

Public School Sex Education/Health Curriculum Plan: A Review

Rev. Edward D. Seely, Th.M., Ph.D.

Preface

The following is a brief commentary on a public school district's published response to public feedback on the plan the school system is developing to bring its sex education program within its health curriculum into compliance with the 2019 Colorado House Bill [now law] 19-1032. Known as HB 19-1032, the law requires all public schools in the state to include in their sex education program instruction about abortion, LGBTQ+ and other related issues. I have given this review to the curriculum director for the school district. Since this development is occurring in many school districts throughout the U. S. and elsewhere; since this plan is on the Internet; and to make my review available for the people who have asked me for it and for others whose districts are formulating similar plans, I have included it on both my academic and general Websites for them and others to read and to use as applicable in addressing such public school efforts in their communities.

The original law, this review, and related reviews can be seen at the following URLs: on my general Website at <https://fromacorntoak12.com/current-issues/> and on my academic Website at <https://seelyedward.academia.edu/research#papers>. The sections highlighted in the district's response are statements that should be given careful attention for any continuing iterations of the plan. Some of the highlighted sections raise further and unanswered questions that should be carefully considered; others have implications that are not addressed but must be addressed for many reasons, including for the well-being of the children, their families, and, since the family is the basis of society, the well-being of society itself. For further information on these reasons, see the related research on my Websites: specifically, the Current Issues and Marriage pages on my general Website and also my academic Website. My comments are in [brackets] to distinguish them from the district's original text.



Health Standards Listening Sessions

- [Health Standards Listening Sessions](#)
-

- [Q & A From Health Listening Sessions](#)

Questions & Answers from the Health Listening Sessions

- The Thompson School District engaged the public in two listening sessions the first week of March. We also collected feedback and questions from an online form. This document addresses the questions from the sessions and online form.

Q: How will TSD be transparent about Comprehensive Health Education materials, scope and sequence, etc.?

A: Health teachers will notify parents re: scope and sequence with general timing during health class. This will allow parents to know what will be taught and approximately when it will be taught. This will allow ample time for parents to opt their student out if they wish.

Any new materials that will be adopted will follow the policy and procedures for viewing and input by the community. Materials for any class are always available for parents/community to view throughout the year by contacting the teacher and principal. Board Policies IHAM and IHAMB address this question.

Q: How can teachers cover the extensive content found in the comprehensive health standards?

A: Because these are comprehensive, these standards will be covered across content areas in some cases (e.g. integration of social emotional learning in all subject areas, collaboration with mental health providers, etc). TSD also supports teachers with prioritizing standards as part of the work in building a scope and sequence for the year. All standards are covered at some point but not with the same depth.

Q: How do I opt my student out of parts of the health curriculum?

A: This process can be found in board policy. Parents and guardians have the option to opt their student out of parts of their health curriculum as found in Policies IHAM and IHAMB and State Law C.R.S. 22-1-128 (3); 22-25-104 (6)(d) and C.R.S. 22-25-106 (4)(a). We are currently revising board policy to clarify this process.

Q: Parts of the curriculum do not respect our family's values and/or religious beliefs. How can we ensure that the standards are presented in a neutral manner respecting differences in beliefs and being supportive of all students and families?

A: Teachers are directed to follow the standards without inserting their own personal beliefs. [How is this direction monitored?] If families would like to exempt their students from health instruction, they can follow the board policies IHAM and IHAMB and State Law C.R.S. 22-1-128 (3); 22-25-104 (6)(d) and C.R.S. 22-25-106 (4)(a). .

Q: Guest speakers may be useful in teaching about some health subjects (such as certified nutrition/ dietician experts). Some could also be considered controversial. How does TSD handle this?

A: Expert, fact-based guest speakers aligned with state standards can be vetted and utilized in certain areas according to board policy IMC. We are currently revising board policy to clarify this process.

Q: Where will the standards include vaping prevention education? I'm not seeing it included.

A: The health standards cover teaching “the dangers of use or experimentation with marijuana, illegal drugs, prescription drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.” This would include vaping.

Q: *How is the teaching of health standards monitored in TSD?*

A: As with all content areas, teachers have the standards and the curriculum and are responsible for teaching them. Principals are the supervisors of teachers and monitor what is being taught in the classroom. [How do they do the monitoring? What assurance do they have that the teachers do not teach values contrary to the curriculum and parents’ values and that the teachers do not distribute brochures and other printed matter that promotes ideology?] Concerns should be brought to the teacher first. If the concern is not addressed, then building administration should be contacted.

Q: *What is the requirement in Colorado for public school districts to teach state standards?*

A: Under Colorado State Law, public schools must follow the standards set by the state. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/factsheetsandfaqs-standards>

Q: *What is the process for determining what materials will be used to teach the Comprehensive Health Education Standards?*

A: The process for materials adoption to support curriculum can be found in Board Policy IJJ. [See below.]

Q: *When/how is sexual identity addressed?*

A: This topic is not covered in the Comprehensive Health Education Standards. Therefore, neither sexual orientation nor gender identity are part of the health curriculum in TSD. Students who may have individual questions or need individual support in these areas would receive support from appropriate school staff. [What, specifically, is their procedure for offering ‘support’ for these students?]

Q: *What is the process/expectation for permissions for health surveys?*

A: Board Policy JLDAC guides school staff in the processes for survey parent/guardian notification and permission. Depending on the survey, notification and permissions vary; details can be found [here](#).

<https://www.thompsonschoools.org/Page/24550> (Accessed 05/16/2022)

File: IJJ

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS SELECTION AND ADOPTION

The Curriculum Improvement Council is responsible for reviewing instructional materials suggested by professional staff in the respective curricular areas and for recommending instructional materials for Board approval.

In addition to following the general principles outlined in policy IIA, instructional materials shall:

1. Be directly related to district curriculum, standards, and proficiencies;

2. Support curricular continuity, integration, articulation, timeliness, and relevancy (i.e., motivating to students and pertaining to the content/process being taught);
3. Match the technology and training available at the schools;
4. Be attractive, durable, and reasonably priced, whenever possible;
5. Reflect the needs of all learners, including slower learners and the exceptionally able;
6. Include appropriate depiction of multiethnic, multicultural and non-stereotypic perspectives;
7. Represent a **balanced and objective** approach in areas of ideology, emotion, or controversy, including current issues. **[Does this 'balanced and objective approach' include careful science and the Bible, as per the current 2019 Colorado state law?]**

HB 19-1032, Section 2. 22-1-128 states, (7) (a) Nothing in subsection (6) OR (6.5) of this section shall be interpreted to prohibit discussion of health, moral, ethical, or religious values as they pertain to comprehensive human sexuality, healthy relationships, or family formation. **SUCH DISCUSSION IS ENCOURAGED.** [The uppercase emphasis is in the law.]

Recommended materials shall be displayed for public review at local public libraries and at the district administration building for two weeks prior to their consideration for adoption by the Board. **[Is the public informed as to when this two-week period begins? If so, in what media?]**

Individual schools will be able to select from these materials after carefully reviewing and evaluating their suitability to specific school programs and student needs. Money that has been designated for instructional materials can be used for that purpose only and cannot be transferred to another building account without the approval of the superintendent or his designee.

For the purpose of this policy, supplementary materials shall be defined as any materials not specifically approved by the Board. They may include, but are not limited to, books, periodicals, newspapers, pictures, kits, maps, charts, audio-visuals, discs and software. These materials may be purchased by individual schools within their budgetary limits and must be reviewed by appropriate teachers and the principal. **[How does the public become informed of these 'supplementary materials' and have the ability to access them? Such materials frequently promote ideologies counter to sound science and the Bible on which this nation was based. See, e.g., "[Homosexuality: An Abbreviated Fact Sheet for Speaking the Truth in Love.](#)"]**

Adopted prior to 1985

Revised to conform to practice July 13, 1988 Revised August 17, 1988

Revised June 7, 1995

Revised March 1, 2000

Legal ref: Cross ref:

C.R.S. 22-32-109 (1) (t)

IJ, Instructional Resources and Materials

IJM, Special Interest Instructional Materials

KEC, Public Complaints about the Curriculum or Instructional Materials

<https://www.thompsonschoools.org/cms/lib/CO01900772/Centricity/Domain/367/i/IJJ.pdf>
(Accessed 05/16/2022)