

# AGE-APPROPRIATE SEXUALITY EDUCATION TOPIC GUIDELINES

Oregon Department of Education

The purpose of the document is to provide educators, schools, and school districts guidelines for age-appropriate topics for sexuality education during grades K-12. The topics listed below are the result of developmental research and are only suggestions to help guide your school in providing an effective sexuality education curriculum that can have a positive impact on reducing sexual risk-taking. Oregon Revised Statute 336.455 states that human sexuality education courses "...shall enhance student's understanding of sexuality as a normal and healthy aspect of human development." ORS 336.455 further states that course instruction shall:

- Be age-appropriate
- Be comprehensive
- Be an integral part of the health education curriculum
- Promote abstinence, but not to the exclusion of material and instruction on contraceptive and disease reduction measures. Also, not devaluing or ignoring those young people who have had or are having sexual intercourse
- Include a discussion of the possible emotional, physical, and psychological consequences of preadolescent sexual intercourse
- Include information regarding the efficacy of contraceptives in preventing HIV/STIs and unintended pregnancy
- Advise students of the laws pertaining to their financial responsibilities for their children
- Advise students of ORS 163.435 and 163.445 pertaining to persons 18 years or older having sexual relations with persons younger than 18 years of age
- Teach that no form of sexual expression is acceptable when it physically or emotionally harms oneself or others
- Validate honesty, dignity, and respect for oneself and others
- Teach effective communication and refusal skills
- Encourage family communication

There are basically three approaches to sexuality education:

- **Abstinence-based** (also called "comprehensive")—emphasizes that abstinence is the only 100% effective way to prevent HIV/STI's and unintended pregnancy, but not to the exclusion of medically accurate, age-appropriate information and instruction about condom use and other forms of contraception.
- **Abstinence-only**—emphasizes that abstinence is the only responsible choice outside of a long-term, monogamous relationship and medically accurate information about condom use and other forms of contraception is usually not included.

- **Abstinence-only until marriage**—emphasizes that abstinence is the only choice outside the context of a heterosexual marriage and medically accurate information about condom use and other forms of contraception is usually not included.

Listed below are suggested, age-appropriate topics of instruction for sexuality education. These topics are the accumulative summary of recommendations made by the Sexuality Instruction and Education Council of the United States; Advocates for Youth; Guttmacher Institute; The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation; Douglas Kirby, Ph.D. (*No Easy Answers* and *Emerging Answers*); Phi Delta Kappa; Center for Disease Control and Prevention-Division of Adolescent School Health; and the Oregon Sexuality Materials Review Panel.

**A. Grades K-3:**

1. Good touch, bad touch
2. Understanding body parts, proper anatomical names, stages in basic growth process
3. Communicable/non-communicable diseases, the concept
4. Behaviors that reduce the spread of communicable diseases (washing hands, not sharing eating utensils, using Kleenex)
5. Accepting of their uniqueness and a positive regard for themselves and others
6. Recognize risk behaviors (sharing body fluids) and methods of prevention
7. Unsafe objects (needles, broken glass, drug paraphernalia)
8. Refusal skills, role playing
9. Personal hygiene
10. Emotional development

**B. Grades 4-5:**

1. Children are not ready for sex
2. Biological explanation of the anatomy and physiology for reproduction, for HIV and infectious diseases and puberty – physical and emotional changes
3. Risk, consequences, prevention (avoiding body fluids, needles, etc.)
4. Unsafe objects (needles, syringes, etc.)
5. Refusal skills, role playing
6. Communicable/non-communicable diseases
7. Infection control, hand washing
8. HIV/STI risk, personal plan of prevention
9. Developing healthy attitudes about oneself and others
10. Communication skills
11. Gender respect (boy/girl relationships)
12. Realistic body image
13. Media influences
14. Personal hygiene
15. Sexual expression is a healthy/pleasurable activity for most adults
16. Discussion of different types of relationships (i.e. friendship, family, romantic)

### **C. Grades 6-8:**

1. Young teenagers are not physically or emotionally prepared for a responsible sexual relationship that include intercourse
2. Abstinence from sexual intercourse is the safest and most effective method to prevent HIV/STI's and unintended pregnancy
3. Teenagers need to discuss sexual limits with their partners and people need to respect the sexual limits set by their partners
4. There are many ways to express love, attraction and connection to a partner. Sexual intercourse or other sexual activities are just one way.
5. There are many ways to give and receive romantic attention and not have sexual intercourse or engage in sexual activity that can put you at risk
6. Teenagers need to talk to their parent(s) or other trusted adult before they engage in sexual intercourse or other sexual risk behaviors, seeking reliable advice
7. Effective use of contraceptive and disease prevention methods
8. Most adults believe school-aged teenagers should not have sexual intercourse or engage in risky sexual behaviors
9. The majority of school-aged youth are not having sexual intercourse
10. Influence of media
11. Puberty and maturation, masculinity/femininity
12. Positive body image and healthy identity
13. Reproductive health, conception, personal hygiene
14. Dating violence, responsibility and respect for oneself and others, gender respect
15. Refusal skills, resisting and effectively dealing with negative pressures, communication and asserting personal boundaries
16. Many religions teach that sexual intercourse should only occur in marriage
17. Teenagers who have had sexual intercourse can choose to be abstinence
18. Define HIV/STIs and the immune system, symptoms, effects testing, self examination
19. Define vaginal, oral and anal sexual intercourse
20. Chain of infection
21. Skills for making responsible decisions and choices
22. Social issue with regards to abstinence and non-abstinence
23. Family structures and dynamics
24. The effects of alcohol and drug use in making responsible sexual decisions
25. Disease treatment, past/current/future research for HIV and STI's
26. Advise students of the laws pertaining to financial responsibility for their children.

### **D. Grades 9-12:**

1. The majority of high school students are not having sexual intercourse
2. There are many ways to express love, attraction and connection. Sexual intercourse or other sexual activities are just one way.
3. Accessing contraceptive disease prevention methods, resources and community services, adoption and abortion
4. Review of HIV/AIDS/STI's symptoms, effects, testing, self examination
5. Prevention through responsible decisions and choices
6. Refusal and communication skills to maintain sexual limits and healthy relationships
7. Teens perceiving themselves at risk

8. Treatment and research
9. Male and female anatomy, reproduction
10. Masculinity/femininity, gender identity and sexual orientation
11. Promoting gender respect, respect for oneself and others and individual differences
12. Family structures and dynamics
13. Media influence, peer and parental influence on sexuality
14. The effects of alcohol and drugs with regards to responsible sexual decision making
15. Vaginal, oral, anal sexual intercourse
16. Social, physical and emotional advantages of making choices that are right for us, that fit with our personal choices and boundaries and are freely chosen
17. Analyzing appropriate behavior in dating relationships
18. Advise students of the laws pertaining to financial responsibility for their children.

Other themes that need to be included in an effective sexuality education program:

- Human sexuality decisions can impact our health.
- HIV/STI's and unintended pregnancies are public health issues. Human sexuality is a continuum of choices:  
no sex ←-----→ sex with protection.
- Human sexuality education is a part of mental, social and psychological well being.
- Human sexuality education is about age-appropriate, accurate knowledge and skills that, when addressed in a safe and healthy environment, can help our children grow into responsible community members.

For more information about sexuality education and sexuality, HIV/STI, and unintended pregnancy prevention curriculum trainings, please contact:

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