

Sexuality education

Information for parents of a student in
elementary school



Elementary 4

Québec schools have been providing sexuality education for almost 40 years

Québec schools have exercised their responsibility with respect to sexuality education for almost 40 years. Initially, this responsibility was addressed through the implementation of the Personal and Social Education program. Today, sexuality education is even more necessary than it was when it was introduced into schools in the 1980s. The contemporary social context, characterized by modern technologies, reinforces the need to take action.

Sexuality education is essential to the overall development of children and adolescents. For this reason, the learning content in sexuality education is becoming compulsory for all, from elementary through secondary school. Through this learning content, the Ministère hopes to ensure that all students in Québec have access to sexuality education that is tailored to their age and level of development.

Learning content appropriate to the student's age and level of development

The Ministère has defined the learning content to be covered each year so that it meets children's needs as they mature. The learning content will not be offered as a new subject and it will not be evaluated. In elementary school, every student will receive 5 to 10 hours of sexuality education each year.

In elementary school, sexuality education enables students to better understand themselves, to reflect on gender roles and stereotypes, and to understand the important events in their development such as the changes that occur during puberty. It also helps to reduce their vulnerability to a variety of problems, such as sexual assault and homophobia.

Sexuality is a core aspect of each person's identity, interpersonal relationships, personal fulfillment and well-being.

Because of this, sexuality is not confined to sexual behaviour.

Sexuality education

Sexuality education favours a comprehensive, positive vision of sexuality. It allows students not only to acquire knowledge, but also to develop respectful, egalitarian attitudes and behaviours. Sexuality education is rooted in values such as gender equality, respect for diversity, respect for the physical and psychological integrity of people, a sense of responsibility and well-being.

School staff already have certain qualifications for teaching sexuality education. They have a good understanding of the students and how they think as well as the situations they experience every day at school. This expertise can be used in sexuality education. In addition to being familiar with their students' development, teachers have a meaningful relationship with students. They have pedagogical expertise and the experience and sensitivity that help to create a respectful climate for sharing and to choose the opportune moment for intervening in sexuality education.

The role of parents and schools

The school and the family play complementary roles in sexuality education. The complementary nature of these roles reinforces and optimizes the efforts of both.

Parents play a key role in educating their children about human sexuality and have many opportunities to contribute to their child's well-being, while respecting their values and taking their needs into account. Indeed, it is in the family that children first become aware of different modes of life, social interaction and self-expression. And it is there that they learn to understand themselves and to give and receive affection, love and empathy.

Being familiar and comfortable with one's body in childhood helps with managing the changes that occur during puberty and fosters the development of a positive body image.

The school contributes to each student's development. Sexuality education is a facet of this contribution, in addition to being part of the school's mission, which is to teach students to live harmoniously with others. School is a place where students can reflect, engage in discussion with their peers and receive consistent, accurate and quality information from adults.

Every adult who plays a significant role in the life of a child or adolescent has a role to play in sexuality education. This includes parents and members of the school staff.

Themes covered

Elementary
4

Sexual Growth and Body Image

Understand that the main changes associated with puberty are part of the process of growing up

- › Growing up: moving from childhood into adolescence
- › Main physical and psychological signs of puberty
- › Individual variations with respect to the timeline of changes

Share their feelings about growing up

- › Positive feelings: pride, excitement, independence
- › Concerns or negative feelings: unease, embarrassment, shame
- › Sharing of feelings with people they trust

Friendships foster the development of self-esteem and are an important source of support for children.

Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms

Make connections between gender inequalities and the establishment of harmonious relationships

- › Signs of gender inequality
- › Positive attributes associated with each gender
- › Negative attributes associated with each gender
- › Double standard associated with gendered attitudes

Understand the norms that guide how they express themselves

- › Personal preferences: tastes, interests, aspirations, etc.
- › Norms and outside influences: peer relationships and the social environment (e.g. role models, influences, etc.)

Emotional and Romantic Life

Discuss their representations of love and friendship

- › Definition and perceptions of friendship and love
- › Characteristics of a friend and the importance of friendships
- › Differences between camaraderie, friendship, love, attraction

Understand how certain attitudes and behaviours can influence interpersonal relationships

- › Behaviours that make it easier to get along with one another: acceptance of diversity, concern for others, empathy, commitment, responsibility, respect, mutual assistance, communication, management of misunderstandings and conflicts
- › Behaviours that make it harder to get along with one another: rumours, bullying, jealousy, control
- › Aspirations for their interpersonal relationships