



Health Standards Talking Points for *Educators*

NEED FOR EFFECTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION

- Effective health education helps young people navigate sexual development and become healthy adults. It builds on a foundation of knowledge and skills relating to human development, decision-making, abstinence, contraception and disease prevention.
- Most school districts in Nebraska do not have sexual orientation and gender identity written into their standards as key scientific concepts. Standards that reflect all students' identities create affirming and protective school environments that are linked to emotional well-being and academic success.
- Health education that is age-appropriate and medically accurate should be the standard for all students in Nebraska. Early, age-appropriate conversations on gender identity and expression protects students' well-being and their ability to make informed decisions about relationships in their lives.
- According to the Academy of Pediatrics, children have a stable understanding of their gender identity by age four, including the gender-role stereotypes that can be harmful. Basic health education includes these developmentally-appropriate conversations in order to protect their futures.
- Decades of rigorous research is conclusive—comprehensive health education supports students' well-being while abstinence-only education is not only ineffective, but scientifically and ethically problematic. Comprehensive sex education that is age-appropriate and medically accurate is a key component to effective health education.
- Nationally, parents and caregivers overwhelming support instruction on abstinence, birth control, STIs, healthy relationships, sexual orientation and puberty in both middle and high school. Effective health education is age-appropriate, trauma-informed, medically-accurate and science-based.

HOW HEALTH EDUCATION IMPACTS STUDENTS

- In Nebraska, 57% of students have sex by the time they graduate high school, and yet only 8% of students have ever been tested for an STD. We need to provide students with shame-free information so they can care for their health and well-being.
- Delaying sex (abstinence) is an important part of any comprehensive health curricula. However, information about birth control and navigating healthy relationships before students need it (not after!) helps them plan for their future and make informed decisions.
- Comprehensive sex education helps young people by delaying the age of first sexual intercourse, reducing unprotected sex and reducing unintended pregnancy. It also improves mental health outcomes and reduces dating violence.
- Most LGBTQ students in Nebraska experience victimization at school. Most, 60%, never report the incident to school staff. LGBTQ+ inclusive sex education that centers transgender and nonbinary identities benefits all young people.

FACTS FOR EDUCATORS

Young people need access to age-appropriate, honest and complete health information to protect their health and plan for their futures.

Effective health education helps young people navigate sexual development and become healthy adults. It builds on a foundation of knowledge and skills relating to human development, relationships, decision-making, abstinence, contraception and disease prevention. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is leading a group of educators and experts in developing the [Nebraska Health Education Standards](#), creating a framework for K-12 health education in our state. NDE is led by an elected board, who will ultimately vote on these health standards in fall of 2021.

Effective health education helps young people navigate sexual development and become healthy adults. The new health standards:

- Provide a framework for **students to develop skills** and knowledge for **healthy outcomes**;
- Include **essential, age-appropriate** introductions to the concepts of **gender identity** and **expression** and **sexual orientation**;
- Connect important **safety lessons of consent and safe touch** to **minimize sexual abuse** of young people;
- **Align with the [Non-Discrimination and Equitable Educational Opportunities Position Statement](#)** of the Nebraska Board of Education to “ensure **all Nebraskans, across all backgrounds and circumstances, have equitable access and opportunities for success.**”

Complete, honest and inclusive health education promotes social and emotional learning that contributes to academic achievement, fewer trancies, reduced risk-taking and healthy relationships.

It's past time for schools in Nebraska to update their health standards to reflect the lived realities of all young people, including LGBTQ youth and youth of color. This will create school environments where young people feel seen, heard and respected.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

These new health standards will positively impact all young people and your support can help set the standard for health education in our state. **The Nebraska Board of Education needs to hear from you!**

Take Action!

Contact [your Nebraska State Board of Education member](#) to let them know that you support inclusive, equitable health education standards. Share your expertise or personal experience as they relate to access to effective health education. Additional talking points are on the next page.

The State Board of Education meets on the first Friday of every month, except in July. The vote on the health standards is tentatively scheduled for fall 2021. Your consistent support for this process is needed to ensure that all young people have access to effective health education in Nebraska.

WHY YOUNG PEOPLE NEED EFFECTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION



1 in 3

high school students experiences dating violence by the time they turn 18.



LGBTQ youth who report having at least one accepting adult were

40%

less likely to report a suicide attempt.



57%

of Nebraska high school students have sex by the time they graduate high school.



Only 14.5%

of Nebraska schools implement HIV, STD and pregnancy prevention strategies that meet the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth.