

Dexter Community Schools  
Board of Education  
Executive Summary and Recommendation

**Purpose:** Provide an updated, comprehensive resource to the 7-12 grade Reproductive health curriculum to better meet the needs of all our students, including those who identify as LGBTQ+.

**Explanation:** The Reproductive Health Advisory Committee is composed of DCS faculty and students, Dexter community members, and parents of Dexter students. The RHAC meets a minimum of five times each school year. All of the 2018-2019 meeting dates and each meeting for the 2019-2020 school year have included some discussion regarding the need for LGBTQ curriculum, investigating and reviewing specific curriculum, and the adoption of the Rights, Respect, and Responsibility curriculum in particular. Important discussion points, comments, and points of action include:

- The RHAC was approached by high school students from the Gay-Straight Alliance expressing concern that the current reproductive health curriculum does not meet the needs of LGBTQ+ students. They expressed the need for an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum in Dexter.
- The need for an inclusive LGBTQ+ curriculum was discussed in depth. Data that was discussed that supports this need include:
  - LGBTQ students experience stigma and discrimination through bullying, physical assaults, sexual harassment, verbal assaults, and harassment;
  - Feeling unsafe at school has a negative effect on academic performance, including increased absenteeism, lower grade point averages than their gender-conforming peers, and a higher likelihood to drop out of school;
  - Discrimination and harassment leads to higher rates of suicidal ideation and attempted suicide among LGBTQ youth, higher rates of anxiety, depression, eating disorders and self-harm, higher rates of substance abuse, and higher rates of high-risk sexual behaviors resulting in HIV, STI's, and unintended pregnancy;
  - Protective factors, including support from peers, school connectedness, supportive educators, anti-bullying policies, and an inclusive and comprehensive sexuality education can improve the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ students.
- Data from the 2017-2018 Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth (a risk-behavior survey administered every two years) showed that of all 7th, 9th, and 11th-grade students surveyed, 46 Dexter students identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Assuming this was a good representative sample, this would mean approximately 92 students grades 7-12 identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. The committee felt this was a significant number of students whose needs are not being met by the current curriculum.
- A survey of 7th-12th grade students showed a general lack of knowledge in LGBTQ issues and a desire to learn more.
- The district has recently focused on social-emotional learning targets and mental health initiatives for our students. This curriculum would help address

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these issues not only for Dexter's LGBTQ students, but for all Dexter students, and would align with district initiatives.

- The current resource has not been updated since 2010 and there are no current plans to update it. It does not contain LGBTQ lessons.
- The Advocates for Youth Rights, Respect, Responsibility 7-12 grade curriculum was selected for the following reasons:
  - It is aligned with the National Sexuality Education Standards
  - It is a comprehensive curriculum addressing many topics involving reproductive health
  - It has developed lesson plans and requires no teacher training
  - The authors are recognized experts and have extensive experience in the field of sexuality education
  - It is a free curriculum
  - This curriculum was recommended by Laurie Bechhofer, HIV/STD Education Consultant with the Michigan Department of Education

**Recommendation:**

The Reproductive Health Advisory Committee and administrative team are recommending the adoption of the Advocates for Youth Rights, Respect, Responsibility curriculum for grades 7-12. This is a free resource that will not result in additional expenditures by the district.