

# THE MIDDLEGROUND MIC

## FACT SHEET

Michigan's New Health & Sex-Ed Standards – What Parents, Teachers, and Students Need to Know  
Finding the Middle – Sunday Edition

## QUICK SNAPSHOT

- In November 2025, the Michigan State Board of Education approved updated K-12 health and sex-education standards for the first time since 2007.
- The vote was 6–2 along party lines, with Democratic-aligned members supporting the new standards and Republican-aligned members opposing them.
- These are state standards, not a one-size-fits-all curriculum – local school boards still decide what materials to use and how to teach them.

## KEY FACTS

### 1) Guidance, Not a Script

- The new standards are guidelines, not a mandatory statewide curriculum. Districts choose their own lesson plans and materials while aligning with the standards.

### 2) Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

- The approved standards recommend including age-appropriate instruction on gender identity and sexual orientation, but districts can decide whether and how to teach these topics.

### 3) Parental Opt-Out Rights Remain

- Michigan law still guarantees that parents can review sex-education materials and opt their children out of sex-ed without academic penalty. The revised standards explicitly restate this right.

### 4) High Public Engagement

- Over 100 speakers signed up to comment at the state board meeting on the new standards, showing how divided and emotional this issue has become across Michigan.

### 5) Supporters' Perspective

- Supporters argue the standards bring lessons in line with modern medical and psychological knowledge, reduce bullying of LGBTQ students, and emphasize consent, safety, and healthy relationships.

### 6) Opponents' Perspective

- Opponents say these standards conflict with their values, introduce sensitive topics too early, and distract from “the basics” like reading and math.

### 7) Local Control Still Matters

- Local school boards still control day-to-day curriculum choices, from textbooks to specific lessons. That's why school board elections are now highly politicized.

### 8) Social Studies and Race

- Michigan's social studies standards already include content on racism, race relations, civil rights, and gender discrimination.

#### 9) Funding & Learning Loss

- Michigan passed record K-12 funding, but long-term costs, enrollment shifts, and chronic absenteeism still create major challenges.

#### 10) "Back to Basics" Push

- Bills like HB 4159 would tighten reading/writing requirements and push districts toward science-of-reading standards.

#### 11) State vs Federal Politics

- Federal curriculum and DEI orders add pressure but do not automatically change Michigan's standards.

#### 12) Higher Ed DEI

- UM closed its DEI office after federal orders and funding warnings, reshaping how diversity efforts operate.

#### 13) Foreign Influence Bills

- New proposals would regulate foreign gifts, ownership, and influence in educational institutions.

#### 14) Parent Consensus

- Most parents agree on the basics: strong reading, math, safe schools, and age-appropriate lessons.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR FAMILIES

- Parents still have full review + opt-out rights.
- Local boards decide implementation.
- Real challenges: funding, absenteeism, literacy, mental health.

#### SOURCES

- Michigan DOE
- Michigan State Board of Education Records
- Bridge Michigan
- Michigan Advance
- Chalkbeat Detroit
- AP News
- University of Michigan statements
- Michigan Legislature Analysis