

Working together to keep our students safe and healthy

A parent's guide to the revised
Health and Physical Education (HPE)
curriculum 2015-16



At the Peel District School Board, we're committed to the well-being, safety and success of all students. We know you share this priority. The revised Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum does not change or replace the vital role of parents in educating their children. Peel schools ensure all students are taught factual, accurate information. Parents, meanwhile, are responsible for sharing their values, morals, cultural and religious beliefs with their children.

We know some parents have concerns, specifically about the human development and sexual health component of the revised HPE curriculum. That's why we created this guide—to provide you with the information needed to understand how the revised curriculum will be taught in Peel schools and how families will be involved.



The Ministry of Education released the revised HPE curriculum in February 2015. All Ontario schools are required to implement the curriculum as of the 2015-16 school year. It has four elements, that work together to support the physical, emotional and social well-being of students:

- **Active Living**, such as physical fitness, safety and active participation
- **Movement Competence**, which includes skills and strategies around physical activity and sports
- **Living Skills**, where students build an understanding of themselves, and of coping, social, communication and thinking skills
- **Healthy Living**, including eating/nutrition, personal safety and injury prevention, substance use, addictions, and human development and sexual health



What you need to know about the revised HPE curriculum

HPE facts vs. fiction

There has been inaccurate information about the revised HPE curriculum being shared in our communities, sometimes with the intention of misleading parents.

Here are the **facts**:

We **WILL** encourage students to abstain from all sexual activity to stay completely safe.

We **WILL NOT** encourage students to become sexually active.

We **WILL** teach students about the importance of standing up for themselves and help them learn the skills they need to avoid or leave a situation that feels uncomfortable and respect when others want to do the same.

We **WILL NOT** teach students to consent to sexual activities.

For more on the inaccurate information, you can download a Myth vs. Fact document available on our website at www.peelschools.org/HPE.

Delayed to
spring 2016

To provide time for parents to build an understanding of the revised HPE curriculum, Peel staff will teach the human development and sexual health component to students in spring 2016. By then, teachers have developed strong relationships with their students and have a clear understanding of their maturity levels. This helps ensure that we're teaching the curriculum in an age-appropriate manner.



Advance notice of lessons

We know some parents would like to know when human development and sexual health topics will be talked about in class. All Peel schools are now required to send letters to parents at each grade level at least two weeks before they teach these topics. Schools will not provide advanced notice for classroom discussions and school activities during the school year that build a climate of inclusion and safety, including discussions about different kinds of families or any of the other human rights protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Curriculum taught with sensitivity by professionals

Peel teachers are well-trained professionals who do not promote personal views in the classroom. They will continue, as they always have, to deliver lessons around human development and sexual health in ways that are sensitive to the subject matter and their students. The board is providing teachers with everything they need to continue to provide the HPE curriculum with professionalism, sensitivity and care, including lesson plans for each grade, resources and training.

Only two to five lessons per school year

The human development and sexual health component represents only 10 per cent of the entire HPE curriculum and will take the same amount of time to deliver as it previously did. This means there will only be between two to five lessons for students each school year, depending on grade level, taking place in the spring.



Curriculum taught since 1998

Teaching students about human development and sexual health is not something new. The majority of the HPE curriculum has been taught in all publicly funded schools across Ontario, including Catholic schools, since 1998. The updates teach students how to deal with current issues that did not exist in 1998, like technology and online behaviour.

Teacher “prompts” not mandatory, only provide guidance

Students often ask questions on topics that are not necessarily covered in detail in the HPE curriculum. To give teachers guidance on how to answer many of these questions, the Ministry of Education has included teacher “prompts” in their curriculum documents. These prompts are not a mandatory learning expectation or a required script to follow. They simply help teachers talk about subject matter in a factual and consistent manner. Teachers will always use their best judgment, as appropriate to the needs and development of their students.

Exemption requests for the 2015-16 school year

As with any part of the curriculum, parents can choose to request an exemption through the board’s long-standing Religious Accommodation operating procedure. Before making that decision, we encourage parents to learn about the HPE curriculum by reading this guide, and talking to their child’s school about what content will be taught and in what way.

We will provide religious accommodation on an individual basis, as defined in our operating procedure. Since the human development and sexual health component will be taught in spring 2016, we ask parents to submit religious accommodation requests for these topics in January 2016. Requests received before that point will be acknowledged, but not responded to until after January 2016.

Commitment to equity to keep all students safe

While parents may choose to keep their child at home for parts of the curriculum, the Peel board strongly hopes that they do not. We want all students to be part of discussions that build respect and understanding, that help all students feel safe and respected. Being caring, cooperative, honest, inclusive, respectful and responsible are all part of the board's core values that are taught in Peel classrooms daily.

We will not provide religious or any other accommodation for lessons that build a climate of inclusion and safety, including discussions about different kinds of families or any of the other human rights protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code. This applies to all classroom discussions and school activities about inclusion during the school year. We are committed to equity and inclusion in all forms, and schools actively support that work throughout the year.

Parents play a vital role in their child's health and sexual education

Our education system depends on parents and schools working together for the betterment of students. We play complementary roles. Ensure your child attends class to gain the knowledge and insight to understand themselves and others, makes smart decisions and keeps him/herself safe. Listen to and respect his/her questions, offer your perspectives in a straightforward way, and consider your influence as a role model. Help your child to recognize, share and manage his/her feelings.



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What will students learn in each grade?

Human development and sexual health, like all aspects of healthy living in the HPE curriculum, focus on helping students learn to make healthy choices (and avoid potentially harmful ones) in their everyday lives.

The lessons in each grade build on each other, suitable to the child's age and development. In high school, students must take one HPE credit, but may choose to take additional HPE courses. Here's what the learning looks like by grade.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Grade 1

Goal: When children know the correct names of their body parts, they can communicate clearly and ask for help in case of illness, injury or abuse.

What students will learn:

- To identify body parts by their proper names.
- Senses and how they function.
- Basic good hygiene (e.g. washing hands, using tissues).

Grade 2

Goal: Before puberty, helping children to understand that their bodies will change (e.g. losing baby teeth) can help them communicate potentially unhealthy changes (e.g. pain) to a trusted adult.

What students will learn:

- Basic stages of human development (e.g. infant, child, adolescent) and related body changes.
- Good hygiene for oral health (e.g. brushing teeth, flossing, visiting the dentist regularly).

Grade 3

Goal: As a foundation for healthy relationships later in life, students will learn about what makes them unique and different from others, and how to show respect for all.

What students will learn:

- Healthy relationships with peers and family (e.g. accepting differences, listening, mutual respect, honesty, open communication).
- Overcoming unhealthy aspects of relationships with others (e.g. bullying, peer pressure, being left out).
- Factors and habits that affect physical and emotional development (e.g. safe environment, caring adults, feeling like you belong, sleep, food, physical activity).



- How our differences make each person unique. That includes visible differences like skin, hair and eye colour, clothing and physical ability. It also includes a range of invisible differences such as learning abilities, cultural values and beliefs, gender identity, and family types (e.g. one-parent, two-parent, two-mom or two-dad, grandparents, caregivers).
 - Ways of showing respect for differences in others.
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Grade 4

Goal: Learning the effects of puberty before most students fully experience it helps prepare young people for changes in their bodies, emotions and social relationships.

What students will learn:

- Physical changes that happen during puberty, and the emotional and social impact that changes can have on a developing child.
- How personal hygiene needs may change during puberty (e.g. the increased importance of regular bathing).

Grade 5

Goal: Puberty can be stressful. Understanding changes in their bodies helps students cope. Students will keep learning the importance of showing respect for all, including those who may be entering puberty earlier or later than their peers.

What students will learn:

- To identify parts of the reproductive system, and how the body changes during puberty.
- The process of menstruation and sperm production.
- How to describe emotional and interpersonal stresses related to puberty.
- Strategies to manage stress and enhance their emotional well-being and mental health.

Grade 6

Goal: Entering adolescence, children can build a healthy sense of who they are by understanding how the changes happening in their lives may affect them and their peers. By now, students have the self-awareness and various skills (coping, critical thinking, reflection) to solve problems and examine issues. They'll

apply this to learn about and challenge stereotypes and assumptions. That will help them to continue to gain respect for others, and self-confidence around their own identity.

What students will learn:

- Factors that may affect development of self-concept or personal identity (e.g. body image, stereotypes, self-awareness, cultural and gender identity).
- Physical, social and emotional changes that may occur in adolescence after the initial onset of puberty (e.g. body growth, skin changes, increasing influence of peers, intensity of feelings) and how this affects healthy relationships.
- How to make decisions in personal relationships that demonstrate respect for themselves and others, including the importance of consent and clear communication.
- How stereotypes — such as homophobia and assumptions about gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture and abilities — can affect how a person feels about themselves, their feelings of belonging and relationships with others.

- Appropriate ways to respond to and change assumptions and stereotypes.

Grade 7

Goal: Students need the knowledge and skills to make sound decisions about their health and well-being before they face a situation where they may need that information. This can help to prevent risky activities.

What students will learn:

- Importance of having a shared understanding with a partner about: delaying sexual activity until older; reasons for not becoming sexually active; the concept of consent and how to communicate it; and the need to clearly communicate and understand decisions about sexual activity in a healthy relationship.
- How to identify common sexually-transmitted infections (STIs) and describe their symptoms.
- How to prevent STIs (including HIV) and unintended pregnancy, including delaying first intercourse and other sexual activities until they are older, and using condoms

consistently if they become sexually active.

- Physical, emotional, social and psychological factors to consider when making sexual health decisions (e.g. STIs, pregnancy, side effects of contraception, social labelling, cultural teachings, gender identity, and impact on other relationships).
- How relationships with others and sexual health may be affected by physical and emotional changes in puberty and adolescence.

Grade 8

Goal: Learning respect for their peers helps to ensure young people build positive, healthy self-concepts.

What students will learn:

- Factors that could affect someone's ability to make safe and healthy decisions about sexual activity.
- Sources of support regarding sexual health (e.g. parents, health professionals, in-school resources, local community groups, religious leaders, an elder).
- Gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.

Grade 9

Goal: High school students are encouraged to think critically about the information they've learned about sexual health, just like they're encouraged to apply these same critical thinking skills to decisions about food choices, personal safety and fitness.

What students will learn:

- Preventing sexually-transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies, and sources of information/support (e.g. doctor, public health unit).
- Gender identity and sexual orientation, and how things like acceptance, stigma, stereotypes, self-awareness, culture, religion and media can influence a person's understanding of themselves.
- Building healthy relationships with peers, family members and potential romantic partners (e.g. honesty, open communication and respect).
- Think in advance and apply knowledge of sexual health and safety, including consent and sexual limits.

Grade 10

Goal: Provide information to students that helps them to understand and express their identity as it develops.

What students will learn:

- Factors (e.g. their values/beliefs, what they see in media, setting and communicating limits) that can influence a person's decisions about sexual activity.
- Common misconceptions about sexuality in our culture, how these may cause harm to people, and how they can be responded to critically and fairly.
- How being in an exclusive romantic relationship may affect you and your relationships with others.

Grade 11

Goal: As students near the end of high school, they learn self-awareness and self-monitoring skills to help: 1) understand their strengths and needs; 2) take responsibility for actions; 3) monitor their health progress and fitness goals; and 4) acquire health

knowledge and apply it throughout their lifetime.

What students will learn:

- Mental health/illnesses and addictions, their causes and symptoms, and their effects on personal health and well-being.
- Proactive health measures and supports (e.g. regular medical exams such as Pap tests) that can minimize the risk of reproductive or sexual health problems.
- How to use personal and interpersonal skills to deal with stress and help others in stressful situations (e.g. abusive relationships, illness, separation/divorce).
- The negative stigma sometimes associated with mental illness and ways to reduce it in their community.

- Skills and strategies needed to maintain a satisfactory relationship as it evolves (e.g. conflict resolution).
- Skills and resources to maintain health and well-being as they become more independent.
- How they can apply their strengths and interests to the development of life plans and goals.
- How to analyze how different relations are portrayed in the media, and how to take action to encourage more realistic and inclusive messaging.

Grade 12

Goal: The final year of high school emphasizes how students can maintain the habits of healthy, active living throughout their lives.

What students will learn:

- How relationships may develop through stages.



Learn more

To find answers to more questions about how the HPE curriculum will be taught, please visit our website at www.peelschools.org/hpe. You'll find links to the Ministry of Education's parent resource guides and full HPE curriculum documents.



We inspire success, confidence and hope in each student.



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