Matric student Stanley Malindi believes being a “real man” is being your own man.

How do you think your generation sees sex?
The general perception youth have is that you have to be sexually active if you want to fit in with the “cool gang”. It increases your status among other boys and girls.

It’s about becoming the most talked-about topic on Monday mornings, following a hectic weekend of drinking, partying and getting laid.

Your view?
Choosing to abstain has been the choice I’ve embraced.

I’m motivated to do so by my religious beliefs.

I’m also well aware of the many risks linked to sex. There’s unwanted pregnancy, and being exposed to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

These consequences have a ripple effect on the rest of your life, and all because of a moment’s pleasure.

What about peer pressure?
I’m not afraid of making choices different to those of my peers.

I trust myself to make the choices that are right for me.

As clichéd as this may sound, I do believe that when I respect myself, others follow suit.

There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so that others won’t feel insecure around you.

If you bow down to pressures that require you to have to sleep with someone to be seen as a “real man”, then that’s the kind of man you are – weak.

How can there be ‘love’ without sex?
The journey is so adventurous, fun and exciting as a couple (although it’s difficult at times!), without feeling pressured to sleep with each other.

I find there are many rewards taking it one step at a time.

Are you ever going to do ‘it’?
Sex is such a special, intimate moment.

I don’t want to spoil it by regretting my actions afterwards.

So when I’m good and ready is when I’ll explore a sexual lifestyle.

For me, being good and ready means I know how to protect myself; I know my HIV status and my partner’s status; and I know where to go for help if I need it. It also means I trust my partner to be as faithful to me as I will be to her.

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Making sure that unplanned learner pregnancy doesn’t happen in the first place should be the primary aim of their parents or guardians, and of all who educate them. Here are some pointers to help teachers guide learners to brighter futures.

1. **Health Promotion:** Healthy lifestyles; sexuality; HIV/AIDS; and safety.
2. **Social Development:** Human rights; cultures and religions; civic activities; and relationships.
3. **Personal Development:** Self-concept formation; emotions; coping skills; and relationships.
4. **Physical Development and Movement:** Physical activities; physical fitness; rights; and ethics.
5. **Orientation to the World of Work:** Abilities, interests and aptitudes; career options; and further study.

For these reasons, prevention is the primary strategy outlined in the DoE’s *Measures for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy.*

**Abstinence** is one of the central pillars of the DoE’s prevention strategy. The message that educators should therefore be giving to all learners is that they should abstain from having sex until they’re finished with their high school education. This should form part of school programmes which educate boys and girls about the likely outcomes of engaging in sexual activity, and also encourages them to:

- Attend school every day;
- Stay in school;
- Practise healthy lifestyles; and
- Make appropriate and informed decisions about activities that will impact on their future health and educational prospects.

There is no single formula to prevent unplanned learner pregnancy. But there are a number of approaches and strategies that schools can use, many of which are already formal parts of the education system. The challenge is for educators to use their creativity and experience to arrive at an approach that works for them in their own schools.

Here are some existing programmes and approaches that are recommended in the DoE’s *Measures for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy:*

**LIFE ORIENTATION IS AT THE HEART OF IT**

The curriculum of Life Orientation (LO) covers concepts and areas of learning that are key to equipping learners to make informed, healthy choices for themselves.

Starting from Grade 1

In the General Education and Training (GET – grades 1 to 9) curriculum, the main thrust is to enhance a learner’s sense of self-in-society.

The knowledge, skills, attitudes and values expressed in the five focus areas in this learning area are designed to prepare learners to become well-functioning adults in society:

1. **Health Promotion:** Healthy lifestyles; sexuality; HIV/AIDS; and safety.
2. **Social Development:** Human rights; cultures and religions; civic activities; and relationships.
3. **Personal Development:** Self-concept formation; emotions; coping skills; and relationships.
Everyone's first goal

Prevention:

Their parents or guardians, and of all who educate them. Here are some pointers to help teachers guide learners to brighter futures.

Making sure that unplanned learner pregnancy doesn’t happen in the first place should be the primary aim of teenagers themselves, as well as of parents and guardians. I'm happy to say they’ve been well trained by the Department of Social Development.

It’s also what they learn about self-esteem, healthy relationships, and direction are less likely to make irresponsible choices for themselves.

It’s not just the sex-specific content that does this. It’s also what they learn about self-esteem, healthy relationships, how to handle peer pressure and conflict – all these areas are pillars on which children can build their bright futures.

I therefore encourage my LO educators to teach the learning area fully. I’m happy to say they’ve been well trained by the education department on how to impart this knowledge.

We also have many other programmes that get learners thinking about these issues, while at the same time building other skills and giving them wonderful opportunities. We also take part in competitions, such as the provincial Language Festival, where our learners entered their drama based on the theme “teen pregnancy”.

Parents must be involved

Parents have a large part to play if our work is going to succeed. I always remind them: “Remember, it’s about the future of your child”, I find ways to lure them to join us for school functions. For example, I invite them for events where we have a guest speaker to inspire us, so there’s a happy mood.

I always tell them, “If ever you want to be married, don’t make the mistake of ignoring your education. Education always comes first – so make education your first life partner.”

For older learners

LO is the learning area that’s at the heart of teaching our children to make healthy choices for themselves. It’s not just the sex-specific content that does this.

I therefore encourage my LO educators to teach the learning area fully. I’m happy to say they’ve been well trained by the education department on how to impart this knowledge.

I’ve also developed partnerships with local structures to support us. For example, our school is not far from the University of Limpopo. We engage student social workers to talk to our youngsters. I find many parents still need to be worked up to see the value of peer education.

Language Festival, where our learners entered their drama based on the theme “teen pregnancy.”

GET THE WHOLE SCHOOL THINKING

We also have many other programmes that get learners thinking about these issues, while at the same time building other skills and giving them wonderful opportunities. Most of these are cultural activities, such as poetry, or speech and drama. For example, the learners are given topics such as HIV/AIDS around which they create their own plays or group poetry.

Preparation for life

I firmly believe that young mothers are more likely to become single parents and live in poverty...
Have you heard about the GEM/BEM clubs?

These are school-based clubs made up of boys and girls. They’re motivated and thinking youngsters who are committed to the promotion of equal human rights, dignity for all, and mutual respect between boys and girls.

WHERE IT ALL STARTED
GEM/BEM is an international movement begun in Kampala, Uganda, back in 2001.

With support from both the national Department of Education (DoE) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), it was launched as a national programme in South Africa in 2003. GEM/BEM clubs form part of South Africa’s Child Friendly Schools (CFS) programme.

FOR LEARNERS, BY LEARNERS
These clubs should be started, organised and run by learners themselves.

In this way, these young adults will learn to become self-reliant and active participants in life.

Of course, they will need the support and guidance of a number of adults, including their educators, and members of business and NGO communities.

IT’S ABOUT DOING THINGS
GEM/BEM clubs are part of a movement – so they’re about taking action, not just talking.

Some of the activities South African GEM/BEM clubs are involved in include:

- Starting campaigns to keep school premises clean and safe;
- Setting up recreational activities like drama, art or sports at schools;
- Eduentertainment events that include gumboot dancing, choirs, drama, poetry and story telling, which use talent and entertainment to get important social messages across;
- Debating, especially on topics to do with healthy living and gender equality;
- Charity activities, such as collecting and donating clothes and food to those in need in a community;
- Forming walking teams to ensure the safety of learners on their way home; and
- Inviting speakers to present information on different topics in their schools.

OPEN DOORS TO OPPORTUNITIES
Besides these activities that learners set up themselves, members of GEM/BEM clubs also have access to enriching experiences through support from the provincial education departments, the national DoE, and UNICEF.

Some examples of the support GEM/BEM clubs receive are:

- Training on a range of life skills, including rights and responsibilities; self esteem; leadership; and the importance of equality and equal access to education for girls and boys.
- Information around issues related to gender inequality; gender-based violence; sexuality; learner pregnancy; HIV/AIDS and drug abuse; and other topics.
- Information on how to form a club and make it work, thereby learning to be proactive in ensuring their own educational progress.
- "Technogirls" are GEM/BEM members who are exposed to additional information and workplace experience related to careers in the Maths, Science and Technology fields. This is to encourage girls to enter these fields from which they historically have been excluded.

HIGHLIGHTS ’08
As part of this year’s Women’s Month celebrations, GEM/BEM members from all nine provinces were brought to Pretoria to take part in a dialogue with the former Deputy Minister of Education, Mr Mohamed Enver Surty.

It was an opportunity for the learners to be taught more about the role women played in the struggle to end apartheid. It was also an opportunity for the girls to highlight gender-related issues they face in their own environments, and bring them to the attention of high-ranking officials.

In particular, these learners highlighted problems such as teen pregnancy; sexual violence and harassment; and incidents where teachers have been guilty of pursuing sexual relations with learners.

All provinces carry out a number of GEM/BEM activities during the year, including GEM/BEM camps. These are two- to three-day gatherings of GEM/BEM members, which broaden their horizons through travelling to a new place, and being exposed to all kinds of activities that promote healthy living and explore gender-related issues. A national DoE camp will be held in Pretoria this December. South African GEM/BEM members will be joined by learners from countries such as South Sudan, Uganda, Botswana, Liberia and the Bahamas.

START YOUR OWN GEM/BEM CLUB
For more information on how to set up GEM/BEM clubs at school, request a copy of the GEM/BEM Guidebook for Schools from: Gender Equity Directorate Tel: (012) 312 9363 Fax: (012) 312 5218

Email: ramatlo.c@doe.gov.za; Hlatshaneni.d@doe.gov.za

... AN EDUCATOR MAY NOT FORM ANY SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ANY LEARNER ... EDUCATORS MUST TAKE REASONABLE STEPS TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF LEARNERS ...