

### **Activity 3. UNESCO Sex Education Guidelines**

**Background:** In 2009, international sex education guidelines designed to reduce the rate of H.I.V. infections among young people around the world were proposed by UNESCO, an agency of the United Nations. The proposed guidelines provoked a wave of criticism from conservative and religious groups, many based in the United States. They argued that the guidelines exposed children to sexual information while they were too young to fully understand, promoted pre-marital sex and abortions, and violated parental rights.

Proponents of the guidelines argued that in the absence of a vaccine to prevent AIDS, education was the most potent weapon against the spread of the disease. UNESCO officials estimated that only forty percent of young people aged 15 to 24 have accurate knowledge of how HIV/AIDS is transmitted and that people in this age group account for 45 percent of all new cases of the disease.

**Instructions:** Examine the international sex education guidelines developed by UNESCO (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001832/183281e.pdf>, accessed June 6, 2010). Write a 1,000 word essay commenting on the guidelines and the problems they are intended to address and your view of the issues in the debate, including your response to both critics and advocates of the guidelines.