



Frequently Asked Questions about the Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Standards for K-12 Students

In recent days, the topic of the Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Standards for K-12 students in New Jersey has been the subject of media coverage and intense interest from many parents and community members. This document is designed to answer basic questions and provide information for board of education members.

BACKGROUND

In 2020, the New Jersey State Board of Education adopted the revised Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Standards section of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). These standards were intended to take effect in 2021, however, the implementation was delayed until the 2022-2023 school year as a result of the pandemic. District curriculum is expected to reflect the standards beginning in September.

It is important to note that these standards don't mandate specific curriculum. They provide information on what students are expected to learn, and guidance for individual districts to develop curricula that is age-appropriate and that reflect the values of the community.

NJSBA and its member boards of education believe that parents are our most important partners in education and we welcome parental input and communication.

In fact, state regulations require boards to encourage feedback from the community, as per *N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1*, which states, "District boards of education shall encourage the active involvement of representatives from the community, business, industry, labor, and higher education in the development of educational programs aligned with the NJSLS."

The standards address topics that students should know about, including personal growth and development; pregnancy and parenting; emotional health; social and sexual health; community health services and support; movement skills and concepts; physical fitness; lifelong fitness; nutrition; personal safety; health conditions, diseases and medicine; alcohol, tobacco and drugs; dependency, and substances disorder and treatment.

Concerns have arisen in the wake of media coverage of resource documents that have been made available in some districts. Those resources are not mandated by the state and are not required to be part of any district's curriculum.

On Wednesday, April 13, Gov. Phil Murphy directed the New Jersey Department of Education to review the standards and "provide further clarification on what age-appropriate guidelines look like for our students."

What do the Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Standards say?

NJSBA encourages board members and parents and community members to read the actual standards.

They can be found here: [Comprehensive Health and Physical Education NJSLS 2020 \(June\)](#)

Included in the standards, among other topics, is the need for all individuals to feel welcome and included, regardless of their gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation. The standards also outline when New Jersey students should learn about topics such as sexual orientation, gender identity and anatomy.

What is the difference between standards and curriculum?

Standards are a blueprint that describe expectations of what students should know and be able to do. They guide the development of curriculum by each individual district.

Curriculum is typically developed by teachers and school district leadership. It is proposed to the local board of education, which must, by law, vote to adopt.

Individual districts have control over their curriculum and specific lesson plans.

Can the public see a district's curriculum?

Districts may post their curriculum online, or they may have a process by which community members can view the curriculum. NJSBA recommends that districts make curriculum easily available to parents and community members.

Can parents "opt out" of family life curriculum / sex education?

Yes. In New Jersey, parents have had the right to opt out of the family life curriculum for their children since 1980, when *N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.7*, the Parents Right to Conscience Act, took effect.

Does NJSBA have policy concerning family life curriculum and the opt-out process?

Yes. NJSBA's Critical Policy Reference Manual Policy #6142.1, Family Life Education, is available in the "Members Only Policy Resources" section of the NJSBA website. A copy of the policy can also be found here: <https://www.njsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/6142.1-Family-Life-Education.doc>