



Health Standards Talking Points for *Educators*

NEED FOR EFFECTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION

- Effective health education helps young people navigate sexual development and become healthy adults. It builds on a foundation of knowledge and skills relating to human development, decision-making, abstinence, contraception and disease prevention.
- Most school districts in Nebraska do not have sexual orientation and gender identity written into their standards as key scientific concepts. Standards that reflect all students' identities create affirming and protective school environments that are linked to emotional well-being and academic success.
- Health education that is age-appropriate and medically accurate should be the standard for all students in Nebraska. Early, age-appropriate conversations on gender identity and expression protects students' well-being and their ability to make informed decisions about relationships in their lives.
- According to the Academy of Pediatrics, children have a stable understanding of their gender identity by age four, including the gender-role stereotypes that can be harmful. Basic health education includes these developmentally-appropriate conversations in order to protect their futures.
- Decades of rigorous research is conclusive—comprehensive health education supports students' well-being while abstinence-only education is not only ineffective, but scientifically and ethically problematic. Comprehensive sex education that is age-appropriate and medically accurate is a key component to effective health education.
- Nationally, parents and caregivers overwhelming support instruction on abstinence, birth control, STIs, healthy relationships, sexual orientation and puberty in both middle and high school. Effective health education is age-appropriate, trauma-informed, medically-accurate and science-based.

HOW HEALTH EDUCATION IMPACTS STUDENTS

- In Nebraska, 57% of students have sex by the time they graduate high school, and yet only 8% of students have ever been tested for an STD. We need to provide students with shame-free information so they can care for their health and well-being.
- Delaying sex (abstinence) is an important part of any comprehensive health curricula. However, information about birth control and navigating healthy relationships before students need it (not after!) helps them plan for their future and make informed decisions.
- Comprehensive sex education helps young people by delaying the age of first sexual intercourse, reducing unprotected sex and reducing unintended pregnancy. It also improves mental health outcomes and reduces dating violence.
- Most LGBTQ students in Nebraska experience victimization at school. Most, 60%, never report the incident to school staff. LGBTQ+ inclusive sex education that centers transgender and nonbinary identities benefits all young people.