

National Sexuality Education Standards

The goal of the *National Sexuality Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K–12* is to provide clear, consistent and straightforward guidance on the essential minimum, core content for sexuality education that is developmentally and age-appropriate for students in grades K–12. The *National Sexuality Education Standards* were designed to:

- Outline what, based on research and extensive professional expertise, are the minimum, essential content and skills for sexuality education K–12 given student needs, limited teacher preparation and typically available time and resources.
- Assist schools in designing and delivering sexuality education K–12 that is planned, sequential and part of a comprehensive school health education approach.
- Provide a clear rationale for teaching sexuality education content and skills at different grade levels that is evidence-informed, age-appropriate and theory driven.
- Support schools in improving academic performance by addressing a content area that is both highly relevant to students and directly related to high school graduation rates.
- Present sexual development as a normal, natural, healthy part of human development that should be a part of every health education curriculum.
- Offer clear, concise recommendations for school personnel on what is age-appropriate to teach students at different grade levels.
- Translate an emerging body of research related to school-based sexuality education so that it can be put into practice in the classroom.

Guiding Values and Principles

The *National Sexuality Education Standards* are informed by the following guiding values and principles based on current theory, research in the field and the *National Health Education Standards*:

1. Academic achievement and the health status of students are interrelated, and should be recognized as such.
2. All students, regardless of physical or intellectual ability, deserve the opportunity to achieve personal health and wellness, including sexual health.
3. Instruction by qualified sexuality education teachers is essential for student achievement.
4. Sexuality education should teach both information and essential skills that are necessary to adopt, practice, and maintain healthy relationships and behaviors.
5. Students need opportunities to engage in cooperative and active learning strategies, and sufficient time must be allocated for students to practice skills relating to sexuality education.
6. Sexuality education should encourage the use of technology to access multiple valid sources of information, recognizing the significant role that technology plays in young people's lives.

7. Local curriculum planners should implement existing or develop new curricula based on local health needs.
8. Students need multiple opportunities and a variety of assessment strategies to determine their achievement of the sexuality education standards and performance indicators.
9. Improvements in public health, including sexual health, can contribute to a reduction in health care costs.
10. Effective health education can contribute to the establishment of a healthy and productive citizenry.

The *National Sexuality Education Standards* present seven topics and grade-based performance indicators for each topic which align with the National Health Education Standards (NHES). For example, in the topic of Anatomy and Physiology, under NHES Standard 1, “Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health,” the performance indicator for 2nd-grade students is the ability to “explain that all living things reproduce.”

Seven topics were chosen as the minimum, essential content and skills for K–12 sexuality education.

Anatomy and Physiology provides a foundation for understanding basic human functioning.

Puberty and Adolescent Development addresses a pivotal milestone for every person that has an impact on physical, social and emotional development.

Identity addresses several fundamental aspects of people’s understanding of who they are.

Pregnancy and Reproduction addresses information about how pregnancy happens and decision-making to avoid a pregnancy.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV provides both content and skills for understanding and avoiding STDs and HIV, including how they are transmitted, their signs and symptoms and testing and treatment.

Healthy Relationships offers guidance to students on how to successfully navigate changing relationships among family, peers and partners. Special emphasis is given in the *National Sexuality Education Standards* to the increasing use and impact of technology within relationships.

Personal Safety emphasizes the need for a growing awareness, creation and maintenance of safe school environments for all students.

The National Sexuality Education Standards were developed by a coalition of national organizations under the umbrella of The Future of Sex Ed. The complete standards, a toolkit for states and communities, and professional development resources are available on their website at <http://www.futureofsexeducation.org/index.html>.