

Policy Code: 3540 Comprehensive Health and Safety Education Program

The board is committed to a sound, comprehensive health education program that provides students with accurate information and encourages them to be responsible for their own health and behavior. The board recognizes the primary role of parents in providing for the health and well-being of their children and seeks to involve parents as provided in this policy. The comprehensive health education program provided by the school system will meet the requirements of state law and the objectives established by the State Board of Education. The board may, in its discretion, expand on the subject areas to be included in the program and on the instructional objectives to be met.

A. Comprehensive Health Education Program

A comprehensive health education program must be taught to students from kindergarten through ninth grade. As required by law, the health education program must include age-appropriate instruction on bicycle safety, nutrition, dental health, environmental health, family living, consumer health, disease control, growth and development, first aid and emergency care, mental and emotional health, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, and reproductive health and safety education.

Instruction on gender identity, sexual activity, or sexuality will not be included in the health education program in kindergarten through fourth grade (see also policy 1310/4002, Parental Involvement). As required by law and beginning in seventh grade, and ending in the ninth grade, reproductive health and safety education will include age-appropriate instruction on sexual abstinence until marriage, STDs, the human reproductive system, preventable risks for preterm birth in subsequent pregnancies, the effectiveness of contraceptive methods in preventing pregnancy, awareness of sexual assault and sexual abuse, and sex trafficking prevention and awareness.

Alcohol and drug use prevention education will be an integral part of the comprehensive health education program in kindergarten through ninth grade and will be incorporated in relevant subject areas in tenth through twelfth grade. The alcohol and drug use prevention education program will be sequential and comprehensive, provide factual information, delineate causes and symptoms of drug abuse, be adapted to the local needs of the school community, and encourage parental participation.

B. Parental Opportunities to Review Materials and Withhold Consent for Student Participation

In NHCS, the Family Life education programs offers two courses in grades 6-8. Each year before students participate in comprehensive reproductive health and safety education or in other separate instruction on the prevention of STDs,

including HIV/AIDS, or the avoidance of out-of-wedlock pregnancy, the principal or designee shall notify parents of the opportunity to review the materials and objectives that will be used in instruction. A copy of all objectives and materials will be available for review on the school system website and at each school where these subjects will be taught.

Permission from the parents or guardians of children in Grades 5-8 shall be received prior to their child's placement into the following sex education programs:

- Grade 5 Growth and Changes puberty education program
- Grades 6-8 My Life: Choices Today for a Healthy Tomorrow; or Stepping Stones to Better Living: Responsible Decisions Program

Parents or guardians of high school students shall receive a letter from their child's school stating that their child will automatically be assigned to the sex, **gender, sexual orientation, and LGBTQ Inclusive Language** education portion of the health curriculum. Parents or guardians may choose to withhold their consent for their child's participation in any part of or the entire sex education portion of the health curriculum. To do so, parents or guardians shall complete and submit the bottom portion of the letter indicating they want their child excused from participating in any part of or the entire sex education portion of the health curriculum.

Any parent wishing to withhold consent must do so in writing to the principal, or their designee.

C. Standards for Instruction

For reproductive health and safety education, teachers shall follow the instructional objectives and only use the age-appropriate, inclusive materials that have been made available to parents for review in accordance with this policy. Information conveyed during instruction will be objective and based upon scientific research that is peer reviewed and accepted by professionals and credentialed experts in the field of sexual health education or other field authorized by law.

A determination of what is an appropriate education for a student with disabilities must be made in accordance with the student's individualized education plan, following all procedures as provided in the North Carolina *Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities*.

Legal References: [G.S. 115C art. 9](#); [115C-36](#), [-76.25\(a\)\(1\)](#), [-76.35\(b\)\(5\)](#), [-76.40](#), [-76.55](#), [-81.25](#), [-81.30](#); *Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities*, State Board of Education Policy [EXCP-000](#); State Board of Education Policy [SCOS-007](#)

Cross References: Parental Involvement (policy 1310/4002)

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New Hanover County Public Schools