



PROCEDURE

SO110

Exemption to Human Development and Sexual Health

Board Received: October 28, 2019

Review Date: September 2020

Accountability

1. Frequency of Reports – As needed.
2. Criteria for Success – Schools will annually notify and communicate the process
– Parents/guardians submit in writing requests for exemption

Procedures

Background

On August 21, 2019, the Minister of Education released Policy/Program Memorandum No. 162, Exemption from Instruction Related to the Human Development and Sexual Health Expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1-8, 2019*.

At the request of their parents/guardians, students are to be exempted from instruction related to the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations found in strand D of *The Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1–8, 2019*.

Exemption from instruction is to be on an individual basis, according to the following conditions:

- Exemptions are limited to instruction related to the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations found in strand D of *The Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1–8, 2019*. Students will not be exempted from instruction related to any other expectations in this curriculum or related to expectations in other curriculum subjects.
- Exemptions will be granted only for instruction related to all the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in a student's grade, and not for instruction related to selected expectations or groups of expectations.
- References to human development and sexual health made by teachers, board staff, or students outside the intentional teaching of content related to the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations are not included in the exemption procedure.
- There will be no academic penalty for an exemption.
- There will be no assessment, evaluation, or reporting of exempted students' achievement of Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in their particular grade. Exempted students' grade in health and physical education will be determined on the basis of the overall expectations in strand D of the curriculum, without consideration of the specific expectations under Human Development and Sexual Health.

Purpose

The purposes of this procedure are:

- To outline the responsibilities of Board staff regarding exemptions to human development and sexual health expectations; and,
- Value the role parents/guardians play in their children's learning.

1. Context – Roles and Responsibilities**a) Parents/Guardians**

Parents/Guardians play an important role in their children's learning. They are the primary educators of their children with respect to learning about values, appropriate behaviour, and ethno- cultural, spiritual, and personal beliefs and traditions, and are their children's first role models. It is therefore important for schools and parents/guardians to work together to ensure that home and school provide a mutually supportive framework for young people's education.

Parents/Guardians who become familiar with the health and physical education curriculum can better appreciate what is being taught in each grade and what their children are expected to learn. This awareness will enhance parents'/guardians' ability to discuss their children's learning with them, to communicate with their children's teachers, and to ask relevant questions about their children's progress. It could also inform their decision making about seeking an exemption under their school board's procedure. Parents/Guardians must be informed of this procedure that allows for students to be exempted, at their parents'/guardians' request, from instruction related to the Grade 1 to 8 Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in strand D.

b) Teachers

Teachers are responsible for using appropriate and effective teaching strategies to help students achieve the health and physical education curriculum expectations. They bring enthusiasm and varied teaching and assessment approaches to the classroom, addressing individual students' needs and ensuring sound learning opportunities for every student. The attitude with which teachers approach student learning in health and physical education is critical, as teachers are important role models for students.

To increase their comfort level and their skill in teaching health and physical education and to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum, teachers are expected to reflect on their own attitudes, biases, and values with respect to the topics they are teaching and seek out current resources, mentors, and professional development and training opportunities, as necessary.

As part of effective teaching practice, teachers communicate with parents/guardians about what their children are learning. Communication enables parents/guardians to work in partnership with the school, promoting discussion, follow-up at home, and student learning in a family context.

Teachers must follow this procedure that allows for students to be exempted, at their parents'/guardians' request, from instruction related to the Grade 1 to 8 Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in strand D.

c) Principals

Principals are community builders who create a healthy and safe school environment that is welcoming to all, and who ensure that all members of the school community are kept well informed.

Principals work in partnership with teachers and parents/guardians to ensure that each student has access to the best possible educational experience. They can provide support for the successful implementation of the health and physical education curriculum by emphasizing the importance of the curriculum within the framework of a healthy, safe, inclusive, and accepting school.

Principals must follow the procedure that allows for students to be exempted, at their parents'/guardians' request, from instruction related to the Grade 1 to 8 Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in strand D.

2. Notice and Communications

a) Schools/Teachers are required to:

- provide parents/guardians with a letter outlining the list of all Human Development and Sexual Health expectations by grade (Appendix A);
- 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;
- make the *Exemption from Instruction in Human Development and Sexual Health Form* (Appendix B) available to parents/guardians every school year, accommodating the timelines specified below.
- notify all parents/guardians at least twenty school days before the start of the “period of instruction” related to the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations;
- inform parents/guardians of the date by which the completed exemption form or written request must be submitted in order for their child to be exempted from instruction related to the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations. The deadline for parents/guardians to submit their completed exemption form or written request must not be more than five school days before the start of the period of instruction;
- inform parents/guardians that, in the case of an unforeseen event, school boards and schools have the authority to move the period of instruction to a later date in the school year and must give notice of the change to parents/guardians as soon as reasonably possible.

3. Process

a) Schools are required to:

- allow students to be exempt from instruction related to the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations without academic penalty when a request for an exemption has been submitted on the *Exemption from Instruction in Human Development and Sexual Health Form*;
- acknowledge by written letter (Appendix C) the receipt of exemption forms from parents/guardians;
- make the final decision about whether to accept or reject a request for an exemption that does not fall within the parameters set out in this memorandum (e.g., if the exemption form is returned to the school during the scheduled period of instruction rather than by the school's official submission date).

4. Supervision of Exempted Students

Parents/Guardians will be given the choice of how their exempted child will be supervised during the exemption period. Parents/Guardians must choose one of the following options for their child:

- to remain in the classroom during the exemption period without taking part in instruction in 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
- 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. The supervision of the student will be determined by the school according to the board's procedure; or
- to be released into the care of the parent/guardian or the parent's/guardian's approved designate.

Resources

The Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8: Health and Physical Education; 2019.

APPENDIX A

Insert on School Letterhead

Dear Parent/Guardians:

Re: Human Development and Sexual Health Expectations

There are four strands in the *The Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education, Grades 1–8, 2019*. Strand D: Healthy Living focusses on five health topics.

School boards are required to notify parents twenty (20) school days in advance of the topic: Human Development and Sexual Health Expectations being taught.

The chart below summarizes the expectation that are to be taught in Grade_____.

Topic	D1. Understanding Health Concepts	D2. Making Healthy Choices	D3. Making Connections for Healthy Living
Human Development and Sexual Health			

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_ and end on_.

The daily schedule for this instruction is attached.

Parents/Guardians can choose to have their child or children exempted from instruction related to Human Development and Sexual Health expectations by completing and returning the attached *Exemption from Instruction in Human Development and Sexual Health Form* for each child.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX B

Exemption from Instruction in Human Development and Sexual Health Form

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.

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 every school year, for each child, in order for the 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 among 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 exemption made by phone, or exemption forms or written requests that do not have a parent/guardian signature, will not be accepted;
- ☐ this exemption form must be returned by _____ 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*.

Child's Last Name

Child's First Name

Parent's/Guardian's Name (print)

Parent's/Guardian's Signature

Grade and Class

Date**PLEASE NOTE:**

You will receive an acknowledgement from the school by letter by .

If you do not receive an acknowledgement, please contact:

Please return this signed form no later than:

APPENDIX C

Insert on School Letterhead

Dear

Re: Exemption from Human Development and Sexual Health Expectations

This letter is to acknowledge that your request for your Grade, child to be exempted from the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations has been received.

As requested, your child will: (Choose one)

- ☐ Remain in the classroom without taking part in instructional activities related to Human Development and Sexual Health.
- ☐ Leave the classroom and remain in the school under staff supervision.
- ☐ Be released into my care or the care of my approved designate

Sincerely,