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8 FOREWORD

SOWING THE SEEDS FOR AASECT AND CERTIFICATION OF SEX EDUCATORS

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Founder and Executive Director of AASECT, 1969–80
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In 1958, I was asked to develop and teach a training course for teachers in sex education at the D.C. teachers College. There were no standards then for training sex educators, nor was there even a common definition of the term which was agreeable to the various disciplines. My investigation reflected the fact that there was practically no communication among professionals on this subject. I therefore had to develop a course from scratch. The conceptual framework which I created was based on a three-pronged approach.

First, the content needed to be interdisciplinary and include a bio-social-psychological, cultural and interpersonal body of knowledge. Dr. Lester Kirkendall had not yet published his SIECUS Study Guide, but his earlier work at Oregon State University influenced many of us in developing a human relations and family oriented approach to our definition. It was necessary to go beyond the traditional medical model.

The second factor involved the teaching of skills. Because attitudes and values needed to be sorted out in this sensitive process of learning, I leaned heavily on my training in clinical and social psychology to develop a group-centered approach in which the trainer-teacher becomes the catalyst. Straight lectures as an exclusive method would not do. A background in basic counseling skills also seemed essential, since all effective teachers are frequently asked for advice on personal sexual concerns confronting their students. Problem solving skills seemed appropriate and essential both for teachers and their students.

The third area dealt with the desirable qualities of the sex educator. Because attitudes and values are implicit in sexual behavior, it appeared that certain qualities would be essential to effective sex educators. These included being a supportive, non-judgmental person, having achieved a healthy attitude about one's

own sexuality, along with the ability to communicate warmly and effectively.

During the mid-sixties, institutes and summer courses were encouraged by the National Association of Independent Schools and public school systems throughout the United States. A great enthusiasm was developing for this much-needed training. But the training and teaching led to a need for an interest group: a group to share successes and failures with others; a group in which to grow professionally; a group for research and publications; and most importantly, a group where discussion and debate could take place openly so as to develop greater competency and clearer standards.

In 1967, I felt the time was ripe to found a professional organization. I spoke with colleagues from education, marriage counseling, psychology and the social sciences. They supported me and warned me of the hard work ahead. Among them were Drs. David Mace, John Chandler, Walter Stokes, Robert A. Harper, Albert Ellis, Sophie Kleegman, Emily Mudd, Warren Johnson, Morton Yohalem, Clark Vincent, Ethel Nash and Lester Kirkendall.

AASECT was born on September 1, 1967. I functioned as its executive director until 1980. The three-pronged concept of sex education grew through creative approaches demonstrated in many training programs and classrooms throughout the land.

By 1972, it was my feeling that the time was ripe to develop standards by which to certify sex educators as having the competency to teach. The AASECT Board of Directors approved the plan, and under the wise and generous leadership of Dr. David Mace, standards were developed, approved and published in an AASECT manual that became the foundation for certification and training for AASECT members. Today

many universities and institutions use these training standards as the basic syllabus for their courses. Much work needs to be done to refine, clarify and further research the methodology.

This special issue of *The Journal of Sex Education and Therapy* demonstrates at once how far the field of sex education has progressed since those early days, and yet how far we still have to go.