



Amherst County Public Schools

To: Parents of Amherst County Public School Students
Subject: FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION PROGRAM

In compliance with the mandate of the Virginia General Assembly and Department of Education, components and goals of the Family Life Education program are printed in this memo along with an overview of our health education program, including sexuality education. We encourage you to read this information carefully. **Parents and guardians have the right to review the family life education program offered by their school division, including written and audio-visual educational materials used in the program. Parents and guardians also have the right to excuse their child from all or part of family life education instruction.** Copies of the curriculum material are available in your child's school with standards posted on the ACPS web site. You will also receive a copy of your child's family life curriculum objectives attached to an opt-in or opt-out form prior to the curriculum being taught to your child. **AS A PARENT/GUARDIAN YOU MUST COMPLETE THE PARTICIPATION FORM STATING WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO OPT-IN OR OPT-OUT YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN OF ANY PART OF THE FAMILY LIFE INSTRUCTION.** If after reviewing the curriculum, you wish to "opt" your child/children out of any part of the sexuality education instruction, you must complete the opt out form and return it to the person designated on the form prior to the day of instruction. Your child will then be given an alternate health assignment for the day.

Goals of Virginia's Family Life Education Program

Background: In response to the requirements of section 22.1-207.1 of the Virginia Code, the Board of Education has adopted Standards of Learning objectives and guidelines for the implementation of a comprehensive, sequential family life education program in grades K through 12. The code requires that the program address family living, community relationships, abstinence education, the value of postponing sexual activity, human sexuality, human reproduction, and the etiology, prevention, and effects of sexually transmitted diseases. In addressing this content, the program must promote parental involvement, foster positive self concepts, and provide mechanisms for coping with peer pressure and the stresses of modern living.

It is recognized by the Board of Education that family life education is a continuing process of instruction and guidance which should be an integral part of the overall educational program, contributing to the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual well-being of students. It should also address directly the following goals of public education in Virginia; develop personal standards of ethical behavior and moral choice; participate in society as a responsible family member and citizen; develop a positive and realistic concept of self and others; and practice sound habits of personal health and physical fitness.

Program Goals: In order for students to accomplish the broad goals of public education, more specific goals of the Family Life Education program have been established. They are to help each student to:

1. Understand and appreciate the roles of family members;
2. Understand the characteristics of interpersonal relationships which contribute to positive and effective family life;
3. Develop effective interpersonal skills;
4. Develop a positive self-concept;
5. Appreciate the worth of all persons;
6. Understand the physical and emotional development of humans;
7. Develop an appropriate vocabulary related to human sexuality and human reproduction;
8. Understand the process of human reproduction;
9. Develop an understanding of human sexuality;
10. Develop wholesome attitudes towards his/her own sexuality;

11. Understand the etiology, prevention, and effects of sexuality transmitted diseases;
12. Develop appropriate attitudes for responsible adulthood, especially regarding participation as a parent, a member of a family unit, and a community member; and
13. Develop short-and long-term plans for achieving career and life-long goals.

Amherst County Public School's Program

Amherst County youth, like others in our country, are faced with daily challenges which require decisions that will impact their physical and mental well-being. Therefore, the schools are being called upon by society, more specifically the state of Virginia, to provide instruction in more and more areas which were formerly looked upon as the sole responsibility of the home and church. The Health Education program, which includes human sexuality components, identified by the state, is not intended to replace the role of the home, church, or synagogue. Its intention is to provide carefully organized and factual teaching to supplement the home and religious values.

Our program is a comprehensive and sequential health curriculum that emphasizes total growth including physical, mental, social, and emotional development. Throughout the content, a set of universally accepted values is stressed which includes abstinence with respect to inappropriate behavior, love and caring, honesty, trust, respect for self and others, self-control, and responsibility for self, others, and community.

The elementary health program (K-5) contains the following strands: family and interpersonal relationships, environmental health, sexuality education, substance abuse prevention, mental and emotional health, nutrition, safety and first aid, disease prevention, and personal growth and fitness. In the early grades (K-2) the sexuality education component focuses on good and bad touching, ways to deal with physical and sexual abuse, including inappropriate approaches by others. In addition, students are introduced to the concept that humans and animals reproduce their own kind, which requires nurturing and care. In the upper elementary grades (3-4) sexuality education includes the introduction of the cell as the basis of life, including its part in fetal development of humans and animals. Grades four and five introduce the reproductive system and its relationship to changes that take place during puberty. AIDS information is also introduced. Personal hygiene and attention to child abuse issues continue to be stressed in grades three through five. Boys and girls will be separated for sensitive topics during this instruction.

At the middle school emphasis is placed on the formation of a healthy sexual identity and the development of good decision-making skills using an abstinence-based approach. The themes throughout are respect for self and others and the assumption of personal responsibility for one's behavior. Boys and girls will be separated for selected areas of instruction.

In high school, a coeducational approach will be used for all instruction. The ninth grade curriculum looks at sexuality as an aspect of the total personality, healthy guidelines for dating, choosing abstinence until marriage, and the family as a unity of society. In the tenth grade, students will have the opportunity to discuss considerations and concerns revolving around relationships, including dating and consequences of promiscuity; marriage, including family planning; and fetal development and birth. Since there is no formal health education for eleventh and twelfth graders, optional seminars and similar educational opportunities related to health issues will be offered based on need and interest of individual high schools.

All written or visual materials to be used in this program are open to parental review. Every effort has been made and will continue to be made to assure that this instruction will help to develop more responsible young people. We know that our youth can make better decisions when they acquire basic, factual knowledge which prepares them to counteract half-truths, exploitation, and misinformation.

Thank you for your consideration and review of this information. If you have concerns now or in the future, please contact the principal or your child's teacher. Please sign, detach and return the form to your child's teacher. -----

Please return this form to your child's teacher.

Please complete this form to indicate whether or not you would like for your child to participate in the Family Life Education Classes.

FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION OPT-IN/OPT-OUT FORM

Student Name: _____ School: _____ Grade: _____
Homeroom Teacher: _____

Choose One

- YES - I do want my child to participate in the presentation of the Family Life Standards of Learning.
- NO - I do not want my child to participate in the presentation of the Family Life Standards of Learning.

*I understand that my child will be given an alternate assignment(s) in place of the lesson(s) being taught and that I will be responsible for my child's completion of his/her assignments. **I understand if my child does not participate in this program, I am assuming full responsibility for providing the appropriate education.**

Date

Parent Signature