

Parents & Kids, Talking About Sex ©

Tackling Tough Topics - What is the New Montgomery County Health Education Curriculum?

Parents have had difficulty determining exactly what is the new health education curriculum. On August 26, 2007 the Health Education website for Montgomery County Public Schools at <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/health/> linked to the **Grade 8 Instructional Outline**. However, this outline does not include the new classes in 8th & 10th grade that discuss homosexuality or the 10th grade condom use demonstration lesson. This content in the January 9, 2007 *Revisions to the Grade 8 & Grade 10 Health Education Curriculum*, can be found at <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/boe/meetings/agenda/2006-07/2007-0109/BoardHealthEdPaper1-9-07.pdf>

Old or New Curriculum? Parents need to ask their child's school for a clarification of what will be covered.

Included in the grade eight Instructional Outline for *Family Life and Human Sexuality* is a class objective to "Identify and Describe Methods of Pregnancy Prevention" that lists abstinence as but one of nine alternative methods (p. 26). While the outline recognizes abstinence and includes "unprotected sex" in a list of risky behaviors, students are told that people who engage in sexual activity "should practice responsible/protected sexual behavior." Additionally students are taught that people are "ostracized from the church for using certain methods" of birth control (p. 26). And the section on disease prevention states that religious beliefs include "disease caused by unclean thoughts" and "treat disease through prayer" (p.29). The class identifies STD's including HIV(AIDS), but makes no mention of increased STD/HIV risk from homosexual activity.

High School Comprehensive Health Education

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/health/gr9a.htm#flhs>

Family Life and Human Sexuality

Although students are to "Identify abstinence from sexual intercourse as the most effective means of preventing pregnancy," the class emphasis is to "Evaluate methods of family planning and the effectiveness of methods of contraception"(p. 28). Students also "Analyze risks and consequences of sexual activity" (p.28), but there is no mention of the increased STD/HIV risk from homosexual activity. The effectiveness rates presented are exclusively for pregnancy prevention; there is no clarification as to the birth control methods' difference in preventing pregnancy vs. preventing STD/HIV infection. The school nurse and Planned Parenthood's Karen Enns are listed as approved guest speakers. Ms Enns' phone number is listed in the instructional outline (p.33).

The Disease Prevention and Control class on *Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle and Reducing Risk of Disease* advises students to use the Whitman-Walker Clinic and Planned Parenthood as "Resources For Information, Assessment, Equipment, and/or Treatment of Disease or Disability"(p.36).