



Superintendent's Circular

School Year 2010-2011

NUMBER:
SHS-10

DATE:
September 1, 2010

HUMAN SEXUALITY EDUCATION – PARENTAL NOTIFICATION

Policy on Human Sexuality Education

Chapter 291 of the Acts of 1996, an Act Relative to Sex Education, requires that by September 1, 1997, each School Committee must adopt and publish a policy ensuring that parents/guardians are notified about any curriculum that primarily involves human sex education or human sexuality issues, and permits parents/guardians to exempt their children without penalty from any portion of that curriculum. Schools are also required by the law to make instructional materials for such curricula reasonably accessible for inspection and review by parents/guardians. Attached is a copy of Chapter 291, which is codified as MGL Chapter 71, Section 32A.

In accordance with General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 32A, the Boston School Committee adopted a policy at the meeting of June 18, 1997 requiring the School Department to provide annual written notice, in the language of the home, to all parents/guardians of students at grade levels receiving human sexuality education. This notification shall advise parents/guardians of their right to exempt their children from any portion of that curriculum without penalty through written notification to the building administrator. In addition, that notification shall advise parents/guardians that the instructional materials for the curriculum shall be accessible for inspection and review.

Protocol for Implementation

A copy of the letter required by this policy shall be provided to parents/guardians of students at grade levels receiving human sexuality education. This letter will be contained in the Student Handbook. It shall inform parents/guardians of their rights as outlined in the policy statement and shall be translated into the appropriate languages. Copies of the letters are attached.

Disputes relative to the implementation of this policy shall be addressed as follows:

- a. The building administrator should respond to parent/guardian questions and concerns and should make every effort to resolve problems at the school level.
- b. A parent dissatisfied with an action or decision at the school level under Section 32A may submit a written request for review of the issue to the Superintendent (or designee) who shall review the issue and provide the parent with a written decision within fifteen (15) school days, unless extenuating circumstances require a delay.
- c. A parent dissatisfied with an action or decision of the Superintendent under Section 32A may submit a written request to the School Committee for review. The School Committee should provide a written decision within thirty (30) school days, unless extenuating circumstances require a delay. The School Committee decision on any issue arising under MGL Chapter 71, Section 32A shall be the final local decision.
- d. Parents dissatisfied with the School Committee decision may submit a written request for review to the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

A copy of this policy and dispute process is on file with the Office of the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Parental Notification – Supplementary Curriculum

The Boston Public Schools has a sexuality education curriculum. Principals/Headmasters or Administrators who wish to supplement that curriculum with additional materials must follow the following procedures before using the curriculum **if the curriculum is of a nature that would require additional parental permission.**

- a. The Principal/Headmaster or Administrator should notify Barbara Huscher, Student Support Services, in writing of the desire to use the supplementary curriculum and provide as much material as possible about the curriculum, including: web sites, downloads, written texts, lesson plans, etc. The written request should explain why the supplementary curriculum is being sought, and how it will be used in conjunction with the BPS curriculum.
- b. The request to use the supplementary curriculum will be forwarded to a Comprehensive Sexuality Education Committee composed of parents, educators, and health professionals.
- c. Within thirty (30) school days of receiving the request to review the curriculum materials, the Committee will:
 1. Schedule an open, public meeting to review the curriculum materials. The Committee will invite the Principal/Headmaster or Administrator to attend this meeting to provide additional information about the proposed use of the curriculum.
 2. Recommend to the Chief Academic Officer whether the curriculum should be used. The Committee will also notify the Principal/Headmaster or Administrator of its recommendation
- d. The Chief Academic Officer will make a final decision as to whether the curriculum can be used, and will convey that decision to the Committee and to the Principal/Headmaster or Administrator making the original request.

Compliance Procedures

- a. The notification of parents/guardians shall be made early in the school year, thereby providing ample time to allow for consultation between the home and school and for the review of the curriculum and instructional materials, if requested, before classroom instruction begins.
- b. The scheduling of a review of instructional materials for said curriculum shall be at a time mutually convenient to both school staff and the parent/guardian requesting the review.
- c. No student shall be subject to any penalty, academic or otherwise, as a result of having been exempted from class in accordance with this policy.

Your cooperation in maintaining full compliance with this policy and the procedures developed to facilitate implementation is appreciated.

For more information about this circular, contact:

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Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent

Chapter 71: Section 32A Sex education; policy regarding notice to parents, exception

Section 32A. Every city, town, regional school district or vocational school district implementing or maintaining curriculum which primarily involves human sexual education or human sexuality issues shall adopt a policy ensuring parental/guardian notification. Such policy shall afford parents or guardians the flexibility to exempt their children from any portion of said curriculum through written notification to the school principal. No child so exempted shall be penalized by reason of such exemption.

Said policy shall be in writing, formally adopted by the school committee as a school district policy and distributed by September first, nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and each year thereafter to each principal in the district. A copy of each school district's policy must be sent to the department of education after adoption.

To the extent practicable, program instruction materials for said curricula shall be made reasonably accessible to parents, guardians, educators, school administrators, and others for inspection and review.

The department of education shall promulgate regulations for adjudicatory proceedings to resolve any and all disputes arising under this section.

Dear Parent/Guardian of a Fifth Grade Student:

Teaching young people how to stay healthy is a critical educational goal. To that end, the Boston Public Schools is building comprehensive health programming for school children to enhance their capacity to function in school and to live healthy and productive lives. This effort includes providing health education from Kindergarten through grade 12 which teaches children about their body systems and helps them to develop healthy attitudes and to build skills that enhance wellness and maintain good health.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you about the component which will teach children about healthy sexual growth and development, inform them about HIV and how it can be spread, and teach them refusal, assertiveness, and other communication skills which will help them to refuse to engage in risky behaviors. The lessons will include information about human sexuality. All students' questions will be answered in a factual way. Each child's privacy and personal values will be respected.

The goal of this program is to teach every student to develop sensible lifelong health habits and to take responsibility for his/her own health. It is important to teach this information early in a child's life because it lays the groundwork for the development of healthy life habits.

The following topics may be included in the lessons:

- Adolescent growth and development, including the changes of puberty;
- How communicable diseases (including HIV/AIDS) are spread and how to prevent their spread;
- Behaviors which pose risks to good health;
- Responsible decision making;
- Resisting negative peer pressure;
- Refusal, assertiveness, and communication skills (ways to say "no" to risky behaviors);
- Respecting the right to privacy of self and others;
- Setting limits on physical affection.

Parents can and should have a strong influence on their children's health decisions. The Unified Student Services Team of the Boston Public Schools conducts parent workshops which can help you talk to your child about sensitive health issues. Please contact your child's school or the HIV/Sexuality Education office (617-635-6788) if you would like more information.

Basically, two curricula will be used: *The Great Body Shop* and *Postponing Sexual Involvement for Preteens*. We would like you to see the materials and the curricula. You may arrange to do this at your child's school. If you decide that you do not wish your child to participate in this education, please write the principal of your child's school to let him/her know of your decision. Students who are exempted will not be penalized academically. Your decision will be honored.

Sincerely,

Carol R. Johnson
Superintendent

Dear Parent/Guardian of a Student in Grades Six through Twelve:

The Boston Public Schools' human sexuality education program including HIV/AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and sexually transmitted infection prevention will continue this year as it has in the past. Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection, which causes AIDS, is a disease which most often strikes young people, both men and women, in the peak of their lives. We know that many teenagers are at high risk for acquiring HIV and other sexually transmitted infections; therefore, students need to know which behaviors place them at higher risk.

The schools are protecting your children's health by providing students in grades 6-12 with basic information about the nature of HIV disease, how it is spread and how to prevent infection. Our program stresses not having sex and not abusing injectable drugs as the only sure way to prevent this disease. Education is the best way to help stop the spread of this disease, and our program teaches all methods of prevention. In addition, we are very interested in teaching about adolescent pregnancy prevention. During this education, all students' questions will be answered in a factual way.

You are encouraged to teach your children about healthy sexuality. This information would include HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted disease and pregnancy prevention. As in the past, we are continuing to provide workshops for parents. You may contact your child's school to take part in specially designed parent workshops on important adolescent health issues. You are also welcome and encouraged to review all the teaching materials used in this educational program. Contact your child's principal/headmaster to arrange a review of the materials.

In a number of schools, youth risk behavior and other relevant student surveys may be conducted at the middle and high school levels to help determine the need and effectiveness of health education programming. We need to know whether what we teach is making a difference in student behaviors. If you have any questions about these surveys, you may contact the principal/headmaster of your child's school for more information.

We believe that taking part in this educational program is most important. However, if you do not want your son/daughter to participate in the human sexuality education and HIV/AIDS prevention programs, or associated surveys, please write the principal/headmaster of your son's/daughter's school to let him/her know of your decision. Students who are exempted will not be penalized academically. Your decision will be honored.

Thank you for your cooperation with this important educational program. We look forward to working with you to insure continued, expanded AIDS and sexuality education efforts in our city's schools. The time to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in our city's youth is NOW!

Sincerely,

Carol R. Johnson
Superintendent