

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child's health is important to us. In New York City public schools, health education classes include skills and lessons on violence and injury prevention; emotional and mental health; nutrition and physical activity; tobacco, alcohol and other drugs; family health and sexuality; HIV/AIDS; and personal and consumer health. Now more than ever, students need to apply the skills they learn in Health Education to prevent illness, access valid health information and services, and care for their social, emotional, and mental health.

The New York State Department of Education (NYSED) requires a one-semester, comprehensive health education course in both middle and high school. In this class students learn how to live a healthy life and avoid engaging in risky behaviors. Lessons in health education classes for middle and high school include lessons about sexual health that are appropriate for your child's age. This is in addition to the annual state mandated HIV/AIDS lessons in grades K-12.

Sexual health lessons provide adolescent students with medically accurate information and communication skills to help them make decisions that can keep them healthy and safe. Our shared goal is to delay sexual activity in school-age youth.

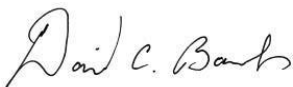
We know that our students and their families have a range of beliefs, cultures and customs. Those family values are core, essential guidelines for your child's life. As a parent/guardian, you have the right to keep your child out of some lessons about birth control and methods of HIV/sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention. You cannot remove your child from abstinence or other sexual health education lessons. If you have questions about which lessons you may opt-out for your child, please speak with the principal, parent coordinator, or health education teacher at your child's school.

If you would like your child to be excused from birth control and HIV/STI prevention lessons, write a letter to your child's principal. The letter should state that:

- Your child should not be in the classroom during lessons about birth control and methods of HIV/STI prevention; and
- You will provide instruction on prevention to your child in your home.

As in all areas, parents and guardians are a child's first and most influential teachers. Parents, guardians and schools share a common goal: we want students of all ages to be healthy in all aspects of their lives. Ask your child what he or she is learning in health education class in all lessons, not only those relating to sexual health. If you want to learn more about your child's health education class, talk to your child's principal and teachers. Also, make sure your child knows what you believe are the best ways to lead a healthy life.

Best,



David C. Banks