

All students in Washington state have the right to receive a consistent, medically accurate, developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and culturally appropriate comprehensive sexual health education based on K-12 Health Education Learning Standards. Multiple national professional associations encourage having a comprehensive sexual health education program, including the American Medical Association; American Academy of Pediatrics; American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine; American School Health Association; and Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine.

PTA is committed to removing systemic inequities and disparate educational opportunities. Students with disabilities, students in foster care, students in juvenile detention, students receiving in-patient mental health care, homeless students, migrant students, students of all races and ethnicities, students of all gender identities and sexual orientations, and victims/survivors of violence all experience gaps in educational opportunities, including sexual health education.

In 2016, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) adopted the Washington State Health & Physical Education K-12 Learning Standards, which include sexual health education. The sexual health education grade-level outcomes were developed using guidelines from organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that recommend when students need information. The Washington State Board of Health 2019 Health Impact Review concluded that requiring schools to provide comprehensive sexual health education would result in improved health outcomes (lower rates of teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), depression, and suicide) and reduced health inequities for students.

According to the 2019 OSPI Health Assessment Survey, most school districts are currently providing some sexual health education, but many districts report using district-developed curricula or other instructional materials that have not been reviewed by the OSPI and the Department of Health for consistency with state requirements.

The Washington State Department of Health reports rates of STDs, unwanted sexual contact, and dating violence among students have been rising steadily, and research has identified comprehensive sexual health education as a promising approach to sexual violence prevention.

The 2019 OSPI Sexual Health Education Workgroup unanimously concluded that all K–12 students in Washington state should have access to comprehensive sexual health education and made recommendations that will improve health outcomes for all students by providing school districts with clear guidance and support:

- a standard definition of “comprehensive sexual health education;”
- standards alignment requirements, scope, and sequence;

- instructional time per grade level;
- acceptable curricula/instructional materials;
- compliance monitoring;
- funding for educator training/professional development and curriculum adoption; and
- community and family partnerships to provide resources and education regarding comprehensive sexual health education and to allow space for discussion of concerns.

Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils advocate for better sexual and reproductive health outcomes for all students by supporting mandated medically accurate, developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and culturally appropriate comprehensive sexual health education based on K-12 Health Education Learning Standards and the State Healthy Youth Act (RCW 28A.300.475).

Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils advocate for:

- accountability systems to ensure consistency of content and quality of curricula used in comprehensive sexual health education across the state;
- funding for educator training and professional development to increase content knowledge, guidance related to teaching sexual health content, bias and sensitivity training, and trauma-informed teaching strategies; and
- a robust list of free or low-cost curricula that are consistent with state requirements.

Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils encourage ongoing discussion and education opportunities for students, parents/guardians, and community members to share information on healthy relationships, personal values, and healthy living in general.

Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils advocate that school districts must notify parents/guardians that they may preview the sexual health education curricula in advance at the student's home school and parents/guardians may opt their student out of sexual health education instruction through a written request.

*-Adopted February 2, 2020 by the WSPTA Board of Directors*