

Sexuality education

Information for parents of a student in
elementary school



Elementary 1

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 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.

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.

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.

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
1

Comprehensive View of Sexuality

Understand what sexuality is

- › With their mind: knowledge and questions about sexuality, self-knowledge and self-affirmation
- › With their heart: emotions, feelings and how they are expressed
- › With their body: growth, needs, five senses, hygiene, protection

Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms

Give examples of gender roles

- › Gender roles socially associated with girls and boys: activities, interests, personality traits, appearance and temperament
- › Concept of gender stereotyping

Become aware of different ways of being and behaving beyond gender stereotypes

- › Observation of the different models of girls, boys, men and women
- › Individual choices: activities, preferences, interests
- › Respect for individual differences

Sexual Assault

Recognize situations of sexual assault and ways of protecting themselves

- › Definition of sexual assault
- › Situations of sexual assault: committed by someone they know, by someone they do not know well or by a stranger
- › Self-protection skills: do not go with someone they do not know, make sure their parents know where they are, remove themselves from a place or situation that makes them feel uncomfortable, etc.
- › Self-defence skills: say no, scream, run away, look for help
- › Reporting an incident: talking to someone if they do not feel comfortable with a situation, being familiar with the network of resources that can help them, asking for help until an adult listens and helps

Become aware of the feelings that could arise following a situation of sexual assault

- › Shame, guilt, etc.
- › Confusion about the possibility that someone they know and like or love could sexually assault a child
- › Fear about confiding in an adult

Preventive actions make it possible for children to develop the skills they need to avoid or report a situation of sexual assault.