

APS Health Education Curriculum Talking Points

A Guide for
Middle
School
Parents &
Guardians



Updated 3/30/23 by J. Nassar

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Introduction

In 2015, Aurora Public Schools made a commitment to the community to provide high quality, age appropriate, comprehensive sexual health education for its 5th grade, Middle School and High School students. A report from stakeholders in the community served as a catalyst to adopt a District curriculum which provided medically accurate, culturally sensitive information to students, in hopes that this would equip students to make healthy decisions to protect their futures. Today, we are pleased to offer a comprehensive and inclusive curriculum, aligned to Colorado State law and academic standards, for all students that focuses on providing individuals with the skills and information they need to participate in healthy relationships when they choose, thus, empowering them to secure healthy futures.

This guide provides an overview of the board adopted lesson content for parents and guardians as they teach their students about a variety of sexual health topics with key supports and resources to increase confidence. APS is committed to educate all students who participate in the following topics for middle school aged students using a medically accurate, scientific and skills based approach:

- *Healthy Relationships, Decision Making & Communication*
- *Accessing Information and Resources Responsibly*

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- *Setting Boundaries*
- *Medically Accurate Anatomy & Physiology*
- *Setting Healthy Goals*
- *Participating in Health Enhancing Behaviors*

The following sections will include information about the adopted curriculum, and will provide you with supplemental materials for you to further support your student in learning about sexual health. We hope you enjoy this Parent Guide, and we look forward to aiding you in supporting your students as they learn health information and skills.

If you have additional questions about the Healthy Relationships and Reproductive Health units after reviewing the following information and resources, please contact Jennifer Nassar, Health Education Coordinator (TOSA), at janassar@aurorak12.org or 303-340-0859 Ext. 28374. You may also request to review the instructional materials at the Division of Equity in Learning by appointment with Jennifer Nassar.

Overview of Lessons

Through an agreement with the University of Colorado Anschutz College of Nursing, we have the opportunity to have senior public health clinical nursing students teach these lessons in many of our middle school classrooms. Our purpose in using the nursing students for teaching is to ensure that lessons include up to date, medically accurate, and culturally inclusive information in the classroom and to build trust in healthcare provider relationships. Oftentimes, nursing students come from similar backgrounds and speak the same home languages as APS students, increasing the authenticity of the experience. Nursing students must complete training and planning hours prior to teaching with the APS Health Instructional Coordinator, and lessons are supervised by classroom teachers, APS administration and CU Nursing faculty.

Lessons are skills-based¹, teaching functional health skills that emphasize health literacy, communication, personal advocacy and health positivity. By using a skills based approach, students receive instruction that considers cultural, environmental, social, physical and emotional factors in its approach. It is through this approach that we feel students will be prepared for health promoting behaviors, attitudes and beliefs.

	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5
6th Grade	Being Critical Consumers	Finding Information About Relationships & Sexual Health	Reproductive System & Pregnancy	Feelings and Relationships	Boundaries
7th Grade	Effective Communication	Influences on Healthy Relationships	Rules of Dating	Saying No	Relationship Role Play
8th Grade	Decide	Consent	STIs	Condom Use	Birth Control Methods

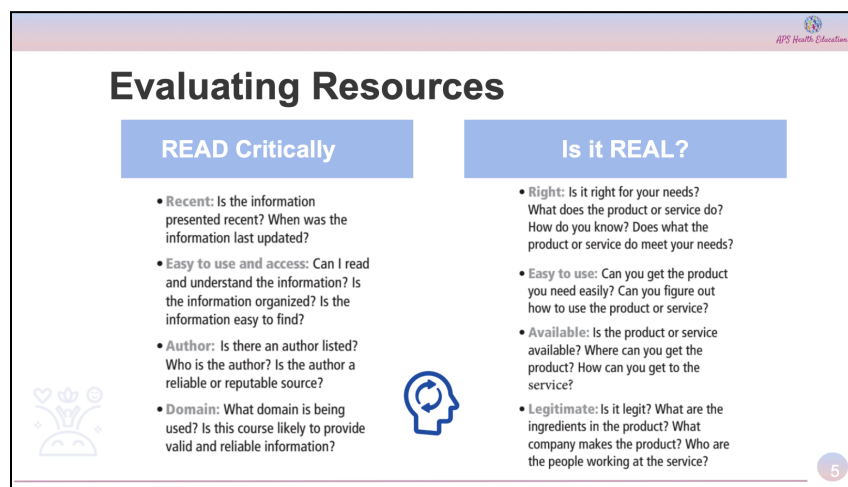
¹ <https://lighthousehealthconsulting.com/resources/skills-based-health-education/>

Middle School: 6th Grade

Lessons for 6th grade emphasize identifying valid resources, including trusted adults, for physical and emotional health needs. Students will learn to critically review and analyze health information, explore recommended resources for health, build skills in communicating health needs, establish boundaries, and complete an age appropriate, comprehensive review of the reproductive body system.

Being Critical Consumers

Students will learn how to identify if resources that they use for health content are from reputable and trustworthy sources (.gov, .edu, healthcare facilities, etc.). They examine skill cues with instructors to determine how to critically review information they find.



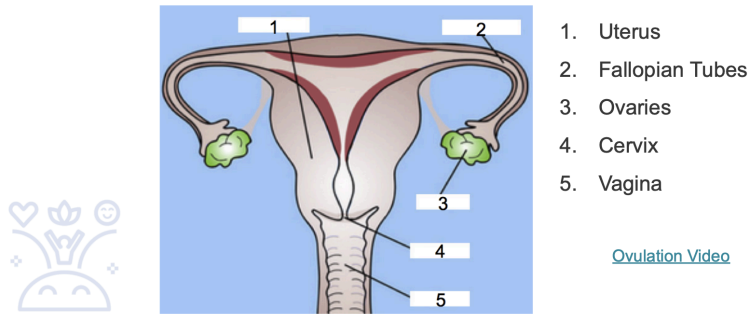
(example of skill cues for 6th grade)

△ Home Follow Up Suggestions:

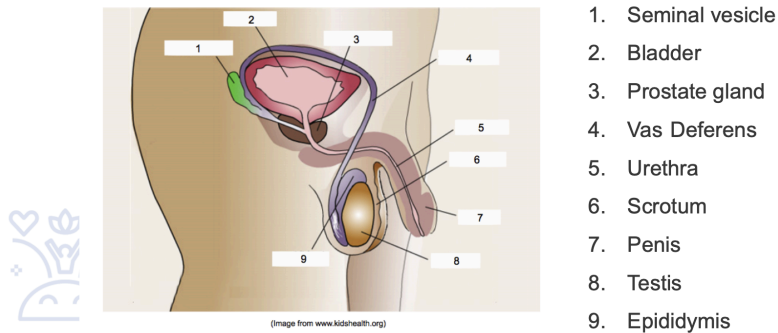
1. Define what appropriate internet searches and social media usage are in your home, and if there are any boundaries that need to be set.
2. Talk to your student about the trusted adults they have identified. Make sure that you as the parent or guardian explore ways to communicate with your student openly and honestly.

	Resources- Learn more about trusted adults from Safe Secure Kids here; Health-Related Internet Use by Children and Adolescents: Systematic Review; Teens, Social Media and Technology 2022 The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Teens and Tweens, 2021 - Summary article
Finding Information About Relationships & Sexual Health	Through discussion and small group work, students will explore what it means to themselves to be healthy, identify the dimensions of health and wellbeing, and discuss why it is important to identify accurate sources for health information. <i>Suggested websites include:</i> kidshealth.org, girlshealth.gov, hhs.gov, yourteenmag.com, cdc.gov △ Home Follow Up Suggestions: 1. What are some of the values and beliefs that you hold about health and relationships? Discuss those values with your student. 2. Ask your student if they feel that they can ask you questions or talk about difficult topics. If this feels difficult, brainstorm together ways that your student can broach difficult questions with you. a. Example: <i>Writing letters or sharing questions in a notebook that gets passed back and forth is a great idea to begin sharing sensitive information.</i> Resources: Would you like to learn an easier way to answer difficult or sensitive questions from your student? See the 'Values Question Protocol' in the Appendix of this guide.
Reproductive System & Pregnancy	Students will label anatomical diagrams (see samples below) for a person with a vagina and ovaries, and a person with a penis and testes. Discussing information will be essential to understanding the organ/structure purpose in the physiological processes of the reproductive system.

Human Reproductive System



Human Reproductive System



(examples of the diagrams used)

△ Home Follow Up Suggestions:

1. Review any cultural, social or religious practices and beliefs with your student regarding hygiene.
2. This is an excellent time to ask your student if they have questions about sex that they would like to address with you. Remember, it might be uncomfortable for both of you, but it is critical that you discuss your family values at this time.

Note- Researchers have suggested avoiding special names for private parts and instead opt for names that accurately reflect

	<i>anatomical names such as 'penis' or 'vagina.' This is important in giving your student more power in asking questions and making decisions about their body. See "additional resources" that follow the 6th grade lesson overview.</i> Resources - Here is a textbook from Oregon State of the biological female and male anatomy systems with comprehensive descriptions of the body parts.																
Feelings & Relationships	In this lesson, students explore appropriate and inappropriate ways to show feelings of attraction toward others. They discuss how feelings change during puberty and the negative consequences of having sex. They learn about sexual abstinence and setting personal limits as a way to avoid those consequences. Then they complete an activity in which they list healthy and safe ways to express romantic feelings. Lesson Reflection: Ways to Express Romantic Feelings <table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Directions: What are 4 appropriate, healthy and safe ways to express romantic feelings for someone you are attracted to? After each way you describe, explain why it is appropriate, healthy, and safe.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Ways to express romantic feelings</td><td>Why is this appropriate, healthy and safe?</td></tr> <tr> <td>1.</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>2.</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>3.</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>4.</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"> Explain why setting limits around ways to express romantic feelings is important. Setting limits around ways to express romantic feelings is important because... </td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"> Give at least 2 examples of how limits can help keep people healthy and safe. Setting limits can help keep people healthy and safe by... 1. 2. </td></tr> </table> 🏠 Home Follow Up Suggestions:	Directions: What are 4 appropriate, healthy and safe ways to express romantic feelings for someone you are attracted to? After each way you describe, explain why it is appropriate, healthy, and safe.		Ways to express romantic feelings	Why is this appropriate, healthy and safe?	1.		2.		3.		4.		Explain why setting limits around ways to express romantic feelings is important. Setting limits around ways to express romantic feelings is important because...		Give at least 2 examples of how limits can help keep people healthy and safe. Setting limits can help keep people healthy and safe by... 1. 2.	
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	1. Ask your student what they learned about setting boundaries. Are there physical, emotional or even spiritual boundaries you would like to add in the discussion? 2. Reaffirm to your student ways that they can set boundaries that you will support.
Boundaries	This lesson teaches students to set healthy boundaries for the basis of relationships. Students will practice describing what boundaries are, and begin to define boundaries for themselves. <u>Examples of boundaries:</u> • "I will loan my pencil to you, but I need it back at the end of class." • "I'm not willing to argue with you." • "I will hang out with you, but I will not gossip about other people." • "I really enjoy holding your hand while walking together, but I don't want to kiss you when we say goodbye." • "I like you but I don't enjoy hugging people, please stop asking for hugs." 🏠 Home Follow Up Suggestions: 1. Discuss with your student the types of boundaries you have set with your own relationships (work, friends, partners). Share why setting and following those boundaries is important to you.

Additional Resources for 6th Grade Topics

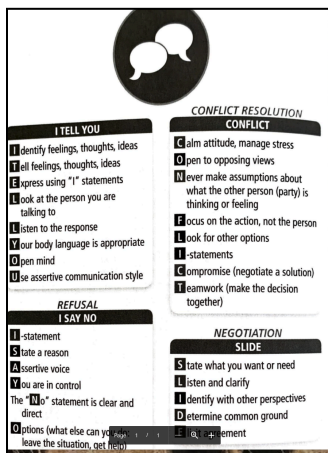
- [The Case for Teaching Kids 'Vagina', 'Penis', and 'Vulva'](#) by The Atlantic. This article details the current research on why using the scientific names for body parts when talking to children can help them in the long run.
- Menstruation Helps: Denver Public Schools has produced a set of videos discussing menstruation that you might find helpful. Find those videos [here](#).

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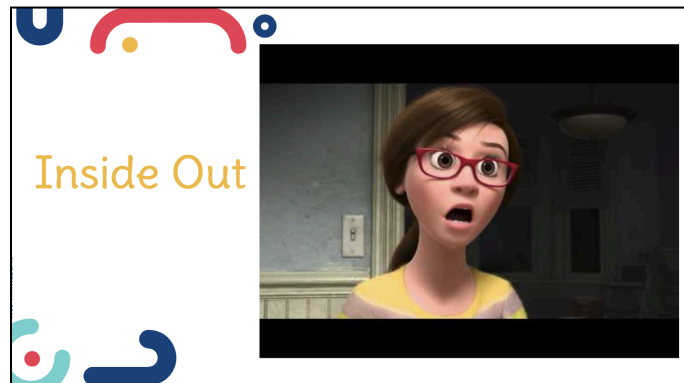
Middle School: 7th Grade

Lessons for 7th grade involve identifying communication styles that people use in daily situations, and focus heavily on practicing self-expression and refusal through scenarios and role play. Students are taught to recognize the impact of positive and negative influences on home, personal and social relationships, and how important it is to set boundaries and clearly communicate needs and wants. Dating and abstinence are discussed in this unit, and students are encouraged to clarify their personal values with families and trusted adults regarding both. Predominate activities include working through different types of communication needs that may be present in diverse relationships using role play.

Effective Communication



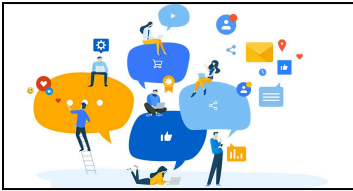
Through group activities, students will discuss how individuals communicate, and how mixed signals and ineffective communication methods can impact relationships with family, friends and partners. The lesson will introduce skill cues for self expression and refusal.



(Students review of clip of Pixar's Inside Out to determine styles of communication)

△ Home Follow Up Suggestions:

1. Ask your student how they feel about using

	"i-messages" in their communication at home. 2. Offer talking through situations in which refusal skills might be necessary (drinking at a party, riding with an individual who is under the influence of a substance etc.), identifying ways that you could support their decisions (using a code word for picking them up from an activity when they are uncomfortable, etc.) Resources- Learn more about using "i-messages" for relationship growth from this video.
Influences on Relationships 	Students will be asked to think about possible influences in home, personal, and social relationships, working to identify both positive and negative impacts from those influences. Students will create a personal web of influence, highlighting how personal beliefs, values, family, peers, and media impact decision making. △ Home Follow Up Suggestions: 1. Ask your student to share what they learned about influences in class, and how they feel about them. Are there any changes they would like to make now that they have identified these influences? 2. Consider possible influences (positive and negative) that are in your home currently. <i>For example, what are habits for eating in the home? Are meals shared experiences? Is the TV on, or are individuals on their phones while eating? What kinds of foods are present for snacking?</i> Consider what messages you would like to reinforce for your student.
Rules of Dating	Through the creation of a classroom "Teen Dating Commission," students are invited to discuss behaviors and influences on four key areas of dating relationships: <i>asking someone out, dating, breaking up and general rules about dating</i>. Students are encouraged to make each rule work for everyone, regardless of gender identities, sexual orientation, cultures, races, religion and economic status.

	7th Grade Personal Wellness Lesson: Teen Dating Commission  You have been appointed to the National Teen Dating Commission. Your job is to create RULES for dating that apply to teenagers. The rules you must create need to meet the following criteria: • The rules must be completely fair. • Every rule must work for everyone, regardless of gender identities, sexual orientation, cultures, races, religion and economic status.  • The rules should promote fairness and respect between the people who are dating. • The rules can't cause harm to anyone. • There must be at least one rule for each step of dating: (1) asking someone out or getting together, (2) dating or going out, and (3) breaking up. You can also create some general rules for dating. (example of student worksheet) △ Home Follow Up Suggestions: 1. Invite your child to share their thoughts about dating and relationships with you. Discuss your expectations about dating and relationships with your child. Set clear guidelines that you are both comfortable with, and follow through according to those guidelines.
Saying No	Students will learn the meaning of sexual abstinence (not having any kind of sexual contact with another person), and practice refusal skills for saying no to someone pressuring them to do something they don't want to participate in. <u>Scenario Example:</u> <i>Rebecca and Jun are in 8th grade and they live on the same street. Jun invited Rebecca over to hang out on a Friday night and keep her company while her older brother has some friends over. Rebecca didn't know that the older teens would be there and that they would be drinking. Jackson, a boy from school is there. He offers Rebecca a beer. Rebecca does not want to drink. She doesn't like the taste of beer and doesn't want to get in trouble when she goes home.</i> △ Home Follow Up Suggestions: 1. Share your own feelings about sexual abstinence with your student, and identify any personal values that have helped you reach those feelings.

	2. It's important that you talk to your child early on about what sex is and clarify any questions that they may have. Remember, talking about sex does not encourage your child to have sex early on. Research shows that talking about sex and how to be safe while doing it usually leads to a child having sex later and safer than other children who do not talk about sex with their parents.^{2 3 4}
Relationship Role Play	Reviewing information and skills gained through the week, students work in small groups with an instructor to design a scenario that depicts a potential communication conflict in a dating relationship. Groups will suggest healthy ways to resolve the situation using clear communication. <i>(Example of task for group work)</i> 🏠 Home Follow Up Suggestions: 1. Talk with your student about the scenarios presented throughout the week, asking if they agreed with their peers or disagreed with solutions presented. Listen to their rationale, sharing feedback.

² <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/protecting-children-sexual-abuse/202203/talking-your-kids-about-sex>

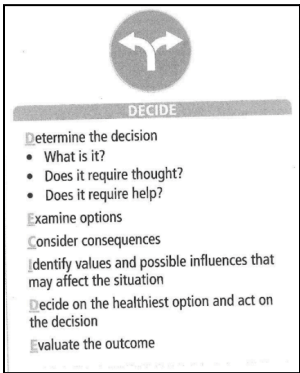
³ https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/docs/facts_for_families/62_talking_to_your_kids_about_sex.pdf

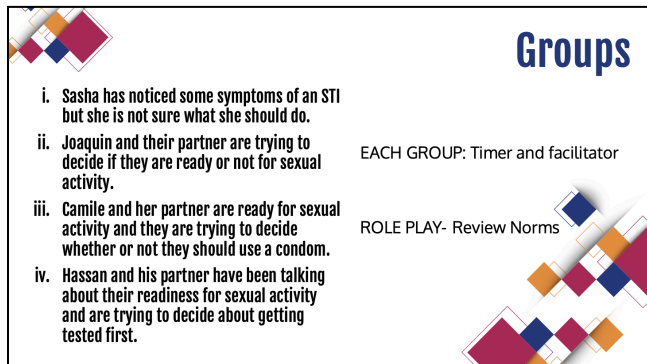
⁴ <https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/healthy-living/sexual-health/talk-your-kids-about-sex-and-healthy-relationships>

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Middle School: 8th Grade

Lessons for 8th grade build upon units from earlier years by encouraging students to apply previously developed skills - identifying valid resources, developing personal communication skills, and building healthy relationships - to their own lives and increase their ability to make decisions for their own futures. A model for decision making is presented, illustrating that students already know how to make decisions, giving them an opportunity to apply that process intentionally to health-related decisions.

Decide 	Students will learn about making decisions, using skill cues for the decision making process. A discussion of personal values, and their impact on decision making will precede an activity where they are asked to make decisions based on things they value in life (health, wealth, time with family etc.). △ Home Follow Up Suggestions: 1. Share a time that you had to make a tough decision with your student. Talk through the process that you went through in order to act. Resources- Learn more about teenagers and cooperative problem solving from Ohio State University here.
Consent	Students are asked to individually reflect on their decision making and to analyze their readiness to participate in relationships. Consent is defined and emphasized through a discussion of these words: <i>consent, authentic consent, coercion, boundaries, clear communication and negotiation</i>. They will practice giving "consent" through an activity where they negotiate ordering pizza with a partner; this activity is designed to get them to think about giving consent in dating relationships. What kind of pizza?  • Great, we both want pizza! • But what kind? Plain cheese? Pepperoni? • Talk about your favorite pizza. What do each of you like? Do you or your partner have limitations or restrictions? • Is your partner a vegetarian? Are you allergic to Pineapple? Do you like extra cheese? • Communicate with your partner and work together to find the perfect pizza for the both of you. • Half pepperoni and pineapple, half sausage and onion? • Extra cheese with pepperoni? △ Home Follow Up Suggestions: 1. Create a safe climate in your home for discussing sexual health, and emphasize no one has the right to force another person to participate in anything

	against their will. Learn the laws regarding consent for Colorado. Ask your student if they have any questions, and make the effort to find information together. Resources- Consent is like a cup of tea video, Colorado Consent Laws (2018)
STIs	Through an interactive activity, students learn some key medical points about STIs, including how they are and are not spread through anal, oral, or vaginal sex. They create a persuasion map (public service announcement) for the classroom to share information they have learned about prevention. While safer sex practices are shared, the point of emphasis for this lesson is that the only way to fully prevent STI transmission is to practice abstinence.  Groups - Sasha has noticed some symptoms of an STI but she is not sure what she should do. - Joaquin and their partner are trying to decide if they are ready or not for sexual activity. - Camile and her partner are ready for sexual activity and they are trying to decide whether or not they should use a condom. - Hassan and his partner have been talking about their readiness for sexual activity and are trying to decide about getting tested first. EACH GROUP: Timer and facilitator ROLE PLAY- Review Norms △ Home Follow Up Suggestions: - Review the resources below to learn more information regarding STIs that can assist you when talking with your student about medical care for STIs. Resources- Children's Hospital Colorado Adolescent Clinic Video library Clinic Tour- What to expect? Also, see What to expect during COVID from clinic visits

	b. BC4U Services c. What's Telehealth? Telehealth How TO d. How do I test for STDs during Covid? e. STI testing
Condom Use	In an age-appropriate demonstration led by CU Nursing students, a step by step process for using a condom is explained using a medical anatomical model and highlighting proper use and disposal. A discussion about decision making in regards to using condoms to help prevent unintended pregnancy and STI transmission is facilitated. △ Home Follow Up Suggestions: 1. Research⁵ studies show that teens prefer receiving information about birth control from individuals they have close relationships with, including families. Reflect on your knowledge about birth control and open the door to conversations with your student. Resources- Talking with your child about birth control, produced by National Children's Hospitals
Birth Control Methods ● Abstinence ● Condoms ● IUDs ● Shot ● Ring ● Patch ● Implant ● Pill ● Emergency Contraception ● Withdrawal	Students work in small groups with their instructor to prepare and share medically accurate information about birth control options, discussing the pros and cons of different types. Information from the week about decision making serves as the base for the share out, highlighting what considerations each method requires. Guiding Questions 1. How does this method prevent pregnancy? 2. Does it prevent transmission of STD's? 3. Who can use this method? 4. Where can a person get this method? 5. How expensive is this method? 6. What does a couple need to consider before they use this method? 

⁵ <https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/journals/JAR-2011-03-14.pdf>

	🏠 Home Follow Up Suggestions: 1. Use up to date resources such as the Office on Women's Health and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists to learn more about up to date research and effectiveness. Resources- Want to ensure a productive conversation with your student about birth control? Here are a few tips from a Washington Post article- discussing conversations with your teenager about birth control
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Values Question Protocol

APS uses a values neutral approach to answering sensitive questions from students during sexual health curriculum presentations called the Values Question Protocol (VQP). The protocol comes from [FLASH Sexual Health Curriculum](#), adopted by APS in 2015, and has since been taught to hundreds of K-12 teachers and facilitators in APS. When a student asks a question about a health topic or belief in class (i.e. - *types of sex (anal, oral, vaginal), pornography, masturbation, gender identity, sexual orientation etc.*), teachers are trained to use the VQP to answer a question factually (respecting any values associated with the question), **encourage follow up conversations with trusted adults**, and minimize any potential classroom disruptions. This protocol can be used at home, and any values associated with the question can be clarified by you, the parent or guardian.

1. Acknowledge the question
 - "I am so glad we have a chance to talk about this."
2. State the facts (define vocab, etc.)
3. Help identify the wide range of beliefs and share yours
 - "Some individuals believe...I believe that..."
4. If needed, refer to clergy, or other trusted adult
 - This might be a good question for our faith leader, I would be happy to go with you to ask them if you'd like
5. Check to see if you answered the question and leave space for other questions

The graphic to the left illustrates the VQP with modifications for home usage. Note that APS believes strongly that parents and guardians have a responsibility to teach their students the values that they hold socially, culturally and religiously.

When using the protocol, it is important to acknowledge that you will honestly answer the question from your student to the best of your ability. If you are unsure how to answer their question, need time to research an

issue, or just need to think through a response that is comfortable for you to give, ALWAYS let your student know that you need time to respond, and give them your best estimate as to when you can provide an answer. For example, "*I want to make*

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sure that I have the most up to date information about your question, give me until tomorrow evening to check some things out.”.

