

Montgomery County Sex Education for Teens

Catholic Teaching and Resources

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What is the Human Sexuality Program Planned for Montgomery County Public Schools?

The Montgomery County Public School Board of Education has developed two controversial materials for Grades 8 and 10:

- Condom demonstration video for 10th graders; a teen girl shows how to use a condom.
- Revised health education curriculum for grades 8 and 10 to include information about “sexual variation,” described as “the concept of sexual orientation as an essential human quality...that individuals have the right to accept, acknowledge, and live in accordance with their sexual orientation, be they heterosexual, bisexual, gay or lesbian.” The Board wrote, “(m)ost experts...have concluded that sexual orientation is not a choice; it’s a natural response...”

These materials are to be used in certain schools this spring. Parents would have to opt their children out of – not into – these lessons.

What is the Catholic Moral Teaching on Human Sexuality?

- Human sexuality is a sacred mystery in which man and woman were created for each other to be the foundation of a civilization of love through self-giving in marriage.
- Every person should be treated with dignity and respect at all times. Sexual morality should recognize this dignity and the importance of a positive integration of a person’s moral, spiritual, physical and emotional well-being.
- Sexual morality should never be presented simply as a way to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. The beauty of marriage and family life, and the commitment to one another, will be lost if the reason for abstinence before marriage is simply to avoid disease or pregnancy. Chastity is a way of life, with each person treated with dignity and respect in all areas of human activity.

What is the Role of Parents as Educators on Human Sexuality?

From television, music and movies, our young people are deluged with information and misinformation concerning sexuality. We need to talk with our children concerning sexual behavior and share with them our Catholic values.

As *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family* (TMHS #44), tell us, parents are the “original and primary, irreplaceable and inalienable, educators of the children,” since the father and mother are in the best position to determine the appropriate time to teach their children human sexuality in light of their physical, spiritual, emotional and moral development. Along with this right comes the duty of parents to provide education in human sexuality and chastity.

What About Teaching “Safe Sex”?

Many well-meaning people promote graphic “sex education” to children, believing it helps encourage responsible behavior and “safe sex” that will protect them from HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases. As Cardinal McCarrick noted in his 2003 pastoral letter on HIV/AIDS, *The Fullness of Life*, “If society is going to seek to modify conduct, then would it not be better and more effective to encourage behaviors such as chastity and abstinence that eliminate the risk of disease while promoting human dignity and a healthy life in all dimensions, rather than behaviors that do not eradicate the risk of disease and lull people into a false sense of security?”

Further, “No one should ever be invited, let alone obliged, to act in any way that could objectively offend against modesty or which could subjectively offend against his or her own delicacy or sense of privacy.” (TMHS #127)

This *principle of respect for the child* excludes involving children and young people in improper activities, such as these incorrect methods of sex education: (a) “dramatized” representation, mime or “role playing” which depict genital or erotic matters, (b) making drawings, charts or models of this nature, (c) seeking personal information about sexual questions or asking that family information be divulged and (d) oral or written exams about genital or erotic questions.

Education for chastity recognizes that each child is unique, matches his or her stage of development - best known by parents - and is held in an environment that integrates the moral dimension of human life with delicacy, all within the context of authentic love for others.

What is the Church’s Teaching on Homosexuality?

Marriage is the foundation of civilization wherein man and woman complement and fulfill each other in a life of commitment and self-giving that is open to children. Since homosexual relations can never generate new life and the God-given complementarity of man and woman is not present, the union is incomplete and cannot lead to fulfillment.

At the same time, our faith recognizes some people feel an attraction for their same gender. We are called to treat them with respect, compassion and sensitivity, to avoid unjust discrimination against them and to understand their call to chastity. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*)

Resources for Parents, Clergy and School Personnel:

Documents and books: Bible, *Familiaris Consortio*; *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family*; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; *Upbringing: A Discussion Handbook for Parents of Young Children*, by James Stenson; *Character Building: A Guide for Parents and Teachers* by David Isaacs; *Sex, Love and You* by Tom and Judy Lickona.

Websites: www.nwfs.org (Project Genesis and FACTS programs); www.familyhonor.org; www.ccli.org (New Corinthians Curriculum).

How Can I Be Involved in My Child’s Education and My Community?

- Become informed. The official website for Montgomery County Public Schools is www.mcps.k12.md.us. A group of parents who are concerned about the proposed changes have placed a copy of the new curriculum online, and are providing information on meetings, at www.mcpscurriculum.com.
- Respectfully contact your child’s public school PTA (Montgomery County Council: www.us.net/mccpta) and the members of the Board of Education (www.mcps.k12.md.us/boe) to have a voice in your child’s education.
- Get involved in the public forum. Participate on your community’s local boards, committees and commissions. We must be present in the public forum when issues are being discussed, and long before decisions are made, and to speak up to defend the values we believe in. We will be better able to present the Catholic teachings on morality and social justice issues by being involved on an ongoing basis. In Montgomery County, opportunities and vacancies are posted online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov.

This information was provided by the Archdiocese of Washington’s Office of Family Life, Justice and Service, and Communications.