



USE YOUR VOICE

Support High Quality, Effective Health Education Support Young People's Well-Being

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, relationships, decision-making, abstinence, contraception and disease prevention.

YOUNG PEOPLE NEED ACCESS TO AGE-APPROPRIATE, HONEST AND COMPLETE HEALTH INFORMATION TO PROTECT THEIR HEALTH AND PLAN FOR THEIR FUTURES.

The [second draft of Nebraska's Health Education Standards](#) significantly weakens the inclusion of medically-accurate and age-appropriate essential elements resulting in a complete departure from what medical experts, education professionals and decades of research clearly demonstrate is effective health education.

Standards for health education should:

- Provide a framework for students to develop skills and knowledge for healthy outcomes.
- Include essential, age-appropriate introductions to the concepts of gender identity and expression and sexual orientation. This is life-saving information for students of all identities.
- Connect important safety lessons of consent and safe touch to minimize sexual abuse of young people.
- Align with the Non-Discrimination and Equitable Educational Opportunities Position Statement of the Nebraska Board of Education.
- Create an infrastructure that guides the training of teachers to educate and support students across Nebraska, allowing for protective learning environments that contribute to academic success.

Your voice matters!

We want to ensure the Nebraska Department of Education hears from a variety of Nebraskans with an interest in excellent public education, especially current and former K-12 students, educators and parents/caregivers. **We need your voice to advocate for high quality, effective health education for young people.**

Send a [direct email to state board of education members](#) and the [Nebraska Department of Education](#) asking for health education standards that include medically-accurate information about effective STD and pregnancy prevention, and includes age-appropriate introductions of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Additional talking points are on the next page.



Example Copy for Emailing Your Board Member

Please feel free to share a personal experience or use any of the content below.

Thank you for starting this important process to set the standard for health education in Nebraska. Please support effective health education standards that will ensure young people in our state have access to inclusive, age-appropriate and complete education that supports their well-being and the complex reality of their lives.

● Share your expertise:

- **Students**—Have you experienced ineffective health education (that includes sex education!)? Were your identities represented in the information you received? Was this information presented in a scientific yet compassionate, non-judgmental way?
- **Parents and Caregivers**—Do you want schools across the state to do more to educate your child when it comes to their human growth and development, mental and emotional health, and overall well-being? How important is pregnancy and STD prevention and LGBTQ-inclusive health education to you and your family?
- **Educator/Subject Matter Experts**—How does effective health education support young people? How will students be impacted if they do not receive honest and complete information about their health? Why is it important to create safe and affirming learning environments for all young people?

● Other supporting information to share with the Board at this point in the process (pick two to three):

- Teaching about gender identity in elementary is valuable for healthy development. [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.¹ Basic health education includes these developmentally-appropriate conversations in order to protect their futures.
- Delaying sex (abstinence) is an important part of any comprehensive health education. 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.
- Decades of rigorous research is conclusive—comprehensive sex education (human growth and development in the standards) supports students' well-being² while abstinence-only education is not only ineffective, but scientifically and ethically problematic. Comprehensive sex education is a key component to effective health education.
- 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.³
- Most school districts in Nebraska do not have sexual orientation and gender identity written into their standards as key scientific concepts. Standards and curricula that reflect all students' identities creates affirming and protective school environments that are linked to emotional well-being and academic success.⁴
- 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.

¹ Rafferty, J. (2018, September 18). Gender Identity Development in Children. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/Pages/Gender-Identity-and-Gender-Confusion-In-Children.aspx>

² Chin et al. (2012). [The Effectiveness of Group-Based Comprehensive Risk-Reduction and Abstinence Education Interventions to Prevent or Reduce the Risk of Adolescent Pregnancy, Human Immunodeficiency Virus, and Sexually Transmitted Infections: Two Systematic Reviews for the Guide to Community Preventive Services](#), American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Volume 42, Issue 3, pgs. 272-294.

³ Nebraska Department of Education (2018-2019). [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#).

⁴ Advocates for Youth. [Science and Success](#). 3rd ed. [Programs that Work to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, HIV and STIs in the US](#). Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth; 2012