Greater Essex County District School Board

Title: **Exemption from Instruction related to the Human Development and Sexual Health Expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1–8, 2019***
Category: Ministry Directive - Policy/Program 162
Department: Student Achievement and Program
Responsibility: Superintendent of Professional Learning -Curriculum and Program
Effective Date: January 21, 2020
Review Date: June 9, 2026
Next Review Year: 2031

Rationale

The GECDSB affirms and upholds the principles of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Constitution Act, 1982 and confirmed in the Ontario Human Rights Code. The Board is committed to the democratic values of fairness, equity, inclusion, and respect for all being reflected in all of its policies, programs, and practices.

Parents/guardians have the right to exempt their child from instruction of the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations found in strand D of The *Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1-8, 2019* as outlined in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 162.

Context of Roles:

Parents/Guardians

Through communications from their school, parents/guardians will become aware of the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations found in strand D of The Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1-8, 2019. With this information, parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss their children's learning with them, communicate with their children's teacher, and ask relevant questions about their children's progress. The curriculum and support documents can inform their decision-making about seeking an exemption specifically from the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations.

Teachers

Teachers are to communicate with parents/guardians as to the precise date and the content of their children's learning with the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations found in strand D of The Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1-8, 2019. Teachers, in consultation with their Principal, are to plan for alternate assigned work for exempted students that remain at school.

Teachers must notify their Principal a minimum of thirty days in advance to the intended date for instruction of the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations.

Principals

Principals are to work with teachers to communicate with parents/guardians at least twenty school days before the start before the period of instruction as to the content of their children's learning with the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations found in strand D of The Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1-8, 2019. Principals are to manage exemption requests and decisions as to submitted exemption requests that are late. Principals are also to schedule supervision of exempted students if required.

Notice of Communications

The Principal or designate will:

- provide parents/guardians with a list of all Human Development and Sexual Health expectations by grade;
- inform parents/guardians that they can choose to have their child or children exempted from instruction related to Human Development and Sexual Health expectations by completing and returning an exemption form for each child;
- provide a standard exemption form available to parents/guardians every school year at least twenty school days before the start of the "period of instruction" related to the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations;
- notify all parents/guardians at least twenty days before the start of the "period of instruction" related to the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations;
- parents/guardians must submit their completed exemption form to the teacher a minimum of five instructional days before the start of the period of instruction.
- in the case of an unforeseen event schools have the authority to move the period of instruction to a later date in the school year however must give notice of the change to parents/guardians as soon as reasonably possible.
- it is expected that the communications to parents/guardians required by this program and policy memorandum number 162 will be issued within stated timelines every school year.

Procedure

The Principal or designate will:

- allow students to be exempted from instruction related to the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations with no academic penalty when a request for an exemption has been made from a parent/guardian in writing accordance with the policy/regulation.
- confirm with parents/guardians the receipt of the exemption forms via letter or email (to be determined by each school).
- make a final decision about whether to accept or reject a request for an exemption that does not fall within the parameters set out in this policy (e.g. if an exemption form is

returned to the school during the scheduled period of instruction rather than by the official submission deadline).

The Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in Strand D of the health and physical education curriculum are different in every grade. In order for a child to be exempt, a parent/guardian must submit a completed exemption form every school year, for each child.

Supervision of Exempted Students

Parents/Guardians have three choices as to supervision of their child during the exemption period. Parents/guardians must choose **only one** of the following options for their child:

1. to remain in the classroom during the exemption period without taking part in the Human Development and Sexual Health, and to be assigned work or activities by the teacher that are unrelated to Human Development and Sexual Health; or

2. to leave the classroom for the duration of the instruction and remain in the school under supervision. The student's activities during the exemption period will be at the discretion of the teacher or principal; or,

3. to be released into the care of the parent/guardian or the parent/guardian's approve designate.

Reference

Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1-8, 2019

Appendix

Appendix A - GECDSB Information Letter

Appendix B – GECDSB Exemption Form

Title: Exemption from Instruction related to the Human Development and Sexual Health Expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1–8, 2019*
Appendix A: GECDSB Information Letter

Please note, schools should customize the daily schedule by including the date(s) that the lessons will be taught and when (e.g. last period of the day if possible). Providing dates and times will minimize any student absences from other subjects.

Sample Letter to Parents re: Human Development and Sexual Health Unit

[School Letterhead here]

Dear Parents/Guardians

For the 20___ - ___ school year, we will be completing a unit on Human Development and Sexual Health as part of the Healthy Living strand of the Health and Physical Education curriculum. The date of instruction related to the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in your child's grade will happen on _____[insert date(s)] at _____[insert time].

Lessons will include the following topics:
(Choose the grade expectations for the letter, including the rationale for why the concepts are taught, and delete the other grade expectation information)

Human Development and Sexual Health Expectations

Grade 1

Students will learn to:

- identify body parts, including genitalia, using correct terminology and body-positive language
- identify the five senses and describe how each functions
- demonstrate an understanding of and apply proper hygienic procedures for protecting their own health and preventing the transmission of disease to others

Why Concepts are Taught

When children know how to care for and use the correct names of their body parts, they build understanding and respect for themselves and their bodies and can communicate clearly and ask for help in case of illness, injury or abuse.

Grade 2

Students will learn to:

- outline the basic stages of human development and related changes, and identify physical, mental, social, and environmental factors that are important for healthy growth and living throughout life
- demonstrate the ability to identify and appreciate aspects of how their bodies work and describe what they can do to ensure that they will continue to appreciate their bodies as they grow and change
- demonstrate an understanding of and apply practices that contribute to the maintenance of good oral health

Why Concepts are Taught

Helping children to understand that their bodies will change (e.g., losing baby teeth) can help them:

- prepare for and adjust to those changes
- appreciate what their bodies are able to do and perceive them positively
- communicate about these changes with a trusted adult if they ever feel confused

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Grade 3

Students will learn to:

- identify the characteristics of healthy relationships and describe ways of responding to bullying and other challenges and of communicating consent in their interactions with others
- identify factors that affect physical development, social-emotional development, and the development of a healthy body image

describe how visible differences and invisible differences make each person unique, and identify ways of showing respect for differences in others

Why Concepts are Taught

To foster healthy relationships, students will learn what healthy relationships look like. Students also learn about what makes them unique and how to show respect for all.

Grade 4

Students will learn to:

- describe the physical changes that occur at puberty and the emotional and social impacts that may result from these changes
- demonstrate an understanding of personal care needs and the application of personal hygienic practices associated with the onset of puberty

Why Concepts are Taught

Today, children enter puberty earlier: on average, girls enter puberty between the ages of 8 and 13 and boys enter puberty between the ages of 9 and 14. Learning about puberty before students may fully experience it helps prepare young people for changes in their bodies, emotions and social relationships.

Grade 5

Students will learn to:

- identify the parts of the reproductive system, and describe how the body changes during puberty
- describe the processes of menstruation and spermatogenesis, and explain how these processes relate to reproduction and overall development
- identify intersecting factors that affect the development of a person's self-concept, including their sexual orientation, and how these factors can support their personal health and well-being
- describe emotional and interpersonal stresses related to puberty, recognize signs that could indicate mental health concerns, and identify strategies that they can apply to manage stress, build resilience, keep open communication with family members and caring adults, and enhance their mental health and emotional well-being

Why Concepts are Taught

By Grade 5, students have developed some self-awareness and coping skills, and have also learned critical thinking and reflective skills.

Puberty can be stressful and helping students to understand changes in their bodies can help them cope. Students will also continue to learn the importance of showing acceptance and respect for themselves and others, including those who may be entering puberty earlier or later than their peers.

Grade 6

Students will learn to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the impacts of viewing sexually explicit media, including pornography
- describe how they can build confidence and lay a foundation for healthy relationships by acquiring a clearer understanding of the physical, social, and emotional changes that occur during adolescence
- make informed decisions that demonstrate respect for themselves and others and an understanding of the concept of consent to help build healthier relationships, using a variety of social-emotional learning skills
- assess the effects of stereotypes and assumptions regarding gender roles and expectations, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, culture, mental health, and abilities on an individual's self-concept, social inclusion, and relationships with others, and propose appropriate ways of responding to and changing harmful assumptions and stereotypes that can lead to destructive social attitudes including homophobia and racism

Why Concepts are Taught

As children grow older and enter adolescence, understanding how they and their peers may be affected by the many changes they are experiencing helps them build a healthy sense of who they are.

By Grade 6, students have developed more self-awareness and coping skills, as well as critical thinking and reflective skills, to solve problems and examine issues. They will apply these skills to learning about stereotypes and assumptions.

By examining and challenging these stereotypes and assumptions, they continue to learn about respect for others, and build self-confidence to build a foundation for healthy relationships.

Grade 7

Students will learn to:

- explain the importance of having a shared understanding with a partner about the following: delaying sexual activity until they are older; the reasons for not engaging in sexual activity; the concept of consent, the legal age of consent, and how consent is communicated; and, in general, the need to communicate clearly with each other when making decisions about sexual activity in a healthy, loving relationship
- identify sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBIs), and describe their symptoms
- identify ways of preventing STBBIs and/or unplanned pregnancy, such as delaying first intercourse and other sexual activities until a person is older and using condoms and other forms of protection consistently
- demonstrate an understanding of physical, emotional, social, and cognitive factors that need to be considered when making decisions related to sexual health
- explain how relationships with others and sexual health may be affected by the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty

Why Concepts are Taught
Students need information and skills to make sound decisions about their health and well-being before they face a situation where they may need that information.

Research has shown that teaching about sexual health and human development does **not** increase sexual behaviour and can actually prevent risky activity.

Grade 8

Students will learn to:

- identify and explain factors that can affect an individual's decisions about sexual activity and identify sources of support regarding sexual health
- demonstrate an understanding of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, and identify factors that can help individuals of all identities and orientations develop a positive self-concept
- demonstrate an understanding of abstinence, contraception and the use of effective and suitable protection to prevent pregnancy and STBBIs, and the concept of consent, as well as the skills they need to apply in order to make safe and healthy decisions about sexual activity

analyse the attractions and benefits associated with being in a healthy relationship, as well as the benefits, risks, and drawbacks, for themselves and others, of relationships involving different degrees of sexual intimacy

Why Concepts are Taught
Students continue to build their understanding of factors that support positive, healthy choices, including building a deeper understanding and appreciation of themselves and their identity. Students are also exploring healthy ways to engage in evolving and new relationships.

The GECDSB acknowledges that parents/guardians are the primary educators for their child/children. (**School name**) is committed to partner with parents/guardians to provide the developmentally appropriate knowledge and skills students need to live healthy lives now and into the future. Family and parental values are an important and necessary component to Human Development and Sexual Health unit and students will always be referred to you for important discussions on the values surrounding some topics.

If parents/guardians choose to exempt their child from the expectations found in strand D of the Ontario Curriculum Health and Physical Education (2019), please contact the school for the exemption form.

Title: Exemption from Instruction related to the Human Development and Sexual Health Expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1–8, 2019*

Appendix B – Exemption Form

GECDSB Exemption Form – Health and Physical Education Curriculum (Section D Human Development and Sexual Health)

Having reviewed the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in the elementary Ontario Health and Physical Education curriculum for my child's grade, I would like my child to be exempted from instruction related to these expectations, without academic penalty. During the exemption period, I would like my child to (select one only):

☐ remain in the classroom without taking part in instructional activities related to Human Development and Sexual Health. I understand that my child's activities unrelated to Human Development and Sexual Health during the exemption period will be at the discretion of the teacher.

☐ leave the classroom and remain in the school under staff supervision. I understand that my child's activities during the exemption period will be at the discretion of the teacher or principal.

☐ be released into my care or the care of my approved designate.

Note: If one of the three options above is not selected, the principal or the principal's designate will determine where in the school the child is to remain during the exemption period.

For the 20___ - ___ school year, the period of instruction related to the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in your child's grade will start on _____ (insert date) and end on _____ (insert date). The daily schedule is attached to the information letter.

I understand and agree with the following statements:

- the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in strand D of the health and physical education curriculum are different in every grade, so I must submit a completed exemption form each school year, for each child, in order for my child to be exempted from instruction related to Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in that school year;
- references to or conversations about sexual health- related concepts by teachers, school staff, or other students outside formal instruction in Human Development and Sexual Health are not subject to this exemption;
- my child will continue to receive instruction related to all other elementary health and physical education curriculum expectations,
- requests for the exemption form must be returned by _____ (enter date) for my child to be excluded from instruction related to the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in strand D of The Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1-8, 2019.
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Child's Last Name _____ Child's First Name _____

Parent/Guardians Name (please print) _____ Parent/Guardian's Signature _____

Grade and Class _____ Date _____

Please note that you will receive acknowledgment from the school by ☐ letter or ☐ email by: _____ (date)

If you do not receive an acknowledgement, please contact:

_____
(contact name).

Please return this signed form no later than: _____
Date

*In this form, the period of instruction refers to the period, including the beginning and end dates, during which instruction in Human Development and Sexual health during health and physical education classes are delivered. This period could extend over several days or weeks, depending on individual schools' calendars and teachers' lesson plan.