

NEBRASKA HEALTH EDUCATION STANDARDS & WHAT THEY MEAN FOR KIDS



The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) recently released a first draft of Health Standards. These standards are meant to guide curriculum for all Nebraska schools, including public and non-public schools. The Health Standards are a deeply flawed, ideologically driven document. Should such standards be adopted by schools, children will be placed in peril, many educators will find their professional judgment and conscience under attack, and the culture will move toward a further normalization of child sexualization.

BACKGROUND ON HEALTH STANDARDS

The NDE provides content area standards for a variety of subjects, which are also periodically reviewed and updated. These standards are the building blocks for curriculum in schools, and it is assumed that they will be used to form the “what” of teaching in the classroom – units, lessons, and activities. While not mandatory for any school, state standards heavily influence classroom learning.

The NDE’s new Health Standards are the first ever such standards proposed. The initial draft that has been presented is the first step in a longer process of revisions. A final draft will be considered for acceptance by the Nebraska State Board of Education in the fall of 2021.

While there is quality material in the first draft of the Health Standards, there is an abundance of concerning issues regarding marriage, family, and human sexuality. Some examples include:

SEX EDUCATION



- In Kindergarten and 1st grade, students will discuss genitalia.
- In 7th Grade, students will “define vaginal, oral and anal sex and their relationship to STD/HIV transmission.”
- In 8th Grade, students will discuss ways to prevent pregnancy, pregnancy testing, “discuss sexual consent and agency”, and “discuss and describe various ‘isms” including “racism, sexism...and heterosexism.”
- High school students will discuss sexual consent, contraceptives, “local services that provide contraceptive methods including emergency contraception.”

MARRIAGE & FAMILY



- Kindergartners will “discuss different kinds of family structures. (e.g. single parent, blended, intergenerational, cohabitating, adoptive, foster, same-gender, interracial). Note that traditional marriage between a man and woman is not mentioned.
- In 3rd Grade, students will “define sexual orientation”, “identify trusted adults whom students can ask questions about gender identity and sexual orientation.”

HUMAN SEXUALITY



- In 1st Grade, students “define gender, gender identity, and gender-role stereotypes.”
- In 4th Grade, students “distinguish between sex assigned at birth and gender identity and explain how they may or may not differ.”
- In 5th Grade, students “explain that gender expression and gender identity exist along a spectrum.”
- In 6th Grade, students “define and explain differences between cisgender, transgender, gender non-binary, gender expansive, and gender identity. Define sexual identity and explain a range of identities related to sexual orientation (e.g. heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, gay, queer, two- spirit, asexual, pansexual).”

IMPORTANT OMISSIONS



- The role of parent as the primary educator of their child, especially on matters of human sexuality.
- How the scourge of pornography leads to sexual objectification, the creation of shame/depression, and sexual dysfunction.
- Digital citizenship: Healthy internet and social media behaviors.

DEAR NEBRASKA CATHOLIC ADVOCATES,

Please consider how you can shine the light of Truth and Christ's love onto the Nebraska Department of Education Health Standards. We are deeply concerned with proposed standards that promote a false understanding of God's design for marriage and human sexuality.

Furthermore, the document raises serious concerns about respecting the role of parents as the primary educators of their children.

Below are some action items for you to consider:

GIVE FEEDBACK

- Take a moment to respond to the NDE Health Standards.
- Email or write a letter to your Board of Education representative.

EDUCATE

- Where you have doubts or questions on the Church's teaching, ask your pastor for help. This is a great moment of education, formation, and evangelization!
- Are there families concerned about this who you can educate?

EVANGELIZE

- Be open to discussing the matter with others, including how they can take proactive steps to have their voices heard.
- Share the beauty, truth, and goodness of Catholic education to others.

PARISH LEADERSHIP

- If you are engaged with your parish and/or school, use that position to encourage others to speak up. Encourage others to share the truth about God's design for marriage, family, and human sexuality.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW CAN I HELP?

There are three simple ways to have your voice heard!

1. The Nebraska Department of Education is asking for feedback. The window of time to submit your thoughts is limited, so please visit https://nde.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8d11y2pRSfXIG8R
2. You can share your thoughts directly with your elected School Board Member. You can find your representative at <https://www.education.ne.gov/stateboard/members/>
3. Stay informed by joining our Nebraska Catholic Conference Advocacy Network at <https://necatholic.org/be-an-advocate/join-our-network.html>

IF THESE AREN'T MANDATORY, WHY SHOULD I CARE?

There are many reasons every Nebraskan should pay attention to the material being presented by the Department of Education.

1. Mandatory or not, Health Standards from the NDE will have an effect on what is taught in classrooms. Exposure of children to inappropriate and unethical material is everyone's business.
2. Even if your school refuses such standards, children in other schools are exposed to this material. Those students are the friends, teammates, and neighbors of your children and grandchildren.
3. For Catholics, the duty to bear the light of Christ is vital considering that many of these standards are diametrically opposed to Catholic teaching. The introduction of this material to children is a serious blow against the truth-filled reality of God's plan for marriage, procreation, and family.

I USUALLY DON'T GET INVOLVED WITH POLITICS OR POLICY. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Jesus Christ calls us to bear His light in the public square. As Catholics, we engage all people with love and present the gift of the Faith to all people. The dignity of the human person is essential to our walk with Christ, and our walk with others. By voicing your thoughts you are expressing the truth of Christ's purpose for sexuality, marriage, gender, and children. To remain silent is to allow exposure of inappropriate and dangerous material to children via our education system. Finally, recall that the Department of Education is asking for feedback—you are being invited to the table!



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