

Report: Lessons Learned

An exchange of experiences with the pleasure-based approach to Comprehensive Sexuality Education between Sweden and the Netherlands



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Introduction

In 2024 and 2025, Rutgers (the Netherlands) and rfsu (Sweden) carried out an Erasmus+ project focused on an exchange of experiences regarding the pleasure-based approach to Comprehensive Sexuality Education. The project was funded by the European Union.

Despite recent expansions, relationship and sexuality education still lacks discussions on relationships, communication, and sexual pleasure, as requested by youth (De Graaf, 2024; Cense et al, 2020; Pound, Langford and Campbell 2016). There is a need for participatory methods that encourage critical thinking and develop communication skills. Scientific research suggests that a positive approach centered on pleasure and consent enhances positive sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing outcomes (Kohler, Manhart, and Lafferty 2008; Landers and Kapadia 2020, Mark, Corona-Vargas and Cruz 2021, Zaneva et al. 2022; Van Ditzhuijzen and Overeem 2025). This aligns with the goals of Rutgers and rfsu. Efforts to promote gender equality and diversity within schools foster safer environments for students. However, teachers face challenges due to inadequate training (Van Ditzhuijzen & De Looze, 2026). There's a crucial need to empower teachers with the knowledge and confidence to deliver age-appropriate sexuality education, including discussions on communication, empowerment, and consent from an early stage.

"Do you want to?" is a teaching material created in Sweden by rfsu, focusing on relationships and sexuality, communication, and consent, and contains seven short films. It actively seeks to include students with different backgrounds, personalities, gender norms, and LGBTQ perspectives, promoting reflection on fundamental questions related to sexuality and relationships. In our project, we attempted to translate the ideas and themes from the teaching package into a version suitable for primary education. Additionally, we sought to create culturally and religiously sensitive versions.

The motivation behind our project stems from the critical need for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) aimed at younger pupils and those in culturally and religiously diverse schools. Teachers in these settings often lack the necessary training and resources to navigate sensitive topics effectively (Van Ditzhuijzen & De Looze, 2026). The project supports teachers in facilitating these conversations, contributing to gender equality, autonomy, and sexual rights, with the goal of preventing gender-based sexual violence and improving respectful and inclusive communication. Benefits include exploring the pleasure-based approach and its implementation in schools' (including primary schools') relationship and sexuality education, as well as its application within culturally and religiously diverse contexts.

What did we do?

Rutgers and rfsu, in collaboration with teachers and other experts, have developed a series of lessons for elementary and secondary schools. We tested lessons in different schools in both countries. The pilot lessons were evaluated with teachers and students.

Creating the lessons

Rfsu and Rutgers met in person in a two-day exchange on the pleasure-based approach. During these days, the first drafts of the lesson plans were created. With the input of different experts (teachers and experts in the field of relationship and sexuality education) we have created two lessons about consent for primary schools. The lessons for primary schools did not explicitly address the topic of sexuality, but focused more on communication and consent. The Swedish 'Do you want to' version for secondary schools was adjusted to a context-sensitive version and also translated into Dutch, containing three pilot lessons. Various videos, followed by discussions, formed the basis of this teaching material.

Recruitment of schools and teachers

Rfsu and Rutgers separately trained groups of teachers in the Netherlands and in Sweden in the pleasure-based approach of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and informed about the context-sensitive versions of the teaching program. In Sweden, teachers wanted rfsu to conduct a demonstration lesson as part of their training. This was not the case in the Netherlands. The aim was to involve two secondary schools and two primary schools per country. Ultimately, three secondary schools and one primary school in the Netherlands were involved. In Sweden, there are two primary schools and two secondary schools involved. To compensate for the smaller number of primary schools in the Netherlands, the lessons were tested in four classes (two per school) in Sweden. Most of the schools had culturally-religious diverse contexts.

Testing the lessons

The pilot lessons were tested at various schools. Afterwards, teachers were interviewed using a standardized questionnaire (see Appendix 1). Teachers were also asked if they could evaluate the lessons with their students. The teachers have provided us with feedback on the results of the evaluation. At a number of schools (primary schools in the Netherlands) and at schools in Sweden, observations were also carried out to monitor the pupils' responses to the lessons. An observation schedule was drawn up for this purpose (see Appendix 2).

Results

In this chapter on the results, we will first discuss the results from the schools in the Netherlands and then the results from schools in Sweden for each type of education.

Primary education - The Netherlands

Theme and connection with the lives of the students

The lessons for primary schools were perceived as fun and most suitable for grades 7 and 8 (when students are 10 to 12 years old). The lessons were perceived by the teacher as well-suited to the students' stage of development, especially because the lessons are focused on respectful relationships and consent (not so much about sex itself). The examples given in the lessons are relevant to the students' lives.

Structure

The teacher finds the lessons clear and the structure excellent. There was room for discussion, practical activities, and theoretical knowledge. The teacher taught the lessons as they were outlined in the lesson plan, repeating some points in class. The combination of conversation and active engagement went well.

Dynamic in the Classroom

Before the lesson, the students seemed somewhat skeptical about the topic. However, they quickly became familiar with it, participated well, and listened attentively. The students were very engaged and curious about what was to come. They sensed that it was a serious subject. During the observation, it became clear that the various exercises were effectively used to pursue the objectives set for the students.

Areas for Improvement

There is a lot of text in the lesson plan, which can be overwhelming if you are not well prepared. The teacher emphasized the importance of good preparation, including knowing how to handle the amount of text in the lesson plan. The teacher suggested adding a number of control questions to the lesson for teachers who might not think of them themselves.

Primary education - Sweden

Theme and connection with the lives of the students

The theme and the various assignments seemed to resonate well with the students' lives. The students had all previously worked together with the teacher on the theme of consent. Therefore, the students' understanding of the concept was very good, and most of them, if not all, understood consent and how to communicate what they want and listen to what the other person wanted.

Structure

The overall structure of the classes was well received by the teachers. One teacher in particular highly recommended putting discussion questions, instructions, and the lesson structure on a screen or PowerPoint. This helps students stay focused and makes the content "clearer." There is a need for a clearer introduction at the start of the lesson to present the plan and "what is going to be done."

Dynamic in the classroom

The students were curious about the lessons and participated actively. In three of the classes, the atmosphere was more strict and well-behaved. In the fourth class, the atmosphere was more loose and relaxed. The students liked playful methods like "consent Bingo" and provided feedback saying they had learned from it. The students also liked the video about consent and value exercises (spin the wheel). In their feedback, they said things like "Good to discuss after the film" and "Important to talk about these things."

Understanding the lessons

Examples of what students said in their exit notes were: "Both parties agree that it's okay," "Saying yes or no to a sensitive question," and "Having autonomy over your own body."

- Examples of communication they wrote in the exit notes:
 - "You have to listen to others and their wishes."
 - "It is important to ask first."
 - "Listening more to 'curious' questions."
- Examples of relationships & boundaries they wrote in the exit notes:
 - "Learned about norms and relationships."
 - "That you can say no even if you are in a relationship."

Another exit note the pupils wrote was to define an active bystander. What is the difference between just watching and taking action? The pupils wrote:

- "Seeing something happen and acting instead of just watching."
- "Not just ignoring it and walking away."
- "Tell a teacher or an adult."
- "Go up and ask if the person is okay."
- "Daring to speak up when someone is being bullied."
- "It's when you stand up for someone."
- "Helping out when something uncomfortable happens."

Areas for improvement

Multiple teachers emphasized the need for better visuals to support the verbal instruction. One teacher highly recommended putting discussion questions, instructions, and the lesson structure on a screen or PowerPoint. Specifically for activities like "Consent Bingo," teachers suggested showing the game boards on the board first so everyone understands the rules before starting.

There is a need for a clearer introduction at the start of the lesson to present the plan and "what is going to be done." To increase student participation, one teacher suggested starting with a "think-pair-share" (discussing in pairs) before moving to a full-class mind map. This helps generate more answers from the group.

The areas for improvement according to the students were that the lessons were too short and that they already had lessons around the theme of consent. One student said that "The story was a bit boring," referring to the story of an active bystander named Jasmine. Another student said, "Let's talk even more about sex and relationships," which they had as a theme at the moment.

Future engagement

Most teachers emphasized that these are important topics to talk about, because students have so many questions. One teacher noted that having "experts" in class is a great "break" from the usual routine and very valuable for the students. They suggested training more teachers or continuing to send out external educators to maintain this impact.

Secondary education - The Netherlands

Two schools tested the lessons, and one school for children with special needs gave written feedback on the lessons.

Theme and connection with the lives of the students

All the teachers endorsed the importance of the theme. They felt that the lessons were suitable for upper school pupils, and the lessons were also tested. The videos were well suited to the pupils' living situations. One of the teachers indicated that she would like to start from a positive perspective, involving students first considering what they do want and how they can express this.

Rating of the videos

The reactions to the videos in the lessons were mostly positive. The first video (in which young people talk about the concept of sex) and the last video (in which two boys kiss) received mixed reactions. The first video was considered too broad and, according to the teachers, provided little new information. The last video was appreciated, but in one of the classes, some boys looked away. Teachers emphasized the importance of showing sexual diversity. Students in another class appreciated that there was a video inclusive of sexual diversity. One teacher mentioned that the last two videos might be intense for Muslim youth, particularly the video about sexual diversity. The students might choose to look away. They have already spent a lot of time discussing sexual diversity in class, but the close-ups may be too intense. The structure of the method is important here.

Structure

The teachers thought the method was well structured, with strong topics and a clear learning path. They were pleased that it was a short program, which can also be given as a supplement to a learning pathway. One of the teachers suggested starting with a more positive approach to consent. She also added role-playing exercises, which had a positive effect on the lessons. This adds variety beyond watching videos and having discussions in class.

Dynamic in the classroom

The types of classes in which testing took place varied greatly. At one school, students were not accustomed to engaging in much discussion. This led teachers to divide students into groups during discussion sessions and have them first think about their answers themselves using sticky notes. This approach proved successful. At the other school, students were more accustomed to discussion, and group discussions ran more smoothly. However, the variation meant that students could occasionally split into groups here as well.

Evaluation by students

The students generally enjoyed the lessons and found them interesting. There were mixed reactions to the subtitles. One class liked them. They thought that if the film had been in Dutch, it would have been uncomfortable or 'cringe'. Now it felt a little less personal. The subtitles made it easier for them to follow. Another class would have preferred the videos to be in Dutch. The last video, showing two boys flirting, elicited the most responses. One class indicated that it was important to keep this video in. Some of the boys from the other class found these images shocking. After the lessons, students indicated that they wanted more lessons on topics related to relationships and sexuality.

Students with disabilities

Some lessons and videos may also be suitable for young people with disabilities. Because the videos are subtitled, it is important that there is little dialogue and not too many stimuli. Videos with a lot of dialogue are often too fast for this group. For use in special education, it is a prerequisite that students have previously taken classes on this subject.

Secondary education - Sweden

The lessons were implemented in two classes across two different schools.

Theme and Connection with the lives of the students

The teachers were very impressed by the films used in the lessons. They observed that the students connected well with the content, which helped spark active discussions in the classroom.

Rating of the videos

When reflecting on the "Do you like to?" films specifically, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Students felt the materials helped them navigate the complexities of consent and rejection. One student shared that the films were a primary source of their knowledge, stating that they gained their understanding through the films, while others credited the project with making it easier to understand how to handle being rejected in a sexual encounter.

Structure

The teachers were satisfied with the structure of the teacher's guide and had no suggestions for improvement.

Dynamic in the classroom

In most classes, the atmosphere was positive, and students actively participated in the lessons and assignments. The videos were well-received. A few classes were a bit calmer and quieter. Those classes included students who were eager to give the “right” answer, despite being told that there were no right or wrong answers.

Evaluation by students

The students valued the lessons. A survey sent out to the students after the lessons indicated a generally positive and reflective attitude among students regarding sexual communication and consent. When asked if they had learned what they needed about sexual communication, both verbal and non-verbal cues, a significant majority of students expressed confidence, with many stating they had learned "to a high extent." This sense of preparedness is mirrored in their views on the importance of communication itself. On a scale of 1 to 10, almost every student rated the importance of communication as a 10, viewing it as the fundamental foundation for a positive sexual experience. As one student noted, communication is vital "so that both parties feel safe and enjoy themselves."

The students also demonstrated a strong sense of social responsibility when it comes to intervening in situations where someone's boundaries are being crossed, such as unwanted touching. Most students felt "quite sure" or "very sure" that they would take action if they witnessed such behavior. Their proposed methods for intervening were practical and empathetic, ranging from direct confrontation to more subtle distractions. One student explained their approach as: "I would have helped in a subtle way so they wouldn't feel scared." This highlights a sophisticated understanding of how to de-escalate tension while providing support, similar to the six-point list that was presented.

Conclusion

Teachers and students appreciated the lessons. The theme of the lessons was considered important and relevant to the students' lives.

The lesson structure for both secondary and primary schools proved to be effective. However, some minor adjustments are needed (including less text in the elementary school version and perhaps more images in the future).

Despite the language differences, the subtitled Swedish videos for secondary schools turned out to be quite popular in the Netherlands as well. In both countries, students felt the materials helped them navigate the complexities of consent and rejection.

Differences between the Netherlands and Sweden

- In the Netherlands, some students from secondary schools had more trouble with the scene in which two boys kissed. This reaction came mainly from boys. We saw fewer such reactions in Sweden.
- In the Netherlands, teachers were more open to conducting the lessons themselves. In Sweden, teachers felt it was necessary for an expert to demonstrate the lesson at least once. This may have been because teachers in the Netherlands were already accustomed to teaching lessons on relationships and sexuality using specific teaching materials.

Recommendations

This report has yielded several recommendations, which will be incorporated into the development of the final version of the lesson plans.

Primary education

- The lessons for primary education could be made less language-intensive for teachers. This ensures that the preparation process also runs more smoothly.
- The lessons for primary education could contain more evaluation questions. This would make it possible to check whether the pupils have understood everything and whether the objectives have been achieved.

Secondary education

- This theme is a great addition to a broad curriculum on relationships and sexuality.
- The order of the lessons can be adjusted so that we start from the positive aspect of consent.
- It would be nice if there could be a little more variety in the working methods by adding an optional working method.
- The teacher's guide could be a bit more specific about the fact that two boys are shown in the last video and suggest teaching lessons on sexual diversity earlier on. This proved to be particularly important in schools with more cultural diversity.
- The lessons cannot be replicated one-to-one in education for children with special needs. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for further development in the future.

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Appendix 1 Questionnaire for teachers

In which classes were the lessons taught?

Introduction

At Rutgers, we are currently collaborating with rfsu on an Erasmus+ project to develop and test teaching materials on consent and communication. The lessons cover topics such as consent. You have taught one or more of these lessons. We would like to hear about your experiences with them.

Your answers will be treated confidentially. Do you agree to the conversation being recorded for the purpose of preparing for the interview?

General experience

- What was your overall experience of teaching this lesson/these lessons and what did you think of the topics covered?
- Did the lesson(s) meet your expectations in terms of content and relevance to the age and developmental stage of the students?
- Which aspects went well or were challenging, and how did you deal with any difficulties?

Lesson structure and exercises

- How well did the structure and timing of the lesson(s) work, including the balance between activities, repetition, and interaction?
- What did you think of the teaching materials (e.g., videos, poster, instructions), and were they clear and useful for your lessons?
- Did you make any changes to the lesson plan, or would you have preferred to see different types of activities? If so, which ones and why?

Students

- How did the students respond to the lesson in general, and what was the atmosphere like in the classroom?
- Which parts of the lesson did the students find most or least interesting, easy or difficult, and why?
- To what extent were the students engaged, did they ask questions, or did they demonstrate prior knowledge of the subject?

Closing questions

- Would you like to teach these lessons again in the future?
- Do you have any questions or comments about the lessons?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 2 Observation schedule

Completed by:

General information		
Background	Day and time	
	Group	
	Teacher	
	Number of students present	
	Number of students absent	
	Number of students with a migrant background	
	What lesson is being taught?	
Classroom	What does the classroom look like? How is the space used? Who (else) is present?	

Observations		
<i>To be completed by the researcher during the lesson</i>		
Opening	How is the class opened? Are there references to previous lessons? How?	How do the students react? Is there a reaction? What kind of reaction? Who responds and how many?
Part 1	Has this part been given? How is it given? Is it carried out as described in the lesson plan?	How do the students react? Is there a reaction? What kind of reaction? Who responds and how many?
Part 2	Has this part been given? How is it given? Is it carried out as described in the lesson plan?	How do the students react? Is there a reaction? What kind of reaction? Who responds and how many?
Etc	Has this part been given? How is it given? Is it carried out as described in the lesson plan?	How do the students react? Is there a reaction? What kind of reaction? Who responds and how many?
Wrapping up	How is the lesson completed? Is the content of the lesson summarized? Are you looking ahead to the next lesson?	How do the students react? Is there a reaction? What kind of reaction?

		Who responds and how many?
	Did the teacher manage to complete all parts of the lesson within the available time? How long does the lesson last in total?	
General observations	What is the atmosphere like during the lesson? How do the students behave? What is the attitude of the students? Are students participating well? How are students involved in the lesson? Is there a lot of mutual interaction? Is there a lot of interaction with the teacher? Is there a break? Is there a change during the lesson in: atmosphere, attitude, opinion, interaction? When? What kind of change?	
Use materials	Have materials been used? Has additional material (videos, images, etc not part of the teaching package) also been used?	

Notes: