**ON THESE PAGES, please provide notation that shows evidence of your thinking, questioning and connecting WHILE you read (text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world), along with your best attempts at figuring out unknown words in context. Then, complete the Food for Thought section at the end.**

***Hey, folks! Before you read this week’s actual article, here, in a nutshell, are the highlights of Ontario’s new Sex Ed curriculum:***

*It will teach students in Grade 1 the proper names for body parts. Grade 2 students will learn about the broad concept of consent by being told that no means no. Concepts of gender identity will be introduced in Grade 3, though the curriculum doesn't get explicit and positions sexual orientation as one of the potential qualities that distinguish people from one another.*

*Discussions about puberty move to Grade 4 from Grade 5, while education about intercourse will take place the following year. Masturbation and "gender expression" will be taught in Grade 6, while kids in Grades 7 and 8 will discuss contraception, anal and oral sex, preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Students will also learn about online bullying and the dangers of sharing sexually explicit images electronically.*

***Now, here’s the actual article to consider for this week:***

**Sex-ed protests prove awkward for school staff Ontario schools face a potential logistical nightmare over sex-ed protests**

By Aleksandra Sagan, [CBC News](http://www.cbc.ca/news/cbc-news-online-news-staff-list-1.1294364) Posted: Sep 13, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Sep 13, 2015 5:00 AM ET

It may have been back to school for many students this week, but some Ontario classrooms were a little emptier than usual.

The dispute between the Ontario Ministry of Education and parents over the new sex-education curriculum is keeping some students out of class, and teachers and principals are caught in the middle.

About half of Toronto's [Thorncliffe Park Public school's students](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/sex-ed-protest-leaves-toronto-school-nearly-half-empty-1.3219400) sat at desks in their classrooms on Tuesday morning. Meanwhile, roughly half of their classmates remained home as their parents protest [a controversial new sex-ed curriculum](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-sex-ed-curriculum-5-things-to-know-1.3059951).

Most of the disputed parts of [Ontario's revised health and physical education curriculum](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/health.html#display) — like Grade 1 students correctly identifying genitalia or  Grade 8 students learning about gender identity and sexual orientation — make up only a handful of lessons.

Still, numerous concerned parents have formed coalitions and some have threatened to remove their children from school permanently.

Some want the government to revert to its previous 1998 curriculum, which [experts deem outdated](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ontario-s-new-sex-ed-curriculum-the-most-up-to-date-in-the-country-1.2969654); while others say they could accept a new version if certain aspects are omitted and others tweaked.

"We're not even against sex ed in schools," says John Himanen, the director of communications for Parents Alliance of Ontario. "I'm all for it, actually. But I want it to be done right."

The alliance argues the revised curriculum has some age-inappropriate material and factual errors, and says the government did not properly consult with parents.

Himanen has three daughters at a Markham elementary school. He hopes Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and the province's Minister of Education Liz Sandals will work with parents to adjust the curriculum. At the very least, he and his wife plan to meet with their daughters' teachers to learn how they intend to deliver the material before deciding if their daughters need to miss any of those lessons.

If none of these strategies work, he's willing to consider alternatives, like home or private school — [similar to tactics other opponents have suggested and even used](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/sex-education-ontario-curriculum-1.3220454).

**Belief-based exemptions possible**

This conflict could create a logistical nightmare for Ontario schools. They are obligated to teach students about the birds and the bees, but want to avoid a mass student exodus as part of a prolonged protest or on the days teachers devote class time to sex education.

In many Ontario schools, parents can request special treatment for religious or personal convictions, including [missing class for holidays](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/muslim-school-holiday-recognition-unlikely-in-canada-1.2984516). Parents can also make a request to the school that their child miss certain parts of the new sex-ed curriculum, wrote Gary Wheeler, the Ontario Ministry of Education's senior media relations co-ordinator.

The ministry has instructed boards to "respectfully and sensitively" deal with parental concerns, he said.

"School boards are expected to consider requests for accommodation on a case-by-case basis within the board's existing policies."

Wheeler did not say whether the ministry provides boards with guidance with regard to shaping those policies. However, Peel District School Board (PDSB) asked the ministry for clarification on the opt out process and "they are not providing it," wrote the board's director of communications and community relations Brian Woodland in an email.

Some school administrators have expressed concern that many parents in their communities will request permission for their kids to miss sex-ed classes, which could pose problems in terms of supervision.

In Halton District School Board (HDSB), most schools reported few absences during parent protests in the spring, according to the district's superintendent of education, Patricia Dyson. But a handful of larger schools had more than 100 students absent, she said.

**Quebec's no-exemption policy**

Ontario is not the only province changing its approach to sex education. This academic year, [Quebec started a pilot project](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-to-introduce-sex-ed-pilot-project-with-no-exemptions-1.3209189) under which roughly 8,200 students in about 15 schools will have mandatory sex-ed — but it won't allow exemptions.

The course material will help students value gender equality and respect differences, as well as prevent relationship violence and unwanted pregnancies, wrote Pascal Ouellet, the Quebec Ministry of Education's media relations manager, in an email.

"In this context, we have no provisions for any exemptions," Ouellet wrote.

The project is scheduled to last two years and could be extended to all schools in the province in 2017-18.

Currently, the Ontario Ministry of Education is not considering a similar move, said spokesman Wheeler.

**Few penalties for absences**

Even if schools implement a no-exemption rule or refuse exemptions for subject matter protected by the human rights code, parents can still choose to keep kids home. The consequences of missing a class without an official accommodation are vague or non-existent.

"It is a handful of classes," wrote PDSB's Woodland when asked if parents or students would face any consequences. "Not an issue."

The TDSB seems to take a tougher, if more vague, stance. Students would be responsible for making up any missed work, says spokesman Bird.

He did not elaborate on how that would be possible if the work itself is part of what the student's parents don't want their child exposed to.

The HDSB's site explains that it may be difficult for students to "achieve a mark they are happy with" if they miss classes. District superintendant Dyson said, "students are expected to attend class."

**Combating misinformation**

A few days into the new school year, the general hope seems to be that Ontario schools will be able to win over most parents who currently oppose the new curriculum by clearing up misconceptions.

The PDSB has created [numerous](http://www.peelschools.org/parents/helpyourchild/curriculum/HPE2015/Documents/Updated%20Myth%20Fact%20-%202015%2006%2010.pdf) [documents](http://www.peelschools.org/parents/helpyourchild/curriculum/HPE2015/Documents/HPE%20Letter%20to%20families%20-%20June%202015%20WEB.pdf) debunking some widespread myths, for example, such as rumours that Grade 1 students will be exposed to graphic flash cards and children will be encouraged to engage in sexual or homosexual activity.

The district's elementary schools won't teach the health sexuality components until spring "to provide time for parents to build an understanding of the curriculum," according to a letter sent home to parents.

The TDSB is also encouraging parents to seek out factual information from the [Ontario Ministry of Education's website](http://www.ontario.ca/page/sex-education-ontario) before making any decisions about keeping their children out of school.

The HDSB has also made documents and information sessions, including a recorded webcast, widely available to soften parental concerns, which Dyson says are usually about the prompts and examples in the curriculum and not the subject matter.

But she acknowledges that won't always work.

"At the end of the day, the parent will have to make a choice."

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:**

**So, what’s your take? From what you now know, would you support or protest Ontario’s new Sex Ed curriculum? More importantly, WHY? Remember, supporting your opinions is what will get you listened to. (Evaluating level)**