



Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child's health is important to us. In New York City Public Schools, Health Education classes in middle and high school include lessons on violence and injury prevention; social, emotional, and mental health; nutrition and physical activity; tobacco, alcohol, and other drug-use prevention; and sexual health, including HIV. Now more than ever, students need to apply the life skills they learn in Health Education to prevent illness, access valid health information and services, and care for their social, emotional, and mental health.

The New York State Department of Education requires a one-semester, comprehensive Health Education course in both middle and high school. In this class, students learn how to live a healthy life and avoid engaging in risky behaviors. Health Education classes for middle and high school include lessons about sexual health that are appropriate for your child's age. This unit includes the annual state-mandated HIV education lessons.

Sexual health lessons provide students with medically accurate information and communication skills to help them make decisions that can keep them healthy and safe. Our shared goal is to delay sexual activity in school-age youth.

We know that our students and their families have a range of beliefs, cultures, and customs. Those values are core, essential guidelines for your child's life. As a parent/guardian, you may opt your child out of certain lessons about birth control and/or methods of HIV/sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention. You cannot remove your child from abstinence or other sexual health education lessons. If you have questions about which lessons you may opt your child out of, please speak with the principal, parent coordinator, or Health Education teacher at your child's school.

If you would like your child to be excused from birth control and/or HIV/STI prevention lessons, write a letter to your child's principal. The letter should state that:

- Your child should not be in the classroom during lessons about birth control and/or methods of HIV/STI prevention; and
- You will provide your child instruction on HIV/AIDS prevention at home.

As in all areas, parents and guardians are a child's first and most influential teachers. Parents, guardians, and schools share a common goal: we want students of all ages to be healthy in all aspects of their lives. We encourage you to discuss with your child what they are learning in class and share your values about how to lead a healthy life with them. If you want to learn more about your child's Health Education class, talk to your child's principal and teachers.

Best,

Melissa Aviles-Ramos
Chancellor