

Sexuality education in secondary schools

INFORMATION FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

Sexuality education is important

Your school is required to make sure all students get high quality sexuality education.

This brochure tells you what you can expect from your school, and how you can get involved.

Sexuality education is a key learning area in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. It focuses on the wellbeing of students and other people and of society.

High quality sexuality education:

- » promotes your overall wellbeing, including sexual and reproductive health
- » increases your ability to make good decisions about your health
- » helps you think critically and act fairly towards others
- » helps you thrive and become a confident and actively involved life-long learner.

What has ERO been doing?

ERO has recently completed an evaluation of sexuality education in New Zealand schools. Some schools were doing a good job of teaching sexuality education, but many schools could be doing better.

Society is changing, so schools need to change too, to help young people face new challenges.

These include things like social media use and the growing understanding of different gender identities and sexual orientations.

What is sexuality education?

Sexuality education includes learning about biology but also friendships, relationships, and social issues.

Sexuality education contributes to the overall health, wellbeing and resilience of young people.

Sexuality education helps everyone develop the skills, attitudes and understanding necessary to share a positive environment at school that is welcoming for everybody, including you.

Sexuality education in Years 9 and 10

Health education, which includes sexuality education, is compulsory in Years 9 and 10.

Your sexuality education programme should have covered:

- » consent
- » positive relationship skills
- » human rights and respect
- » conception and contraception
- » gender identity
- » sexual orientation
- » sexual health and STIs
- » online environments
- » gender stereotypes
- » body changes.

ERO recommends that schools spend at least 12-15 hours on sexuality education each year.

Sexuality education in Years 11 to 13

Health and sexuality should be woven through all Year 11 to 13 subjects, but students in these years can choose health as an NCEA subject.

Students choosing health will continue to explore what was covered in Years 9 and 10 but will be encouraged to think more deeply.

The sexuality education programme at your school should include:

- » analysing gender and sexuality
- » exploring and critiquing how sexuality and gender are viewed in society and culture
- » researching positive sexual health behaviours
- » working across the school to affirm human rights to be inclusive of everybody.

What students told ERO

Some students told ERO they feel some aspects of sexuality education are just skimmed over and others aren't covered at all. They thought schools could do better by finding out what students want to know and creating a programme reflecting that.

Students told ERO they believe young people are exposed to sexuality through media and from peers without enough relevant education to help them respond in a healthy way.

Student comments to ERO highlight the need for schools to find out how well their sexuality education curriculum is meeting the needs of their students. You, as a student, should be a part of that conversation.

How can you influence your school environment?

Your role as a student

As a senior student you have the opportunity to think about the sexuality education at your school and how appropriate and relevant it is across the different years.

Your contribution to discussions around sexuality education can help other students receive the right information at the right time.

Feedback opportunities

Your board of trustees is required to consult with the school community about the health curriculum at least every two years. The board may do this through meetings or by using online or paper-based surveys. This is a great opportunity for you to be heard and to help your school adjust the sexuality education programme so younger and future students are taught the right topics at the right time.

In schools with good consultation, trustees and leaders try to find ways everyone in the community, including students, parents and whānau, can have meaningful input into the sexuality education programme. So if you don't get the opportunity to contribute your parents may be able to help make sure you do.



The most important thing is to hear from parents and the students to make sure the school is meeting their needs.

board chair

School culture

The curriculum is one part of life at school but the school's culture has a huge role to play in the wellbeing of all students.

All schools are likely to have students who are diverse or unsure in terms of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is important boards recognise this and look for ways to support these students.



I think it's really important that people learn about LGBTQI. It's really important that people understand.

student

Some schools have become more inclusive by having a gender-neutral uniform or dress code, or providing gender-neutral bathrooms.

You can also contribute to making your school a more inclusive, safe space for all students who attend.

Students in some schools have done the following:

- » surveyed students in other local schools about their sexuality education programmes
- » organised protests against inappropriate comments on social media

- » asked for and set up groups to support students with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

Support groups help students feel included and safe at school, while other groups raise awareness of sexuality-related issues among staff and students.



It's about having a sense of community, somewhere to go where you know people share your opinions and experiences, and you can feel safe.

student

Find out more

Education Review Office

ERO has published several documents relating to sexuality education (aside from this one):

- » Promoting wellbeing through sexuality education
- » Sexuality education in secondary schools – Information for whānau
- » Sexuality education in primary schools – Information for whānau
- » Sexuality education in secondary schools – Information for boards of trustees
- » Sexuality education in primary schools – Information for boards of trustees

These documents are available on the ERO website.

Ministry of Education

The Ministry has the following resources available:



The New Zealand Curriculum



Sexuality education: A guide for principals, boards of trustees and teachers



Sexuality education: Practical information about education for parents and carers



Supporting LGBTIQ+ students

These documents are available on the Ministry of Education website.