



Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Rockford

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Dear Parents and Guardians in the Diocese of Rockford,

As our faithful families return to school for the new year, I am reminded of Pope emeritus Benedict XVI's remark that good schools educate the whole child with a well-rounded curriculum. Solid formation of our children will help ensure that they be given every chance to live whole and healthy lives, devoted to God and to Christ's Church.

Still as the new school year dawns, I must urge Catholic parents to be aware of new sexual education standards in Illinois public schools referred to as comprehensive sex education. The standards put forth in comprehensive sex education can cause irreparable harm to children, are contrary to Church teaching on God's gift of sexuality, undermine parents' rights, and indoctrinate children to a particular social agenda.

In 2021, I, along with the other Bishops of Illinois, opposed SB 818 that allows for school districts across Illinois to teach comprehensive sex education in public schools. If a school district adopts comprehensive sex education, it must abide by the National Sex Education Standards (NSES). These standards require children from kindergarten through 12th grade to receive instruction about gender identity, expression, and orientation.

Examples of the troubling comprehensive sex education skills that children will be taught by grade levels include:

- **2nd grade:** discuss the range of ways people express their gender and how gender-role stereotypes may limit behavior.
- **5th grade:** distinguish between sex assigned at birth and gender identity and explain how they may or may not differ.
- **5th grade:** explain masturbation.
- **5th grade:** describe the potential role of hormone blockers on young people who identify as transgender.
- **8th grade:** define sexual identity and explain a range of identities related to sexual orientation.
- **8th grade:** explain the steps to using barrier contraception methods correctly.
- **10th grade:** differentiate between sex assigned at birth, gender identity, and gender expression.

Parents should be aware that the curriculum in comprehensive sexual education can harm young children and adolescents by presenting ill-formed views of relationships that are based on personal gratification and the contemporary misunderstanding of God's gift of sexuality. Sexual education, when informed by the truth and beauty of our Catholic faith and morality, focuses our children on the selfless love modeled by Jesus Christ and leads to the union between body and spirit. Such education promotes the value of chastity and teaches the self-control needed to honor the dignity of ourselves and others.

Parents and concerned guardians can take steps to protect their children by educating themselves to make informed decisions, by petitioning their school boards to choose not to teach comprehensive sexual education, by deciding to opt their children out of this education if their school districts choose to teach it, and by remaining vigilant in being aware of who is teaching their children and what they are teaching. These steps are described in detail, including access to an updated list of decisions by Illinois school districts, on the Diocese of Rockford Life & Family Evangelization website at www.rockforddiocese.org/life/current-life-issues/parental-rights/.

We know that, as of the date of this letter, the following school districts in the diocese have adopted the new comprehensive sex education curriculum:

- **Rockford School District 205**
- **DeKalb Community Unit School District 428**

and the **School Districts in Stephenson County** have opted out of implementing the curriculum. I urge Catholic parents who live in these districts to be extremely vigilant by examining the curriculum and using their right to opt their children out if they object.

Other school districts in Carroll, Jo Daviess, Kane, Lee, McHenry, Ogle, Whiteside, and Winnebago – throughout the diocese – are considering whether to opt out of implementing such instruction. In these cases, I urge Catholic parents and guardians to make known to their school boards their objections to the curriculum.

As families prepare for a new year of learning, I share with you the words of Pope Benedict XVI in an address on youth education:

“It is not ideologies that save the world, but only a return to the living God, our Creator, the guarantor of our freedom, the guarantor of what is really good and true ... an unconditional return to God who is the measure of what is right and who at the same time is everlasting love. And what could ever save us apart from love?”ⁱ

With the assurance of my prayers for you, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford

ⁱ Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2012, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20111208_xlv-world-day-peace.html.