



Supporting your Child's Personal Development at School and Home

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Introduction

In this session, we will look at:

- The rights of your child in education
- What schools are required to teach in sexuality education
- Important strategies to reinforce at school and at home
- The importance of good communication
- The importance of working collaboratively with your child's school
- Strategies for building cooperative relationships
- What to do if your teacher or school isn't providing the type of sexuality education and support that you want

Educational Rights

- All students with disability have the right to access education on the same basis as other students
- A student with disability must have opportunities and choices which are comparable with those offered to students without disability
- Under the Disability Education standards, schools are required to:
 - Consult with the student and their family
 - make reasonable adjustments
 - eliminate harassment and victimisation

Disability Standards for Education (2005)

The PDHPE Syllabus

- All schools are required to provide sexuality education to students as part of the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) Syllabus
- The PDHPE syllabus only tells teachers **what** content they must cover and what outcomes students should achieve
- The PDHPE syllabus doesn't tell teachers **how** they must teach it

The PDHPE Syllabus

The PDHPE syllabus requires schools to cover content including:

- The body and how it works
- Puberty and life changes
- Hygiene
- Emotions
- Protective behaviours
- Communication skills
- Healthy and unhealthy relationships, including sexual relationships
- Reproduction and menstruation
- Identity, including sexual and gender identity
- Sexual health, including safe sex, contraception and STIs

The PDHPE Syllabus

- Sexuality education may look very different between school depending on:
 - The knowledge, skills and experience of the teacher
 - The approach of school management
 - The values of the school (e.g., schools with religious affiliations)
 - The values of the school community
 - Mainstream schools vs Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs)
- *Who knows what their child is currently being taught in sexuality education at school?*
- *What do you want to know about you child's sexuality education at school?*

What is your child learning at school?

What questions can you ask about your child's sexuality education?

- What values does the program promote?
- How will I know that my child learned the concepts taught?
- Will practical skills will you be teaching my child?
- What provisions does it make to teach to my child's learning capabilities?
- What protective strategies will you be teaching my child?
- How will you be supporting my child's ability to understand consent?
- What topics will you be covering?

What is your child learning at school?

- Does it encourage my child to talk to me if he/she has questions/fears?
- Does it teach general social skills? Making friends?
- Does it teach about other ways of being intimate and showing affection besides sexual intercourse?
- Will you be teaching the positive aspects of sexuality, or just about keeping safe?
- How can I help?

How can you help?

The following strategies are important at home and at school:

- Using correct names for private body parts
- Reinforcing the difference between private and public
- Asking for consent as much as possible, and respecting that consent
- Encouraging the child to continuously build skills and independence. E.g., personal care
- Preparing in advance for puberty changes

Good communication with the school is vital for all these to succeed

Importance of Good Communication

Good communication:

- Builds understanding and trust
- Minimises misunderstandings and conflict
- Saves time!
- Is the foundation of any collaborative partnership

Why is it important to work collaboratively with your child's school?

Research shows that effective family-school partnerships have the following benefits:

- Better learning outcomes for students
- Fewer problems with students' challenging behaviour
- Teachers have a more comprehensive understanding of students
- Families and schools are better able to prioritise and solve problems collaboratively for the benefit of the student

What are the benefits for you and your child?

- Consistency between home and school is less confusing for your child
 - Key messages are reinforced
 - Positive behaviours are reinforced
 - Challenging behaviours are better managed
- More support for you – puberty can be a particularly difficult time
- You know what your child is- or isn't being- taught
- You know if what your child is being taught matches your family's values

Strategies to Build Cooperative Relationships

What you can do?

- Talk with the school before your child starts to ensure all the planning that needs to be in place is done before your child's first day
- Ask the school about the curriculum they will offer your child and how it will be personalised to meet their specific needs
- Discuss the sorts of preparatory work you can do with your child before they start school to help them make a smooth transition this might involve
- Discuss how knowledge, skills and behaviours can be reinforced in the same positive way both at home and school

Strategies to Build Cooperative Relationships

- Schedule support meetings each term with the relevant staff, to monitor and share your child's progress
- Find out about the extra-curricular and allied health services your child can access and try to organise times to meet with these people.
- Maybe you can assist in school extra-curricular events?
- Tell your school what methods you would prefer to use to communicate and how frequently you would like to be contacted
- Maintaining regular contact and sharing what you know

Strategies to Build Cooperative Relationships

What the school should do:

- Be accessible and transparent
- Communicate with you about what your child has achieved **and** what hasn't gone so well
- Collaborate with you and your child on how to best meet your child's need
- Ask you about what your concerns are

Strategies to Build Cooperative Relationships

- Involve you in problem solving
- Discuss with you how knowledge, skills and behaviours can be reinforced in the same positive way both at home and school
- Value your opinions and input



Importance of Feedback

If you aren't satisfied with the way the school is communicating, the sexuality education program or the support your child is receiving:

- Speak to the school first (teacher or Principal)
- It is always best to try to resolve things at the local level

If you aren't satisfied with the school's response:

- Make a complaint to the relevant education authority (e.g., NSW Department of Education, Regional Catholic Education Office)

If it's a matter of discrimination against your child, you can complain to:

- NSW Anti-discrimination board
- Australian Human Rights Commission

A Teacher Talking About the Importance of Parental Involvement

- www.safeschoolshub.edu.au/for-parents/what-to-do-about-/special-needs/a-head-of-special-education-emphasises-the-importance-of-parental-involvement