Dear Sixth Grade Parent or Guardian,

Health education in middle school begins with basic concepts designed to teach children about the physical and emotional changes that they will experience and to help prepare them for this development. In our upcoming units, we will be covering but are not limited to the following topics: teen dating and violence prevention, human trafficking, internet safety, nutrition, HIV/STD and disease prevention, sexual education, and alcohol and drug prevention.

Throughout the semester, we will focus on skills related to healthy communication, decision making, and assertiveness. In addition to learning about basic anatomy and physiology in this unit, students will learn the importance of applying these skills while developing healthy relationships.

During the weeks of ______________ we will cover our unit on comprehensive sexual health education. School based sexual education is not a substitute for what you teach your student at home, but it can be a valuable resource in preparing your student for the future. It is our belief that you provide the most important role in the formation of your student’s values and behaviors.

The sexual education unit will include a review of anatomy and physiology of reproductive systems, changes at puberty, personal hygiene, and disease transmission and prevention (including HIV/STD). We will also focus on values identification, and strategies to deal with peer pressure situations and emotional consequences.

It is our hope that you will discuss the topic of adolescent development with your student as we approach these topics in school. If I can provide you with any further information on any of the topics being addressed in our upcoming units, please contact me. If you choose to opt your child out of the comprehensive sexual health education unit, please notify me in writing a week prior to the beginning of the unit.

__________________________________

Health Teacher

__________________________________

Principal
Learning About Sexual Identity

Part of your sexual identity is understanding and accepting your feelings of sexual attraction for others. This is often called sexual orientation.

There are different types of attractions.

- Many people are sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex—boys to girls and girls to boys. The term for this type of attraction is heterosexual or straight.

- Some people are sexually attracted to people of the same sex—boys to boys or girls to girls. The term for this type of attraction is homosexual or gay. Gay men are attracted to other men. Lesbians are women who are attracted to other women.

- Some people are sexually attracted to both sexes. For example, a boy may be attracted to both girls and boys, or a girl may be attracted to both boys and girls. The term for this type of attraction is bisexual.

- Some young people aren't attracted to anybody right now. This is normal and OK.

Another part of sexual identity is how you see yourself in relation to being male or female. This is called gender identity.

- Most of the time, a boy feels comfortable with his male body, and a girl feels comfortable with her female body.

- Some people are transgender. They are born as one sex, but feel more like the other. It's as if they were born into the wrong body. For example, a transgender woman is someone born as a male who feels more like a female. A transgender man is someone born as a female who feels more like a male. Transgender people can have any sexual orientation.

- Gender roles are ideas about how males and females should behave. These ideas can be influenced by a person's family, culture, peers and society. They can change over time.

Sometimes people feel comfortable with accepted gender roles. At other times, a person may find gender roles limiting. The person may feel pressure to act in certain ways or do certain things just because he or she is male or female.
Aspects of Sexuality

Sexuality is about more than just “having sex.” It includes the choices people make about sex, their feelings of attraction toward others, how they feel about themselves as male or female, how they take care of their bodies and how well they listen and communicate about sex.

As you discuss these different aspects of sexuality, be sure to cover the following information.

**Choices People Make Around Sex**

- Some people choose not to have sex at this time in their lives. This is called sexual abstinence. People who are abstinent may decide not to participate in any sexual behaviors at all, or to set limits and avoid any sexual behaviors that could put them at risk for pregnancy or for sexually transmitted diseases, or STDs, which are illnesses that can be passed during sex. Abstinence is the best choice for teens.
- Other people choose to be sexually active. This means they participate in sexual behaviors with another person. Having sex can be an important and healthy part of human sexuality, but it carries certain risks and responsibilities. People need to be mature enough to accept those responsibilities and be prepared to protect themselves and their partners from unintended pregnancy and STD before they become sexually active.

**Feelings of Attraction Toward Others**

- Part of a person’s sexuality is his or her feelings of sexual attraction toward others. The term sexual orientation refers to different types of attractions.
- Many people are sexually attracted to the opposite sex—boys to girls and girls to boys. The term for this type of attraction is heterosexual or straight.
- Some people are sexually attracted to the same sex—boys to boys or girls to girls. The term for this type of attraction is homosexual or gay. Gay men are attracted to other men. Lesbians are women who are attracted to other women.
- Some people are sexually attracted to both sexes. For example, a boy maybe attracted to both girls and boys, or a girl may be attracted to both boys and girls. The term for this type of attraction is bisexual.
- Some young people aren’t attracted to anybody right now. This is normal and OK.

**How People Feel About Being Male or Female**

- How people see themselves in relation to being male or female is called gender identity.
- Most of the time, a boy feels comfortable with his male body, and a girl feels comfortable with her female body.
- Some people are transgender. They are born as one sex, but feel more like the other. It’s as if they were born into the wrong body. For example, a transgender woman is someone born as a male who feels more like a female. A transgender man is someone born as a female who feels more like a male. Transgender people can have any sexual orientation.
Aspects of Sexuality (continued)

How People Feel About Being Male or Female (continued)

- **Gender roles** are ideas about how males or females should behave. These ideas can be influenced by a person's family, culture, peers and society. They can change over time.
- Sometimes people feel comfortable fulfilling accepted gender roles. At other times, a person may find gender roles limiting or experience negative pressure to act in certain ways or do certain things just because he or she is male or female.

How People Take Care of Their Bodies

- Good sexual health is an important aspect of healthy sexuality. Taking care of the body includes keeping the reproductive and sexual organs healthy and preventing illness or disease.
- Regular check-ups can help ensure that a young person's reproductive organs develop normally during puberty and stay healthy through adulthood.
- People who choose to have sex need to know how to protect their bodies from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV. They also need to know how to avoid unintended pregnancy. Abstinence is the best way for teens to avoid pregnancy and health problems caused by STDs.
- Good hygiene and keeping the body clean is also important.
- Young people also need to understand how the reproductive system works and what’s normal for their bodies, so they can notice any problems or changes that should be checked by a health care professional.

How People Communicate About Sex

- Part of healthy sexuality is being able to effectively communicate one's sexual choices, including setting sexual limits to protect sexual health.
- For many teens, this means supporting their choice to be abstinent by knowing and using effective refusal skills to say no to sexual activity. For people who choose to be sexually active, it includes negotiating safer sex practices and the use of condoms to protect against unintended pregnancy and STD.
- It’s also important to express feelings of attraction to others in healthy and appropriate ways.
- Nobody should ever be forced, tricked or pressured into engaging in sexual behaviors.