



DISINFORMATION RESPONSE GUIDANCE

Addressing disinformation related to standards and curriculum with members, parents, and the community

Topic:

New Jersey's Health and Physical Education Standards
NJ Individuals with Disabilities and LGBTQ+ Curriculum
NJ Diversity and Inclusion Curriculum

Know the facts

While it is usually not explicitly stated, political actors on the extreme right often attempt to [conflate multiple issues](#)—in this case, standards and curriculum—to play into parental fear about evolving curricula in schools. The overwhelming majority of examples being cited online to stoke fear and outrage are taken out of context, manipulated toward a political end, and have little to no basis in what is happening inside New Jersey's nearly 600 school districts.

The purpose of this document is to help you talk with NJEA members, parents, and your community about some of the issues being talked about in deliberately misleading ways.

On Standards vs. Curriculum vs. Lessons:

While most educators understand the difference between State Standards, curriculum, and individual lessons, many parents can be confused by the different but similar terms. Political actors often purposely misuse these terms to elicit a response from parents and others.

Standards are what students are supposed to have learned by the end of the year. The curriculum represents a overarching outcome for educators with a school to help students reach the standards. Daily lessons, along with resources and assessments, are part of the curriculum and they ensure the curriculum and standards.

Standards do not mandate specific instruction, the use of certain materials, or assessments. Rather, they provide a blueprint for local school leaders and curriculum designers to develop appropriate curricula for students in their communities.

The responsibility to develop and implement curricula rests with local school officials. Once a curriculum for a given subject is written and adopted by a Board of Education, classroom teachers use the curriculum to write daily lesson plans to meet the specific needs of their students.

On Health and Physical Education Standards:

In 2020, the current members of New Jersey State Board of Education adopted a [revised set of Health and Physical Education Standards](#) to guide the development of curriculum in local school districts.

The goal of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Comprehensive Health & Physical Education is to provide clear, consistent and straightforward guidance on the essential minimum, core content for sexuality education that is developmentally and age-appropriate for students in grades K–12. More than forty individuals from the fields of health education, sexuality education, public health, public policy, philanthropy and advocacy convened at the national level to create a strategic plan for sexuality education policy and implementation.

These revisions to the Health and Physical Education Standards require students to be able to “demonstrate ways to promote dignity and respect for all people (e.g., sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, differing ability, immigration status, family configuration)” and also to be able to “differentiate between gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.”

Parents retain the right to opt-out of sex education curriculum if they feel their child is not prepared for that instruction.

On the Individuals with Disabilities and LGBTQ+ Curriculum:

In 2019, Gov. Murphy signed a law to create and implement new Individuals with Disabilities and LGBTQ+ curriculum, which mandates that school curricula include the historical contributions of disabled and LGBTQ+ people in middle and high school classes where appropriate.

Specifically, the 2019 mandate states that “a board of education shall include instruction on the political, economic, and social contributions of persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, in an appropriate place in the curriculum of middle school and high school students as part of the district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.”

On the Diversity and Inclusion Curriculum:

In 2019, Gov. Murphy signed a law that required schools districts to incorporate the age-appropriate and subject-area-appropriate lessons on diversity and inclusion within the curriculum in grades K – 12.

Specifically, the 2019 mandate requires classroom instruction shall:

- “(1) highlight and promote diversity, including economic diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, and belonging in connection with gender and sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, disabilities, and religious tolerance;
- “(2) examine the impact that unconscious bias and economic disparities have at both an individual level and on society as a whole; and
- “(3) encourage safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all students regardless of race or ethnicity, sexual and gender identities, mental and physical disabilities, and religious beliefs.”

Talking about the issues

When communicating with members, parents, or the community, it is important to remember the Health and Physical Education Standards, the Individuals with Disabilities and LGBTQ+ Curriculum, and the Diversity and Inclusion Curriculum, all:

- Include **age-appropriate** lessons and materials
 - Throughout a child’s time in school, district leaders and classroom teachers work to ensure that all materials presented to children are age-appropriate, culturally relevant, and in alignment with statutory curricular requirements
 - Because each school district tailors their lessons to meet the needs of their communities, lessons can *and will* look different from town to town
- Are based on truth and honesty
 - The standards and curriculum being taught in New Jersey’s schools are based on objective facts and indisputable historical occurrences
 - At a time when reality is up for debate, it is important that educators work with students so they can discern fact from fiction and formulate their own opinions and world views
- Promote acceptance and respect
 - Public schools are required by law to be safe and inclusive environments for all students
 - To create safe and inclusive environments for all students, standards, curricula, and lessons are designed to promote intrapersonal understanding and respect for those who are different from us and those we may not understand or agree with

- Thrive with parental input
 - Educators and parents agree that the best, most transformative education happens with parents and educators working together
 - If there are questions or concerns about a lesson, parents should work with teachers and school administrators to understand and offer insight and input on specific lessons being implemented in classroom
- Encourage compassion and curiosity
 - The purpose of education is to expand what one knows, and these instructional practices, through an age-appropriate, student-centered approach, seek to help students understand many complex issues facing society today.
 - Through this intentional practice, educators work to increase students' sense of compassion and humanity toward all people, regardless of gender, sex, creed, ability level, race, ethnicity, personal history, or background.

Resources and more information

Disabled and LGBTQ+ Curriculum

[AchieveNJ: The Path to LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum](#)

[Garden State Equality](#)

Diversity and Inclusion Curriculum

[Message Guidance for Talking About Honest and Accurate Education](#)

[NEA Ed Justice Honesty in Education page –includes model school board resolution](#)