

# Family Life Education Teacher Handbook

for the Republic of the  
Marshall Islands



SAMPLE

## **Family Life Education (FLE) Teacher Handbook**

Published by Family Planning Australia, 8 Holker Street, Newington NSW 2127 Australia

Website: [www.fpnsw.org.au](http://www.fpnsw.org.au) ABN: 75 000 026 335 © Family Planning Australia 2024  
First Published in 2024

Compiled by: Family Planning Australia

Copyright is retained by Family Planning Australia on the regional template on which this document is based. Copyright for its country-specific version of the Teacher Handbook is passed to the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

### **Acknowledgements**

The FLE Teacher Handbook was developed by Family Planning Australia and the Public School System of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. This handbook is based on UNESCO's (2018) International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education.

The Public School System of the Republic of the Marshall Islands is grateful to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and UNFPA, which, through the Transformative Agenda for Women, Adolescents and Youth in the Pacific: Towards Zero Unmet Need for Family Planning 2024 – 2027, supported the development of the FLE Teacher Handbook.

Special thanks to Family Planning Australia for compiling this resource and coordinating inputs from all key stakeholders.

**Version 1: February 2024**

## Contents

Part 1: Introduction to Family Life Education .....	7
1.1 What is Family Life Education? .....	8
1.2 FLE in the Health Curriculum .....	10
Part 2: Together for FLE.....	12
2.1 A whole-of-school approach.....	13
2.2 Working with parents and carers.....	14
2.3 Addressing common concerns and misconceptions .....	16
2.4 Culturally relevant FLE.....	19
Part 3: Safe and inclusive FLE for all students.....	20
3.1 Classroom routines and structure .....	21
3.2 A trauma informed approach.....	24
3.3 Accessible and inclusive FLE for all young people .....	25
3.4 Promoting human rights .....	27
Part 4: Preparing to teach FLE lessons.....	28
4.1 FLE Lesson Guides .....	29
4.2 Reflecting best practice principles in the Lesson Guide.....	30
4.3 Tips for starting the lesson .....	32
4.4 Tips for teaching the main activity .....	34
4.5 Tips for ending the lesson.....	39
4.6 Answering challenging questions.....	40
4.7 Planning for feedback and assessment .....	41
4.8 Creating an FLE lesson plan.....	42
4.9 Reflective practitioner .....	47
Additional resources.....	55
Reference list .....	56

## **Part 1:**

# **Introduction to Family Life Education**

# 1.1 What is Family Life Education?

Family Life Education (FLE) is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. Internationally, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is the recognized term for best practice in this field of education.

In RMI, FLE is embedded in multiple subjects. The Health Curriculum is the main carrier subject of FLE. Topics relating to relationships, values, rights, culture, and sexuality can be found in the Social Science Curriculum. The Science Curriculum includes topics relating to reproduction, anatomy, and physiology.

FLE aims to equip children and young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that will empower them to<sup>2</sup>:



## Why teach FLE in schools?

Schools can provide consistent, timely and evidence based FLE because of their regular and ongoing contact with young people.

Students may learn about FLE topics from family and friends, health professionals, the media, or other online sources. However, these opportunities may not be available to all students, and information without guidance may not be reliable or evidence based.

A lack of effective FLE may leave children and young people more vulnerable to harmful sexual behaviours and sexual exploitation. It also limits their capacity to make informed choices and access social and health services.<sup>2,3</sup>

Research demonstrates effective FLE programs:

- develop awareness, knowledge and confidence about the body and its functions in relation to sexual and reproductive health
- contribute to informed decision making and reduced sexual risk taking
- contribute to the prevention of sexually transmissible infections and unintended pregnancy
- develop students' understanding of consent, relationships and gender
- contribute to the prevention of sexual abuse, assault and violence
- develop improved sexual health and media literacy
- develop communication skills and skills in social and emotional learning
- develop understanding of and respect for diversity and inclusion.<sup>3</sup>
- develops students' understanding of consent, relationships and gender
- contributes to the prevention of sexual abuse, assault and violence
- develops improved sexual health and media literacy
- develops communication skills and skills in social and emotional learning
- develops understanding of and respect for diversity and inclusion<sup>3</sup>

## Why is FLE important for Cluster 2 students?

Students in Cluster 2 (Grades 4 to 6) are typically aged 9 to 12 years old. During these ages, students are likely to begin the onset of puberty and experience physical, social and emotional changes. FLE equips students of this age with the knowledge of how their bodies are changing and the skills to regulate their emotions during puberty.

As peer relationships become increasingly important to students of this age, FLE also supports students with the skills to build healthy friendships and assess risks associated with peer pressure. This builds the foundation for understanding healthy romantic relationships and sexual consent, which are explored in more depth in later years.

As students go through puberty, they grow a stronger sense of self-identity. FLE equips students with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to think critically about what influences their self-esteem, body image and confidence. This includes thinking critically about gender norms and media messages.

As students take on more responsibilities, they are encouraged to consider what actions they can take to protect their health and rights and those of others. FLE encourages students to acknowledge their behavior and provides opportunity to practice skills relating to healthy relationships and wellbeing.

**Part 2:**  
**Together for FLE**



## 2.1 A whole-of-school approach

FLE should be delivered in supportive and enabling environments that are safe, free from judgment and conducive to learning. Effective FLE practice extends beyond the classroom and supports student wellbeing across the physical environment, routines and activities outside of classrooms.

A whole-of-school approach recognizes that FLE programs are more effective when key messages, approaches and practices are well planned and reinforced consistently. A whole-of-school approach is also known as a health-promoting school approach.<sup>2-3,5-10</sup>

Here are some tips on how school leaders can lead and support FLE programs within their schools.

### In the classroom

- Have agreed teaching goals, content, strategies and resources across year levels.
- Provide opportunities for young people to have a say in FLE programs and relevant school procedures. E.g., a suggestion box or student surveys.

### In the school environment

- Ensure FLE programs are supported by principals, school leaders and staff who support student wellbeing. This may include deputy principals, head teachers, year advisors, school counselors and school nurses where available.
- Embed effective FLE principles in school procedures and environments. This could include child protection, behavior management and anti-bullying policies; staff codes of conduct; mandatory requirements; and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene programs.
- Engage teachers in opportunities to enhance delivery of FLE. For example, ongoing professional development, debriefing and networking opportunities.
- Plan for cohesive delivery across year levels.
- Ensure external guest speakers complement existing programs and provide information that is evidence-based, accurate and aligns with effective practice principles.
- Provide individual support for students and be inclusive of diversity.

### In the community

- Provide information and resources to families about the importance of FLE and the approach taken by your school. This enhances parent/carer confidence and improves outcomes for students.
- Link with local health and community services to provide resources and referrals.
- Work in partnership with cultural and religious leaders to foster culturally appropriate FLE.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.2 Working with parents and carers

Parents and carers are the first and continuing educators of their children. They share the responsibility to instil personal and cultural values in their children and determine what information is appropriate.

In partnership with families and the community, schools also play a vital role in supporting the FLE of young people. Effective collaboration ensures FLE programs are relevant, culturally appropriate and engaging.

The following strategies can be used to engage with parents and carers in the development and delivery of FLE programs to support student learning.

- Plan for consultation with families when developing or reviewing FLE programs and resources. This helps schools understand cultural or other considerations when teaching sensitive topics.
- Inform parents of upcoming FLE programs and follow school guidelines about consent for participation. It is important to emphasize how FLE will contribute to the shared goals of promoting good health, safety and wellbeing for all students. When parents and carers understand the purpose of a program, they are generally more comfortable and supportive of their children participating in it.
- If possible, follow up with parents and carers who do not want their children to participate in FLE. This will help you to find out reasons for their decision and if further information is needed. Sometimes parents may need clarification on what will and will not be included in the school program. Empathetic discussion with parents may support students to attend some if not all, FLE lessons.
- Offer information and resources for parents and carers to build their knowledge of FLE topics including puberty, relationships and consent. This can increase confidence to talk to their children at home when opportunities arise.
- Provide a range of resources and formats to meet the needs of families in your community. This includes resources suited to students with a disability, translated resources, and resources reflecting diverse cultural groups.<sup>3,10</sup>

On the next page is an example of an information letter for parents and carers which your school can adapt.<sup>11</sup>

## Information for parents and carers: Family Life Education

Dear parents and carers,

Family Life Education (FLE) aims to provide children and young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that will help them to:

- realize their health, wellbeing and dignity
- develop respectful social and sexual relationships
- consider how their choices affect their wellbeing and others
- understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives

Our school will soon deliver FLE to students in Grade [insert level/s]. Topics that will be covered include [insert topics covered in the year level].

These topics are age appropriate and relevant to students. They prepare them for the changes that come with puberty. These lessons also help students build foundations to enjoy healthy and respectful relationships into the future.

We believe that FLE is a shared responsibility between parents and carers, the school, and the community, including health and social services. Parents and carers are the main educators of their children in relation to FLE.

To ensure we are working together, we would like to offer more information. Please use the form below to let us know what you are interested in and return it to the school office [insert contact details].

We look forward to working in partnership with you.

Kind regards,

[Insert name, job title and school]

Please cut the dotted line above, fill out this form, and return it to your child's teacher.

-----

**Parent/carers name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student year level:** \_\_\_\_\_

I have marked items I am interested in.

- ☐ Attending a parent/carers information evening
- ☐ Attending a parent/carers and child information evening
- ☐ Receiving a suggested reading/watching list
- ☐ Receiving a list of useful websites
- ☐ Attending a presentation by FLE experts
- ☐ Attending FLE team meetings
- ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## 2.3 Addressing common concerns and misconceptions

In the Health Curriculum, Grade 4 to 6 students learn topics including the major physical and emotional changes that happen during puberty; challenging negative peer pressure; and preventing and addressing sexual and gender-based violence.

Students are also introduced to strategies they can use to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy. In secondary grades, students build on this knowledge and learn about sexual consent and contraception.

FLE programs are based on the idea that young people have the right to learn about their sexuality. They should be able to make responsible decisions to protect their health and wellbeing.

Although there are many benefits of FLE for student health outcomes, FLE programs may raise concerns from supporters of abstinence only education. It is normal for teachers to be unsure how to respond to these concerns.

The following table outlines common concerns about FLE, and evidence that can help schools and teachers respond.

Misconceptions and concerns	Responses
<b>FLE encourages children and young people to have sex earlier.</b>	Research from around the world shows that FLE rarely, if ever, leads to children and young people having sex at an earlier age. Various studies have shown that FLE has either no direct impact or actually delays when people first start having sex.
<b>FLE is only age-appropriate for high school students.</b>	<p>FLE programs are effective when carefully planned from the beginning of schooling. Without FLE, children and young people may hear conflicting and sometimes damaging messages from their peers, the media, or other sources.</p> <p>Good quality FLE provides complete and correct information, emphasizing positive values and relationships. FLE is about more than sex – it includes information about the body, puberty, relationships, life skills, etc.</p> <p>FLE helps children to learn the correct names for parts of the body and understand facts of human reproduction. It develops skills for healthy relationships, safety and ways to prevent and respond to violence.</p> <p>FLE provides children opportunities to develop confidence by learning about emotional regulation, responsible decision-making, conflict resolution, and</p>

	empathy. These topics are introduced gradually, in line with the age and growing capabilities of the child.
<b>FLE goes against our culture or religion.</b>	FLE stresses the need to engage and build support among the cultural leaders in each community to adapt the content to the local cultural context. FLE programs can also promote key values aligned with cultural and religious beliefs. This includes valuing respect, responsibility, honesty, health, kindness and compassion.
<b>It is only the role of parents and the extended family to educate our young people about sexual health.</b>	Parents and family are the main source of information, support, and care for children and young people. Education ministries and teachers support and complement families by providing holistic education. Schools can provide accurate and reliable information on sexual health in a safe and supportive learning environment.
<b>Teachers may be uncomfortable or lacking the skills to teach FLE.</b>	<p>Well trained, supported, and motivated teachers play a key role in implementing high quality FLE. Teachers are often faced with questions about growing up, relationships or sex from students. They must have a suitable and safe way of responding to these questions.</p> <p>Clear department and school policies and curricula support teacher skills and confidence. As does pre-service and ongoing teacher training and support from school management.</p>
<b>Teaching FLE is too difficult for teachers.</b>	<p>Teaching and talking about sexuality can be challenging in social and cultural contexts where there are negative and contradictory messages about sex, gender, and sexuality.</p> <p>However, most teachers have a rapport with students, with skills to actively listen, identify needs and concerns, and provide information.</p> <p>Teachers are not expected to be experts on sexuality. They can be trained in FLE content through participatory methods. This training can be included as part of the curriculum of teacher training institutes (pre-service) or as in-service teacher training.</p>
<b>Young people already know everything about sex and</b>	The internet and social media can be excellent ways for young people to access information and answers to their questions about sexuality. Young people often use

<p><b>sexuality through the internet and social media.</b></p>	<p>online media (including social media) because it is quick and convenient.</p> <p>However, online media doesn't always provide age appropriate, evidence based facts and may provide biased and distorted messages. It is difficult for young people to tell between accurate and inaccurate information.</p> <p>While online media can provide information, it does not offer the space for young people to discuss, reflect and debate issues. Online media does not support or develop responsible decision making, problem solving, social and emotional skills.</p> <p>FLE offers a forum for young people to critically discuss the images, practices, norms and sexual scripts that they observe via social media and pornography. It provides an opportunity to learn about the aspects of sexuality that are absent from pornography, such as emotional intimacy, negotiating consent and discussing modern contraception.</p> <p>FLE also supports young people to navigate the internet and social media safely and can help them identify correct information.</p>
--	--