

Sex education & gender ideology in public school curriculum

What Catholic parents of public school children should know

Recent changes to the state’s recommended curriculum standards for health education could influence the instruction children receive at their local school.

The new standards promote topics related to gender ideology, which stand in contrast to Catholic teaching that marriage is the lifelong union between a man and a woman, as well as the teaching that men and women, made in God’s image and likeness, have inherent biological and sexual differences.

For instance, starting as early as grade six (11- to 12-year-olds), teachers would be advised to:

“Define gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, and explain that they are distinct components of every individual’s identity.”

“Explain that romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attractions can be toward an individual of the same and/or different gender(s), and that attractions can change over time.”

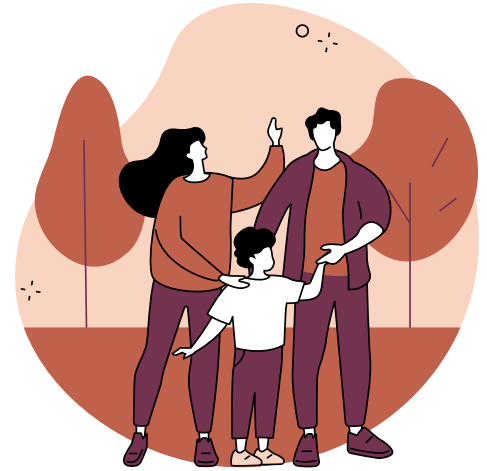
Other standards appear to encourage sexual behavior among children and encourage use of artificial contraception methods:

“Examine various considerations (e.g., personal and/or family values, cultural and societal norms, and beliefs) for determining emotional readiness for sexual behaviors.”

“Demonstrate the ability to apply a decision-making model to arrive at a decision that promotes health and safety related to various relationships (including sexual relationships).”

“Assess personal health practices and develop short- and long-term goals that support healthy sexual behaviors (e.g., abstinence, delay, use of contraception, use of barriers, giving and obtaining consent).”

Public schools are not explicitly required to use the new standards. However, local schools



look to the state for guidance, and some schools will likely follow suit and adopt the new standards into their health education curriculum.

Under state law, parents have the right to review in advance lesson plans related to sex education, and the right to opt their children out of sex education.

However, there is still the concern and possibility that **objectionable topics related to gender ideology or sex education will be mixed into required health education curriculum, making it difficult for parents who wish to exclude their children from this instruction.**

Michigan Catholic Conference is sharing this resource to help parents—the primary educators of their children—to understand their rights and how to address this issue if presented in their local school.

I'm a parent. What do I do now?

Consider the following steps:

- Ask to review your local public school's current health and sex education curriculum, as well as any planned changes to that curriculum.
- Ask your school leadership if they have adopted or plan to adopt any of the health education standards recently approved by the State Board of Education.
- Monitor the agendas for upcoming meetings of your local school board and consider attending to share your concerns if the district is seeking to adopt the standards. Parents should know that if "Policy 2417" or "Policy 2418" or "NEOLA Spring Update" is mentioned on the agenda, the new health standards are likely being considered.

How can I learn more?

Under state law, school districts that offer optional elective sex education classes must create a Sex-Ed Advisory Board (SEAB), consisting of members that include clergy, parents, and local citizens. The SEAB is tasked with reviewing sex education material and making recommendations to the district school board regarding what is best suited for their local community.

If your local school offers optional sex education, you may consider inquiring:

- Does your school have a SEAB?
- Who is on this board and when do their terms expire?
- When does the board meet?
- How does one apply to serve on this board?

It should be noted that your local SEAB does not cover health class curriculum, and therefore you may wish to keep an eye out for any changes to the health curriculum at school board meetings.

What am I looking for when reviewing the health and sex education curriculum?

Any of the standards listed above, including concepts related to gender ideology and sexual activity, as well as topics that contradict your family's values or undermine your parental rights.

Whether or not you opt your child out of sex education, it may be helpful to share your concerns with your child's principal and teachers regarding any instruction on gender ideology and other objectionable content in any setting—health class and beyond.

Direct conversations with school leadership or providing public input at local school board meetings may also be warranted and should be conducted with charity and respect for all involved.

For more information

To read the standards in their entirety, scan the QR code, or visit <https://cthl.cc/horwl>

