



Milwaukee Public Schools

June 2009

Fact Sheet: MPS Human Sexuality Education *Frequently Asked Questions*

1. Is sex education taught in the Milwaukee Public Schools?

Sex education is taught in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). Evidence-based curricula are taught in grades 6 through 12. MPS uses “Making Proud Choices” and “Reducing the Risk.” Information about “Making Proud Choices” can be found on the following website: www.selectmedia.org Information about “Reducing the Risk” can be found at: www.etr.org MPS also has a Human Growth and Development (HGD) Curriculum for grades kindergarten through grade 12. This curriculum was recently updated with assistance from the Milwaukee Health Department, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, with additional feedback from parents, teachers, doctors, health professionals and other community leaders. Although not evidence-based, the HGD Curriculum is aligned with national standards as well as the MPS learning targets. Lessons are skill based and considered “best practices” in teaching and learning.

Staff in more than 60 of our schools has completed the necessary evidence-based training and are using both the curricula. In the past school year, 177 4th grade teachers from over 100 schools were trained in the updated HGD curriculum. We are systematically training staff in the remaining schools.

2. Is there a written policy regarding sex education in MPS? If so, what does it say?

MPS has written policies regarding Human Growth and Development, Health Education, and HIV. These policies are available in English, Spanish, and Hmong. These policies can be found at: www.wellnessandpreventionoffice.org (Locate the “Health” menu item and click on “Policies.”)

3. What does it mean to be considered a comprehensive sex education district?

The MPS curriculum addresses a wide range of issues. In the elementary grades many lessons focus on families, friendships, communication skills, decision making, goal setting, coping with emotions, personal safety, hygiene, the body and self-esteem. Starting in 4th grade topics such as puberty, sexually transmitted infections are introduced and contraception is added starting in 5th grade. A comprehensive sex education curriculum focuses all the strategies and skills that can help a student remain abstinent but also provides accurate information regarding contraception for students who choose to become sexually active.

4. Did the district purchase curriculum materials or create its own set of materials?

MPS purchased the “Making Proud Choices” and the “Reducing the Risk” curricula with funding from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention and Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools grant. The MPS Human Growth and Development (HGD) curriculum was created in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and community members. MPS can share the MPS HGD curriculum with other school districts in the state of Wisconsin for the nominal cost of duplicating, handling, and shipping. The curriculum is also available for free download at:

<http://wellnessandpreventionoffice.org/health.html>

5. At what grade level does the instruction begin? When does it end?

The DPI HGD curriculum is for students in Kindergarten through grade 12. “Making Proud Choices” is for one grade in grades 6-8 and the “Reducing the Risk” is used in the high school health class.

6. Are children in sex education classes separated by gender? That is, are girls in a class together and are boys in a separate class?

The decision to teach sex education to coed classes or to boys and girls in separate groups is left up to each school and/or classroom teacher. Some schools separate the boys and girls but most schools/classrooms use the coed approach.

7. What are the main elements of the curricula?

In general, the sex education curricula used by MPS in middle school and high school include the following main elements:

- Abstinence is the best choice for school-age youth.
- Increased knowledge about preventing pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)/infections (STIs), and HIV.
- Avoiding high-risk situations.
- Learning and practicing refusal skills, delaying tactics, negotiation skills, and deflecting unhealthy peer pressure.
- Hygiene.
- Friendships.
- Dating violence.
- Puberty.
- Family make-up.
- Emotions.
- HIV risk factors, including myths and facts.
- Getting and Using Protection from HIV, STDs, and pregnancy.
- Implementing protection from STDs and pregnancy.
- Sticking with Abstinence and Protection: demonstrating effective communication skills for remaining abstinent and for avoiding unprotected sexual intercourse.

8. Is HIV/AIDS prevention taught at the same time?

Yes, lessons about HIV/AIDS prevention are integrated into the curricula.

9. Are there any restrictions on what instructors can discuss with students?

MPS human sexuality instructors must follow the approved MPS curricula. MPS instructors are directed not to include personal bias, values, and/or opinions. The approved MPS curricula are medically and scientifically accurate, culturally diverse, and developmentally appropriate. Instructors are not to deviate from the approved curricula in order to ensure the student instruction follows MPS policies and guidelines. The curricula in grades 5 through 12 discuss condoms, contraception, and homosexuality. The curricula do not discuss abortion.

10. What are the training requirements for instructors?

Instructors receive a total of six hours of training for the Making Proud Choices and Reducing the Risk Curriculum before implementing the approved evidence based curricula. To date we have offered 4th grade teachers two hours of training for the MPS Human Growth and Development Curriculum and are planning on offering training to other grade level teachers. The hours of training are in line with the guidelines from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the people who developed the evidence-based curricula.

11. Do I, as a parent, have the right to withhold my child from sex education classes?

Yes, a parent/guardian has the right to withhold their child from sex education classes. MPS instructors send a letter home informing parents/guardians about the sex education classes. The letter explains the content of the lessons. On an accompanying permission slip, a parent/guardian can sign to withhold their child from one or more of the lessons, or all of the lessons, at the parent's discretion.

12. Are there resources available to me that will help me discuss sex and development with my child?

The Milwaukee Health Department has a community-based initiative, **Plain Talk**, designed to assist parents in developing the skills and tools they need to communicate effectively with their children about abstinence, healthy relationships, and sexuality. If you are interested in participating in this program or in finding out more information, please go to the following website: <http://www.milwaukee.gov/PlainTalk23791.htm> or call Denise Crumble at (414) 286-8478.

If you have additional questions, call the MPS Wellness & Prevention Office at (414) 475-8860.

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