

Overview of MOE's Sexuality Education in Schools

MOE's sexuality education aims to help students make responsible choices on matters involving sexuality. It is taught in the context of values which our mainstream society believes - the importance of the heterosexual married family as the basic unit of society, and respect for the values and beliefs of the different ethnic and religious communities on sexuality issues.

The three key messages of sexuality education are:

- Build healthy futures for yourself, family and society;
- Healthy relationships based on love and respect are the foundation for strong families; and
- Casual sex can lead to unwanted pregnancies, STIs/HIV which can harm and hurt your loved ones.

MOE recognises that issues of sexuality involve value judgments and that parents are ultimately responsible for the health and moral values of their children. Thus, parents can opt their children out of a school's sexuality education programme or individual topics, talks and workshops.

Why the Need for Sexuality Education

Both parents and schools want our young to acquire the knowledge, values and habits which will allow them to develop healthy and responsible relationships as they grow up. While parents bear the main responsibility for their children's sexuality education, schools have a complementary role to play in providing students with objective and reliable information on sexuality as part of a holistic education.

The three main challenges that MOE aims to address through sexuality education are:

1. Problems Related To Teenage Pregnancies, STIs/HIV Among Teens

Each year we have about 2000 teenage pregnancies in Singapore (statistically age group used is 10 to 19). Some abort their pregnancies while others go on to give birth and become teenage mothers. Both groups suffer negative consequences, either from the trauma of abortions or as a teenage, often single mother, for which they are ill-equipped.

2. Sexual Activity Among Teenagers

Teenage pregnancies and the higher rates of STIs indicate that some youths are sexually active and are having unprotected sex.

3. Greater Access to Information

Our young have many sources of information online, from popular culture and friends. They are exposed to social norms of other societies and interest groups, including those with liberal values. Hence, it is important that parents play an active role in guiding their own children and for them to be able to receive objective and reliable information in schools.

MOE's Framework for Sexuality Education

The Framework for Sexuality Education was developed and disseminated to all schools in 2000, setting out the principles, goals, and main themes for the design and delivery of sexuality education in schools.

1. The key guiding principles of sexuality education are:
 - parents bear the main responsibility for the sexuality education of their children;
 - sexuality education is premised on the importance of the heterosexual married family as the basic unit of society;
 - the teaching of facts is integrated with the teaching of values, which reflect that of the mainstream society;
 - students will be taught to understand and respect the attitudes, values and beliefs regarding sexuality that other communities propagate;
 - specially selected and trained teachers are to teach the Growing Years package; and
 - relevant resources in the community will be brought in to complement school resources for sexuality education.
2. The three goals of sexuality education are:
 - provide accurate and adequate knowledge on human sexuality and the consequences of sexual activity so that pupils are able to make informed decisions;
 - impart intra- and inter-personal skills of problem-solving, decision-making and effective communication so that pupils are able to build responsible and rewarding relationships; and
 - inculcate positive values and attitudes of sexuality so that pupils develop a respect for themselves and others as sexual beings, premised on the heterosexual married family as the basic unit of society.

MOE evaluates the content and approaches in sexuality education periodically to ensure that sexuality education remains relevant for our students, while keeping to the guiding principles. A Steering Committee chaired by the Director-General of Education comprising well-trained professionals including psychologists, counsellors, educationists and medical practitioners, will periodically review the sexuality education framework and curriculum. To ensure that concerns of the wider public and parents are also addressed, the Steering Committee will also consult COMPASS (COMMunity and PARENTS in Support of Schools), which has representatives from the community and parents.