

Human Growth and Development Frequently Asked Questions

How long has Human Growth and Development been offered in the Omaha Public Schools?

The course has been offered for close to 30 years, beginning in the 1986-1987 school year.

At what grade levels is Human Growth and Development offered?

At the elementary level, Human Growth and Development is offered in fourth, fifth, and sixth grades with parent permission. Boys and girls are separated during the lessons. In middle school, it is offered for nine weeks at grades 7 and 8; and at the high school level for one semester during the tenth grade.

Does that mean that OPS will not start Human Growth and Development curriculum in kindergarten?

That is correct. There will be no HGD lessons until 4th grade.

Does everyone have to take Human Growth and Development?

No, parents have the opportunity to "opt-in" their child for Human Growth and Development lessons in 4TH, 5TH, and 6th grades. In 7TH, 8TH, and 10th grades, parents may "opt-out" their child for all or any part of Human Growth and Development.

Who decides what is to be taught and at what grade levels?

Decisions about what is to be taught and at what grade levels topics are taught is based upon national standards, and on parent and community input. An external consultant was contracted to conduct a parent survey of over 1,500 randomly selected OPS parents from January through March 2015. The results of the survey were presented at a community forum in April 2015; and through table discussions, ideas of what should be in the curriculum were further defined by the community and parents. Approximately 150 parents, teachers, and community members attended the April event. Teachers also added their input as standards were written. A second community forum is to be held in October 2015 to gather input from families and community about possible standards and generalizations by grade level.

Will Human Growth and Development content standards be posted and available for all parents to review?

Yes, once the content standards have been approved by the Board of Education they will be posted and made available to parents.

What is the process for approval of Human Growth and Development curriculum after standards are approved?

- After standards are approved by the School Board, a search will begin for possible curriculum and materials that most closely match the standards.
- Once selected, a parent review night will be hosted to gather parent input on the materials and products.
- Selected materials will be field tested
- Recommended materials will be taken to the School Board for approval.
- Once approved, materials will be placed online for parent viewing.

How will parents/families be provided an opportunity for input on the Human Growth and Development curriculum?

A parent review night will be held in January to review possible materials and curriculum.

Will OPS use Planned Parenthood Curriculum once standards are approved?

No, our teachers and school nurses have been writing curriculum for close to 30 years. We will write the curriculum to fit the beliefs of our families and community. We have many lessons that have worked well in the past, and will update and supplement as needed. We also will review published curricular materials and other resources that meet the recommendations of our parents and then select materials that will be appropriate. Planned Parenthood has not been a part of our curriculum in the past nor will it be in the future.

What does the majority of the Human Growth and Development content standards currently cover?

Much of the current curriculum teaches students to make wise decisions using a decision making process. To use healthy communication skills, learn about healthy relationships, prevent alcohol and chemical abuse, practice refusal skills and help prevent bullying. Abstinence is communicated and stressed throughout the standards. Reproductive anatomy, pregnancy, pregnancy prevention, and sexually transmitted diseases have been taught in the past and are proposed for the new standards as well.

What is potentially new in the updated Human Growth and Development content standards?

LGBTQ topics of discussion proposed in grades 7th and 8th will center on teaching individuals to be respectful of one another, even if ideas and beliefs are different from personal beliefs. At the high school level only, emergency contraception, as well as using the decision making process to review consequences of abortion will be discussed. Students will be encouraged to talk with parents about consequences and family beliefs.

Will teachers be trained?

Teachers are regularly trained in the Human Growth curriculum content during professional development days. Any additional training deemed important will be conducted during the summer.

Will there be resources and training available for parents/families that are interested?

Parents are encouraged to be the primary educators for their children's sexuality education. Based on feedback from the April 2015 community forum, parents/families, requested resources and training to support conversations at home. These resources and training options will be posted on the OPS website after parent/family input and final approval from the Board of Education on the content standards and materials.

How can I as a parent make sure my child is not indoctrinated with values that are different from what my family believes?

The Omaha Public Schools believe that parents should be the primary educators of their children in matters of sexuality education. The school will present information about different topics and encourage students to go home and talk to their parents about family beliefs by using optional discussion assignments that provide opportunities for parent and child dialogue. Parents also have the opportunity to opt their children out of topics they are not comfortable with their child learning about or opt their student out of the whole course.

Will students be encouraged to abstain from sexual behavior?

Absolutely; no one wants teens to be sexually active. We believe that by preparing students to set goals, use refusal skills and by looking at the consequences of their decisions, we are preparing them for the future. Abstinence will always be encouraged as the best and safest decision.

Is OPS encouraging high risk sexual behaviors?

No, absolutely not. OPS will always encourage abstaining from all sexual activity, especially high risk behaviors.

Does OPS support consensual sexual behavior between school age students?

No, absolutely not. Abstinence remains the best and safest decision for students to make.

Will you be teaching students about homosexuality?

Topics of discussion will center on teaching individuals to be respectful of one another, even if ideas and beliefs are different from personal beliefs. The parent survey suggested that sexual orientation and gender identity topics begin in grades 6th- 8th.

Will students receive contraceptives as a part of this Human Growth and Development class?

No, OPS does not permit the distribution of contraceptives in any school setting now or in the future.

Will OPS take students to get abortions?

Absolutely not! These are personal decisions between a student and parents/caregivers. We always encourage students to talk with parents about any personal or sexual situations.

Will the school district redefine what we call families?

A family will be defined by saying, "There are many different types of families and they serve many functions such as love and affection, education, economic support, protection, guidance and socialization."

How have parents/families been involved so far in the development of content standards?

They have been engaged in numerous ways. A parent survey was conducted by an outside consultant to gather input, a community forum was held in April 2015, numerous individual parent meetings, and phone conversations have occurred. A community forum is going to be held on Tuesday, October 20, 2015.

Will OPS be showing pornography?

Absolutely not.