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## Give Students Creative Control Over the Information



Bianca Laureano, a sexologist and educator, is the cofounder of the Women of Color Sexual Health Network and the director of education and regional programs at [Scenarios USA](#).

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As a sexuality educator for almost 20 years, I've learned there is no single right way to get vital sexuality information to young adults. But the approaches must be interdisciplinary and accessible to youth, a challenge that is multiplied by the variety of circumstances, backgrounds and cultures within the U.S. population.

The use of technology and social media, peer education programs and nontraditional texts — like comic books, blogs and zines — as well as collaborations with community organizations, are all great tools for teaching sexuality education.

But over a decade ago, I changed my teaching strategies when I realized that the sexuality education curricula, though comprehensive, was not working for the populations I was teaching: queer trans people of color, immigrants and working poor youth. Students with fewer resources have different barriers and cultural perspectives that must be honored. The curriculum must be adapted to them. Often, these students don't have access to the same services, or are not comfortable learning about themselves and their bodies in classrooms where teachers misunderstand their circumstances, or mispronounce their names.

*Under-served students are often uncomfortable learning about themselves in classrooms where teachers misunderstand their circumstances, or mispronounce their names.*

But one way to engage youth, and give them agency when it comes to the topics of health and sexuality, is media making. Writing poems, essays or scripts and making films are all creative ways for youth to process the information, and learn from each other. At Scenarios USA, where I work, students submit their writing — the stories that they wish to see in the media — to biannual contests, and the winners are paired with Hollywood-level directors to collaborate on movies based on their stories. We apply interactive, engaging and youth-led approaches to film, storytelling, journal writing, social media and inquiry-based curricula to begin dialogue and promote the sharing of accurate sexuality information.

In creating their own media, youth also affirm their unique identities, and can represent themselves as they wish to be seen.

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