

Due to the sensitive nature of some of the topics in the Family Life Education program, Prince William County Public Schools institutes an opt-out process, where parents may elect to remove their children from instruction on any or all of the objectives in the program. In addition, the School Division has set parameters on classroom discussion that may occur involving the following topics:

Homosexuality

The topic of homosexuality is limited to the teaching and discussion of sexually-transmitted diseases. Teachers limit discussions to a technical definition (one who engages in sexual activity with a member of the same sex) and do not explicitly address the acceptability of this lifestyle. It is recognized that students may ask questions or request further information; in these cases, students are referred to their parents or guardians for clarification. Although homosexuality is not taught as an acceptable lifestyle, efforts are made to be sensitive to students who may be wrestling with their sexual identity or have experience with adults or peers who do.

Family

For the purpose of teaching Family Life Education in Prince William County Public Schools, the definition of “family” is “the head of the household and all persons related by blood, by marriage, or by law including adoption and court awarded custody.” Teachers should teach that, although it is desirable for a family to include both a mother and a father, due to circumstances beyond the control of a child, this does not always occur. As many children in a classroom will not have a two-parent family, the teacher should reinforce that these children should not feel “less worthy” because their family does not resemble the family of other students. The teacher should likewise indicate that the composition of a family is beyond the control of a child; therefore the most important factor in considering what constitutes a family is the love, care, and support the adult member of a household provides for a child.

Abortion

The topic of abortion should be discussed in the context of the Constitution of the United States and the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Currently, the right of an individual to have an abortion is protected under the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States; however, students should be taught that, while abortion is legal under certain circumstances, it is not considered to be an acceptable form of birth control.

Contraception

Prince William County Public Schools do not condone students engaging in sexual activity before marriage because of the risk of sexually-transmitted diseases and pregnancy, potential psychological and emotional problems, loss of self-esteem and because premarital sexual intercourse violates the law in the Commonwealth of Virginia. However, students should be taught that contraception is one method of reducing the risk of pregnancy or contracting sexually-transmitted infections. Students should also be taught that abstinence is the only sure way to prevent pregnancy or contraction of sexually-transmitted infections. Although methods of contraception may be appropriate

for discussion, any teaching, discussion, or use of literature that involves techniques of applying contraceptive devices is prohibited.

The primary goal of the Family Life Education program is to educate students about making informed choices based on preliminary information they receive in the program, coupled with information from their parents and other approved sources. Every effort is made to avoid the disenfranchisement of students.

In June 2004 the Prince William County School Board approved an updated version of the Family Life Education curriculum aligned with the revised state guidelines. Copies of the Family Life Education curriculum documents can be located on the Prince William County Public Schools webpage at www.pwcs.edu. Click on “Programs,” “Science and Family Life Education,” and the “Family Life” menu tab.