

Ophea and OASPHE Reaction Statement

Health and Physical Education: Human Development and Sexual Health

Government Announcement on Health and Physical Education Curriculum

On July 11th 2018 Ontario's Premier and Minister of Education announced that the sexual health education "sex-ed" component of the Health and Physical Education (H&PE) curriculum would revert back to the 1998 version until additional parent consultations have been conducted.

Ophea and OASPHE Statement

Ophea and OASPHE are the provincial subject associations for Health and Physical Education and believe the curriculum has the potential to positively impact the health of 2 million Ontario students by helping them develop the knowledge and skills to become healthy, productive citizens.

Ophea and OASPHE are disappointed with the announcement by the Government of Ontario and believe that Ontario students have a right to learn from an up-to-date, research-based Health and Physical Education curriculum that includes human development and sexual health "sex-ed" education.

Sexual health education should address current issues facing students including online safety, informed decision making (including consent), self-esteem, mental health, healthy relationships, respect for others, diversity and equity. The curriculum should reflect all students including those with visible/invisible differences as protected through the Ontario Human Rights Code and related provincial policies such as Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy.

Sexual health education should be delivered in a developmentally appropriate manner and structured so that it meets the learning needs of students at different ages to build the skills they need to make healthy choices and protect themselves from potential harms.

A Shared Responsibility

Ophea and OASPHE acknowledge that the delivery of sexual health education should be a shared responsibility that respects the roles of both parents and teachers.

Parents are responsible for teaching their child values, beliefs, traditions and supporting their education. Teachers are responsible for effective instruction in a safe, caring and inclusive environment.

As provincial subject associations for Health and Physical Education, Ophea and OASPHE trust that educators will continue to uphold these principles as they provide students with learning opportunities that are balanced, integrated and connected to real life.

Delivery of Sexual Health Education

Ophea and OASPHE believe that the 20 year old "sex-ed" expectations from 1998 will not meet the needs of students in 2018. In response Ophea will ensure our existing Human Development and Sexual Health teaching supports, available to all schools, school boards and public health units in Ontario, are mapped against the 1998 Human Growth and Development expectations to ensure educators are supported when they return to classrooms in September.

These existing teaching supports will continue to include information that addresses current issues facing students including online safety, consent, self-esteem, mental health, healthy relationships, respect for others, diversity and equity.

Consultation Process and Next Steps

In 2010 the Liberal government made a commitment to undertake additional parent consultations and a revised Health and Physical Education curriculum was not released until 2015. Given the timeliness and urgency of this matter, students and the Ontario education system cannot wait another five years for a similar process to be undertaken. Ophea and OASPHE urge the government to move quickly to clearly outline their consultation process ensuring that it is provincially representative of all parents and that it also engage with students, educators, unions, associations, public health and subject-matter experts with lived experience implementing this curriculum. This will ensure that this government has a comprehensive understanding of all perspectives prior to revisiting any curriculum content.

For more information visit:
Ophea.net/Advocacy

