

Message from Chris Reykdal

Health Curriculum and Gender Identity

From: Chris Reykdal [<mailto:Chris.Reykdal@k12.wa.us>]

Sent: Wednesday, August 09, 2017 10:50 AM

To: DL Superintendents <Superintendents@k12.wa.us>

Subject: New Health and Physical Education K-12 Learning Standards

Good morning,

We have a legacy of innovation and trailblazing in Washington state, and our education system is no different. We value progress and data-driven decision-making, as it supports strong educational outcomes that lead to an open world of opportunities for our students.

As it is our mission to support every student so they are prepared for career, college, and life, it's our job to support the whole child by promoting a focus on both academics *and* health and physical education.

State law requires the teaching of only a few health topics: HIV and STD prevention, mental health and suicide prevention, and instructions on performing CPR and using automated external defibrillators. No other topic is required to be taught.

One particular topic in the new standards that has received some public attention is "self-identity." Optional grade-level outcomes on self-identity were included in the new health standards as a way to promote understanding and respect for a wide variety of students and families. As with all standards, the learning outcomes are age-appropriate and can help teachers prepare for topics that often come up in the classroom.

If a kindergarten teacher chose to teach self-identity, they might initiate conversations such as what types of toys, activities, or clothing might be commonly associated with girls or boys. Or if students initiate these conversations, teachers can help guide a productive conversation.

Today, we face an epidemic of youth suicide, bullying, and harassment. The consequences of this reality are sobering. Regardless of how you feel about gender and sexuality, our students experience these questions and challenges all the time.

Two ways we can help support every student as educators and community leaders are to help build positive self-image and to promote the value and acceptance of diversity in gender and sexuality. Additionally, students who feel "seen" are more comfortable and confident in their learning environments and, therefore, are better able to learn.

In addition to self-identity, I'm excited about the other pieces of these health and physical education standards. They support:

- developing strategies for resolving conflicts,
- analyzing potential dangers of sharing personal information through electronic media,
- creating a balanced daily food plan, and more.

Please work with your school boards and community members to select the curriculum that best prepares your students for success, and let us know how we can support your implementation of the state standards.

If you have any questions about the standards, please don't hesitate to contact my office. The best person to talk to is Laurie Dils, Sexual Health Education Program Supervisor (contact information for Laurie and others below).

All my best,

Chris

Below is the contact information for OSPI staff regarding the New Health and Physical Education Learning Standards:

Laurie Dils, Sexual Health Education Program Supervisor
(360) 725-6364
Laurie.Dils@k12.wa.us

Marissa Rathbone, Learning and Teaching Director of Operations
(360) 725-4977
Marissa.Rathbone@k12.wa.us

Kathe Taylor, Learning and Teaching Assistant Superintendent
(360) 725-6417
Kathe.Taylor@k12.wa.us