



**In the ongoing debate between proponents of abstinence-only sex education in schools and those who favor, well, anything *but* that, one looming truth gets overlooked: The culture is now so sexualized that there's evidence that *all* forms of sex education may be impotent.**

In a recent survey of college students at six schools, almost all the guys (86%) said they'd viewed pornographic material in the last year, and one out of five (20%) said they looked at porn "every" or "nearly every" day. And as if we didn't have enough U.S.-produced porn, Japan's erotic cultural imports are rapidly growing. "The appeal of Japanese pop culture [to Americans] is that it is a moral-free zone," says Patrick Macias, editor of Otaku USA, in an MSNBC interview. "The ideas of good/bad, right/wrong...that duality is not present."

With the floodwaters of sexual influence

pouring into the culture, sex education programs are treated like levees—they can hold back the water, but only so much of it. And the report card on abstinence-only programs is mixed. The anti-abstinence group Advocates for Youth studied the outcomes from 11 state-sponsored abstinence programs and summarized: "Evaluation of these 11 programs showed few short-term benefits and no lasting, positive impact."

As you might suspect, when you actually look at the results of these studies, rather than relying on an anti-abstinence gate-

keeper, the picture looks a little brighter. The programs had marginal success—some could show measurable impact on kids' willingness to abstain. One factor that everyone agrees on—parents are the key to kids' sexual attitudes and behaviors, but more and more parents depend on schools to do the heavy lifting.

In a USA Today interview, abstinence advocate Valerie Huber said: "You can't expect that one class is going to undo all the misinformation teens are receiving...It needs to be reinforced, and parents should be the primary sex educators of their children." ■