

Review of Sexuality and Gender Education

NSW Department of Education

William Loudon

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Executive Summary

1. The NSW *Personal Development, Health and Physical Education* syllabuses are aligned with sex and gender education approaches in comparable English-speaking countries.
 - Medically accurate sex education, which uses correct anatomical terms and provides specific information about puberty, contraception and sexually transmitted infections, is mandatory in Canada, Wales, New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland, Singapore and 13 US states, and recommended in England and Northern Ireland.
 - Sex education is inclusive of sex and gender diversity in Canada, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand and nine US states. It is prohibited by law in Singapore and five US states.
2. The NSW Department of Education policy and guidelines provide a comprehensive and appropriate platform for government schools' and teachers' decision-making on sex and gender education.
3. The *Teacher Toolbox* resources were designed to support teachers in NSW government schools in implementation of the sex and gender content of the *Personal Development, Health and Physical Education K-6* and *Personal Development, Health and Physical Education 7-10* syllabuses.
4. Use of the *Teacher Toolbox* resources is optional for schools. The units of work and lessons are inclusive of sex and gender diversity and consistent with NSW anti-discrimination legislation, the NSW syllabuses and sex and gender education syllabuses in comparable international jurisdictions.
5. The *Teacher Toolbox* activities are generally age-appropriate but the review identifies content in several resources that is not suitable for all students. The Department of Education should review these resources and teachers should not use them without the approval of their school principal.
6. *Crossroads* is a compulsory 25-hour unit of work for Year 11-12 students in NSW government schools. Broad topics are specified, but the content and sample lessons are optional for schools. The resources build on knowledge from the *PDHPE 7-10* syllabus, and cover the same content as syllabuses in comparable international jurisdictions.
7. *Crossroads* activities are generally age-appropriate but the review identifies content in several resources that is not suitable for all students. The Department of Education should review these resources and teachers should not use them without the approval of their school principal.

Findings

Personal Development, Health and Physical Education Syllabuses

1. The *PDHPE K-6* and *PDHPE 7-10* syllabuses provide a developmentally appropriate sequence of sex and gender education content, including age-appropriate references to sex and gender diversity. The syllabuses provide more detail than most comparable jurisdictions, and are sufficient guidance for schools' and teachers' planning of sex and gender education.

Department of Education Policy and Guidelines

2. The NSW Department of Education policy and guidelines provide a comprehensive and appropriate platform for government schools' and teachers' decision-making on sex and gender education. They should, however, be reviewed to align with any changes following this review.

Teacher Toolbox, Early Stage 1-Stage 3

3. The *K-6 Teacher Toolbox* activities are age-appropriate, inclusive and linked to syllabus outcomes.

Teacher Toolbox, Stage 4

4. The Stage 4 lessons in the *Teachers Toolbox* are inclusive and linked to syllabus outcomes.
5. The Stage 4 unit of work "Exploring Sexual Risk" includes medically accurate but explicit material on sexual practices and the risks of infection.

The Department of Education should review the age-appropriateness of the examples used in this unit and teachers should not use the materials without the approval of their school principal.

Teacher Toolbox, Stage 5

6. Stage 5 *Toolbox* resources are consistent with the NSW syllabus, and cover similar content as the Ontario and New Zealand syllabuses.
7. Some of the scenarios in some Stage 5 *Toolbox* activities would not be appropriate for all students.

The Department of Education should review the age-appropriateness of the role plays and scenarios used in Stage 5 *Toolbox* activities and teachers should not use the materials without the approval of their school principal.

8. Stage 5 *Toolbox* video resources are from authoritative sources; where the videos are higher risk, schools should take steps to ensure that the Department of Education policy on the use of audio visual resources have been followed.
9. The inclusive approach to sex and gender diversity in Stage 5 *Toolbox* resources is consistent with NSW anti-discrimination legislation, the *PDHPE K-10* syllabuses and practices in comparable international jurisdictions.

Crossroads

10. The six *Crossroads* learning contexts are mandatory in NSW government schools but specific content and teaching strategies are intended to be chosen by individual schools.
11. *Crossroads* sex and gender resources cover the same content as the Year 11-12 Ontario and New Zealand syllabuses.
12. *Crossroads* resources build on the *PDHPE 7-10* syllabus and reflect the optional content suggested in the *Crossroads* master document.
13. Some of the scenarios in *Crossroads* lessons on media, technology and sexuality would not be appropriate for all students.

The Department of Education should review the appropriateness of the role plays and scenarios used in these *Crossroads* activities and teachers should not use the materials without the approval of their school principal.

14. In the context of adolescent sexual health *Crossroads* should prefer authoritative NSW Health websites and teachers should not refer students elsewhere unless they can be confident of the entire range of other material which may appear on third-party websites.
15. The teacher note on controversial issues that appears at the front of each *Teacher Toolbox* unit of work should appear in each of the sex and gender lessons provided for *Crossroads*.
16. The inclusive approach to sex and gender diversity in the *Crossroads* resources is consistent with NSW anti-discrimination legislation, the *PDHPE K-10* syllabuses and practices in comparable international jurisdictions.
17. *Crossroads* uses medically accurate language in the context of lessons on sexual health risks. This is consistent with Department policy, but the Department of Education should review the appropriateness of the language for use with all students.

18. The Department of Education should clearly indicate whether material bearing its logo is mandatory or optional.
19. If fine-grained, lesson-level teaching materials are required for potentially contentious topics, the Department of Education should support one or more independent agencies to provide them.

1. Purpose and Process of the Review

The NSW Department of Education commissioned a review of departmental resources that relate to sexuality and gender in October 2016. The review compares the NSW resources with international curriculum materials, provides an analysis of the *Teacher Toolbox* and *Crossroads* resources, and includes a set of findings about the appropriateness of the NSW resources.

The literature review draws on curriculum documents available in English. These typically take the form of national, state or school district sex education laws, syllabuses and resources. National summaries are provided for the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand and Singapore.

The NSW resources include the *Personal Development, Health and Physical Education K-6* and *7-10* syllabuses, the *Teacher Toolbox* and *Crossroads*.

- The *PDHPE K-6* and *PDHPE 7-10* syllabuses are compulsory for all NSW schools. They provide a list of content and learning outcomes, but do not include specific lessons or units of work.
- The *Teacher Toolbox* was developed to support teachers in NSW government schools in implementing the sex and gender education components of the PDHPE syllabuses. Use of the sample units of work and lessons in the *Teacher Toolbox* is optional in NSW government schools, and each of the lessons and units of work contains a variety of optional material and activities.
- *Crossroads* is a compulsory 25-hour unit of work for Year 11-12 students in NSW government schools. Schools are required to address six themes (personal identity, mental health and wellbeing, relationships, sexuality and sexual health, drugs and alcohol and safe travel). Some content topics are suggested for each theme, but the content is not compulsory. A set of optional lessons has been produced to support teaching of the sexuality and sexual health components of *Crossroads*. All the lessons are optional, and the lessons themselves include a variety of optional content and teaching strategies.

Note on Terms

Internationally, sex education documents and legislation use a range of acronyms when referring to members of sex and gender diverse groups. Statutory advice to schools in England, for example, uses the acronym LGBT for lesbian, gay bisexual and transsexual people and the NSW *Teacher Toolbox* uses the acronyms SSAIGD for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse people and GLBTQI for gay, lesbian, bisexual transgender, queer

and intersex people. In this report, the acronyms used are those that apply in the legislation or resource being described. Similarly, legislation and usage varies in the use of the acronyms STDs, for sexually transmitted diseases, and STIs, for sexually transmitted infections.

Jurisdictions also use a variety of terms to describe sex and gender education: sex education, sexuality education, sexual health education, reproductive health education, and sex and relationships education.

2. Sex and Gender Education in English-Speaking Jurisdictions

2.1 United States of America

2.1.1 Legal Requirements

States have constitutional responsibility for education in the United States, so the legal requirements about sex education vary from state to state. Sex education is compulsory in 24 of the 50 US states and the District of Columbia.

There are two broad streams of sex education in the United States: “medically accurate” and “abstinence-only” sex education. “Medically accurate” sex education is defined differently from state-to-state but typically includes comprehensive information on anatomy and physiology, puberty, conception, contraception, STIs and HIV/AIDS. “Abstinence-only” sex education, which has been federally-funded since 1981, promotes the health benefits of abstaining from sex until marriage and the benefits of monogamous relationships. Schools using federally-funded abstinence programs may not advocate or discuss methods of contraception except to emphasise their failure rates.¹ Twenty-seven states require that when sex education is offered abstinence must be stressed.²

In addition to legal limits on teaching about contraception and STDs, individual states may require materials to be age-appropriate, culturally inclusive, include information on HIV/AIDS, or treat sexual orientation in either an inclusive or negative manner.³

Thirty-four states and the District of Columbia make HIV/AIDS education compulsory; 13 jurisdictions require that sex or HIV information is medically accurate; 26 states plus DC require that information is age-appropriate; 27 states require that abstinence is stressed in sex education; and 39 require that abstinence is stressed or covered in HIV/AIDS education.

Nine states require that discussion of sexual orientation in the context of sex education be inclusive. Five states require only negative information on sexual orientation in sex or HIV/AIDS education. In Arizona, for example, HIV/AIDS education may not promote a homosexual lifestyle, portray homosexuality in a positive manner or describe methods of homosexual sex as safe.⁴

¹ <http://www.siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewpage&pageid=1340&nodeid=1>

² <https://www.gutmacher.org/state-policy/explore/sex-and-hiv-education>

³ <https://www.gutmacher.org/state-policy/explore/sex-and-hiv-education>

⁴ <http://law.justia.com/codes/arizona/2011/title15/section15-716>

2.1.2 National Standards

Although state legislatures or district school boards mandate content or approaches to sex education, in the United States there is a parallel stream of curriculum advice in the form of national standards promulgated by non-government organisations. The National Sexuality Education Standards have been developed by a partnership of three organisations: Advocates for Youth,⁵ Answer⁶ and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States.⁷

The National Sexuality Education Standards cover seven content areas and four phases of schooling (K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12).⁸ The seven topics are anatomy and physiology, puberty and adolescent development, identity, pregnancy and reproduction, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, healthy relationships and personal safety. The approach is inclusive and medically accurate, providing information about both contraception and abstinence. Table 1 summarises what students should know and be able to do by the end of each phase of schooling in the Identity strand of the standards.

Table 1. US National Sexuality Education Standards: content and skills, Identity strand, by phase of schooling

End of Phase	Content and Skills
K - Grade 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe differences and similarities in how boys and girls may be expected to act.• Provide examples of how friends, family, media, society and culture influence the ways in which boys and girls think they should act.
Grade 3 - 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define sexual orientation as romantic attraction to an individual of the same gender or of a different gender.• Identify parents or other trusted adults to whom they can ask questions about sexual orientation.• Demonstrate ways to treat others with dignity and respect.• Demonstrate ways students can work together to promote dignity and respect for all people.
Grade 6 - 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Differentiate between gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.• Explain the range of gender roles.• Analyze external influences that have an impact on one's attitudes about gender orientation and gender identity.• Access accurate information on gender expression and sexual orientation.• Communicate respectfully with and about people of all gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientations.

⁵ <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/>

⁶ <http://answer.rutgers.edu/page/aboutusintro>

⁷ <http://www.siecus.org/>

⁸ <http://futureofsexed.org/documents/josh-fose-standards-web.pdf>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan to promote dignity and respect for people in the school community.
Grade 9 - 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate between biological sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression. • Distinguish between sexual orientation, sexual behavior and sexual identity. • Explain how to promote safety, respect, awareness and acceptance. • Advocate for school policies and programs that promote dignity and respect for all. • Analyze the influence of peers, media, family, society, religion and culture on the expression of gender, sexual orientation and identity.

The Standards are supported by mapping tools that enable states and school districts to identify how well their local or state sex education curriculum matches the National Standards at each phase of schooling.⁹ In addition, the Standards are supported by National Teacher Preparation Standards for Sexuality Education¹⁰ and a comprehensive set of implementation tools¹¹ to support implementation of the Teacher Preparation Standards.

2.1.3 State Requirements: California and South Carolina

Mandatory content varies from state to state. In California, for example, recent legislation has required all school districts to provide sex education in Grades 7 to 12 from 2016. The purposes of sex education, according to the California Healthy Youth Act, are:

- (1) To provide pupils with the knowledge and skills necessary to protect their sexual and reproductive health from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and from unintended pregnancy.
- (2) To provide pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to develop healthy attitudes concerning adolescent growth and development, body image, gender, sexual orientation, relationships, marriage, and family.
- (3) To promote understanding of sexuality as a normal part of human development.
- (4) To ensure pupils receive integrated, comprehensive, accurate, and unbiased sexual health and HIV prevention instruction and provide educators with clear tools and guidance to accomplish that end.
- (5) To provide pupils with the knowledge and skills necessary to have healthy, positive, and safe relationships and behaviors.¹²

⁹ <http://futureofsexed.org/fosestandards.html>

¹⁰ <http://futureofsexed.org/teacherstandards.html>

¹¹ <http://futureofsexed.org/implementation.html>

¹² https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB329

Compliance with the relevant sections of the revised California Education Code (EC §51933 and §51934) requires a wide range of content concerning sex and gender diversity. Schools are required to: discuss social views on AIDS and HIV, including stereotypes and myths; not reflect bias based on gender identity or gender expression; recognise that people have different sexual orientations; include examples of same-sex relationships; include instruction on gender, gender expression and gender identity; and explore the harm of negative gender stereotypes.

South Carolina's mandatory content is less inclusive than California's. The Comprehensive Health Education Act¹³ defines reproductive health education as:

instruction in human physiology, conception, prenatal care and development, childbirth, and postnatal care, but does not include instruction concerning sexual practices outside marriage or practices unrelated to reproduction except within the context of the risk of disease. Abstinence and the risks associated with sexual activity outside of marriage must be strongly emphasized (§59-32-10).

There are some specific legislative restrictions on content. Abortion cannot be included among methods of birth control mentioned; programs may not include discussion of alternate sexual lifestyles from heterosexual relationships except in the context of instruction on sexually transmitted diseases; no contraceptive device may be distributed in schools; and films, pictures or diagrams may not include actual or simulated portrayals of sexual activities or sexual intercourse.

In South Carolina, school textbooks are mandated state-wide, but local school boards may develop or select their own materials for reproductive health education, family life education and pregnancy prevention education if the materials are approved by a local 13-member advisory committee that includes specified numbers of parent, clergy, health professionals, teachers and students.

2.1.4 Summary

Sex and gender education is compulsory in about half of the US states, and the character of sex education is politically contested. Some states require that instruction is medically accurate and inclusive of sex and gender diversity; other states limit the information that can be provided about methods of contraception, focus on abstinence as the key to reducing the risks of sexual infection and early pregnancy, and require that homosexuality not be portrayed in a positive manner. It is common for states of school districts to mandate textbooks and other instructional resources that are consistent with local legislative requirements are endorsed at state or school districts levels.

¹³ <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c032.php>

2.2 Canada

2.2.1 Legal Requirements

In Canada education is the constitutional responsibility of provincial governments. Sex education is compulsory in all provinces other than Québec, where some content is taught as part of Physical Education and Health but stand-alone sex education decisions are made at the school level. A pilot program running in the 2015-2016 and 2016-17 school years is expected to lead to sex education having a more formal place in the Québec curriculum in the future.¹⁴ Elsewhere in Canada, sex education is a part of provincial elementary and secondary health education syllabuses.

There is some variation across the nation in the age at which key content is covered.¹⁵ The names of body parts are introduced in Kindergarten in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Québec; in Grade 1 in Ontario, and somewhere between Grades 4-6 in other provinces. STDs and their prevention are introduced in Grade 6 in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan; between grades 5-7 in Nova Scotia; and later in Québec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Birth control is covered in Grade 7 in Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia; in Grade 8 in British Columbia, Alberta, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador; and Grades 9 or 10 in Saskatchewan.

Nine of Canada's ten provinces specify the grade at which the concepts of sexual orientation or gender identity are introduced (see Table 2). The only exception to this rule is Alberta, where the 2002 syllabus introduces the social influences on sexuality and gender roles but does not specifically mention sexual orientation or gender identity. These issues are, however, well canvassed in Education Alberta's 2016 *Guidelines for Best Practice: Creating*

¹⁴ <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/contenus-communs/education/sexuality-education/>

¹⁵ These conclusions are based on analysis of provincial syllabuses. By province, these materials may be found at:

- British Columbia: https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/course.php?lang=en&subject=Health_and_Career_Education&course=Health_and_Career_Education_K_to_7&year=2006
- Alberta: <https://education.alberta.ca/media/160196/health.pdf>
- Manitoba: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/framework/>
- Saskatchewan: <https://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca/webapps/moe-curriculum-BBLEARN/index.jsp#>
- Ontario: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/health.html>
- Québec http://www1.education.gouv.qc.ca/progressionPrimaire/educationPhysique/index_en.asp
- New Brunswick: http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/k12/content/anglophone_sector/curriculum_anglophone.html
- Nova Scotia: <https://sapps.ednet.ns.ca/Cart/index.php?UID=20120801154831142.227.51.61>
- Prince Edward Island: <http://www.gov.pe.ca/eecd/index.php3?number=1051678&lang=E>
- Newfoundland and Labrador: <http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/curriculum/guides/health/index.html>

*Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender identities and Gender Expressions.*¹⁶

Table 2: Grades at which the concepts of sexual orientation and gender identity are introduced, Canada, by province

Province	Grade at which children are introduced to concepts	
	Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity
British Columbia	Grade 6	Grade 6
Alberta	Unclear	Unclear
Saskatchewan	Grade 3	Grade 1
Manitoba	Unclear	Grade 5
Ontario	Grade 3	Grade 3
Québec	Grade 1	Grades 3-6
New Brunswick	Grade 3	Grade 6
Prince Edward Island	Grade 8	Unclear
Nova Scotia	Grade 3	Grade 4
Newfoundland and Labrador	Grade 9	Unclear

2.2.2 National Resources

Unlike Australia, which has both state and national school curriculum documents, all of Canada’s school curriculum documents are published by provincial government authorities. The Public Health Agency of Canada does, however, publish guidelines for sexual health education across the whole life course, and question and answer documents on sexual orientation and gender identity in schools. The Guidelines¹⁷ characterise effective sexual health education as not discriminating on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. The question and answer documents are designed to address commonly asked questions about gender identity¹⁸ and sexual orientation¹⁹ in schools.

The centrality of these views on sexual and gender diversity in Canadian public life is reflected in the national government’s recent amendments to the Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and gender expression.²⁰

¹⁶ <https://education.alberta.ca/media/1626737/91383-attachment-1-guidelines-final.p>

¹⁷ <http://sieccan.org/pdf/guidelines-eng.pdf>

¹⁸ http://sieccan.org/pdf/phac_genderidentity_qa-eng.pdf

¹⁹ http://sieccan.org/pdf/phac_orientation_qa-eng.pdf

²⁰ The Bill is before parliament at the time of writing. <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/identity-identite/aboutleg-aproposleg.html>

2.2.3 Provincial Requirements: Ontario

Ontario is Canada’s most populous province, accounting for almost 40% of the population. It is also the province with the most recently approved sex education courses. Revised in 2015, the Grades 1-8 and 9-12 Health and Physical Education syllabuses contain four strands: living skills, active living, movement competence and healthy living.²¹ Human development and sexual health is taught as part of the healthy living strand. Table 3 provides a summary of content, by grade, of the human development and sexual health content.

Table 3: Human development and sexual health content, by grade, Ontario

Grade	Human development and sexual health content
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body parts • Senses and functions • Hygienic procedures
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stages of development • Oral health (e.g. brushing, flossing, visits to dentist)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy relationships • Physical and emotional development • Visible/invisible differences, respect
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puberty – changes; emotional, social impact • Puberty – personal hygiene and care
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproductive system • Menstruation, sperm production • Emotional, interpersonal stresses in puberty
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of understanding of self • Understanding puberty changes, healthy relationships • Decision-making in relationships • Stereotypes and assumptions – impacts and strategies for responding
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delaying sexual activity • Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy prevention • Sexual health and decision-making • Relationship changes at puberty
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions about sexual activity; supports • Gender identity, sexual orientation, understanding of self • Decision-making, contraception • Relationships and intimacy
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventing pregnancy and STIs • Factors affecting gender identity and sexual orientation; supports • Relationships – skills and strategies • Thinking ahead about sexual health, consent, personal limits
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making, communication, healthy sexuality • Misconceptions relating to sexuality

²¹ <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/health1to8.pdf>;
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/health9to12.pdf>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships – effects on self and others
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental illness, addictions – causes, manifestations, effects on personal health and well-being • Reproductive and sexual health; proactive health measures • Skills for dealing with stressful situations • Mental illness, reducing stigma
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and strategies for evolving relationships • Identifying personal aptitudes and interests, developing life plans • Maintaining health and well-being when independent • Bias and stereotyping in media portrayal of relationships

Lesson plan advice, consistent with the syllabus, is available from third party providers. Ophea, one of Ontario’s health and physical education associations, provides “130 ready-to-use lesson plans per grade, supported by student templates and assessment tools.”²² Similarly, the public health service at the City of Toronto lists a range of lessons plans, resources and kits for teachers consistent with the new syllabus.²³

Although all Ontario schools are required to teach the health and physical education curriculum including the sex education content, the large number of publically funded Catholic schools will have support to deliver the curriculum in a way that is consistent with Catholic principles.²⁴

2.2.4 Summary

Sex education is a statutory obligation in all provinces but Québec. In all provinces, including Québec, there is a provincial health education syllabus that identifies the years in which important sex and relationships content is taught. In every case, these syllabuses are age-appropriate, medically accurate and inclusive. Year 8 students in Ontario, for example, learn about the range of gender identities and distinguish between these and gender expression and sexual orientation. Although statutory syllabuses are typically very comprehensive, they do not provide specific lesson plans. Teachers have the option of using third-party lesson plans and kits to support their teaching.

²² <http://teachingtools.ophea.net/lesson-plans/hpe>

²³

<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=ccf662ca69902410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>

²⁴ <http://www.ycdsb.ca/documents/Update%20Letter%20on%20HPE%20Curriculum%20June%202015.pdf>

2.3 The United Kingdom

2.3.1 England

Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is a non-statutory subject in England, so there are no standardised frameworks or programs of study. The Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) component of PSHE is, however, compulsory in government-funded secondary schools.²⁵ It is subject to statutory guidance published in 2000²⁶ and supplementary advice updated in 2014. The supplementary advice was funded by the Department for Education but developed by a coalition of non-government organisations.²⁷ This document provides advice on school SRE policies, teaching about consent and violence in relationships, pornography and sexting, selection of resources and outside visitors, and making SRE inclusive.

The supplementary advice emphasises schools' duty under the Equality Act 2010²⁸ to ensure that teaching is accessible to all students, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Teachers are advised not to assume that all intimate relationships are between opposite sexes; to ensure that case-studies, role-plays and scenarios include LGBT people; and to use inclusive language that reflects the diversity of the school community.

Although no specific lesson sequences, programs or teaching resources are provided in the supplementary advice, links are provided to many third-party websites. The resources section of the document draws attention to three sources of further information: Brook, the PSHE Association and the Sex Education Forum. Brook, a young people's charity provides access to dozens of teaching packages, leaflets, games and posters.²⁹ The PSHE Association, a national support body for teachers provides units of work, lesson plans, school policy documents and assessment strategies.³⁰ The Sex Education Forum provides teaching and learning resources, professional development programs and policy advice³¹ Among these are SRE resource lists and web links for primary,³² secondary³³ and special needs education.³⁴

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum/other-compulsory-subjects>

²⁶ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/283599/sex_and_relationships_education_guidance.pdf

²⁷ https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/sites/default/files/SRE%20for%20the%2021st%20Century%20-%20FINAL.pdf_0.pdf

²⁸ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/2/chapter/1>

²⁹ <https://www.brook.org.uk/>

³⁰ <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/>

³¹ <http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/home.aspx>

³² http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/media/4465/resource_list_primary_-_in_new_template.pdf

³³ http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/media/4468/resource_list_secondary_-_in_new_template.pdf

³⁴ http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/media/4474/resource_list_disability_-_in_new_template.pdf

2.3.2 Scotland

In Scotland, schools choose their own teaching programs and resources, mapped against a broad set of principles and practices called *Curriculum for Excellence*.³⁵ The detail of the curriculum is not prescribed by the state, but the activities of secular and religious state-maintained schools are governed by statutory guidance from the Scottish Government.

The 2000 *Report of the Working Group on Sex Education in Scottish Schools* provided a framework for sex education in Scotland. Among other things, it acknowledged that “school sex education has a role to play in discussing the myths and stereotypes around gender, sexuality and sexual orientation issues.” This should be done, the Report argued, both as a means of reducing bullying and affirming respect for and understanding of diversity.³⁶ Statutory guidance released in 2001 affirmed this approach.³⁷

The statutory guidance was updated in 2014 to reflect changes in Scottish law concerning same-sex marriage.³⁸ Scottish schools are required by law to ensure that all children and young people receive high quality relationships, sexual health and parenthood education (RSHP). RSHP is now expected to be inclusive of, and responsive to all, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Although denominational schools are subject to this statutory guidance, they may use resources consistent with their faith and religious traditions. Catholic schools meet the requirements of RSHP education through programs prepared by the Scottish Catholic Education Service, *God’s Loving Plan*³⁹ in primary schools and *Called to Love*,⁴⁰ in secondary schools

2.3.3 Wales

Sex education is a statutory requirement in Wales.⁴¹ Governing bodies of schools must maintain a written policy about the provision of sex education in their school. Secondary schools are obliged to offer sex and relationships education (SRE) and are expected to do so in the context of Personal and Social Education (PSE).

The 2010 statutory guidance identifies the importance of equal emphasis on the emotional, physical and social aspects of SRE, and schools are expected to “acknowledge and address the changes and uncertainties that young people experience regarding adolescence and

³⁵ <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/thecurriculum/index.asp>

³⁶ <http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/158180/0042808.pdf>, p. 21.

³⁷ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2003/11/18503/28874>

³⁸ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0046/00465948.pdf>

³⁹ <http://sces.org.uk/gods-loving-plan-2/>

⁴⁰ <http://sces.org.uk/called-to-love-2/>

⁴¹ <http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/130425-sex-and-relationships-education-in-schools-en.pdf>

their developing sexual identity” (p. 16). Schools are expected to deal on a honest, sensitive and non-judgemental way with sexual orientation and offer support and guidance to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners (p. 25).

Learning outcomes are specified for the primary and secondary phase of schooling, but not in specific yearly intervals or in any detail. Table 4 includes the learning outcomes for primary and secondary schools. Questions about age appropriateness of content and strategies for teaching controversial issues are expected to be managed through to school sex education policies and schools are expected to consult local education authorities and community organisations about resources and professional development.⁴²

TABLE 4: Primary and secondary school learning outcomes, SRE, Wales

Phase of schooling	Learning outcomes
Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the reasons for the physical and emotional changes that take place at puberty, including conception, pregnancy and birth • the range of their own and others’ feelings and emotions • the importance of personal safety and what to do or to whom to go when feeling unsafe.
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the importance of stable, secure and loving relationships • develop a responsible attitude to sexual relationships • understand the laws relating to sexual behaviour • acknowledge the consequences and risks of sexual activity, including unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) • understand the links with other risk-taking behaviours, including the potential risks of online social networking • recognise cultural and social influences and resist unwanted pressure • negotiate their emerging sexual identity with confidence • know about the methods and availability of contraception and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections • understand the responsibilities of parents • know how to get consistent, appropriate information on sexual health and well-being from a range of agencies.

2.3.4 Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Department of Education requires schools to have a written policy on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), and that RSE be “taught in harmony with the ethos of the school and reflect the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities”.⁴³ The policy is required to be consistent with the Equality Act

⁴² <http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/sex-and-relationships-education-faq/?lang=en>

⁴³ http://www.eani.org.uk/_resources/assets/attachment/full/0/41570.pdf

(Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, which makes discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation illegal.⁴⁴

The content of Relationships and Sexuality Education is outlined in revised RSE Guidance issued in 2015 for primary schools⁴⁵ and post-primary schools.⁴⁶ Statutory content for each phase of schooling is listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Statutory RSE content, Northern Ireland, by phase of schooling

Phase of schooling	Relationships and Sexuality Education content
Years 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themselves and their personal attributes • Their own and others' feelings and emotions • The importance of keeping health • Strategies and skills for keeping healthy
Years 3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their self-esteem and self-confidence • Their own and others' feelings and emotions and how their actions affect others
Years 5-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their self-esteem, self-confidence and how they develop as individuals • The management of a range of feelings and emotions and the feelings and emotions of others • How to sustain their health, growth and well-being
Years 8-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and express a sense of self • Explore personal morals, values and beliefs • Investigate the influences on a young person • Explore the different ways to develop self-esteem • Explore the concept of health as the development of a whole person • Investigate the influences on physical and emotional/personal health • Develop understanding about, and strategies to manage, the effects of change on mind, body and behaviour • Develop strategies to promote personal safety • Explore the qualities of relationships including friendship • Explore the qualities of a loving, respectful relationship • Develop coping strategies to deal with challenging relationship scenarios • Develop coping strategies to avoid and resolve conflict • Explore the emotional, social and moral implications of early sexual activity • Explore the roles and responsibilities of individuals within a variety of home and family structures • Develop an awareness of parenting skills • Investigate some of the changing needs of family members at different stages in the life cycle • Explore strategies to manage family scenarios

⁴⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2006/439/made>

⁴⁵ http://ccea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/curriculum/area_of_learning/pdmu/rse/RSE_Guidance_Primary.pdf

⁴⁶ http://ccea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/curriculum/area_of_learning/pdmu/rse/RSE_Guidance_PostPrimary.pdf

The statutory content provides opportunities for the typical topics in sex education – puberty, contraception, STIs, identity and inclusion – but does not specify them in detail. This level of detail appears in non-statutory advice. Students in Years 8-10 for example, have a statutory entitlement to “explore the implications of sexual maturation” and non-statutory content suggestions to teachers include “sexual health, fertility, contraception, teenage pregnancy and childbirth”. Table 6 compares the statutory content that specifically relates to sex and relationships education with the non-statutory advice.

Table 6: Non-statutory RSE advice specific to sex education, Northern Ireland, by phase of schooling

Phase of schooling	Statutory content	Non-statutory guidance and suggestions
Years 1-2	The importance of keeping healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realise that growth and change are part of the process of life and are unique to each individual
Years 3-4	Strategies and skills for keeping healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of the stages of human growth and development
Years 5-7	Know how to sustain their health, growth and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know how the body grows and develops Be aware of the physical and emotional changes that take place during puberty Know how babies are conceived, grow and are born Know that AIDS is a prevalent disease throughout the world and is a major health issue for many countries
Years 8-12	Develop understanding about, and strategies to manage, the effects of change on body, mind and behaviour,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Puberty, body image, mood swings
	Explore the qualities of relationships including friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conditions for health relationships, types of relationships, healthy boundaries, gender issues in relationships
	Explore the implications of sexual maturation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual health, fertility, contraception, conception, teenage pregnancy, childbirth
	Explore the emotional, social and moral dimensions of early sexual activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal values, attitudes and perceptions, the law, STIs, the impact of underage parenting

The Department of Education’s 2015 statutory guidance for RSE in primary schools provides a list of resources which teachers may wish to consult but reminds schools that they are responsible for selecting and quality assurance of teaching and learning resources. On the

topic of sexual orientation, gender identity and homophobic bullying web links include the Stonewall LGBT website;⁴⁷ The Classroom,⁴⁸ a website that provides presentations, lesson plans and teaching resources celebrating diversity; Exceeding Expectations,⁴⁹ a website designed to tackle homophobia and address sexuality of young people and End Bullying Now,⁵⁰ a Northern Ireland anti-bullying forum.

The statutory guidance for secondary schools expands this list, adding Schools Out,⁵¹ a charity committed to making schools safe and inclusive; the Rainbow Project,⁵² which provides training for schools on preventing homophobic bullying; NI Direct,⁵³ a government service which provides information for young people on sexual identity; and Transgender NI,⁵⁴ which provides advice to schools on gender and identity with a focus on transgender issues.

2.3.5 Summary

Although the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom have separate school curriculum arrangements, there are some commonalities in their approaches. Sex education is a statutory obligation in state-funded secular or denominational schools. Consistent with local and national equality legislation, all four countries require that sex education is inclusive and addresses the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students.

All four countries offer non-statutory guidance and advice, require a school-level plan, and direct schools to resources developed by subject association specialists and community health and sexuality organisations. Special guidance is provided for faith schools, but they must all operate within the statutory guidance. Wales and Northern Ireland offer more specific guidance about content to be covered at specific phases of schooling, but all four countries require that sex education materials be age-appropriate.

⁴⁷ <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

⁴⁸ <http://the-classroom.org.uk/>

⁴⁹ <http://www.exceedingexpectations.org.uk/>

⁵⁰ <http://www.endbullying.org.uk/>

⁵¹ <http://www.schools-out.org.uk/>

⁵² <http://www.rainbow-project.org/>

⁵³ <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/young-people/health-safety-and-relationships>

⁵⁴ <http://www.transgenderni.com/>

2.4 New Zealand

Sexuality education is compulsory in New Zealand schools. Schools are expected to spend at least 12-15 hours per year on sexuality education and significantly more in the senior secondary years. Schools are required to consult with their communities at least once every two years about how they intend to implement the health education component of the curriculum. There is no legal impediment to schools offering contraceptive education, but parents may withdraw their children if they wish.⁵⁵

The national guide released in 2015 pays attention to sexual identity and gender identity, as well as to Pasifika concepts of sexuality. Regarding Pasifika identity, the guide notes (p. 24):

Using Pacific language terms in sexuality lessons is important. For example, Fa'afafine (Samoan), Fakaleiti (Tongan), Akava'ine (Cook Islands) are all terms used to describe unique and traditional gender identities for males who identify themselves as having the spirit of a woman, or as behaving in the fashion of a female. It is important to recognise that these groups are unique to the Pacific and do not fit neatly into western categories of male, female, heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or transsexual.

The New Zealand health and physical education curriculum has seven key learning areas, one of which is sexuality education.⁵⁶ The curriculum is organised into five age-appropriate phases of teaching and learning. The content is both medically accurate and inclusive. There are statutory or advisory teaching resources beyond the health and physical education curriculum. The guide recommends that teachers consult New Zealand Family Planning for supplementary information or sexuality and relationships programs that support the requirements of the health and physical education curriculum.⁵⁷

Table 7, below, provides a summary of the sexuality education content in each phase of schooling.

⁵⁵ <http://health.tki.org.nz/Teaching-in-HPE/Policy-guidelines/Sexuality-education-a-guide-for-principals-boards-of-trustees-and-teachers>

⁵⁶ <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum/Health-and-physical-education/Learning-area-structure>

⁵⁷ <http://www.familyplanning.org.nz/about/our-work/health-promotion>

Table 7. Statutory sexual education content, New Zealand, by phase of schooling

Phase	Sexuality education content
Years 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe changes in growth and identify body parts and developmental needs. • discuss family relationships and affirm and show respect for diverse family structures • question and discuss gender stereotypes • learn about basic human rights in relation to relationships and identity • students will learn to express feelings and how they contribute to positive and inclusive environments
Years 4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn about pubertal change and body growth and development • learn how to support themselves and others during change and develop a positive body image • describe how social messages and stereotypes about relationships, sexuality, and gender affect well-being, • actively affirm the rights of themselves and others. • reflect on friendships and plan strategies for positive and supportive relationships • identify risks and issues in online and social media environments and question messages related to gender, sexuality, and diversity. • identify how to access health care
Years 7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn how to support themselves and others during pubertal change and develop a positive body image • discuss Intimate relationships and sexual attraction highlighting respect and communication skills • learn the processes of conception and child birth • identify health care resources in the community • critically explore how gender and sexuality messages affect well-being and plan strategies to support inclusion, diversity, and respect in friendships and relationships (including in online environments) • analyse how sexuality is represented in social media and mass media, and critique dominant messages • develop assertiveness skills and recognise instances of bullying and discrimination and question and discuss gender norms
Years 9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn to manage their own sexual health and how to access health care • Examine long-term and short-term effects of sexual decisions • learn about conception, contraception, sexually transmissible infections, and other aspects of sexual decision-making • learn about the physical and emotional effects of sexual identity, sexual attraction, and sexual maturation • critique dominant cultural messages about sexual behaviour (including those in mass and online media) • identify skills for positive and supportive intimate relationships. • Discuss human rights, consent, and the importance of choice and agency in relationships • explored online and social media environments and plan strategies for positive and supportive engagement
Years 11-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will explore pressure, social norms, gender identity, and cultural issues relating to sexual health • evaluate community agencies, the politics of sexuality and sexual health, and

- | | |
|--|---|
| | <p>recognise positive and supportive intimate relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• critically analyse issues of safety and risk, and research positive sexual health practices• identify future sexual health needs and critique cultural norms |
|--|---|

Summary

Sex education in New Zealand is comprehensive, age-appropriate, medically accurate and inclusive. Students learn the names of body parts and consider the influence of gender stereotypes in Years 1-3; they learn about puberty, body image and gender, sexuality and diversity in Years 4-5; about conception and childbirth and strategies to support inclusion, diversity and respect in relationships in Years 7-8; about contraception, STIs the physical and emotional aspects of gender identity in Years 9-10; and the impact of social norms on sexual health; and gender identity and cultural issues in Years 11-13. The national curriculum does not mandate lesson plans or teaching resources but directs teachers to third party websites for support.

2.5 Republic of Ireland

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is mandatory in the primary school years. One of the broad objectives of the program is that each child will “develop a sense of personal responsibility and come to understand his/her sexuality and the processes of growth, development and reproduction”.⁵⁸ SPHE is also mandatory in the first three years of secondary school in Ireland. There are ten modules to be covered in three years and time allocation is one period per week. Relationships and Sexuality is one of these mandatory modules. There are five modules in the senior secondary years. One of these, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), is compulsory. The others, including Gender Studies, are optional. Syllabuses and resources are provided by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessments.⁵⁹

The primary school SPHE syllabus contains three major strands and teachers are expected to choose some content from each of the strands in each primary school year. It introduces correct anatomical naming of body parts in Infants; issues of sexual equality in Years 1-2; the idea of physical changes at puberty and the effects of sexual stereotyping in Years 3-4; and the physical changes of puberty, human reproductive systems, and the differences between boy-and-girl friendships and same-sex friendships in Years 5-6.

Primary SPHE is supported by a set of teacher guidelines.⁶⁰ These guidelines provide advice about classroom climate, approaches to teaching, selection of resources as well as a set of sample units of work. Beyond some general advice about the usefulness of games (p. 65) and surveys (p. 87) in dealing with sensitive issues such as sex roles and equality, there are no sample lesson plans or activities on sex and gender issues.

The lower secondary SPHE syllabus identifies compulsory content at each year level.⁶¹ RSE syllabus topics cover a range of reproductive and physical health topics and the development of decision-making around intimate relationships. The Year 1 syllabus focuses specifically on three sex and gender diversity issues, aiming to “enable students to deepen their awareness of stereotyping and its influence on attitudes and behaviour”, to “identify some contemporary attitudes to sexuality” and “to help students recognise the need for respect for sexuality”.

⁵⁸ http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Curriculum/SPHE_Curr.pdf

⁵⁹ <http://www.ncca.ie/en/>

⁶⁰ http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Curriculum/SPHE_Gline.pdf

⁶¹ <http://www.sphe.ie/downloads/RESOURCES/SPHE%20JUNIOR%20CYCLE%20SYLLABUS.pdf>

The Guidelines⁶² for the junior secondary years are more specific than for the primary years and refer to set of resource materials published in 1998.⁶³ Twenty-four sample lessons are described in detail.

In the compulsory RSE component of senior secondary SPHE, students learn about self-awareness, relationship skills, sexual and reproductive health, sexual identity parenting and personal rights and safety. The sexual identity topic deals directly with distinguishing between sexual activity, sexuality and sexual orientation; clarifying understanding of and comfort with different sexual orientations; and demonstrating how to relate respectfully to others of a different sexual orientation.⁶⁴

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessments senior secondary SPE web page contains “useful links” to a range of third-party Irish websites containing a range of advice on health, sexuality and lifestyle,⁶⁵ sexual health and pregnancy,⁶⁶ mental health⁶⁷ and drug awareness.⁶⁸

Summary

Sex education is compulsory in Ireland. Teaching and learning materials prepared by the national curriculum and assessment provider are mandatory in primary and secondary schools. The materials are inclusive, beginning with sex stereotypes in the early years of primary school and concluding in senior secondary with explicit instruction distinguishing between sexual activity, sexuality and sexual orientation. A wide range of links is provided to community sex and relationships websites.

⁶² http://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/d1ba9abd-499b-47e7-bcbb-692993065786/JCSEC24_SPHE_guidelines.pdf

⁶³ http://www.sphe.ie/downloads/teaching_resources/rse_junior_cycle_book.pdf

⁶⁴ http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Post-Primary_Education/Senior_Cycle/SPHE_framework/SPHE_Framework.pdf

⁶⁵ <http://spunout.ie/>

⁶⁶ <http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/>

⁶⁷ <http://au.reachout.com/>

⁶⁸ <http://www.drugs.ie/>

2.6 Singapore

Sexuality education is compulsory in Singapore. The goals of sexuality education are characterised as equipping students to “protect themselves from sexual advances and abuse”, and “avoid sexual experimentation and activities that lead to problems related to teenage pregnancies and STIs/HIV”.⁶⁹ It can only be taught by specially selected teachers who (among other things) “possess values that are aligned with [Ministry of Education] values”.⁷⁰ Parents who wish to opt their children out of the program may do so by completing a form and lodging it with their school.⁷¹ Sexuality education “teaches students what homosexuality is, and the current legal provisions concerning homosexual acts in Singapore.”⁷²

Two sets of resources are provided for use in schools. The *Growing Years* program for primary, secondary and post-secondary levels and the *eTeens* program for students 14 years or older, as well as through science, character and citizenship education and the form teacher guidance period.

- *Growing Years* comprises 16 lessons of 30-minutes each in primary schools, 22 lessons of 60 minutes in secondary schools and six lessons 60 minutes in junior colleges. Topics include “building rewarding and responsible relationships, dating, going steady and marriage, issues in sexual health and behaviours, consequences of teenage sexual activity and pregnancies, and influence of the media”.⁷³
- *eTeens* involves one 60-minute mass talk and three 45- to 60-minute class-based lessons for 14-15 year olds and one 60-minute mass talk and on 60-minute class-based lesson for junior college students. *eTeens* focuses on STI’s/HIV and skills for resisting pressure to have pre-marital sex.

Although abstinence is promoted, medically correct information on the use of condoms in preventing STDs is included in the *eTeens* program. The information provided is age-appropriate, in the context of Singapore cultural norms. There is some scope for external providers to offer supplementary sexuality education programs in schools, provided they participate in a MOE “vetting program”. Approved programs do not replace the MOE

⁶⁹ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/programmes/social-and-emotional-learning/sexuality-education>

⁷⁰ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/programmes/social-and-emotional-learning/sexuality-education/moe-framework-for-sexuality-education>

⁷¹ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/programmes/social-and-emotional-learning/sexuality-education/roles-of-stakeholders>

⁷² <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/programmes/social-and-emotional-learning/sexuality-education/scope-and-teaching-approach-of-sexuality-education-in-schools>

⁷³ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/programmes/social-and-emotional-learning/sexuality-education/scope-and-teaching-approach-of-sexuality-education-in-schools>

programs and require age appropriate materials that comply with MOE policy positions on sexuality education.⁷⁴

2.7 Summary: Sex Education in English-Speaking Jurisdictions

Sex education is compulsory in most English-speaking countries. It is required by law in nine of the ten Canadian provinces, all four countries of the United Kingdom, and in New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland and Singapore. It is compulsory in about half of the jurisdictions in the United States. Almost always, it is taught as part of a broader health and physical education curriculum area of study.

In every jurisdiction examined, sex education materials are characterised as age-appropriate. Detailed scope and sequence charts in many jurisdictions aim to ensure that concepts presented are age-appropriate. What counts as age-appropriate, however, varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In Canada, for example, the idea of sexual orientation is introduced in Grade 1 in Québec and in Grade 9 in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Beyond the United States, sex education typically provides information about the anatomy and physiology of reproduction, puberty, conception, contraception, STIs and HIV/AIDS. About half of the US states require abstinence-only, rather than medically accurate, sex education.

There is a wide range of attitudes about the appropriate level of detail to be mandated in sex education. At one extreme, in Singapore, all instructional materials must be approved or vetted by the Ministry of Education. In the United States, school districts typically provide approved text book and resource lists and tightly control sex education resources. New Zealand and Ontario provide detailed scope and sequence charts listing content and learning outcomes for each year or phase of schooling, but do not provide lesson-level resources. In contrast, England and Scotland mandate that sex education is provided and that it be inclusive, but require that school boards develop their own content and choose teaching and learning materials to suit their circumstances.

In some jurisdictions, such as England, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the mandatory material is supplemented by links to third-party agencies and resources provided by teachers' professional associations, family planning services, youth sexuality agencies and sexuality and relationships websites.

An inclusive and non-discriminatory approach to sex and HIV/AIDS education is guaranteed by law in nine US states and prohibited by law in five states. It is guaranteed by law in Canada, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, the Republic of Ireland and New

⁷⁴ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/programmes/social-and-emotional-learning/sexuality-education/information-for-external-providers/application-information>

Zealand. In these countries, sex and gender diversity is not regarded as a theory or a social construct but as a matter of fact protected by equality legislation.

Table 8 provides a summary of the five key areas of variation in sex and gender education: whether it is compulsory, age-appropriate, medically accurate; sex and gender inclusive; and whether teaching materials and resources are mandated by the jurisdiction.

Table 8: Sex and gender education, by jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Compulsory	Age-appropriate	Medically accurate	Sex & gender inclusive	Mandated resources
USA (50 states + DC)	24	27	13	9	x
California	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
South Carolina	✓	✓	x	x	✓
Canada (10 provinces)	9	10	✓	✓	✓
British Columbia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alberta	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Saskatchewan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Manitoba	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ontario	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Québec	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
New Brunswick	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prince Edward Island	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nova Scotia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Newfoundland & Labrador	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UK (4 countries)	4	4	4	4	x
England	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Scotland	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Northern Ireland	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
New Zealand	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Republic of Ireland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Singapore	✓	✓	✓	x	✓

In conclusion, then, the predominant approach to sex and gender education in the English-speaking countries included in this review is that sex education should be comprehensive and medically accurate, age-appropriate and inclusive of sex and gender differences in schools and in the community. Where there is more variation, however, is in the degree to which teaching and learning resources are mandated or recommended.

3. Sex and Gender Education in NSW Schools

3.1 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education syllabuses

Sexuality education is mandatory in NSW and regulated through the *Personal Development, Health and Physical Education K-6* and *7-10* syllabuses.

3.1.1 PDHPE K-6

The *PDHPE K-6* syllabus has eight strands. The sex education content occurs in the Growth and Development strand. The syllabus provides a developmental sequence on the topics of personal identity, the body, human sexuality, changes and values. Stage 2 human sexuality content includes male and female sexual characteristics and changes related to puberty. Stage 3 content includes menstruation, the reproductive process and responsibility in sexual relationships. In addition, gender images and expectations are mentioned as part of the personal identity sub-strand and discrimination is mentioned in the values sub-strand, in both Stages 2 and 3. The syllabus reminds teachers that subject matter related to discrimination and harassment should be addressed in a developmentally appropriate sequence and be consistent with the specific areas of discrimination in the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (p. 48).

The *PDHPE K-6* syllabus is comparable with the New Zealand and Ontario syllabuses. The NSW Year 5-6 content on puberty and reproductive systems appears in Grades 4-6 in Ontario and Years 1-3 and 4-6 in New Zealand. The NSW syllabus includes content on gender images and expectations in Years 3-6, compared with the coverage in Grade 6 in Ontario and Years 4-6 in New Zealand. The NSW syllabus provides more guidance than syllabuses in the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland or US state-based legislative mandates.

3.1.2 PDHPE 7-10

PDHPE 7-10 has four content strands. The sex and gender education content is in Strand 3: Individual and Community Health and specifically in Outcomes 4.6, 4.7, 5.3, 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8.

The NSW Stage 4 (Years 7-8) content focuses on sexual health; sexual choices and their consequences; power, gender and risk-taking; and influences on health decision making. Stage 5 (Years 9-10) develops the earlier sexual health and risk content and adds material on methods of contraception and how attitudes, behaviour and sexuality are influenced by gender expectations and assumptions.

This content is broadly in line with other comparable sex and gender education syllabuses. In Ontario, aspects of sexual health are introduced in Grade 7 and developed in a sequence in each of Grades 8-11; contraception, STIs and sexual risk-taking are studied in Grade 9;

and gender identity and sexual orientation are studied in Grades 8, 9 and 10. In New Zealand gender, sexuality and diversity are studied in Years 4-6, in Years 7-8 and in Years 9-10; conception, contraception and STIs are covered in Years 9-10. The NSW syllabus for Years 7-10 is more detailed than either Ontario or New Zealand syllabus, and much more detailed than the UK, Republic of Ireland or US state legislative requirements. Like the *PDHPE K-6* syllabus, it provides appropriate and sufficient guidance to schools and teachers.

Finding 1: The *PDHPE K-6* and *PDHPE 7-10* syllabuses provide a developmentally appropriate sequence of sex and gender education content, including age-appropriate references to sex and gender diversity. The syllabuses provide more detail than most comparable jurisdictions, and are sufficient guidance for schools' and teachers' planning of sex and gender education.

3.2 NSW Public Schools Sex and Gender Education Policies and Resources

In addition to the mandatory syllabuses for all NSW schools, the Department of Education provides a set of policy guidelines for sex and gender education in government schools.

Sexuality and Sexual Health in NSW Government Schools (2016) provides an overview of the purposes of sexuality education, summaries of research on the need for sexuality education and the characteristics of effective sexuality education, a set of best practice guidelines and guidelines about managing disclosures of abuse.

Principles of Sexuality and Sexual Health Education in NSW Government Schools (2016) identifies 12 principles to be considered in designing, delivering and evaluating programs in schools. These principles include a whole-school approach, a positive climate, partnerships with parents and carers, evidence about what works, a commitment to student wellbeing, interacting with children and young people in positive ways, building on a sequence of knowledge and skills K-12, using real-life and culturally appropriate contexts, avoiding shock tactics, providing accurate information, using interactive and inclusive teaching and learning activities, and involving students in program planning.

The Department of Education policies and principles are supported by guidelines for engaging external providers, a flowchart to support teachers in choosing appropriate resources, summary advice about what to do and what not to do in sexuality education, and a description of the skills for empowerment that are expected to be developed through NSW sexual health programs.

These policies and guidelines are comprehensive and appropriate. They make clear the role and rights of parents in sex and gender education, provide suitable principles to guide schools' planning and offer guidance in the selection of resources. If this material constituted the only sex education direction provided to teachers and schools, it would be

comparable with the statutory guidance provided in Scotland and statutory and supplementary guidance provided in England.

Finding 2: The NSW Department of Education policy and guidelines provide a comprehensive and appropriate platform for government schools' and teachers' decision-making on sex and gender education. They should, however, be reviewed to align with any changes following this review.

3.3 *Teacher Toolbox*

The *Teacher Toolbox* is a set of additional resources provided for NSW government schools to support teaching of the sex and gender education component of the *PDHPE K-10* syllabuses.

Unlike the syllabuses, the *Toolbox* material is not mandatory. Teaching materials in the *Toolbox* include substantial units of work and individual lesson plans. Within each of the units and lessons, a variety of activities are offered. Schools may use some, or all or none of the activities, or may modify them to suit local needs and circumstances.

3.3.1 *Teacher Toolbox Resources for PDHPE K-6*

The *Teacher Toolbox* resources include four units of work and four additional single-lesson activities linked to *PDHPE K-6* outcomes.

- “Body Basics” is a single, stand-alone activity for Early Stage 1 students and includes a set of card labels for external, non-sexual body parts and some student activities about how these parts have changed since birth.
- “We are different” is linked to Stage 1 outcomes and helps children name external, non-sexual body parts.
- “Special me, special you” is also linked to Stage 1 outcomes and explores external and internal body parts and how they change.
- “My Body Is for Me” is a single lesson for Stage 1 classes and distinguishes between private and non-private body parts.
- “A Time to Change” is linked to Stage 2 outcomes and explores the changes during puberty. It refers to the interactive puberty section of the BBC Human Body website.⁷⁵
- “How We Change” is an additional activity on puberty for Stage 2 classes. It provides a non-anatomical introduction to puberty, and uses measures of height to draw attention to other individual differences.

⁷⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/body/interactives/lifecycle/teenagers/>

- “Growth and Development” is linked to Stage 3 outcomes on the human reproductive system.
- “Looking into Discrimination” is designed for students in Stage 3. The terms discrimination, racism, racial discrimination, sexism and homophobia are introduced, followed by a class discussion on homophobia and bullying.

Considered together, the four K-6 units of work and individual lessons in the *Teacher Toolbox* provide an age-appropriate sequence, introduce information about puberty and the human reproductive system in a staged and appropriate way, are consistent with the *PDHPE K-6* syllabus, make good use of reputable third-party internet sources, and take a gender inclusive approach to the changes of puberty.

Finding 3: The K-6 Teacher Toolbox activities are age-appropriate, inclusive and linked to syllabus outcomes.

3.3.2 Teacher Toolbox Resources for PDHPE Stage 4

The Stage 4 *Toolbox* materials include one unit of work, “Exploring Sexual Risk”, and two single-lesson activities: “Mystery Bag” and “Speed Dating – STIs”.

“Exploring Sexual Risk” focuses on sexual health (Outcome 4.6) and the consequences of risky behaviours (Outcome 4.7). “Mystery Bag” is a revision exercise, designed to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned previously about puberty and human reproduction. “Speed dating” is a short activity designed to consolidate knowledge of STIs and BBVs.

The *Teacher Toolbox* lesson sequence on STIs reflects the NSW syllabus and includes material that would be covered with similar aged students in Grade 7 in Ontario and with slightly older students in New Zealand. In both of those jurisdictions a medically accurate approach would be taken, using anatomically correct naming of body parts and specific naming of sexual practices in the context of STI risk. The Ontario syllabus, for example, mentions specific sexual health risks in Grade 7.

Finding 4: The Stage 4 lessons in the Teachers Toolbox are inclusive and linked to syllabus outcomes.

The Stage 4 unit of work “Exploring Sexual Risk” is, however, very specific about sexual practices and the risks of infection. The unit specifically warns teachers that these activities may be confronting to some students, that they should consider the nature of the group in deciding which sexual behaviours to discuss, and reminds them that parents should be informed in advance about the contents of sex education programs so that they can exercise their right to withdraw their children. Schools would need to be very confident that

these conditions have been met, and that the lessons are age-appropriate for their students, before approving that the unit of work be taught.

Finding 5: The Stage 4 unit of work “Exploring Sexual Risk” includes medically accurate but explicit material on sexual practices and the risks of infection.

The Department of Education should review the age-appropriateness of the examples used in this unit and teachers should not use the materials without the approval of their school principal.

3.3.3 *Teacher Toolbox Resources for PDHPE Stage 5*

The *Teacher Toolbox* includes six units of work and a further 13 lesson-length support activities.

Stage 5 Units of Work

- The activity sequence “Contraception” is focused on Outcomes 5.6 and 5.7. After a teacher explanation of the range of methods of contraception, students work in groups to discuss factors influencing the choice of methods of contraception.
- “Planning and Managing Sexual Health” addresses Outcomes 5.6 and 5.8. Students brainstorm the issues young people need to consider before engaging in sexual activity, complete a quiz, watch a short Family Planning NSW video on getting a sexual health check,⁷⁶ and discuss two NSW Health Department videos on confidentiality.⁷⁷
- “What Influences Sexual Risk Taking” supports Outcomes 5.6 and 5.7 in the *PDHPE 7-10* syllabus and is designed to illuminate the risks and outcomes of sexual activity.
- “Negotiating Consent” addresses Outcome 5.6. The *Toolbox* also includes a companion single-lesson activity “Consent in Sexual Relationships” which uses six short scenarios to stimulate discussion about the meaning of consent.
- “Recognising and Responding to Abuse and Violence” is designed to meet Outcome 5.3. It includes research on definitions of abuse, violence, sexual assault and date rape and identifying situations in which forms of abuse may occur.

⁷⁶<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BePIDKsbHIs&index=35&list=PLrOa7LNP0maWfyGFru08Yq8CC5UrwG18>

⁷⁷ <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/youth/Pages/OHOW-videos.aspx>

- “Being an Upstander” addresses Outcomes 5.2, 5.3 and 5.5. In addition to the policy reminders attached to each of the *Toolbox* materials (safe and supportive classrooms, controversial issues and parents’ right to withdraw children) this activity sequence notes the importance of applying the Department’s policy regarding the use of audio-visual material. The unit of work begins with the teacher showing one or more of four video clips where same sex attracted people talk about their experience as young people. Teachers are specifically reminded that the clips include comment about suicide and self-harm. Two of the video clips are provided by Family Planning NSW,⁷⁸ one by the AFL⁷⁹ and one is a recording of a publically broadcast US city council meeting.⁸⁰ Students are asked to discuss how these individuals responded to the challenges they faced, and what people might do in the face of discrimination, harassment or abuse.

Stage 5 Individual Lessons

In addition to units of work and individual lessons described above, the *Toolbox* includes a further eight individual lesson plans.

- “Condom Copout” (Outcome 5.6) is based on an information card containing advice about the benefit of condoms in reducing the risks of STIs and a series of “cop-out” lines people may use for not using them.
- “Myths and Facts Quiz” (Outcome 5.6) is a short activity based on a set of true or false statements about STIs.
- “Accessing Health Services” includes a hand-shaking activity designed to show how quickly STIs can be spread in a population, as well as an opportunity to access a NSW Health Department website, Play Safe.⁸¹
- “Enhancing sexuality” (Outcomes 5.6, 5.7) develops a class scenario where a young person is considering engaging in sexual activity for the first time, helps students to identify the factors that will influence the person’s decision making, the potential harm that could occur and the precautions that could be taken to minimise risk.
- “Opposite Ends of the Pole” (Outcomes 5.3, 5.6) explores binary thinking about sexuality. Distinctions are drawn between sexual attraction, sexual identity, and sexual behaviour.

⁷⁸<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HwGhmyDJyY&list=PLrOa7LNP0maWfyGFru08Yq8CC5UrwdGl8&index=45>;

⁷⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAVBifE5H1U>

⁸⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ax96cghOnY4>

⁸¹ <https://playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au/>

- “Looking into Homophobia” (Outcome 5.3) explores the ways that homophobia is felt and expressed. Students work in groups to explore the thoughts, feelings and actions of someone who bullies, someone who is bullied and two bystanders.
- “Numbers” (Outcome 5.3) is an outdoor game that gives students the experience of being excluded from a group. The subsequent classroom discussion focus on the experience of discrimination.
- “Stepping Out” (Outcomes 5.3, 5.6) uses a set of 32 character cards to explore the range of views about sexuality.
- “Things Are Not Always as They Seem” (Outcome 5.6) is a short activity using sample statements about STIs to structure class and group discussions about STIs and BBVs.
- “Taking Up a Position” (Outcome 5.6) is a short activity designed to demonstrate to students the range of opinions on sex and sexuality.
- “Affirming Diversity” (Outcome 5.3) concerns attitudes to diversity and the challenges and support services available for people of diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- “Sock Puppet Activity” (Outcomes 5.3, 5.6) explores how cultural beliefs and values may affect people when forming relationships.

Findings: Teacher Toolbox Resources

Teacher Toolbox units of work and individual lesson plans cover Stage 5 syllabus material on contraception, STI risks and prevention, sexual decision making, sexual consent and sex and gender diversity. The same material is also covered in a medically accurate and inclusive way in Ontario and New Zealand. In Ontario, STIs, sexual decision making and relationship changes at puberty are covered in Grade 7; gender identity and sexual orientation and contraception are covered in Grade 8; pregnancy, STIs, gender identity and orientation and consent are covered in Grade 9; and sexual decision making is covered in Grade 10. In New Zealand, contraception, STIs, sexual identity and consent are covered in Years 9-10.

Finding 6: Stage 5 *Toolbox* resources are consistent with the NSW syllabus, and cover similar content as the Ontario and New Zealand syllabuses.

The Stage 5 *Toolbox* resources are well-designed, scaffolding learning through a series of steps. Typically, units of work begin with a brainstorming or revision exercise followed by a teacher content presentation or stimulus, activities to consolidate student learning (scenarios, role-plays, research tasks or worksheet analysis), and small group or whole class discussions to summarise what has been taught and learned. The activities are varied, well-structured and likely to engage the 14- to 16-year-old students in Stage 5.

Substantial use is made of role-plays and scenarios in the Stage 5 resources. All the scenario activities use imaginary characters and provide appropriate scaffolding of the learning activities. Care has been taken in the instructions to teachers to ensure that students can see the range of attitudes in their class without being forced to take up a personal position in public. Some of the scenarios, however, would be uncomfortable or unfamiliar for some students. Schools should, therefore, take steps to ensure that the activities and role plays are not used unless the school has determined that the role plays and scenarios are appropriate for their students.

Finding 7: Some of the scenarios in some Stage 5 *Toolbox* activities would not be appropriate for all students.

The Department of Education should review the age-appropriateness of the role plays and scenarios used in Stage 5 *Toolbox* activities and teachers should not use the materials without the approval of their school principal.

Videos located on third party websites are a source of potential risk in sex education programs. Instructional designers locate resources that they think are useful and appropriate, but do not control other material that may appear from time to time on a third-party website. The Stage 5 *Toolbox* videos are from authoritative sources – Family Planning NSW; the AFL; broadcast TV; the UK Crown Prosecutors Service; the BBC – or from public domain material likely to be accessed by students of this age such as YouTube pop music performances and song lyric websites. In one of the units of work, the recommended video resources are acknowledged as potentially challenging for some students and teachers are advised to take special care to follow the Department’s audio-visual guidelines.

Finding 8: Stage 5 *Toolbox* video resources are from authoritative sources; where the videos are higher risk, schools should take steps to ensure that the Department of Education policy on the use of audio visual resources have been followed.

A substantial portion of the material in the Stage 5 *Toolbox* resources concerns sex and gender diversity. The importance of inclusive approaches to sex education is stressed in the statutory guidance in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; in the syllabuses of all ten provinces of Canada; New Zealand; the Republic of Ireland; and by law in nine US states. Five US states and Singapore mandate negative rather than inclusive approaches, but the NSW syllabus and the *Teacher Toolbox* resources are overwhelmingly in the mainstream of inclusive approaches to sex education.

Finding 9: The inclusive approach to sex and gender diversity in Stage 5 *Toolbox* resources is consistent with NSW anti-discrimination legislation, the

PDHPE K-10 syllabuses and practices in comparable international jurisdictions.

3.4 Crossroads

3.4.1 Crossroads Structure and Content

Crossroads is a mandatory program for NSW students, to be completed in Years 11-12. Schools are expected to deliver *Crossroads* in an indicative time of 25 hours. *Crossroads* has two focus areas: “Owning yourself” and “Responding to others”. These focus areas are explored through six contexts: personal identity, mental health and wellbeing, relationships, sexuality and sexual health, drugs and alcohol and safe travel. Schools may choose their own content and resources.

Some content is suggested for each of the six focus areas but teachers are encouraged to select content that meets the needs of their students. Table 9 identifies the content focus and suggested content relating to sex and gender education in the focus area “Owning yourself”. A similar set of content appears for the focus area “Responding to others”.

Table 9: *Crossroads* suggested sex and gender content, “Owning yourself”

Content focus	Suggested content
Own identity	Aspects of identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gender • sexuality • culture and language • strengths • body image • self-concept
Developing and maintaining respectful relationships	Managing intimate relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual relationships • celibacy • expectations of partners • rights and responsibilities in various contexts, e.g. non-sexual relationships, defacto, marriage, one night stands
Gender and sexual identities	Factors that influence gender and sexual identities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mutual understanding • diversity • cultural values • social pressures • discrimination • addressing homophobia and transphobia
Safe and ethical behaviour	Safe and ethical behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respect for self and others • effective communication • assertiveness • safe practices • safe sex behaviours

	<p>Consent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coercion • reasons for consent • negotiating consent • unwanted or unplanned sexual experiences <p>Reproductive and sexual health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reproductive health • pregnancy • sexual health care, e.g. positive sexual health, testing, contact tracing, treatment • contraception • sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and blood borne viruses (BBVs)
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Eighteen lesson-length *Crossroads* activities and two additional handouts were provided for review. Activities range in suggested length from 30 to 60 minutes. Each activity identifies the *Crossroads* outcomes and content covered by the activity and includes notes for teachers. Use of the resources is optional, as is adoption of any of the teaching strategies, scenarios, role-plays and videos in the lessons.

As many of the resources are designed to be used in more than one strand, for this review they are grouped by topic. Two *Crossroads* resources, “There is Never Any Justification for Violence” and “King or Coward” focus principally on violence and extremism and only tangentially on the sexual dimensions of these issues. Neither has sexually explicit content nor has a sustained focus on sex and gender difference and neither is reviewed here.

3.4.2 *Crossroads* Resources

Personal Identity

The first group of resources focus on issues of personal goals and strengths.

- “Identifying skills, strengths and strategies” begins with students logging on to the University of Pennsylvania authentic happiness website and completing the VIA strengths for children survey.⁸² Students then work in pairs to compare their top five strengths, identify a situation where one of the strengths was called on, and then identify a challenging situation in which this strength would be required.
- “Applying strengths and skills” is a complementary activity. Students select a challenging or awkward situation from a list of scenarios. In groups, students then choose a strategy that would enable the character in the scenario to achieve a positive outcome, identify the strengths needed to do so and role-play the scenario.

⁸² <https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/user/login?destination=node/463>

Media, Technology and Sexuality

A second set of resources concerns media, technology and sexuality.

- “Are we represented” is a 30-minute media analysis activity. Students are asked to collect images (or use a set provided by the teacher) and classify the images as supporting or rejecting traditional gender roles. Several small group activities about the media’s role in affirming or challenging traditional gender stereotypes and a class discussion follow. Finally, students may be asked to view an advertisement designed to challenge gender stereotypes in girls’ toy choices.⁸³
- In “Media world and me” students brainstorm sources of information about sex, sexual health and sexuality, review a teacher- or student-developed collection of media images and complete a handout designed to help them classify the media message in the image.
- “What is real? Developing critical sexual literacy” is designed to help students reflect on the differences between the “media world” and the “real world”. Teachers planning to use this activity are warned that the “media world” includes sexually explicit material, that some students may have no knowledge or experience of this aspect of the media world and that the media world to be considered in the lesson is broader than explicit sexual content.
- “Young people, technology and sexuality” focuses on the issue of sharing sexually explicit images. Students work in small groups or pairs to consider the moral implications of some short scenarios and then consider the risks, options and legality of a set of sexting scenarios.
- “Generation XXX” involves three “finish the story” scenarios, where students consider whether they should leave or stay in potentially risky situations concerning sexually explicit images.

Sex, Gender and Identity

There are six *Crossroads* lessons and a handout on the topic of sex, gender and identity.

- “Influences on body image” explores the social construction of beauty. Students discuss ideals of beauty and consider the impact of the media on the formation of these ideals.

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http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2013/11/19/goldieblox_commercial_rewrites_the_beastie_boys_urges_young_girls_to_pursue.html

- “Do opposites really attract?” explores binary thinking about gender and sexuality.
- “Exploring gender identity” focuses on gender expectations and their impact on sexuality.
- “If the category fits – wear it” is designed to support the resource “Exploring gender identity”. It includes construction of a group list of the differences between males and females, sorting these into male, female and both categories and a teacher-led discussion on the difference between masculinity and femininity and biological sex, and the difference between sex and sexuality.
- “Gender matters” is a 30-minute lesson focusing on the terms sex, gender, gender diverse, gender questioning, sexuality, sexual identity, transgender, same sex attracted, gay and lesbian. Students view two video stories of transgendered people from the mental health website ReachOut.com⁸⁴ and work in small groups to discuss a set of questions about gender identity, self-concept and mental health.
- “Stairs to inclusivity” uses the continuum introduced in the Stage 5 *Teacher Toolbox* unit “Being an upstander”. Students consider twenty-three scenario cards that reflect range of potential categories of discrimination and decide where the scenarios fit on the stairs to inclusivity.

Sexual Health

The *Crossroads* resources “Stepping out to access sexual health services” and “Responsibilities in a sexual relationship – Contact tracing” concern sexual health. “Stepping out” encourages students to think about factors that influence young people’s access to health care. The “Stepping out” activity is the same as the one used in the Stage 5 *Toolbox*. The character cards are similar in content, exemplifying a range of sex, gender and cultural locations; a range of sexual experience; and a range of family circumstances.

“Responsibilities in a sexual relationship” is designed to increase student familiarity with the NSW Health website Play Safe.⁸⁵ This lesson uses position cards placed on a continuum from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The teacher reads out a series of statements related to sexual health and STIs. After a whole-class debrief of the differences in people’s views on such issues, the class explores the information on contact tracing on the Play Safe website.⁸⁶ Students are then introduced to the Let Them Know website,⁸⁷ developed by the Melbourne Sexual health Centre and supported by NSW Health’s STI Programs Unit. The lesson notes

⁸⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWFYZ5VY1IU>; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XK2_L683Y34

⁸⁵ <https://playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au/>

⁸⁶ <https://playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au/treatment/what-is-contact-tracing>

⁸⁷ <http://www.letthemknow.org.au/>

propose group discussions of four sample conversations with sexual partners provided on the Let Them Know website⁸⁸ followed by whole-group discussion.

Findings: Crossroads Resources

The literature review characterised sex education in English-speaking jurisdiction in terms of five issues: whether is compulsory, age-appropriate, medically accurate and inclusive, and whether the teaching and learning resources are mandatory.

Crossroads is compulsory for Year 11-12 students in NSW government schools. The six learning contexts are compulsory components of the program, and are expected to be taught in the equivalent of one school week of instruction. The *Crossroads* booklet makes clear that “selection of specific content and methods of delivery will be carried out at the school level” (p. 4).

Finding 10: The six *Crossroads* learning contexts are mandatory in NSW government schools but specific content and teaching strategies are intended to be chosen by individual schools.

The *Crossroads* lessons and activities are comparable with sex and gender education syllabuses in Ontario and New Zealand. *Crossroads* content includes aspects of identity, managing intimate relationships, factors that influence gender and sexual identities, safe and ethical behaviour, consent and reproductive health. The Ontario Grade 11-12 content includes reproductive and sexual health, skills for evolving relationships, and bias and stereotyping in media portrayals of relationships. The New Zealand Year 11-13 content includes social norms and cultural issues relating to sexual health, positive and supportive intimate relationships, community health agencies, the politics of sexuality and health, risks to sexual health and identifying future sexual needs.

Finding 11: *Crossroads* sex and gender resources cover the same content as the Year 11-12 Ontario and New Zealand syllabuses.

The *Crossroads* resources examined in this review typically follow well-scaffolded sequences, often beginning with brainstorming to activate students’ knowledge of the topic, followed some direct teaching or an activity designed to illuminate the learning outcomes of the lesson. These activities use pair sharing strategies, group discussions and stimulus material such as cards, scenarios, or physical representations of the range of positions people take. Most lessons end with a teacher-led summary of the issues canvassed in the lesson. All the *Crossroads* lessons reflect content that is either in the *PDHPE 7-10* syllabus or the *Crossroads* optional content listing.

⁸⁸ The resources refer to a link that has appears to have been moved.

The two media analysis lessons (“Are we represented” and “Media world and me”) build on material in the *PDHPE 7-10* cross curriculum content and *PDHPE 7-10* Outcome 4.6

The six *Crossroads* lessons on sex and gender build on *PDHPE 7-10* Outcomes 5.3 and 5.6, and refer to *Crossroads* content on gender and sexual identities. “Do opposites really attract?” follows the work on binary thinking in the Stage 5 *Toolbox*. Intended for older students than the Stage 5 work, it includes scenarios that illustrate range of sexual attraction, behaviour and identities. “Exploring gender identity” and “If the category fits – wear it” concerns discussions of gender stereotypes. “Gender matters” concerns terminology for sex and gender diverse people and “Stairs to inclusivity” provides an opportunity to consider the discrimination and support for diverse communities of all kinds.

The two *Crossroads* sexual health activities follow content in Outcomes 4.7 and 5.6 of the *PDHPE 7-10* syllabus and the *Crossroads* content on “safe and ethical behaviour”. “Stepping out” uses the same lesson structure as the Stage 5 activity of the same name, and “Responsibilities in a sexual relationship” uses the continuum cards structure familiar from many of the *Toolbox* and *Crossroads* lessons. “Stepping out” explores health care access from variety of young people, revises content on STIs and introduces a resource for tracing of sexual partners in case of STIs.

Finding 12: *Crossroads* resources build on the *PDHPE 7-10* syllabus and reflect the optional content suggested in the *Crossroads* master document.

The lessons on media, sexuality and technology are potentially controversial. “Young people, technology and sexuality” focuses on the sharing of sexually explicit images. “Generation XX” includes a scenario that refers to an (undisclosed) explicit act and the scenario cards in “What is real” refers to slightly more explicit kinds of material. These lessons are accompanied by teaching notes intended to guide teachers’ decision making and there is scope for teachers to choose examples and scenarios that suit the students in their class. Some of this material, however, would be uncomfortable or unfamiliar for some students. Schools should, therefore, take steps to ensure that this *Crossroads* material is not used unless it has been determined to be appropriate for the students and class groups involved.

Finding 13: Some of the scenarios in *Crossroads* lessons on media, technology and sexuality would not be appropriate for all students.

The Department of Education should review the appropriateness of the role plays and scenarios used in these *Crossroads* activities and teachers should not use the materials without the approval of their school principal.

As is the case in the *Toolbox* resources, some of the *Crossroads* web links are to NSW Health sponsored websites. Others include the University of Pennsylvania’s authentic happiness website; a commercial feminine products website; ACON, an LGBTI health promotion organisation primarily funded by NSW Health; ReachOut, which provides online mental health tools and resources for young people; Twenty10, a community-based organisation working with sex and gender diverse communities; and the Gender Centre, which provides services for the transgender and gender diverse community. Sixteen to 18-year old students ought to be able to use their own judgment in accessing such external websites, but teachers directing students to them cannot know what other resources may appear on third-party websites from time to time. For this reason, in the context of adolescent sexual health, *Crossroads* should prefer NSW Health websites and not refer students elsewhere unless they can be confident about the entire range of other material which may appear on third-party websites.

Finding 14 In the context of adolescent sexual health *Crossroads* should prefer authoritative NSW Health websites and teachers should not refer students elsewhere unless they can be confident of the entire range of other material which may appear on third-party websites.

Well-planned and taught programs carefully select resources to manage controversial issues. Unlike the *Toolbox* resources, however, *Crossroads* lessons do not carry a standard reminder about the management of controversial issues in NSW government schools.⁸⁹ This should be remedied.

Finding 15 The teacher note on controversial issues that appears at the front of each *Teacher Toolbox* unit of work should appear in each of the sex and gender lessons provided for *Crossroads*.

All the *Crossroads* resources are inclusive of sex and gender diversity. In this regard, they build on the approach taken in the NSW *PDHSE K-10* syllabuses, NSW anti-discrimination legislation and the statutory guidance on sex education in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Canada, New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland, California and eight other US states.

Finding 16: The inclusive approach to sex and gender diversity in the *Crossroads* resources is consistent with NSW anti-discrimination legislation, the

⁸⁹ “Sexual health education can be a controversial issue in schools. According to the NSW Department of Education’s *Controversial Issues in Schools* policy, it is essential to maintain communication between the school and the parents in relation to the school’s educational program, in particular the PDHPE program. Informing parents of the content of the PDHPE program before beginning the program allows parents to exercise their rights of withdrawing their child from a particular session or sessions on certain controversial issues. In this regard, a parent’s wish must be respected.”

***PDHPE K-10* syllabuses and practices in comparable international jurisdictions.**

Contraception, puberty, STIs and sexual health are taught in the *PDHPE K-10* syllabuses and are assumed knowledge in *Crossroads* activities. The medically accurate convention of using anatomical names for body parts and frankly identifying sexual practices in discussion of health risks leads to a few instances where words are used appropriately in context but might seem surprising when taken out of context. *Principles of Sexuality and Sexual Health Education in NSW Government Schools* requires that learning experiences provide accurate and reliable information and aim to dispel myths about sexuality and sexual health.⁹⁰ On the other hand, such explicit naming of body parts and sex acts may not be appropriate for all students.

Finding 17: *Crossroads* uses medically accurate language in the context of lessons on sexual health risks. This is consistent with Department policy, but the Department of Education should review the appropriateness of the language for use with all students.

The final variable in the state and national sex education programs described in the literature review is whether programs are mandated or not. *Crossroads* is mandatory. All students must receive a total of 25 hours of instruction on personal identity, mental health and wellbeing, relationships, and sexuality and sexual health, drugs and alcohol and safe travel. The content identified in pages 5-15 of the *Crossroads* master document is optional, and the 18 *Crossroads* lessons discussed in the review are optional. In this regard, NSW mandates much less content for Years 11 and 12 than New Zealand or Ontario and about as much as Scotland, England or California.

The *Crossroads* advisory material, however, is extensive and operates at several levels of specificity: there are content elaborations in the *Crossroads* master document; suggested lesson structures; and suggested activities, scenarios, handouts and role-play cards.

In general, NSW the curriculum tradition tends towards the more comprehensive end of the spectrum. A great deal of support material is provided to teachers and they are generally appreciative of what is provided. This does, however, lead to a problem for NSW: not everyone distinguishes between what is compulsory and what is advisory.

Material which carries the State Government and Department of Education logo, as all *Toolbox* and *Crossroads* lessons do, will be understood to be authorised by the Government and therefore mandatory, no matter how carefully the text of the resource explains that the content or activities or role-play scenarios are optional.

⁹⁰ Principle 10, p. 5

Finding 18: The Department of Education should clearly indicate whether material bearing its logo is mandatory or optional.

Consideration also should be given to changing the patterns of authorisation in curriculum support materials. In other jurisdictions, it is much more common to provide lists of content and require schools to make their own decisions about lesson-level support for teachers. In England, for example, the Department for Education funded a coalition of non-government organisations to provide advice on content and resources.⁹¹ One of these NGOs was also funded to work with schools to advise them on developing their sex and relationship curriculum and improving teaching quality.⁹² Similarly, in Ontario the physical and health education teachers' association provides detailed but not authorised lesson plans, the New Zealand materials direct teachers to NZ Family Planning programs and the Northern Ireland materials recommend a range of third party providers.

These arms-length approaches to lesson-level support materials have several advantages for governments, right across the curriculum. In a large jurisdiction, such as NSW, located in a country with a relatively common national curriculum, it makes more sense to stimulate the market for high quality materials than to take on responsibility for authorising materials at the finest level of detail. Such an approach is likely to lead to a range of alternative materials being produced, all meeting syllabus requirements but doing so in ways that are compatible with different regional, pedagogical or faith traditions. In the case of potentially controversial topics, it would also allow the Government to focus on ensuring that its policies on controversial issues were being followed rather than producing materials that were themselves potentially controversial.

Finding 19 If fine-grained, lesson-level teaching materials are required for potentially contentious topics, the Department of Education should support one or more independent agencies to provide them.

⁹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-social-health-and-economic-education-pshe/personal-social-health-and-economic-pshe-education>

⁹² <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/sex-and-relationship-education-sre-21st-century>