-based: Requires curriculum to be based on programs that have been shown through program evaluation to reduce unintended pregnancy or other sexual health outcomes, such as delaying sexual activity, or increasing condom or contraceptive use.

Health education (that includes sexual health concepts): Instruction on physical health that may incorporate some sex education concepts such as STI prevention AND/OR pregnancy prevention and sexual violence OR healthy relationships. Additionally, some states require public schools to implement or follow state department of education standards or core curricula, which may include health education standards covering sexual health topics, teaching sex education by proxy.

HIV/AIDS education: Instruction on HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment that does not require instruction on other sexual health topics such as pregnancy prevention, relationships, reproduction, anatomy, puberty, other STIs, etc.

Medically accurate: Verified or supported by the weight of research conducted in compliance with accepted scientific methods and published in peer-reviewed journals, if applicable, or comprising information recognized as accurate, objective, and complete. Some state definitions of “medically accurate” require the department of health to review the material for accuracy; others require curriculum to be based on information from reputable medical agencies like the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG).

Opt-In: A school must notify parents and guardians and obtain consent before sex education instruction begins. If the consent is not given, the student cannot receive the instruction.

Opt-Out: A school must notify parents and guardians before sex education instruction begins, but a parent/guardian must submit a request to have their child removed if they do not want their child to participate.

Sex education: Instruction on sexual health, including STI prevention AND pregnancy prevention alongside healthy relationships, puberty, anatomy and development, and more. Maybe standalone instruction required under names such as "sexual health education", "sexuality education", "family life education", "personal health and safety education", "human growth and development instruction."

