



Howell Township Public Schools

Bruce Preston, Assistant Superintendent of Personnel/Curriculum
bpreston@howell.k12.nj.us

732-751-2480 x3830
732-919-1060

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

Recent media coverage has brought a focus on the topic of health curriculum implementation. HTPS would like to clarify misconceptions that exist and explain how our district has addressed the development of the health curriculum associated with the revised 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Comprehensive Health and Physical Education. The entire list of these standards is located [here](#) for your review.

The language in these standards is generic. It focuses on identifying gender roles and treating all children, regardless of gender, with respect. Please note that while we are required to include all standards outlined by the state, *our district* determines *how* to create the curriculum and how to teach the required standards. We are not given a curriculum guide, mandated resources, or a program by the state or any organization, nor are we given lessons by anyone outside of the HTPS that must be implemented. Our teachers, guided by the HTPS Supervisors of Health and Physical Education and myself, determine the lessons that will be created and implemented with the age and grade level of the students in mind.

Any specific lessons you may have read about on social media or in the news are not lessons HTPS has created, nor does the state require us to teach these lessons. The lessons you may be seeing on social media are not lessons utilized in the district.

It is important to note that the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Comprehensive Health and Physical Education are written in a very specific format. Some standards include “e.g.” which means *for example*. These examples are suggestions; they may not be included in the lessons we develop. Additionally, standards are broken down by grade level bands (grades K-2 are represented as by the end of the second grade; grades 3-5 is represented as by the end of fifth grade; and grades 6-8 are represented by the end of eighth grade). When it says “by the end of...” for a grade level, we consider the topic when determining which grade to assign it to in the grade level band. Some standards are designated to be taught by the end of grade 12. Since we are only a K-8 district, we would not address those standards as they are not pertinent to our K-8 district. We also would not teach a standard for the grade 6-8 band to a second grader.

Additionally, please be advised that you can opt your child out of specific lessons or portions of the health curriculum directly related to the Comprehensive Health and Physical Education standards. State statute (Section 18A:35-4.7- Parent’s statement of conflict with conscience) allows a parent or guardian to present to the school principal a signed statement asking their child to be excused from specific portions of the health, family life education, or sex education curriculum, if it is in conflict with

his or her conscience or sincerely held moral or religious beliefs. Once the letter has been received by the school administration, a discussion should take place with the parent/guardian to clarify any misconceptions about the program. The student can then be excused without penalty or consequence from the identified content of the course found in conflict; however, the student must still complete mutually agreed upon instructional activities that support achievement of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Comprehensive Health and Physical Education. Our district notifies parents annually through the distribution of the Family Life letter relevant to each grade. We send this letter via School Messenger and place it on our website at the beginning of the school year.

The current HTPS Health curriculum is available and posted to this [link](#), as well as the videos HTPS uses in grades 5-8 for family life. You can also view a video at this [link](#) (scroll to the bottom of the page) explaining how we teach the new standards and why we teach them as we do. The same webpage also provides access to all of the HTPS's approved curriculum. I recommend reviewing the materials and resources provided through these links as our approved Health and Physical Education curriculum already meets the 2020 State Health standards.

Given the amount of misinformation out there and questions that have been arising, we wanted to ensure the information you have is directly from the District. Should you have any questions, please contact my office.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BC Preston", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Bruce 'B.C.' Preston

Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Curriculum