



## ***A Note to Parents from the Department of Teaching and Learning***

Family Life Education (FLE) is a state-endorsed program. The FLE curriculum for Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) was developed through the cooperative efforts of school personnel and members of the Community Involvement Team. The program has been in place since 1991.

The FLE program supports the family, promotes parental involvement, fosters positive self-concepts and provides mechanisms for coping with peer pressures and the stress of modern living. The program also includes, at age-appropriate grade levels, instruction on family living and community relationships, the value of postponing sexual activity until after marriage, human sexuality, human reproduction, the prevention and effects of sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS, social media and sex-trafficking. The program is taught by teachers who have received special training in the background goals and objectives of FLE.

The curriculum is available for review in all schools. Detailed information relative to the lesson objectives, audiovisual materials, instructional procedures and accompanying resources are provided within the curriculum documents.

Parents and guardians have the right to review the FLE program offered by the school division, including written and multi-media educational materials used in the program. Parents and guardians also have the right to excuse their child from all or part of FLE instruction. Parents and guardians are encouraged to review the FLE curriculum materials for their children's grade level(s).

VBCPS implements the FLE program at all schools during the second semester. Scheduling for instruction within the second semester is at the discretion of the principal. Prior to the start of the program, students receive information from their schools to share with parents/guardians. This information includes the dates of instruction for the program, as well as more specific information related to the opt-out program. The opt-out program is offered for parents/guardians to opt their children out of the FLE program if they do not wish them to participate in some or all of the program lessons. Since individual schools schedule the dates for FLE instruction, deadlines for opting-out of the program will vary. However, requests in writing must be honored at any time during the program.

### **How to Talk to Your Children about Matters Regarding Sexual Behavior**

Your child's school does not want to replace you as your child's source of information regarding sexual behavior and the spread of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Formal training in your child's school is intended to build on the attitudes, values and beliefs that you have already instilled in your child. You, as the parent or guardian, must bear the responsibility for teaching your child sexually responsible behavior.

Many parents find it difficult to talk about topics related to sexuality with their children. Your willingness to answer all of his or her questions will establish your lines of communication for future discussions.

Children's questions vary when it comes to sexual matters. Your child is influenced by what he or she sees on television, in magazines, on the Internet and on billboards; what is heard in conversations with peers; and the verbal and nonverbal cues learned from you about your own attitudes toward love, relationships, sexual feelings and self-esteem.

When your child asks you questions:

- Be honest with your child about your own level of knowledge. If your child asks you a question that you cannot answer, it is okay to tell him or her that you do not know the answer but will find out.
- Answer your child's questions in simple language that he or she can understand.
- Avoid giving body parts nicknames.
- Ask your child what he or she has heard or knows already about the question asked.
- Check to see that your child understands your answer with a statement, such as "Does this answer the question you had?"

Your child may ask you questions about your own sexual behavior. Personal questions can present you with a real challenge. How much you share with your child will depend on your child's maturity, your own feelings and the type of relationship you have established with your child. By being approachable, you can provide your child with the tools to become a sexually responsible adult.

Here are some important considerations as your child's educator regarding sexual matters:

- You are the primary sex educator for your children. It is your right as well as your responsibility to communicate your family's specific values about sexuality. You should tell your child your beliefs and what you want for him or her.
- Although it is best to start talking with your child when he or she is young, it is never too late to start the discussion. Also, keep in mind that one conversation will not accomplish the task of teaching your child about sexually responsible behavior and your family values.
- Be clear about your own values and beliefs, and be prepared to express them to your children.
- Don't wait for your child to ask questions about sexuality. Take advantage of situations when you are alone with your child, such as in the car, to start conversations.
- You do not have to be an expert or feel comfortable with the topic of sexuality to educate your child about sexually responsible behavior.
- Keep a variety of pamphlets, books, etc. around the house for your child to read that you have read first. These are available through your minister, the public health department, your doctor, primary health clinics, etc. Also, there are numerous family sites on the Internet that offer information for teens and advice for parents.
- Finally, do not feel that you have wasted your time because your child demonstrates a lack of interest or response during the conversation. Children often absorb more information than you realize.

This information was adapted from the following resources: *When the Subject is Sex - Attitudes and Answers for Young Children* by Pamela Wilson and *Some Advice on Raising Sexually Responsible Children* by Betsy Matthews Wright. If you want additional information, there is a wealth of information available in the community and on the Internet for parents and guardians who wish to further their education regarding HIV/AIDS. Below are some sources of information:

- American Red Cross (Health & Safety), (757) 446-7700, Ext. 1
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1-800-232-4636 or <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- Eastern Virginia Medical School - The Medical College of Hampton Roads Library, (757) 446-5851; Eastern Regional AIDS Resource and Consultation Center, (757) 446-6170 (resource directory is available upon request)
- Sentara Virginia Beach General Hospital, Explore Health, [www.sentara.com/HealthInfo/ExploreHealthWithSentara/Pages/ExploreHealthWithSentara.aspx](http://www.sentara.com/HealthInfo/ExploreHealthWithSentara/Pages/ExploreHealthWithSentara.aspx)
- United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1-877-696-6775 or <https://www.hhs.gov/>, and Health Finder, <https://healthfinder.gov/>
- Virginia Dept. of Health, <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/>; Va. Beach Dept. of Public Health, (757) 518-2700 or <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/virginia-beach/>