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Seminar on sex education conducted at UM June 8-12

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SEMINAR ON SEX EDUCATION
CONDUCTED AT UM JUNE 8-12

MISSOULA--

Elementary and high school teachers, administrators, counselors and public health nurses from throughout Montana are participating in a seminar on sex and sexuality this week (June 8-12) at the University of Montana.

The 48 educators are discussing common problems they have when dealing with young peoples' questions about sex and sexuality.

Jack Shevalier, health education consultant for the Montana State Department of Health in Helena, is directing the seminar.

Small group discussions are conducted by Dr. Deryck Calderwood, consultant for family life and sex education, Pleasantville, N.Y., local physicians, staff members from the health department and Montana teachers who have worked in sex education.

According to Shevalier, similar seminars have been conducted annually by the health department for six or seven years at UM.

The seminar encourages teachers to answer questions about sex in an "open, honest, frank manner," Shevalier said in an interview. "The teacher should be able to answer from an impersonal viewpoint, not from a viewpoint loaded with personal prejudices."

Shevalier said that the teacher has "the responsibility to teach the students about the sex function as well as the responsibility to teach the student about the other parts of the human body."

The State Department of Health views human sexuality as a "strong health entity which has strong ties to health education," Shevalier said.

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Montana teachers, he said, have consistently requested information about how to deal with sexual problems in the classroom. The major objective of the seminar is to "train teachers to be able to deal effectively with areas of human sexuality." said Shevalier.

Sexuality is not just specific sex facts, but also personality traits, he said. "A person's sexuality is . . . what they are not what they do."

Many of the teachers, he said, try to deal with their own questions and problems before they feel they can help the young people.

"It is also frequently easier for a student to ask a question of a teacher or counselor than a parent. Parents have great difficulty separating emotions from fact when their own children are concerned."

Many Montana cities have launched sex education programs, he said. After receiving requests from public school administrators, Shevalier added, the health department tries to secure community involvement to plan the program.

He said that the programs are endorsed by local teacher, lawyer, doctor and business groups.

Schools have conducted surveys of parents and have received "overwhelming support" for the proposed programs, said Shevalier. "Most people in the state are willing to see the need for sex education."

The seminar is cosponsored by the Departments of Home Economics and Education and the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at UM in conjunction with the State Department of Health.

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