

## Concerns with the Government's Decision Regarding the Health and Physical Education Curriculum

The current Health and Physical Education Curriculum revised in 2015 should remain. Good policy should not be seen as partisan. But is no surprise as sadly, this government's campaign promise was confirmed on July 11 by Minister of Education Lisa Thompson and in September, Ontario students will be taught the 1998 sexual education components of the Health and Physical Education curriculum — which predates same-sex marriage, Google, and social media and excludes concepts of consent, same-sex relationships, gender identity, cyberbullying, and the dangers of sexting. The following article, written by one of our staff before the election anticipating this decision is important to this conversation – [What No Premier Can Change About Sex Education in Ontario](#).

I can assure you that Toronto District School Board Trustees are concerned. And it is not only our Board that feels this way – the Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA) that represents the 31 English Public Boards was directly involved in advocating for the new curriculum to be implemented since it was developed. President Cathy Abraham spoke to this in an [article](#) published before the election. *“It talks about health issues and safety and it's about the well-being of our kids ... we will work with this government and help them to understand why we believe this health and physical education curriculum is important... The whole issue about consent, we all know that's a huge conversation right now and the sooner we are able to have that conversation with our children, that they have the right to say no... [is] not a bad conversation to be having.”*

Our Chair Robin Pilkey has made the following public comment...

*“We do not yet know many details, however we have a number of questions and concerns about how the previous Health & Physical Education curriculum will be implemented in September — especially given that it was written in 1998 and a lot has changed for students since then. In the meantime, the TDSB remains a system that strives to ensure students are prepared for the realities of today. From online safety to human rights, we will continue to support the well-being and health of students.”*

We are seeking additional details from the Ministry of Education and Director John Malloy will be bringing staff together from Leadership and Learning, Communications, Legal, etc. to discuss next steps. These discussions will, among other things, enable us to determine where there may be gaps in the previous curriculum and identify where topics are covered elsewhere in the overall curriculum. For example, through our [policies](#) that speak to Equity.

I have been sharing through twitter that it is our role as trustees in the *Education Act* to promote student achievement and well-being... to promote a positive school climate... to promote the prevention of bullying and deliver effective and appropriate educational programs... and that means supporting the current Health and Physical Education curriculum. But I have been reminded through a number of tweets from teachers and by OPSBA that curriculum documents are guidelines and they provide significant ability for teachers to provide

details, examples, varied strategies etc. Curriculum guides are not like a daily planner from which there is no straying, although that may sometimes be the public perception. Good teachers want to ensure that the concepts are understood, skills gained, perspectives appreciated etc. and how they do it is largely up to them. We need to support our teachers using the curriculum guides, and teaching in a manner that is best for their students discussing real life, age-appropriate scenarios and examples. These articles support this position – [Ontario Teachers Can Fill In The Blanks Of Old Sex-Ed Curriculum](#) and [Hibbert: Must trust teachers on health education](#).

As we work internally, we are encouraging all parents/citizens to contact their local MPP and the Minister of Education to let them know of their concerns. I have been advised that this should be through letter as it is our understanding they may not respond to social media. Contact information for all Members of Provincial Parliament can be found [here](#). You might also want to ask just how and when you will be consulted.

The [Myths and Facts](#) document on the OPSBA website provides context and background for advocacy.

I will keep the community updated as we determine next steps.