

# APPENDIX I:

## Sample Parent Notification Letters

### Letter A: Sample letter notifying parents about HIV/AIDS lessons; for grades K-12.

Dear Parent or Guardian:

HIV/AIDS is one of the most serious health problems Americans have ever faced. Advances in medicine have made tremendous strides in keeping people infected with HIV healthy for many years. Still, it has no cure, and education is the only way we can help our students protect themselves from becoming infected.

The New York State Education Department and the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) require that HIV/AIDS education be provided for all students in kindergarten through grade 12. The *HIV/AIDS Curriculum* that NYCDOE developed for NYC students is age and developmentally appropriate. For example, in kindergarten, students learn how people get sick and how to get better. In 7th grade, children learn how HIV affects the immune system, the risks of alcohol and drug use, and the importance of communicating with parents/guardians or caregivers. High school lessons teach students to avoid behaviors that put them at risk for HIV, STDs and unintended pregnancy.

As a parent or legal guardian, you have the right to excuse your child from certain HIV/AIDS lessons that teach about methods of HIV/STD prevention. These “opt out” prevention lessons are identified in the *HIV/AIDS Curriculum*, which is online at

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/FitnessandHealth/StandardsCurriculum/HIVAIDScurriculum>

If you would like your child to be excused, you must write a letter to me stating that:

- Your child should not be in the classroom during the “opt out” prevention lessons; and
- You will teach your child about prevention at home.

Encourage your child to speak with you about HIV/AIDS. Doing so can help you reinforce your child’s awareness of how HIV is transmitted, and present opportunities for you and your child to discuss how abstaining from sexual intercourse is the most important and effective way for children to protect their health and their future.

We welcome your involvement on our School Wellness Council or to coordinate PTA presentations about HIV/AIDS. Speak to your child’s teacher, parent coordinator, or me about how you can support the lessons. If you have any questions regarding this program, please call me at \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

Principal

# APPENDIX I:

## Sample Parent Notification Letters (continued)

### Letter B: Sample letter notifying parents about HIV/AIDS and sexual health education; for middle and high school grades only.

*Sexual health education is a mandatory component of the comprehensive health education course in middle and high school. Parents must be notified prior to sexual health education instruction. In the semester that middle and high school students receive their health education course, this letter can be used to notify parents about both sexual health and HIV lessons.*

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child's health is important to us. In New York City public schools, we provide health education classes that include age-appropriate lessons about family health, sexuality and HIV/AIDS, in addition to other important health topics.

Statistics show that we have students who are having sex before the age of 13; students who have had multiple sexual partners; and students who aren't protecting themselves against sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. We have an important role to play with regard to educating our children about sex and the potential consequences of engaging in risky behavior. We must provide our students with accurate information and communication skills to help them make decisions that can keep them healthy and safe. To that end, the required one-semester, comprehensive health education course in both middle and high school must also include age-appropriate sexual health education, as well as the HIV/AIDS lessons that are required each year for students in grades K-12.

We understand that our students and their families have a range of beliefs, cultures and customs. As a parent/guardian, you have the right to keep your child out of some sexual health and HIV/AIDS lessons about birth control and methods of HIV/STD prevention. However, you cannot remove your child from abstinence or other sexual health education lessons. If you have questions about which lessons you may opt your child out of, please check with your child's teacher, parent coordinator, or me. You can also view the entire NYCDOE HIV/AIDS Curriculum online at

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/FitnessandHealth/StandardsCurriculum/HIVAIDScurriculum>.

If you would like your child to be excused from birth control and HIV/STD prevention lessons, you must write a letter to me stating that:

- Your child should not be in the classroom during lessons about birth control and methods of HIV/STD prevention; and
- You will provide instruction on prevention to your child in your home.

As in all areas, parents and guardians are a child's first and most influential teachers. Parents, guardians and schools share a common goal: we want students of all ages to be healthy in all aspects of their lives. When it comes to talking with students about sex, our shared goal is to delay sexual activity in school-age youth. We encourage you to ask your child what he or she is learning in health education class and to make sure your child knows what you believe are the best ways to lead a healthy life. Conversations you have with your child about sexual health will place the information they are receiving in health class in the context of your family's values. Again, if you have any questions about health education or would like to review our school's health education curriculum, please contact your child's teacher or me.

Sincerely,

Principal