

October 1, 2018

Dear parents,

Sexuality education is a form of education that takes various dimensions of human experience into account and covers a variety of subjects: knowledge of the body, body image, gender stereotypes, romantic feelings.

It enables students to:

- better understand themselves
- establish emotional relationships that show respect for themselves and others
- develop critical thinking and good judgement along with a sense of responsibility

To provide students with sexuality education that covers all the important issues, the Ministère intends to give it a more formal place in students' education. Therefore, as of September 2018, the learning content defined by the Ministère is compulsory for all elementary and secondary students at both public and private schools. This learning content is also available at the preschool level.

The various topics will be taught in an age-appropriate manner and instruction will foster the students' development and make them less vulnerable to certain problems.¹ Adapted programming has been developed for students with special needs.

Québec schools have exercised their responsibility with respect to sexuality education for almost 40 years:

- from the 1980s to 2000, through the Personal and Social Education program curriculum delivered by teachers
- from 2000 on, sexuality education has been provided by teachers and non-teaching professionals using a variety of means

Sexuality education is essential to the overall development of adolescents. In the school, it will therefore continue with the specific learning content for each level of secondary education. The learning content takes into account contemporary issues, for example, easy access to images and messages about sexuality in the community and the use of social media.

The learning content defined by the Ministère is tailored to the students' ages and levels of development, and is in line with the recommendations of experts from the World Health Organization and UNESCO. The content will be taught by school personnel in collaboration with partners chosen by the school (e.g. health network, community organizations).

¹ <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/teachers/dossiers/sexuality-education/>

SEXUALITY EDUCATION - SECONDARY

Three to five of seven themes will be covered with students each year. The themes are as follows:

- **General Understanding of Sexuality:** sexuality is at the core of who we are and has a number of dimensions (e.g. physical, psychological, affective, socio-cultural)
- **Sexual Growth and Body Image:** the benefits of having a positive body image, the influence that social norms can have on body image, etc.
- **Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms:** understanding the role that puberty plays in consolidating your identity, thinking about your values, taking a critical look at representations of sexuality in the public space
- **Emotional and Romantic Life:** first feelings of love and attraction, discovery of sexual orientation, the importance of reciprocity in romantic relationships (respect for yourself and for the other person), the challenges involved in first romantic relationships, preventing violence, etc.
- **Sexual Activity:** feelings in a romantic relationship, reasons why people get involved, the importance of ensuring that sexual activity is safe and based on mutual consent
- **Sexual Violence:** myths and prejudices about sexual assault, the notion of consent, the importance of reporting a situation of sexual assault
- **STBBIs (sexually transmissible and blood-borne infections) and Pregnancy:** the importance of protecting yourself and ways of doing so to avoid STBBIs and pregnancy, strategies for adopting safe sexual behaviours

Sexuality education targets attitudes, behaviours and values, rather than knowledge alone. The following video by UNESCO highlights Comprehensive Sexuality Education's interdisciplinary and positive view of sexuality: <https://youtu.be/eV92ALv-TGw>

The school and the family play complementary roles in sexuality education. The complementary nature of these roles reinforces and optimizes the efforts of both. Rest assured that the school team is deeply committed to the healthy development of your child.

For more information, please visit <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/parents-and-guardians/sexuality-education/>.

Each school is in the process of developing their own plan for implementation in 2019. For more information regarding the themes and content to be covered at specific grade levels, please contact your child's school.

Sincerely,



Mike Dubeau
Director General
Western Québec School Board