Gist-Enhanced Reducing the Risk Curriculum (RTRgist)  
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Gist-Enhanced Reducing the Risk (RTRgist) Curriculum?

- RTRgist is a research-based risk reduction curriculum to reduce teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. It includes information on delaying initiation and protection;
- It includes seven class sessions, each lasting about 2 hours, plus five questionnaires to assess effectiveness (one before and after the 7 class sessions, and at 3-6- and 12 months).
- Class size is generally 10-20 students;
- Direct instruction and experiential activities are included such as role playing to build skills in refusal, negotiation, and communication;
- It is delivered through trained instructors as well as through facilitated video instruction.
- Parent permission and student assent are required before class sessions begin.

Who is the Curriculum For?

- Multi-ethnic populations of high school aged students (13-18 years old)
- Urban, suburban, and rural youth

What Makes RTRgist Different from Other Sex Education Courses?

RTRgist goes beyond presenting the facts about preventing unplanned pregnancy and STDs. It helps participants:

- Understand how to avoid unhealthy risks;
- How to quickly and automatically recognize signs of health risks;
- How to quickly and automatically retrieve their core values and principles that are relevant in risky contexts; and
- How to apply their own values and principles to representations of the situation to make healthy decisions.

How is RTRgist Evaluated?

RTRgist is part of a research program on risky adolescent decision making. Evaluating RTRgist involves:

- An experimental design with a control group;
- Participants complete a survey before the program, upon completion and at three- six- and 12-months after the program. The questionnaire assesses a variety of behavioral and non-behavioral variables, which you can provide in reports as scientific evidence of effectiveness for the program.

What Have We Learned About the Effectiveness of RTRgist?

RTRgist has been tested in a randomized trial with high school students as part of a 5- year grant funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Randomized controlled trials were conducted in New York, Arizona, and Texas. Twenty-two outcomes were assessed. In a recently completed analysis, the enhanced intervention had a stronger impact on reducing risky behavior compared to a standard curriculum (and to a control group):

- Participants in the RTRgist group had decreased intentions to have sex from the pre- to post-test compared to the standard risk reduction intervention and to the control group;
• Participants in the RTRgist group had delayed initiation of sexual intercourse; Participants in RTRgist were 68% less likely to become sexually active after one year compared to the standard and the controls;
• The enhanced intervention also increased intentions to use condoms, replicating the protective effect of the standard curriculum.

How Can I Use the RTRgist Curriculum with my Students?
• We are working with community partners to conduct additional research trials, collecting data in order to improve effectiveness and refine content and delivery methods.
• Collaboration may include assistance with participant recruitment and retention, site location, and facilitation of the classes. It may also include grant writing opportunities.
• Partner sites may receive a site fee in addition to data regarding their program effectiveness.

Where Has the Program Been Implemented?
• The RTRgist curriculum has been implemented in New York, Texas, and Arizona.
• In previous trials, the research team partnered with 15-20 high schools in Texas, the Dallas Boys and Girls Club, 3 high schools in Arizona, and Ithaca High School in New York to recruit participants.
• The curriculum is currently being implemented in schools and community sites in Ithaca and New York City.

What Will the Control Group Receive?
• Students at a particular site are randomly assigned to receive either the RTRgist curriculum or a curriculum on healthy eating and fitness.

What are the Incentives for Program Participants?
• In addition to receiving an effective curriculum, participants may also receive coupons or gifts and some implementations may include funding for participant payments.

What is the Theory behind RTRgist?
The theory behind the enhanced curriculum is supported by evidence from field and laboratory research. The Gist-Enhanced Reducing the Risk curriculum is a modified version of the Reducing the Risk curriculum previously identified as effective by the Centers for Disease Control. Dr. Reyna, a renowned psychologist and professor of Human Development at Cornell University, enhanced the curriculum based on her research on human judgment and decision making. Her research dispels common myths about how adolescents reason and suggests new approaches for reducing adolescent risk taking which she has incorporated into this curriculum.

To Learn More about Interventions for Risk Reduction and Avoidance in Adolescents
http://www.human.cornell.edu/HD/reyna/rtrgist-home.cfm