

Health Education

What do the changes mean for ISDS?

NEW CURRICULUM STANDARDS

High-quality sex education supports adolescent health, teen pregnancy prevention, and healthy relationships. In November 2020, for the first time in more than two decades, the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted new minimum curriculum standards that guide sex education in Texas. These newly adopted Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, for Health Education include many improvements across a wide array of topics, including sexual and reproductive health. Health Education is an elective at the high school level but required in middle school, and key sex ed topics will now be offered at the middle school level. Many school districts do not currently offer sex education, and will need to adopt updated curriculum to align with new TEKS.



To view new TEKS, scan this code

New TEKS include:

- Age-appropriate, timely information on key topics like anatomy, puberty, menstruation and human reproduction.
- Information on contraception, condoms, and prevention, screening and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), now required at the middle and high school levels.
- The importance of abstinence.
- Standards on healthy relationships, such as prevention of sexual abuse, dating violence, sex trafficking, and in support of topics such as healthy communication and respect. While the standards teach the importance of respecting the boundaries of other people, they do not include consent.
- Standards do not cover sexual orientation or gender identity. However, districts may choose to include content that is inclusive of LGBTQ students, including bullying prevention.

Minimum Standards

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills represent the **minimum** curriculum standards that must be delivered to students. However, in any subject, TEKS are the floor, not the ceiling. School districts are not prohibited from "teaching beyond the TEKS" and may provide instruction in topics that are not covered in TEKS.

For example, while the TEKS do not specifically include content on consent, many districts recognize the importance of this topic and incorporate consent into instructional materials.

What instruction must be provided?

Health education is part of the enrichment curriculum. Following changes in 2009, Health Education is no longer a graduation requirement and is elective at the high school level. However, Health Education TEKS are required to be delivered at the elementary and middle school level.

Per the Texas Administrative Code, all the TEKS for health education for grades K-8 are required to be taught and students must demonstrate proficiency of those TEKS.

- The Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §74.2(a) states that health education is part of the required curriculum for grades K-5.
- The Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §74.3(a)(1) states that the TEKS for health education must be taught in grades 6-8 as part of the required curriculum. For grades 7-8, the TEKS are banded together, which provides districts with the flexibility of when and how to offer the course. For example, a district or campus might decide to teach all these TEKS in grade 7, they might teach all of them in grade 8, or they might teach half of the TEKS in grade 7 and the other half of the TEKS in grade 8.
- While Health Education is not required statewide at the high school level, districts do have the option of choosing to require Health Education in high school.