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# New & Improved: National Sexuality Education Standards



An introduction by  
Teen Pregnancy & Prevention Partnership

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# NSES Standards

Created by: The Future of Sex Education Initiative (FoSE)

- A collaboration of Advocates for Youth and SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change
- Intended to support comprehensive sexuality education in public schools
- Intentionally vague to allow presenters to decide how much information to give and what activities to use.
- First published in 2012; 2nd Edition released in March 2020
- Can be viewed by topic area or by grade at:

[www.futureofsexeducation.org/](http://www.futureofsexeducation.org/)

# Reading the Tables

7 sexuality education topics

Each topic has performance indicators, which is what students should know and be able to do

Organized by:

- Grade level (2nd, 5th, 8th, **10th**, or 12th)
- National Health Education Standards (CC, INF, AI, IC, DM, GS, SM, ADV)

Each indicator has a code that identifies which topic it addresses, what grade level, the NHES standard it applies to, and the item number

## SEXUAL HEALTH (CONTINUED)

**Core Concepts**  
CC

**Analyzing Influences** INF

**Accessing Information** AI

**Interpersonal Communication** IC

**Decision-Making** DM

**Goal Setting** GS

**Self-Management** SM

**Advocacy** ADV

**BY THE END OF THE 8TH GRADE, STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO (CONTINUED):**

<p>List at least four methods of contraception that are available without a prescription (e.g., abstinence, condoms, emergency contraception, withdrawal)</p> <p><b>SH.8.CC.3</b></p>							
<p>Describe pregnancy testing, the signs of pregnancy, and pregnancy options, including parenting, abortion, and adoption</p> <p><b>SH.8.CC.4</b></p>							
<p>Explain STDs (including HIV), how common</p>							

# The 7 Sexuality Education Topics

1. Consent & Healthy Relationships = CH (was HR)
2. Anatomy & Physiology = AP
3. Puberty & Adolescent Sexual Development = PD
4. Gender Identity & Expression = GI (was ID)
5. Sexual Orientation & Identity = SI (was ID)
6. Sexual Health = SH (was PR & SH)
7. Interpersonal Violence = IV (was PS)

# Biggest Changes?

## Frameworks

Guiding principles have shifted to include **trauma informed** care, **racial equity & social justice**, and **health behavior** models.

Still **skill** and **knowledge** based

## Standards

**10th grade added** as a new benchmark (original grades included 2, 5, 8, & 12)

Still **7 Categories**, but Identity has **split** while reproduction **merged** with STDs

## Glossary

Updated terms for **sexual orientation & gender ID**

Includes **social justice** terms

Phrases specific to **interpersonal violence**

# Guiding Principles & Values

Frameworks for the Standards

High Expectations

Functional Knowledge and Skills

Trauma-Informed

Social, Racial, and Reproductive Justice  
and Equity

Intersectionality

Language Inclusivity

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# Trauma- Informed

An approach to teaching that recognizes the influence of individual and systemic trauma on students and assesses the implications on instruction and cognition to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment.

Ex. Giving trigger warnings before discussing violent content

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# Justice & Equity

Social, racial, and reproductive justice and equity lead educators to avoid approaches that marginalize students while strengthening young people's capacity to challenge harmful stereotypes and be inclusive of a wide range of views.

Ex. Avoiding heterosexist language that assumes male/female dichotomy

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# Intersectionality

Created by Kimberlé Crenshaw, this theory describes the way overlapping social identities relate to systems and structures of discrimination.

Ex. Not just facing sexism as a woman, but facing racism and sexism as a black woman

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# Language Inclusivity

Using language which does not exclude or alienate students of certain identities, but rather respects each student for those unique identities.

Ex. Modeling the use of pronouns and using pronouns that align with student identities.

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# 1. Consent and Healthy Relationships

**Formerly “Healthy Relationships”**, this category covers consent, boundaries, & healthy communication and does so in earlier grades (2nd)

→ **Consent**

Define this term early on and discusses factors like substance use and power dynamics that can impact ability to consent

→ **Social Media**

Evaluate strategies to use social media safely, legally & respectfully  
(CHR.8.SM2)



## 2. Anatomy & Physiology

With the **name unchanged**, this category has undergone content updates to reflect more inclusive language

→ **Gender-Inclusive Language**

"List medically accurate names for body parts, including the genitals"  
(AP.2.CC.1)

→ "...there are natural variations in human bodies" (AP.5.CC.1)

→ **No standards for accessing info**

This category doesn't include standards for students to find credible information.



### 3. Puberty & Adolescent Sexual Development

Formerly “**Puberty and Adolescent Development**”, this category kept 2nd grade clear of benchmarks, while those from 12th grade shifted to 10th.

→ **credible sources vs. medically accurate**

Younger grades are expected to find “credible” sources, while older grades should be able to identify what is “medically accurate”

→ **Describe the role of hormones**

“...and the potential role of hormone blockers on young people who identify as transgender” (PD.5.CC.4)



## 4. Gender Identity & Expression

Formerly part of “**Identity**” category, which was split to highlight that **gender and sex are two distinct ideas**.

→ **Many new competencies with new terms**

“Define differences between cisgender, transgender, gender nonbinary, gender expansive, and gender identity”  
(Gl.5.CC.2)

→ **Explain sex vs. gender**

“Differentiate between sex assigned at birth, gender identity, and gender expression” (Gl.10.CC.1)



## 5. Sexual Orientation & Identity

Formerly part of “**Identity**” category, which was split to highlight that **sex and gender are two distinct ideas**.

→ **Similar competencies to Gender Identity with new terms related to sexual orientation**

“Define sexual identity and explain a range of identities related to sexual orientation (e.g., heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, gay, queer, two-spirit, asexual, pansexual)”  
(SO.8.CC.2)

→ **Support as a protective factor**

“Explain how support from peers, families...can improve a person’s health and wellbeing...” (SO12.INF.1)





## 6. Sexual Health

Formerly two distinct categories, “Pregnancy and Reproduction” and “Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV”, this new category merges the two to provide a more holistic approach to what it means to be “sexually healthy”.

→ **8th Grade Know-It-All**

Most of the competencies for this category fall under the 8th grade. There are more than 12 with at least 5 being new.

→ **Includes new information about HIV treatment (+PrEP & PEP)**

“Explain medical breakthroughs in HIV prevention and treatment and why HIV can now be considered a chronic condition” (SH.8.CC.g)



## 7. Interpersonal Violence

Formerly "Personal Safety", this new category better covers multiple types of violence and in different relationships (family, romantic, & peer, etc.)

→ **Moves toward Prevention**

This category now focuses on preventing violence rather than telling those who experience it how to respond

→ **Adds information about Sex Trafficking**

"Define sex-trafficking, sexual exploitation, and gender-based violence\*" (IV.8.CC.3)

# Glossary

Updated with many new terms and phrases, the glossary is an excellent starting point to better acquaint yourself with any words which may be new to you so you can be better prepared to explain them to others.

# Examples

**Asexual-** “A person who does not experience sexual attraction but may experience other forms of attraction (e.g. intellectual and/or emotional)”

**Safety Plan-** “A personalized and practical plan that can help a person in an unsafe relationship know the best way to respond when they are in danger including, but not limited to, how to get out of the relationship”

**Two-Spirit-** “A contemporary umbrella term used by Native, Indigenous, and/or First Nations people whose gender identity encompasses both male and female energies...”

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# Resources

**National Sex Education Standards (NSES) - <https://bit.ly/NSES2020>**

National Teacher Preparation Standards for Sex Ed. (NTPSSE)-  
<https://bit.ly/NTPSSE7>

National Health Education Standards (NHES)- <https://bit.ly/CDCNHES>

Health Education Curriculum Assessment Tool (HECAT)- <https://bit.ly/CDCHECAT>

Professional Learning Standards for Sex Ed. (PLSSE)- <https://bit.ly/4PLSSE>

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