

## Answering Difficult Questions Protocols

### Health Education

#### Guidelines for Answering Difficult Questions

1. All information discussed must align with the **grade level curriculum** . If you are unsure if a topic can be discussed, please do not answer the student's question until ensuring it is in the curriculum. All vocabulary terms that can be discussed are on the "Secondary Family Life and Human Sexuality Unit Vocabulary by Grade Level" located in itslearning.
2. All Questions should be answered in a way that creates a safe climate for all learners.
3. Anonymous Question Box or Padlet should be used during unit.
  - A. For the Digital Learning Environment:
    1. **REMAKE** this Padlet to use for students to ask questions anonymously: [https://padlet.com/brittany\\_grubb/6ax4iv0ito14rzi6](https://padlet.com/brittany_grubb/6ax4iv0ito14rzi6)
    2. It is essential that the following permissions are set for your Padlet:
      1. **Posting - Attribution:** Display author name above each post? - **Turn OFF**
      2. **Content Filtering - Require Approval:** Require a moderator to approve - **Turn ON**
4. **Use the Answering Difficult Questions Protocol :**
  - a. Affirm, Identify, Facts, Beliefs, Refrain
    - i. **Value Related Questions:** Use SOY Method
      - a. "Some people believe..., Other people believe..., You need to decide..."
    - ii. **Be aware of personal bias:** Answer questions with facts, not opinions. When opinions are analyzed, a complete range of values should be discussed in a fair way and should reflect the way the person with the viewpoint would describe it if they were present.

#### Answering Difficult Questions Protocol

##### Affirm

Affirm the learner for asking the question. Examples include:

1. "That's an important issue."
2. "I'm glad you asked."
3. "A lot of people wonder that."
4. "I get that question a lot."
5. "This is a different question, let's think about how it might affect everyone."
6. "That's an interesting question."
7. "I get questions like this sometimes."

## Identify

Identify the type/components of the question. This is a silent process: Is the student asking for:

1. Information/clarification
2. To check "Am I normal"
3. Permission seeking
4. Shock/Can I get you
  - a. Think about "what is the question the student is really asking" - are they testing you, is there a question behind the question?
  - b. Is there any part of the question you can answer - is it developmentally appropriate, is it personal, does it go against HCPS policies
  - c. Can you change the language or reframe the question? - Remind the class to use medically accurate terms
  - d. Keep it general when you answer the question
  - e. If you are not answering the question, be clear of why you are not answering it (that is not within our curriculum, so we will not be discussing that topic in this classroom).
5. Beliefs/Values
  - i. Is it a belief question? If so, sample responses include:
    - a. "That's a belief question. Many people, families, and religions have different answers."
    - b. "Most of the questions you have asked have been fact questions, but this question is based on values, in which many people have different beliefs."

## Facts

Answer the factual part(s) of the question that are within the grade level curriculum using medically accurate terms.

## Beliefs

If time allows, help the class describe the range of beliefs

1. "Different people believe things about \_\_\_\_\_. What do you think some people believe?"

a. **The educator's role is to :**

1. Ensure as complete of a range of beliefs as possible are shared
2. Ensure that each belief is expressed in as fair and respectful way as possible
3. Create a climate in the classroom where all beliefs are respected
4. Refrain from sharing your personal beliefs or asking a student to share their own beliefs

## Refrain

Decline to express your own personal beliefs. Refer to family, religious leaders, and other trusted/loved adults.

1. Example response: "Since people have such different beliefs about this topic, I encourage you to talk to your family to find out their beliefs. Talk about it with people you trust, especially the trusted adults in your life."

## Answering Difficult Questions: When the Educator is Unsure

**The following is a list of possible responses / strategies to use when you are unsure of how to respond to a student 's question :**

1. Direct students to the question box

- a. "I would feel more comfortable if you wrote your question. Please use our Anonymous Question Padlet to ask your question."
2. Tell the student you are unsure
  - a. "I am not sure of the answer to your question. Can you write your question on our Anonymous Question Padlet so I can find the answer for us."
3. Tell students you want to take time to clarify/research and will come to class tomorrow with an answer
4. Deflect until next class
  - a. "This is a topic I will address in class tomorrow. Let's hold off on talking about it until tomorrow."
  - b. "I am not sure if we are able to discuss the answer to your question in class. Let me clarify and I will answer the question tomorrow if it is in our curriculum."
5. Offer to talk to the student after class
  - a. "The growing up process can be confusing. Let's talk about that after class."
6. Encourage student to talk to trusted adult at home
7. If the question is not within the grade level curriculum, explain that you cannot answer the question for this reason and refer the student to a trusted resource
  - a. "That is a great question but is not something we will be talking about in our class. I encourage you to ask an adult you trust at home."