

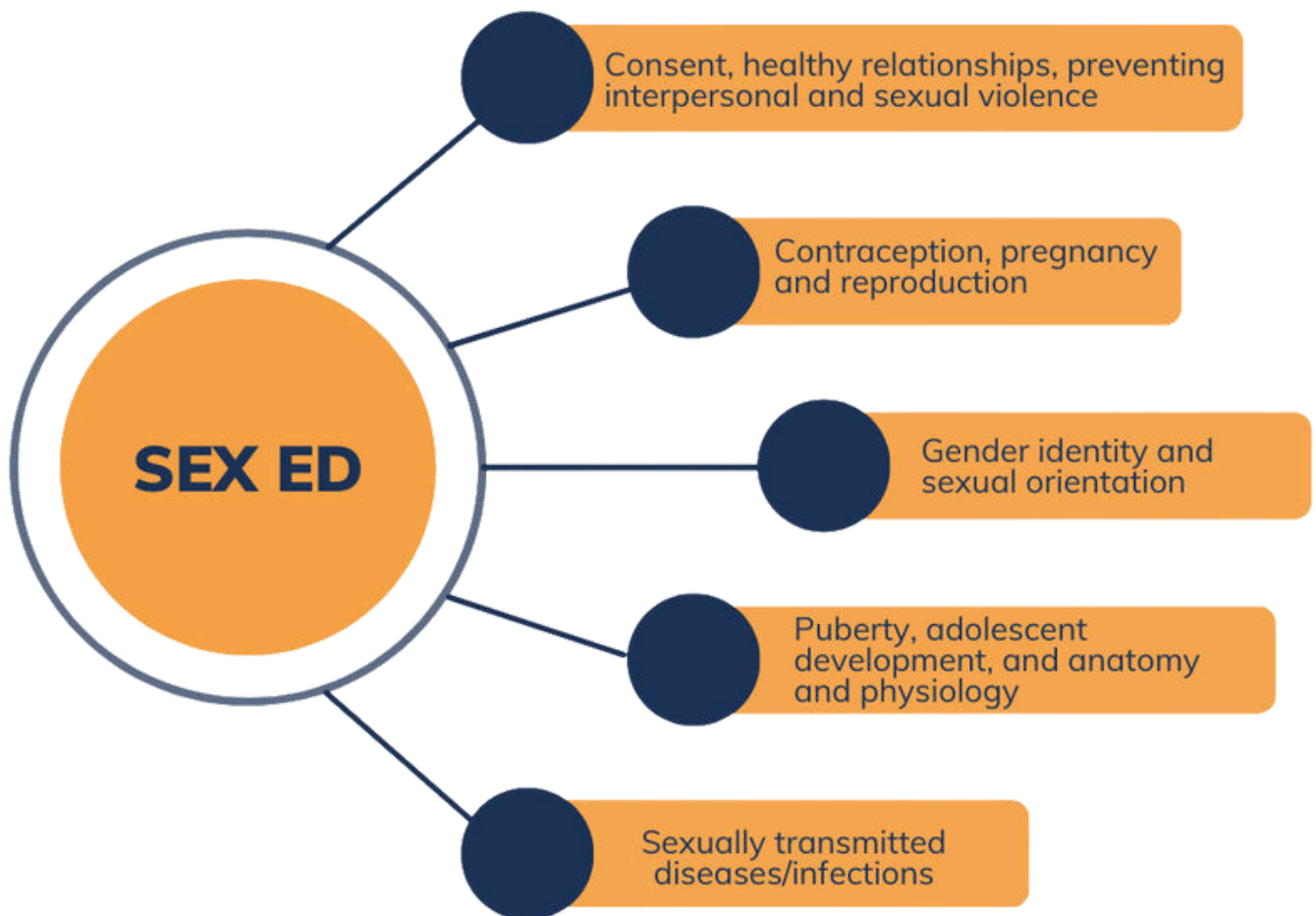


# **SEX ED 101**

**THE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER'S  
GUIDE TO SEX EDUCATION**

# WHAT IS SEX EDUCATION?

Sex education is so much more than the birds and the bees. It's essential for young people to learn how to take care of their bodies and relationships and grow into healthy adults. Effective sex education starts early, is accurate, evidence-based, age-appropriate, and includes:



For more information on what should be covered in sex education, check out our [handy guide to the National Sex Education Standards](#).

## WHAT IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

Your constituent gave this guide to you because you are a member of the school board and they need your help to defend and/or advance sex education in your school district.

# THE FACTS

**Sex education is popular!** Most people strongly support public school sex education (despite well-funded opposition campaigns), including 96% of parents who want it to be taught in high school, and 84% of parents who want their kids to have it in middle school.

**Every student needs sex education.** When all students learn sexual health and wellness education together, some really beautiful things happen: they become less likely to bully each other, they do better in their schoolwork, and they are more likely to help each other if someone is being bullied or abused.

And that's not all: sex education can help young people build more healthy peer relationships and break out of isolation, and for many students it provides the first and best information they'll get on consent, puberty, and pregnancy and STI prevention.

**Sex education is even more important for some students.** Sex ed reduces gender-based violence by giving all students the tools they need to both say and hear "no." And it increases the safety and mental health of LGBTQ+ students by creating a more affirming school community.

**Sex Education includes parents.** Not only do an overwhelming majority of parents support sex ed; the National Sex Ed Standards actively encourage schools to include parents, caregivers, and other trusted adults in a young person's education.

# HOW GOOD IS YOUR DISTRICT'S SEX EDUCATION?

You can learn more about the laws and regulations regarding sex education in your state [at this link](#). Wherever you live, as a school board member, **you have the power to improve your school district's sex education**, and this guide will help you do just that.

## HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK TO EVALUATE SEX EDUCATION IN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT:

|  | YES                   | NO                    |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Is sex education mandated?   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Is sex education required to be comprehensive and medically accurate?  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Does the curriculum require instruction on consent and age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention?  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Does the curriculum include instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity?   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Does your sex education policy have an opt-out ( <b>not</b> an opt-in) policy?   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Does the sex education curriculum align with the National Sex Education Standards? View the <a href="#">standards</a> or our <a href="#">easy overview</a> for more information. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

# WHAT CAN I DO?

As a school board member, you can ensure that the sex education in your districts meets students' needs without needing to be an expert in the field. Here are some steps you can take:

## **Propose and pass policy that improves sex education.**

EducateUS maintains a [running list of model policies](#) passed by other school districts in the country – use them for inspiration.

**Appoint people to special advisory committees.** In many places, school districts have special advisory committees to review their sex education curricula and make recommendations about it to the school board. As a school board member, you can appoint community members who understand the evidence supporting sex education, and encourage advisory committee members to arrange conversations with sex education experts.

**Don't be intimidated by the opposition.** We know that opponents of sex education sometimes show up in force at school board meetings, but remember that, in most places in the country, they are actually in the minority. The vast majority of parents and students continue to support sex education.

**Engage your community.** Reach out to your community to build support for sex education. You can make more progress advocating for improvements to sex education in your school district when you have community members backing you up. Our Lead Organizer, Candace Hardnett, can help mobilize your community. Contact Candace at [chardnett@educateusaction.org](mailto:chardnett@educateusaction.org) to get the conversation started.

# TRICKS FROM THE OPPOSITION

Opponents of sex education are well-funded and loud. But that doesn't mean they get to win. Our strategy should always be to unify people through common values and stand up to our opposition.

## Familiarize yourself with tricky language:

- Shifting to an **opt-in policy** for sex education means parents have to sign a permission slip or otherwise actively agree before their kids can learn what they need to. Whether a parent is busy or a child forgets about the form, opt-in policies make it impossible for some students to get the education they need even when their parents want them to.
- Our opposition claims that everything taught in medically accurate and age-appropriate sex education classes is **obscene, pornography or sexualizing**, from the proper names of body parts to explanations of consent to descriptions of how students can protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections.

- **Curriculum transparency** is a popular phrase referring to the opposition's efforts to break public schools by insisting that all curricula be made public. This puts an impossible burden on schools and teachers that are already underfunded and overburdened.
- Our opposition uses the phrase **parental rights** when they want to impose their personal opinions on everyone else's children, without regard to the rights of the other parents of children in the school, let alone the rights of the children themselves.
- **Released Time for Religious Instruction** can be used as a smokescreen to remove kids from school during class time and take them offsite to conversion classes run by unlicensed adults. You can read more from [Parents Against Lifewise](#).

For more on opposition tactics and how to move past them, check out our [Speak Up Guide](#).



## ...BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY

**You are not alone.** If you want to help defend or advance sex education in your district, if you need help finding the curriculum that's right for your community, if you need help finding funding for improvements to sex education, or if you want to deepen your understanding of anything in this guide, EducateUS is here to help.

Just reach out to Candace Hardnett, Lead Organizer, at [chardnett@educateusaction.org](mailto:chardnett@educateusaction.org) and let us know how we can be of use in making sure that every student in your district gets the education they need to grow and thrive – no exceptions.

