

The Right Response to Pono Choices

The *Pono Choices* Curriculum, the Unintended Teen Pregnancy and STI Prevention Program for middle school youth, has (again) been in the news. On September 4, 2014, the Hawaii State Department of Education (DOE) announced its approval of an updated version of the *Pono Choices* sexual health curriculum for use by their middle schools. The DOE has also decided to change its policy from parents having the choice to *opt-out*, if they provide the correct forms to the school, to an *opt-in* option. Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, all parents must sign an opt-in form to allow their children to participate in sexual health education. We applaud this DOE's decision. It shows they are listening to the parents and groups who have serious concerns related to *Pono Choices* on many levels including: age-appropriateness, its graphic nature, inaccurate definitions and medical inaccuracies.

The debate about the *Pono Choices* highlights serious concerns parents have regarding the best way to teach their children in all matters related to the sensitive issues of intimacy and sexuality. Since Catholic parents are entrusted, from the moment of their child's baptism, with the role of being the primary educators in matters of faith, including the Church's teachings on chastity and human sexuality, it is best to look at these issues in a broader sense and in the light of Catholic Teachings.

Here are two resources which can help parents understand what to teach:

- **Basic Guidelines for Human Sexuality Education Within the Family** (Authored by: The Diocese of Honolulu Religious Education Office) available at www.catholicahawaii.org/adultfaith

- **A Parent's Guide: Teaching the Truth & Meaning of Human Sexuality** Preview the video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf4vs5D8zxl> Purchase at www.catholicparents.org (look under "multimedia" then "family")

Here is a resource which can help parents understand when to teach:

- **Chastity and Human Sexuality in the Early, Adolescent, and Teen Years** available at www.catholicahawaii.org/adultfaith

Equipped with this basic information, what should parents do specifically regarding *Pono Choices* or any human sexuality curriculum in your public school?

- First, pray with your spouse, pastor, or a close friend. Call upon the Holy Spirit for wisdom, understanding, and strength.
- Make it a point to examine the human sexuality curriculum at your child's school to gain a good understanding of what your child will learn.
- Do not "opt in" your child if the human sexuality curriculum does not align with the values of your family and the Church or is not age-appropriate.
- Discuss your values with your child in a loving, nurturing, and age-appropriate way.

Lastly, WE are the Church. Join with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Find support with parents who hold common values by getting involved with your parish Religious Education program or consider enrolling your child in a Catholic School.

Co-written by Mike Rockers and Jayne Mondoy