

Oak Park Our Whole Lives 2017 Family Handbook

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Introduction

Thank you for enrolling your student in an Oak Park Our Whole Lives program!

We are a holistic sexuality education program serving the wider Oak Park area (Oak Park, Forest Park, River Forest, Elmwood Park, Berwyn, and Austin.) The program was founded in 2016 and works closely with families and students to meet the needs of individual students and the community for sexuality education.

Curriculum summaries, schedules, FAQs, and other information about the program are located on our web site at <http://www.opowl.org>. Organizers and facilitators can be reached via email at oakparkowl@gmail.com. Our Facebook page, at <http://www.facebook.com/opowl>, is where the program posts information about open enrollment, events, and other information of interest to the community.

If you are interested in facilitating OP-OWL classes yourself, partnering with us through a community organization, becoming a guest speaker, or otherwise volunteering beyond your student's participation in the program, please let us know! Most of those in the program are or have been OWL parents ourselves, and we are always happy to welcome others to join us.

We are constantly looking for ways to help OP-OWL programs fit the needs of students and families; please don't hesitate to ask questions, provide feedback on your/your student's experience, or make suggestions.

Best,
Nara Nayar and Nina Brewer-Davis
Co-Founders, Oak Park Our Whole Lives
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<http://www.opowl.org>
<http://www.facebook.com/opowl>

Our Whole Lives Values

Though the OWL curriculum is secular, it is not value free. The following are the values on which the curriculum is based.

These values are posted at each session for the 4th & 5th grade and 7th & 8th grade programs and referred to on a regular basis throughout the curriculum.

Self worth

Every person is entitled to dignity and self-worth, and to his or her own attitudes and beliefs about sexuality.

Sexual health

Knowledge about human sexuality is helpful, not harmful. Every individual has the right to accurate information about sexuality and to have her or his questions answered.

Healthy sexual relationships are:

- *consensual* (both people consent)
- *nonexploitative* (equal in terms of power, neither person is pressuring or forcing the other into activities or behaviors)
- *mutually pleasurable*
- *safe* (sexual activity brings no or low risk of unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and emotional pain)
- *developmentally appropriate* (appropriate to the age and maturity of persons involved)
- *based on mutual expectations and caring*
- *respectful* (including the values of honesty and keeping commitments made to others).

Sexual intercourse is only one of the many valid ways of expressing sexual feelings with a partner. It is healthier for young adolescents to postpone sexual intercourse.

Responsibility

- We are called to enrich our lives by expressing sexuality in ways that enhance human wholeness and fulfillment and express love, commitment, delight and pleasure.
- All persons have the right and obligation to make responsible sexual choices.

Justice and inclusivity

- We need to avoid double standards. People of all ages, sexual identities, races, ethnicities, genders, backgrounds, income levels, physical and mental abilities, and sexual orientations must have equal value and rights.
- Sexual relationships should never be coercive or exploitative.
- All of the following are natural in the range of human sexual experience: being romantically and sexually attracted to more than one gender (bisexual), the same gender (homosexual), another gender (heterosexual), and/or to those with a more fluid understanding of their own and others' gender (pansexual), or not experiencing sexual attraction at all (asexual).

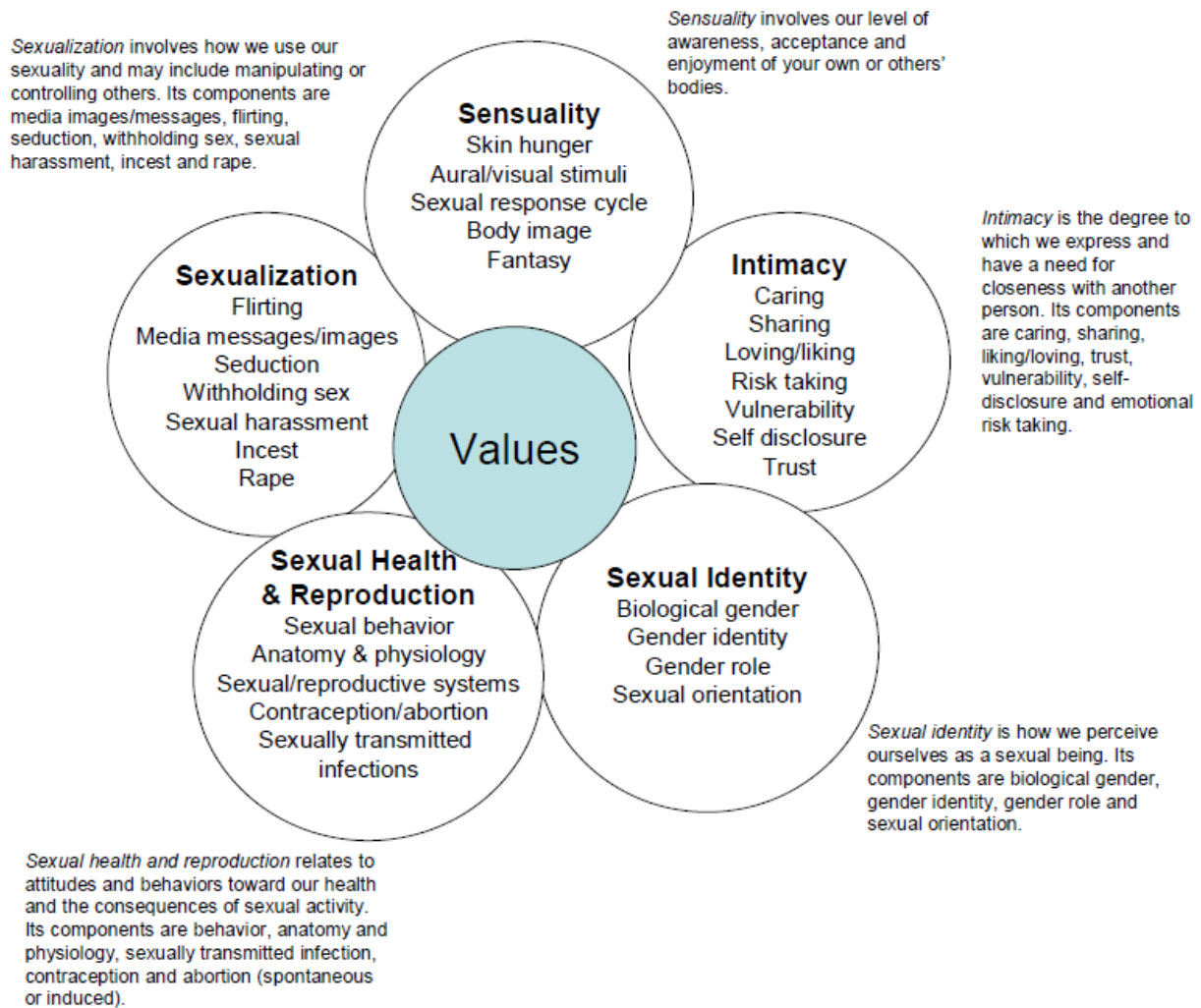
Our Whole Lives Assumptions

- All persons are sexual.¹
- Sexuality is a good part of the human experience.
- Sexuality includes much more than sexual behavior.
- Human beings are sexual from the time they are born until they die.¹
- It is natural to express sexual feelings in a variety of ways.
- People engage in healthy sexual behavior for a variety of reasons including to express caring and love, to experience intimacy and connection with another, to share pleasure, to bring new life into the world, and to have fun and relax.
- Sexuality in our society is damaged by violence, exploitation, alienation, dishonesty, abuse of power, and the treatment of persons as objects.
- It is healthier for young teens to postpone sexual intercourse.

¹ The OP-Owl curriculum defines "sexual," or "sexuality" as a broad term that encompasses sensuality, intimacy, sexual identity, sexual health and reproduction, and sexualization. Please see "Circles of Sexuality" on the following page to understand the holistic interpretation of "sexual" that underlies these assumptions.

The Circles of Sexuality

Sexuality encompasses nearly every aspect of our being, from attitudes and values to feelings and experiences. It is influenced by the individual, family, culture, religion/spirituality, laws, professions, institutions, science and politics.



Adapted from Life Planning Education, 1995, Advocates for Youth, Washington, D.C. www.advocatesforyouth.org. Based on the original work of Dennis M. Dailey, Professor Emeritus, University of Kansas.

Our Whole Lives

Family Rights & Responsibilities

Family Rights

Families decide whether youth will participate. Please review the policies and curriculum carefully and decide whether OP-OWL is right for your child before signing the permission slip in this packet.

Parents/guardians have the right to see all materials participants will see, including any YouTube videos, handouts, or general interest films. Regular emails will inform families of topics to be covered at each session and provide links to or copies of any supplemental materials to be used. Families may re-view the curriculum before or after any session on request.

Family Responsibilities

In order for youth to participate in OP-OWL, their parents or guardians are required to:

- Participate in the family information session
- Review the family information packet and sign the permission form
- Make a commitment to regular student attendance
- Speak with a facilitator or coordinator if they have concerns or questions at any time in the program.

Families will also be asked if they are willing to volunteer. This is optional, but would be very helpful! Potential volunteer tasks include helping open the main door before and after class, bringing snacks or drinks for classes, helping with sibling care for required events, or carpooling with other families.

Student Rights

Students have the right to:

- Ask any questions they have about sexuality
- Receive full and accurate information about sexuality
- Gain the knowledge and values they need to make decisions about sexual matters
- Be supported in sexual expression that is healthy and life-affirming
- Be treated with respect by facilitators and other participants in the group

Our Whole Lives Policies

All facilitators, other volunteers, and parents or guardians of participants will be provided with a copy of these policies and sign to acknowledge that they have read them before the end of the family information session.

Family Involvement

All levels/stages:

- Family orientation is required of at least one parent or guardian.
- All parents/guardians will receive and sign:
 - A copy of the OP-OWL family rights and responsibilities
 - A copy of the OP-OWL safety and reporting guidelines
 - A participation agreement form
- Emails will be sent between each session, reminding families of what was covered in the previous session and outlining the specific topics to be covered in the next. Homelinks and reminders about what to bring will be included as applicable.
- Families will be contacted if behavioral issues become unmanageable by facilitators (See "Disruptive Behavior" in this document).

K-1st Grade:

- Parents/guardians are welcome to stay for any or all sessions.
- They may be specifically encouraged to do this by facilitators on a case-by-case basis.
- Parents/guardians are expected to attend the last session, which celebrates the kids.
- Homelinks will be sent home after each session.
- Families are encouraged to collect photos of their children's births, or their children at a younger age if birth pictures are not available, for children to share with the class at the appropriate session.

4-5th Grade:

- Families are encouraged to read assigned sections in *It's Perfectly Normal* with their children and discuss.
- Homelinks will be sent home after each session.

7-8th Grade:

- Families are encouraged to ask their children about the topics covered in each session, and to talk with their children before the session.

Attendance

Consistent attendance in the OP-OWL program is a must to build trust relationships among participants and between facilitators and participants. The program content is scaffolded and builds a knowledge base as content progresses from one topic to the next. Your youth's participation assumes that you will prioritize OWL

attendance over the many other contenders in the life of your child(ren).

OP-OWL programs begin promptly so that we are able to cover all of the material scheduled for the evening. *If you know your child will be late or absent, please call or text the team leader of that session.*

OP-OWL programs are run by volunteer facilitators, who have other commitments, including their own children. Please respect their time by picking your student up promptly, particularly for evening sessions. *If you know will be late picking up, please call or text the team leader of that session.*

Elementary levels:

If a child must be absent due to unexpected reasons, we understand! But if a child is absent more than 3 sessions, that child may no longer attend OWL for that offering. We ask that the family sign up for another class in the future. No refunds will be offered for attendance drop-outs after the initial class.

7-8th Grade:

If a child must be absent due to unexpected reasons, we understand! But if a child is absent more than 5 sessions, that child may no longer attend OWL for that offering. We ask that the family sign up for another class in the future. No refunds will be offered for attendance drop-outs.

Safety

Participation

All students will have the written, informed consent of their parent or legal guardian before being allowed to participate in the OP-OWL program.

Facilitator training and background

All facilitators will be trained in the use of the OWL curriculum, including training in the recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

Facilitators will undergo a basic criminal background and sex offender registry check through a reputable provider.

Facilitators may have children who are enrolled in OP-OWL programs; however, with the exception of the K-1 class, no one may facilitate a program in which their own child is enrolled.

Building security

The Oak Park Friends School facility where orientations and classes will be held is a locked building with a key code required for access.

Reporting requirements

If OWL program volunteers have reasonable cause to believe a child known to them may be an abused or neglected child they will immediately report the required information as required under Illinois law, specifically the [Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, 325 ILCS §§ 5/3, 5/4, 5/4.1, 5/4.02, 5/4.5, 5/7, 5/7.6, 5/7.9, 5/9; 89 ILAC § 300.30](#). Knowing and willful violation of state reporting requirements is a Class A misdemeanor for a first violation and a Class 4 felony for a second or subsequent violation.

OP OWL will have a Crisis Advisor (currently Stephanie Kiesling), a trained social worker with experience handling crisis situations, available to facilitators and directors to help make determinations about how to respond to concerns about children's personal safety that may arise as a result of information shared within the class.

Confidentiality

Facilitators normally are expected to keep confidential the specifics of conversations in OWL sessions.

Facilitators may discuss specifics within this circle of confidentiality: other facilitators in the program, OWL coordinators, and the OWL Education Advisor and Crisis Advisor.

If a facilitator has a serious concern about the health or safety of an OWL participant, it may be necessary to reach outside the circle of confidentiality (see "reporting requirements," above). If the facilitator is undecided about whether or not to report a concern, the facilitator may contact the Crisis Advisor in order to receive support in deciding whether it is appropriate to contact other supporting individuals and agencies, such as parents, school officials, or DCFS.

Contact with students

Two facilitators are required to be in the room when any OP OWL participant is present. No facilitator may be alone with a participant.

Anonymous question boxes will be provided to participants to allow questions to be asked without identification of the questioner. There is no need for direct email, phone, or text contact between facilitators and participants within the context of OWL.

No facilitator may "friend" or "follow" a student on social media while that student remains a minor; no facilitator with a privacy-locked account may accept any social media "friend" or "follow" request from a student while that student remains a minor.

Disruptive Behavior

Working with a group of children, facilitators expect that situations may arise where children act in a way that is disruptive of the classroom environment.

When this happens, facilitators will attempt to redirect children's energy with physical activities or if the problem is with an individual to briefly separate them from the group. Facilitators are encouraged to discuss challenges with OP OWL's coordinators. OP OWL

also has an Education Advisor (Merryl Brownlow, an experienced educator) available to help troubleshoot classroom challenges, and facilitators are encouraged to contact the Advisor.

If a student has a behavioral disorder or a disability that is associated with behavior that can be disruptive in a group setting, OP-OWL will work with families to make every effort to provide accommodations that allow the student's full participation in the program. If a student's behavior adversely affects the group as a whole, the families will be contacted and a plan developed for addressing the behavior.

If problems continue despite the planned supports, OP OWL may ask families to remove the child from the program for that offering. (The child may be welcomed back for future offerings, such as if it is determined that the child hasn't reached the needed maturity level.) Pro-rated refunds will be given if a child is asked to leave the program.

Students With Disabilities

OP-OWL believes that sexuality is a positive, life-affirming aspect of being human, and that youth with disabilities have a right to quality sexuality education.

Facilitators will use strategies grounded in Universal Design for Learning to make the OP-OWL environment as welcoming as possible. Families are invited to share strategies, 504 plans, Individualized Education Plans, and other relevant information with facilitators to help them understand students' needs and learning styles.

Facilitators do not receive specific training on working with youth with disabilities as part of the program. All facilitators will work with families to understand and support students; the program asks for patience and understanding with our individual and collective learning curve as we develop new approaches and understandings.

OP-OWL does not have the resources to provide one-on-one supports to students, but aides, translators, and caregivers who assist students with special needs are welcome to attend sessions with those students.

Registration And Enrollment

Families will register students by submitting a registration form.

Prior to enrollment, families will have multiple opportunities to ask questions of program volunteers and review the curriculum through the web site, informal events (advertised via OP-OWL's Facebook page), and email.

Some family involvement and permissions are required for student participation; please see the "Family Involvement" portion of this document for details.

Payments

The Oak Park Our Whole Lives program is a 501(c)3 nonprofit. All enrollment fees are tax-deductible and go toward program costs and scholarships for families needing financial assistance to attend.

Payment may be made by PayPal or check at any time after enrollment is confirmed. Full payment for the program must be made by one week prior to the beginning of class.

Cancellation policy

Fees will be refunded in full for cancellations up to one week prior to the initial parent/child information session. After that date, fees will be refunded less a \$25 cancellation charge.

Scholarships

Scholarships are available on request for families for whom the program fees pose a significant financial burden.

Wait list policy

If there are more students than there are spaces, slots will be awarded based on a combination of factors: first forms submitted will be considered first, as well as the goal of having gender-balanced classes. Every effort will be made to ensure that no class is comprised of greater than 60% of one gender, and enrollments may be "capped" by gender.

Out of grade-level enrollments

We believe that families are the best judge of their children's maturity and needs. If a family believes their student is ready for the course they have in mind, the program will put them on a wait list for any slots that remain once the enrollment period closes. Preference will be given to students enrolled in the grades for which the program is offered.

OP-OWL encourages families to wait until their children are enrolled in a grade level for which OWL courses are offered and enroll them at that time. We believe that most children benefit from having OWL classes with a peer group of similar age and maturity. However, if families review the curriculum and wish to enroll their children, we are willing to work with families to do so.

If facilitators determine, after a few weeks of the program, that the placement is not working for the student or the group as a whole, OP-OWL reserves the right to ask the family to withdraw. Pro-rated refunds will be given if a child is asked to leave the program.

Late enrollments

No additions will be allowed to the classes after the initial session—children may sign up to take the class at another time.

Oak Park Our Whole Lives Permission Form

I/We give

Child(ren)'s Name(s)

permission to participate in Our Whole Lives, a comprehensive sexuality program offered by Oak Park Our Whole Lives.

I/we:

- have been offered the opportunity to view these materials.
- have attended an orientation to this program.
- have received and reviewed a copy of the OP-OWL values, assumptions, family rights & responsibilities, and program policies.

Signed _____ Signed _____
(parent/guardian) (parent/guardian)

Name _____ Name _____
(print) (print)

Date _____ Date _____

Volunteering:

- Yes, I am willing to:
- Bring snacks for the final celebration
 - Help with the "retreat day" (4-5 and 7-8 only)
 - Make my contact info available to other families for carpools
 - Other _____

(we could really use admin, bookkeeping, & photocopying help, for example)