

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH EDUCATION OVERVIEW FOR PARENTS

Introduction

The purpose of this overview is to provide parents with information about Duval County Public Schools' K-12 Comprehensive Health Education Curricula. The curricula's emphasis is on providing students with information that will enable them to make healthy, informed choices regarding their health and well-being. The ultimate goal is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help them take responsibility for their own health.

Parent Involvement

With the understanding that parents are a child's first health educator, it is extremely important that parents serve as role models for their children by taking responsibility for their own health. This involves eating nutritiously and exercising regularly, as well as taking care of their own mental/emotional health. Many lessons throughout the curricula include information and activities, which have opportunities for active at-home involvement by the parent(s) and child. Some of the homework assignments will focus on parent/child interaction. Completing these activities are very important in improving family communication and will serve to keep parents aware of current trends and health issues being taught in the classroom.

The Health Education instructional materials appropriate for the school's specific grade levels are available for preview and parents may contact the school to request an opportunity to review them at the school site. Parents may choose to review the materials at another school, which may be more convenient to their home or work location.

If you should need additional information, please contact the Supervisor of Health Education at 390-2131.

Requirements For K-12 Comprehensive Health Education

Florida law requires comprehensive Health Education in grades K-12. Age and developmentally appropriate curricula lessons have been developed to address the Florida Sunshine State Standards and are aimed at providing students with information and skills to help them make healthy and responsible choices. Throughout all lessons, abstinence from sexual activity outside of marriage is taught **as the expected standard for school-age students**. Parents are encouraged to review the instructional materials identified for use in the Health Education curricula. In accordance with Florida Statutes and Duval County School Board policy, parents may exempt their child from the instructional lessons on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. Topics of other curricula lessons include lessons on personal health; family life; community health; consumer health; environmental health; injury prevention and safety, including first aid and CPR; nutrition; prevention and control of disease, including HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections; marriage and relationship skill-based education; parenting skills; breast cancer detection/self exams; substance use and abuse; mental and emotional health; and consequences of teenage pregnancy.

Acknowledgements

On December 6, 1994, the School Board voted to identify a 39-member Task Force, which was charged with reviewing the K-12 Comprehensive Health Education curricula and making recommendations concerning revisions/additions. The group was enlarged to 42 by subsequent action of the Board at its January 3, 1995 meeting.

The Task Force began its work on January 11, 1995, and completed its work on April 19, 1995. The Task Force Report was presented to the Board during a workshop on July 31, 1995. The Board at its August 1, 1995 meeting endorsed it.

Following this endorsement, four committees were established that included parents, educators, and medical professionals to develop the curricula based on the Task Force recommendations. The following four committees were established: a Steering Committee, K-5 Curricula Committee, 6-8 Curricula Committee, and 9-12 Curricula Committee.

These committees met on a weekly basis from September 1995 through February 1996. The committees reviewed a plethora of materials and made recommendations as to what should be included. The curricula were developed based on these recommendations.

Duval County Public Schools remain very grateful to all those involved in this comprehensive process. Each of the people involved gave a great deal of time and energy to producing quality health education curricula for the students in the public schools. A special thanks to all of them for their commitment, which led the members of the Duval County School Board to approve with a 7-0 vote the implementation of the revised K-12 Comprehensive Health Education curricula.

Opt-out Instructional Program

Parents are encouraged to review the instructional materials identified for use in the Comprehensive Health Education Curricula. If they decide that they would like for your child to be exempt from the instructional lessons on reproductive health and/or HIV/AIDS, they will need to write a letter to the principal to make that request.

Opt-out lessons has been developed for students whose parents request that they be exempt from the instructional lessons on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. The opt-out lessons serve as a reinforcement for other health-related topics such as self-esteem, conflict resolution, techniques for saying NO, dealing with feelings in an appropriate manner, nutrition, exercise, stress management, and goal setting, etc. Students who are assigned the opt-out lessons are not penalized in any way.