

Sexuality Presentation to Teachers and Parents

In 2018 The Education Review Office released a report into Sexuality Education in schools. It concluded that while most schools were meeting minimum standards, many had significant gaps in teaching and learning about such important aspects as consent, digital technologies, and relationships.

The world is changing rapidly – our country is more diverse than ever before. There are growing concerns about climate change, the impact of the pandemic and Covid 19. Family structures are changing, social norms in relation to gender and sexuality are shifting, social media is on the rise, and there is increased use of digital communications and devices. Teaching healthy relationships has never been more important – these are the ways we can work towards the prevention of bullying, of violence of child abuse, and recognise the importance of social and emotional learning.

We continue to revise what we include in our sexuality education programme. It is prudent to take into account changing social climates, recent youth health research and broader understandings about sexuality and sexuality education.

Sexuality education is part of the Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) and is based on the values, principles and concepts of the learning area. The ministry of education recognises the shift in focus with sexuality and it is now called Relationships and Sexuality Education – RSE.

PAUSE

Sex education and relationships sexuality education are different. The NZC supports a holistic approach to sexuality education as defined by the Haurora model, which includes physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects. This is much broader than sex education which relates only to the physical and reproductive knowledge.

Our sexuality curriculum must recognise and reflect the diverse needs and strengths of students from Maori, Pakeha, Pasifika, Asian and other ethnic communities in New Zealand. Dedicated and significant health education time and a safe supportive school environment is essential for the effective implementation of our sexuality education programme. Our school's cultural environment and the overall school ethos sets the tone for this programme. The teaching and learning is inclusive, values diversity, fosters openness, addresses bullying, works against discrimination, and enhances wellbeing.

RSE takes a positive view of sexual development as a natural part of growing up. It encompasses learning about physical development, including sexual and reproductive knowledge, gender identity, relationships, friendships, whanau and social issues. It sits within the broader area of relationship education which includes social and emotional learning.

A good sexuality education programme for our students:

- Promotes students' overall wellbeing
- Increases students' ability to make good decisions about their health
- Helps students think critically and act fairly towards each other
- Helps students thrive and become confident, life-long learners.

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Sexuality education starts at level 1 of the curriculum. It takes an inclusive and developmentally appropriate approach.

All young people need access to information and opportunities to think about, question and discuss issues related to relationships, gender, sexual identities, health and societal messages.

Research shows that holistic, well-planned RSE programmes taught by informed and up-to-date teachers makes a significant difference to the learning and overall sexual health of young people.

Current issues that require attention in the sexuality education programme for adolescents include consent and coercion; the sexualisation of young people, particularly girls; the effects of pornography on young people's understanding of sexuality and relationships and only opposite sex relationships are normal.

Programmes should empower, engage and inform young people rather than focus on risk. Students prefer programmes that connect with their lives, are relevant, inter-active and student-centred.

While attitudes to sexual diversity are becoming more inclusive young people who identify as non-heterosexual still face many challenges in schooling environments. Students who are coming to terms with their own sexuality be it transgender, lesbian, gay or bisexual need to feel understood and supported at school.

RSE offers a context where communication, assertiveness, problem-solving and decision making within friendships, online, in intimate relationships, families and wider communities can be explored.

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When asked adolescents noted that more time was needed to be spent on sexuality education and it was deemed that 12-15 quality hours per year was an indication of an effective programme.

An interesting finding from the Health Select committee states

“When girls and women have access to reproductive health services, contraception and education and are free of violence they are more likely to stay in school, to choose to have fewer children later in life, less likely to contract an STI or have poor health and more likely to be employed and to participate in society.”

Hauora and sexuality – Te Whare Tapa Wha.

Hauora means the “breath” or essence which sustains life. Achieving Hauora or the good life requires careful balancing of the physical, spiritual, social, environmental and relational elements that determine the well-being of individuals and collectives. Sexuality is an element of Hauora.

Maori understandings of health and wellbeing are often described as holistic because they go beyond the health of the physical body to include spiritual, emotional, social, environmental and relational elements.

We have selected several of the main activities we will be using over the next few weeks for you to look over and a member of the teaching staff will talk you through them.

For those of you that have looked over the resource on the website we have made a few decisions about what we will not cover – contraception, abortion, sexually transmitted infections and oral sex. We will answer questions as they come up but we will take a conservative approach to these areas. In some instances we will direct students to ask a trusted adult to help them with these questions.