

Parents and guardians are in a great position to receive candid feedback about sex education curriculums from their children and advocate for improvements on their behalf.

While students are capable of and encouraged to participate in self-advocacy, parents wield a great deal of influence over school matters given their abilities to both engage in committees and vote. We know that the [majority of parents](#) support sex education, and it's important to make your support known.

In this toolkit we provide a few ideas for how to get involved if you are concerned about your child's sex education curriculum and want to advocate for advancing sex education in your district and state.

Do Your Research

Many districts require that sex education curriculums are posted online or shared with parents before the information is taught. If this is not the case for your district, you should still be able to access the curriculum by contacting your child's school.

You may already have an existing concern that you want to review in greater detail, or just a general interest in learning about what is being taught in school. Here are some questions to ask yourself when reviewing the lesson plans:

- Is the information taught to students required to be medically accurate and age-appropriate?
- Does the curriculum perpetuate stigma against students?
- Is the curriculum inclusive of LGBTQ+ identities?



For more information, visit the [National Sex Education Standards](#).

Organize

You do not necessarily need to be a member of a formal committee or advisory board in order to advocate for change in your school district or state. There are many options for organizing that do not require direct association with your school or county. Here are a couple ideas to get you started:

Take Advantage of Social Media

Social media can be a great way to organize fellow parents that share your concerns and want to make a change.

Potential uses for social media include:

- Surveying parents in the district about their opinions on the sex education curriculum.
- Organizing groups to attend school board meetings and other events.
- Raising awareness for issues within the school's sex education curriculum.

Refer to our [Digital Advocacy Toolkit](#) for further guidance on using social media to advocate for advancing sex education.

Partner with Local Organizations

There are plenty of local organizations that would be more than happy to help you advocate for advancing sex education in your area. Consider reaching out to them.

Examples of local organizations include:

- Parent Teacher Association/Organization
- Teacher's union
- Family planning clinics
- HIV/AIDS organizations
- Health care providers
- Reproductive health care advocacy organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- LGBTQ+ organizations

Join School Organizations

If you do have the time and the opportunity, joining school or county organizations can be a great way to ensure your concerns reach decision makers.

Parent Teacher Association/Organization

The Parent Teacher Association and Parent Teacher Organizations provide opportunities for parents to get involved and work with school staff to improve educational experiences for students. Reach out to your child's school for more information on joining.

Advisory Committees

There is a good chance your district and/or school has a School Health Advisory Committee and/or a Curriculum Advisory Committee. These committees are typically tasked with reviewing health education and sex education curriculum material and making recommendations to the school board. Members of the committee can be either appointees or volunteers, so research the process for your specific district if you are interested in getting involved.

Testimonies

Consider testifying at school board meetings or other public hearings that allow community members to voice their concerns. This is a great opportunity to present your concern to an audience and propose a solution. It can be even more effective to collaborate with other parents beforehand to speak on the same issue and emphasize a need for change. There are also numerous opportunities for parents to provide public comment on education standards. Check in with your state Department of Education to understand local processes and timelines.

Contact Elected Officials

Familiarize yourself with the process of designing or selecting sex education curriculums in your state or district—who ultimately makes the decision around policies that concern you? It could be your legislature, the State Board of Education, or your local school board. Knowing the answer to this question will allow you to determine the most effective approach to advocating for change. Refer to page 17 of our [Community Action Toolkit](#) to learn more about these organizations.

Once you know who the decision makers are, here is some guidance for how to go about reaching out to them with your concerns:

Emailing Representatives

When constructing an email to your representative:

1. Include the bill number of concern in your opening sentence.
2. Keep it concise.
 - Briefly introduce yourself and make it clear you are a constituent. Representatives want to hear from people who live in their district.
 - State why you support/oppose the bill.
 - State why the representative should care about this issue.
 - Tell the representative exactly how you want them to vote on the issue.



Calling Representatives

You, or your representative, may prefer phone calls over emails. When calling a representative, consider the following guidelines:

1. Share your name and make it clear you are a constituent (you live in their district).
2. Share your specific sex education concern. Keep this clear and concise. Utilizing values based messaging or sharing relatable and personable examples will make the conversation more memorable and personal to your representative.
3. Tell the elected official exactly what you would like them to do about the specific sex education issue ("Please vote 'Yes'/'No' on X policy change")
4. Thank the elected official for supporting your cause.

In-Person Meetings with Representatives

There is a chance that your representative's preferred method of contact is in-person meetings. If this is the case, keep these tips in mind:

1. Prepare your persuasive message beforehand. You will want to be very direct in the point you are trying to make.
2. Gather facts and anecdotes that support your position or concern.
3. Conduct background research on your opposition so you can anticipate counter-arguments and address them.

The best way to persuade those who are skeptical of your demands is to affirm shared values. One tactic you can use to find common ground is *agree, bridge, and convince*.

- Start with stating something you can *agree* on. ("We all want..." or "You're right that...")
- Create a *bridge* to shift the conversation toward your messaging. ("However, ..." or "The thing to remember is ...")
- Then, you'll be better set up to *convince* them of your message.

The key points that you choose to prioritize may vary depending on your audience. For example, if speaking to the school board you may choose to highlight the financial benefit of pursuing your desired change, while for parents you may decide to highlight the positive outcomes it can have on their children's well-being.

Vote

Being an active voter is a highly effective way to influence sex education policies and curriculums in your area. Representatives of your state are elected, as are most school board members. Do your research on candidates and vote for those who have historically supported policies that advance sex education.

To learn more about your state's procedures and candidates' voting histories, you may utilize resources such as [Ballotpedia](#).

Communicate with Your Child

Remember that your child is the one receiving the sex education curriculum first-hand. Therefore, they will likely be able to offer the best insight into the content and how it may be impacting their life experiences.

Use policies as opportunities to start conversations.

Many districts require that schools notify parents, or even require parent's written permission, when their child is beginning their sex education course or when specific content is due to be taught. Use these opportunities to open conversations with your child about their sex education curriculum or other related topics. ■

This handout is an excerpt from our Community Action Toolkit. For more information on creating change in your community, get the full guide!

[Download the Toolkit →](#)