

Submission on the Draft Relationships and Sexuality Education Curriculum April 2026

From Resist Gender Education (RGE)

A. About RGE

Resist Gender Education is an alliance of educators, parents and others who joined together in 2021 to advocate for scientifically factual and age-appropriate relationships and sexuality education (RSE) that does not teach gender identity beliefs as if they are fact.

We are unequivocal that children deserve to be taught the truth – that there are only two sexes, that sex is a reproductive category, and that it is impossible for humans to change their sex.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft RSE curriculum, which we support, on the whole.

B. Positives in the draft curriculum

There are several major improvements in the content of the curriculum that we fully endorse:

- There is no mention of ‘gender’ or ‘gender identity’ in the entire curriculum. The word ‘identity’ is still used a little at each year level but in the context of children having personal traits, not special ‘genders’.
- The age of consent is explicitly stated at Y8 and Y9, an important piece of knowledge that was missing in the previous curriculum.
- The topic of contraception has been moved to Y10 where it is age-appropriate.
- Pornography has been improved as a topic, first covered in Y8, as part of the comprehensive consent and online safety themes that run through the whole curriculum.
- The word ‘intersex’ does not appear in the curriculum, but because there is no overarching definition of sex that confirms that 99.98% of humans are unequivocally known to be male or female at birth, confused teaching about this medical condition may continue.
- Topics are presented in a factual way at age-appropriate levels.

However, we have identified some gaps in the curriculum that need to be addressed. See below.

C. Content that needs to be added

1. A simple, clear definition of sex that is based on gamete size

In the draft framework that preceded this draft curriculum, it was refreshing to see the reality of the sex binary reinforced in factual language:

...“male and female bodies have reproductive systems that work together during fertilisation” and “Females have ovaries, a uterus, and a vagina to make eggs and grow a baby. Males have testicles and a penis to make and deliver sperm.”

But these definitions of sex and reproductive roles have disappeared from the new curriculum, to be replaced by worryingly imprecise language:

Conception usually occurs through sexual intercourse when sperm fertilises an egg, which is how human reproduction begins.

Why is the new curriculum being coy about which sex has the sperm and which one has the egg?

Recommendation: Return to the language in the draft framework, making it clear to children that sex is a binary reproductive category with each sex having an innate and complementary role.

2. Abstinence

Mentioning abstinence only once in the curriculum, in the context of contraception, is not sufficient. Abstinence should be discussed as a personal sexual choice, not just as a method of contraception.

3. Abortion

Another gap is the lack of any reference to abortion. Although this is a contentious topic, students need to be informed about the availability of abortion as well as other options when faced with an unplanned pregnancy.

4. Misogyny

Alongside investigating the harms of pornography, misogyny – a contemptuous attitude that impacts on half the population – needs to be examined, especially because a rapid rise has been recorded in misogynistic attitudes being expressed towards female teachers and students in our schools. <https://www.thepost.co.nz/nz-news/360973756/making-sense-manosphere-99-adults-dont-even-get>

5. Respectful disagreement

Young people need to learn how to disagree without casting those with different opinions as harmful or toxic. Understanding that not everyone has the same point of view and that we can live and work together constructively anyway has become crucial in this era of rigid and tribal

thinking. Instead of characterising words as dangerous and demanding safe spaces, adolescents should be taught to be open to learning by being willing to explore a topic from all angles.

As part of education about positive relationships, children should learn to reject the idea that it is noble or self-preserving to sever contact with friends or family simply because they don't always agree. In recent years, the value of family relationships has been downgraded, so that it has become fashionably acceptable for young adult children to cut off their families for perceived bigotry. The whole of society suffers when these foundational relationships are destroyed. Including lessons in maintaining healthy relationships through open and respectful discussions needs to be a core part of RSE so that it can contribute to examining another essential topic – transgender ideation.

6. Transgender ideation

That the concept of being 'transgender' is not in the curriculum is a relief after years of this idea being taught to our children as if it were factual and something uniquely wonderful. However, RGE believes that 'gender identity' cannot be ignored entirely because it is everywhere in our society – it is the elephant in the room.

We are constantly being asked to fill out forms declaring 'gender' (male/female/non-binary/other/ prefer not to say), even in unexpected places like booking a bed in a DOC hut. Transgender belief must be addressed in RSE because otherwise there is no challenge to the false idea that humans can change sex and the widespread confusion and harm this ideology is causing will continue unabated.

Most people don't understand that, when any alternative option to male or female is given, they are being asked to accept gender ideology as true. The marker of sex is being reduced to the stereotypes of 'masculine' or 'feminine' interests and clothing. We must not teach gender identity as fact because it isn't - facts are supported by empirical data that proves them to be true for everyone and everything. But we also cannot afford to avoid all discussion of this modern ideology and the effect it is having throughout society.

Gender identity is clearly a belief as much as Jesus being the son of God is a belief and that is how it should be framed in the curriculum. All beliefs should be presented with respect - the classroom is not an environment for disparaging anyone's sincerely held beliefs. The idea that many people hold sincere views which they think are factual rather than belief-based, can be examined with nuance and empathy in a classroom using the previously learned skills of critical thinking and respectful disagreement.

Gender identity ideology is a very complex idea which has proven to be difficult even for adults to comprehend and discuss. Nevertheless, RGE believes the topic must be in the curriculum to ensure there is opportunity for discussion of this social phenomenon which has real life consequences for those who believe in it as well as those who don't.

Recommendation: As gender identity beliefs are now present in every kind of medium, institution, and youth culture, we recommend that it be taught in Y10, not as irrefutable fact as before, but as a set of beliefs held by some people. Students should be enabled to apply critical thinking skills to the tenets of the ideology.

D. Language choices

Although the language in the curriculum is no longer overtly ideological there are still some red flags and loopholes that lobby groups or activist teachers could use to continue pushing their personal gender identity beliefs.

1. Puberty

In Y6, the curriculum manages to describe pubertal changes without mentioning which sex experiences which changes.

*Menstruation is a natural process where the lining of the uterus breaks down and leaves the body through the vagina. **People** manage menstruation in different cultural and social contexts.*

Emotional changes may occur during menstruation and there are practice strategies for self-care, like rest, gentle exercise, healthy eating, and seeking support from trusted adults.

Menstruation occurs alongside other pubertal changes, such as breast development, growth spurts, and body hair growth, and strategies (e.g. rest and hydration) can manage discomfort.

Physical changes during puberty can include sperm production, increased height, muscle growth, voice deepening, and the appearance of body hair.

The use of ‘people’ instead of ‘women and girls’ in the sentence about managing menstruation is a red flag loophole for continuing to teach children the falsehood that boys can have periods.

Recommendation: All references to menstruation must refer to ‘women and girls’ and specifically state that males cannot menstruate, nor can they have female-only medical conditions such as endometriosis, nor can they ever get pregnant.

2. Diversity and inclusion

In Y4 children are to be taught:

*Stereotypes negatively simplify complex social information by assigning fixed traits to groups; these negative assumptions can be challenged by **exploring diverse perspectives** and building inclusive relationships.*

*Avoiding assumptions based on group identity reduces bias and supports emotional safety, trust, and **inclusion** in social relationships.*

While it is important for children to learn about the negative effects of stereotypes, the phrase *exploring diverse perspectives* could be a loophole for teaching that sex is a personal choice.

Recommendation: This potential loophole could easily be avoided if the curriculum had a secure definition of ‘sex’ based on gamete size.

In Y5, there is another ‘inclusion’ red flag, this time implying that sport ought to be an open category:

*Stereotypes in sports and hobbies shape expectations by reinforcing biases. This can deter people from participating, and influence how people are evaluated and **included**.*

By Y7, the theme of ‘inclusion’ has developed into taking action including ‘using inclusive language’, which is likely to be interpreted as mandating the use of wrong sex pronouns.

*Respecting diversity goes beyond being polite — it means actively noticing whose voices are missing, **using inclusive language** that reflects real understanding, and having the courage to **challenge unfair treatment**, even when it is uncomfortable.*

Recommendation: Whenever talking about inclusion, the curriculum needs to be clear that children can only expect to be included into groups or spaces to which they belong and there is no right to be included in every group or space based on personal wishes. There is also no right to demand to be addressed in a way that is outside the norms of standard English.

3. Affirmation

Beware of language that represents ‘being kind’ as requiring children to surrender their own values.

In Y6, children *do* need to know that their language choices affect others but that does not mean they should be coerced into agreeing with something that is not true - that a person has actually changed sex.

*Behaviour can be affected by positive emotions such as happiness, excitement and love. Empathy for others involves **moderating behaviour appropriately**.*

*Language influences inclusion by **signalling respect**, bias, or belonging.*

*Using respectful communication strategies such as **affirming language**, tone awareness, and turn-taking in conversations that makes everyone feel welcome and avoids stereotypes*

*Practising respectful communication strategies that promote inclusion, prevent bullying, and support **emotional safety** in group settings*

Recommendation: The curriculum needs to be more explicit about what is meant by “moderating behaviour appropriately”. Basic safeguarding means children should not be taught to override their own sense of wellbeing simply to assuage the feelings of others.

Other potential red flag phrases that the curriculum should avoid are: ‘personal identity’, ‘self-aligned choices’, and ‘exclusion based on identity’.

E. Constraining the outside providers

Unless the Ministry of Education places firm constraints on resources produced by Sexual Wellbeing Aotearoa (formerly Family Planning), InsideOUT, and Gender Minorities Aotearoa, these organisations are highly likely to continue to interpret the curriculum in whatever way they choose and maintain their outsized influence in our schools.

Last year, RGE wrote to the Education Minister, Erica Stanford, to ask her to prevent inaccurate and inappropriate teaching resources from being marketed to schools by outside providers.

We suggested that the best way to ensure children are provided with accurate information in RSE is for the Ministry to do as it has done with maths and literacy and produce a standard set of workbooks for every year level.

Having standard workbooks would preclude interference from outside providers and would also prevent parents being denied access to RSE resources on spurious ‘copyright’ grounds. With MOE-produced workbooks it would be transparent to everyone what is to be taught, thus avoiding parental-school conflict and enabling parents to make fully informed decisions.

Unfortunately, this sensible request has been turned down by the Ministry of Education. Although this consultation is focussed on the content of the curriculum, RGE urges that consideration is also given to *how* the content will be delivered and safeguards are put in place to ensure accurate delivery is not left to chance.

Recommendation: The Ministry’s new resources need to be provided to parents in an easily accessible format so that there is a clear understanding by all about what will and will not be taught to their children in RSE.

F. Other policy matters

- The 2020 recommendation for “*Sexuality issues [to be] explored across the curriculum, not just in health,*” needs to be revoked and RSE lessons restricted to dedicated health education time.
- Consideration should be given to tailoring RSE lessons to match the differing wishes of girls and boys that were identified by the ERO report into RSE. Feedback from teachers confirms that the often-immature behaviour of boys acts as a significant restraint to girls’ participation in RSE discussions, especially for girls from ethnic or religious minorities.

Resist Gender Education

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