

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 in the schools will therefore continue with specific learning content for each level of elementary education.

Sexuality education is essential to the overall development of children. 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 - ELEMENTARY

Two to four of the six 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:** knowing your body, appreciating and taking care of it, understanding puberty
- **Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms:** the different ways masculinity and femininity can be expressed, the importance of being able to express yourself beyond gender stereotypes
- **Emotional and Romantic Life:** friendship, expressing your feelings, new feelings that come with puberty, etc.
- **Sexual Assault:** safety rules, strategies for protecting yourself and the importance of reporting an incident of sexual assault to an adult
- **Pregnancy and Birth:** union of an egg and a sperm, the phenomenon of birth, stages in the development of a fetus

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 Quebec School Board