

Sex Education

in the
Context of
Education
Reform



Québec 





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Why a document on sex education now, and for whom?

This document is intended for teaching personnel and complementary educational services personnel working in elementary and secondary schools and for their partners in the health and social services sector. Its production is timely because the reform of education is changing the way many things are done in our schools. For example, we are all aware that the Personal and Social Development program will be or has been eliminated with the implementation of the Québec Education Program. The new direction aims for the development of a range of competencies. As a result, sex education is no longer associated with a single subject or a single educator, and has now become the responsibility of a group of partners. The contribution of the complementary educational services personnel is essential to achieving the goals of the Québec Education Program and realizing the mission of the Ministère de l'Éducation, which is to provide instruction, to socialize and to provide qualifications.

The Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux have agreed to cooperate more closely to attain a common objective: the development of young people. This document will thus be made available to personnel in both sectors as a guide to help them integrate sex education into their work with youth.



The Importance and Necessity of Sex Education

In Western societies, children and adolescents are overwhelmed with information of all sorts about sexuality, both in the school environment and outside it (family, media, peers, etc.). They have to orient themselves with regard to a wide, and often confusing, array of messages, behaviours and models related to sexuality. Some can rely on their family environment to help them interpret these messages, but many parents feel uncomfortable in this area, and are reluctant to venture into the domain of sexuality for fear of saying too much or of not expressing themselves adequately.



Likewise, in the school environment, many educators would sincerely like to help students gain a better understanding of sexuality, and they feel well equipped to do so, while others refuse to touch the subject at all. Fellow students are also an important source of sexual information for young people, but often this information is incomplete and lacking in detail. Another source is the numerous implicit and explicit sexual messages in the media, though the nature of these can often be ambiguous and sometimes even violent. As a result of being regularly subjected to such stereotyped, idealized and fragmented views of sexuality, children and adolescents are both fascinated and intrigued by this world. Adults know how these outside influences shape ideas and perceptions of sexuality and are therefore responsible for presenting young people with a positive attitude to human sexuality. For beyond all the artificiality and sensationalism, sexuality lies at the heart of our sexual identity, our relationships to others, and to our self-fulfillment and well-being.

In this context, the first task in sex education often consists in demystifying certain aspects of sexuality. The educator must transmit the information necessary for the students to understand the true nature of the facts in question so that they can see it in a more realistic and human context. It is essential to be frank in discussing sexuality with children and adolescents, while encouraging them to develop their judgment, sense of responsibility, critical faculties and capacity for discernment. In fact, each adult in a child's life has a role to play in sex education. While it is agreed that

parents are the first educators of their children, those in the school environment also significantly influence children's lives. Therefore, it is the responsibility of these educators¹ to create learning situations in a formal context, where discussions can be held on the sexual topics that are of most concern to children and adolescents, or which are likely to be of most concern to them either immediately or in the near future. The goal of explicit sex education is first of all to foster the harmonious integration of an individual's sexuality, while taking social standards into consideration.



1. The term educators refers to teaching personnel, other professionals and support staff in the education and the health and social services sectors.

How to Define Sexuality and Sex Education?

This is not the place for an exhaustive or narrowly academic definition of sexuality or sex education, but it is pertinent to examine the concepts briefly.



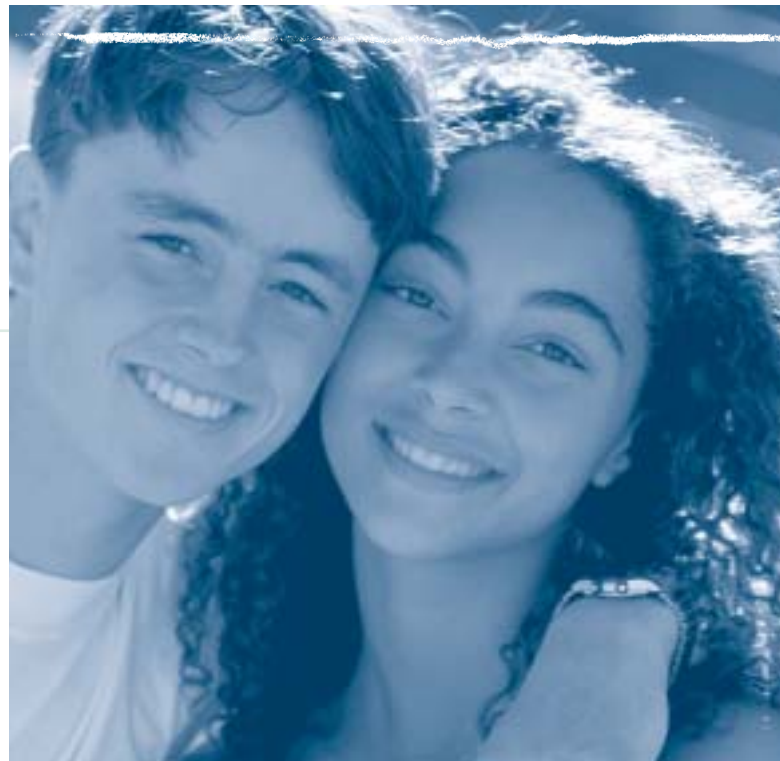
2.1 Sexuality

It goes without saying that sexuality is not limited to sexual practices and genital functions, but revolves around emotions and relationships.

Sexuality is therefore not a phenomenon restricted to the developmental stages of adolescence (puberty, first love, first sexual experiences). Human beings are sexual from the time they are born, and even commonplace factors, such as parents' attitudes to their children's gender, contribute to shaping their sexual identity. Likewise, the complicity or pressure of their peers can influence their perceptions of boy-girl relationships. Pressure from the media is another factor, an example of which is the profusion of advertising emphasizing slimness, which can have a negative impact on body image. While adolescence would appear to be the defining period of sexual initiation, it should not be overlooked that various situations throughout the life of the child, preadolescent and adolescent enable him or her to better understand the meaning of sexuality in a person's life and especially in his or her own life.

A great number of factors play an important part in one's growth as a sexual being: self-esteem, self-affirmation, friendship, love, body image, peer pressure, the development of critical thinking, respect for intimacy and modesty, sense of humour, empathy, pleasure, knowledge of one's body, responsibility for one's sexual health, problem-solving competencies, personal sensitivity. Sexuality is the product of a complex relationship involving personal experience, external influences and social and moral circumstances.

In fact, human sexuality is multidimensional. It involves an emotional dimension composed of attitudes, values and feelings for oneself and others. It draws on knowledge, ways of thinking and a variety of concepts. It is based on biology, but it is largely influenced by the society in which a person develops, since society regulates culture, relationships between groups and individuals, and spiritual and moral standards. Finally, it involves behaviours which may in some cases put the physical or psychological well-being of the protagonists at risk. The wide scope and richness of sexuality necessarily require a sound knowledge of oneself, which calls for a cognitive, reflexive and integrative approach.



2.2 Sex Education

For many years, sex education was limited to forbidding any sexual conduct among adolescents and closely supervising them to ensure that this directive was obeyed. Gradually, total abstinence gave way to suggesting that sexual activity be postponed for the sake of preventing sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and adolescent pregnancy. Both these approaches were based on the same message: avoid the consequences of sexual expression that are perceived to be negative. More recently, the appearance of AIDS has refocused sex education approaches on prevention.

If approaches to sex education have long insisted on prevention, it was because certain obvious facts demanded such an approach. Even today, the statistical picture of what young people are experiencing in their relationships and sexual conduct would suggest maintaining a similar educational approach. In this respect, the survey on the physical and mental health and well-being of young persons carried out among 3 700 girls and boys aged 9, 13 and 16 (Québec 2002a), intended to represent all Quebecers in those age groups, sheds light on several facts. The survey found that fewer than 5% of 13-year-olds and fewer than 50% of 16-year-olds have had sexual relations. The average age of the first sexual relation among the group of 16-year-olds who described themselves as “sexually active” was 14.5 years of age. Roughly 6% of the 16-year-old girls in the sample had experienced a pregnancy. As for the use of condoms during their first and most recent sexual relations, the figures are encouraging: about 60% of 16-year-old boys stated that they had used a condom. However, 15% of the boys and 18% of the girls in this age bracket had not protected themselves, neither during their first nor their most recent sexual relation. Furthermore, among 16-year-old girls who had been with a partner during the previous 12 months, approximately one girl in ten had experienced sexual violence; one in five, physical violence; and one in three, psychological violence. Among 16-year-old boys, four in 100 had inflicted sexual violence; one in ten, physical violence; and one in five, psychological violence.

As we are all aware, sexuality has a dark side. For this reason, sex education initiatives can help children and adolescents avoid certain difficult (and even very stressful) situations, but such initiatives should also help them to better understand each other and to fulfill and assert their own sexual identity. Sexuality can no longer be viewed solely through the lens of prevention, nor can it be limited to a transmission of knowledge. Although knowledge confers power in life, sex education must also explore the areas of interpersonal skills and practical knowledge. It is important that sex education measures inform the students, encourage them to reflect on their experience and, in some cases, help them to construct their identity. In this respect, simple, accurate information can give young people the self-confidence required to broach more emotional issues. In order to avoid being manipulated solely by external influences, it is important to reflect on the personal consequences of certain behaviours or situations. This means that adults must deliver explicit messages, which are clear and unambiguous, taking into account the context of the question and the age of the child or adolescent. Vague messages, which leave young people in the dark or lead them to make hasty interpretations, are to be avoided.

Unfortunately, there are a number of situations in which the ignorance of a child or adolescent can lead to deplorable circumstances, including forms of exploitation and abuse. It is important to keep in mind that encouraging young people to reflect on the existence of certain facts and providing them with the information they need constitutes a first step in prevention. This is particularly true in the case of sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, knowledge alone is not sufficient to prevent all forms of abuse to which young people can be subjected, nor is it sufficient to merely educate students. Other factors must be taken into account, such as the psychoaffective dimension of sexuality and its moral issues. Sex education measures concern both the healthy expression of one's own sexuality and the prevention of possible problems related to sexuality. This process requires the guidance of an adult who is aware of the issues involved and who is ready to commit himself or herself to the psychosexual development of young people.

Although some adults overestimate the sexual knowledge of young people, while underestimating their ability to understand and manage certain aspects of life, both these erroneous views should be avoided. One aspect of sex education involves providing guidelines that can serve to help children and adolescents evaluate their situation and take responsibility for some of the decisions concerning their lives. In accomplishing this, the important thing is not the quantity of information provided, but the quality of the educator's attitude.

“We can't assume the mission is accomplished after only one limited discussion on sexuality.”

There are numerous occasions to develop the competencies children or adolescents need to become well-adapted individuals and to form satisfying interpersonal relationships. The success of any sex education measure necessarily depends on the attention given to progressive and constant learning. They must be integrated into a process that enables children and adolescents to learn, understand and react. Sex education is based on a model of education that is democratic, scientific and open. Its purpose is to contribute to the development of personal and social ethics.



Fears Concerning a Mandate for Sex Education

Although there are plentiful teaching resources available to support a sex education process, certain fears and objections may persist among teaching and nonteaching personnel.



One common fear is that of saying too much and offending the sensibilities of the child or adolescent. However, there are many examples demonstrating that keeping silent about certain facts or avoiding a question can be more disturbing than giving an honest answer, no matter how difficult it is to formulate. Every question deserves an answer, whatever the age of the person asking it. However, the context in which the information is delivered is important, because that can be more troubling, or even traumatizing, than the content itself. Everything depends on the delivery. Superfluous information that children cannot understand, or that is not relevant to them, is simply eliminated. However, if the basic information given is conveyed with a negative emotional charge, it risks causing confusion. Likewise, if the information transmitted is tinged with sensational, or even horrific details (which young people tend to have a taste for), there is a risk of shocking the sensibilities of certain students. The fact is, sex education in school should take special care to demystify sexual facts and ensure that students are not disconcerted by this reality.

Of course, it is not always easy to broach the subject of sexuality. Some teachers feel they lack strategies or ways of handling situations. These can be acquired through experience, but they also require a healthy dose of frankness. Teachers should not be afraid to innovate, to use different and refreshing pedagogical activities and to participate in lively discussions, rather than simply hope that a classroom lecture will answer all questions. They must expect to be surprised from time to time, and not hesitate to be transparent. They should remember situations in which gestures can be more eloquent than words. This is also true in sex education. Anyone who considers himself or herself prepared to engage in a frank discussion of sexuality with young people, and who is taken aback if asked a question about masturbation, for example, conveys an eloquent nonverbal message. The embarrassment provoked by certain questions asked by young people is perfectly natural and legitimate. It is not advisable to deny this feeling, to fight it, or worse yet, to try vainly to conceal it. When a

situation is embarrassing, it is better to simply say so. This can be a welcome opportunity to “humanize” sex education. Intellectual and emotional honesty is key in this process. The need to deal with subjects that are sometimes delicate and even controversial is one of the major fears that teachers have. Any discussion of sexuality is liable to stir controversy. The shock of perceptions can be useful and enriching, provided that it does not fuel prejudices. The acquisition of knowledge should not be based solely on emotional reactions or commonplace notions, but on a process of critical reflection. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between fact and opinion. Are there values at stake in a question? The various points of view should then be presented in an objective and balanced way. It goes without saying that this fear of controversy is directly related to potential reactions from parents. Also, some educators feel they do not have sufficient knowledge of the subject and are afraid of displaying their ignorance in front of the students, as their “reputation” is at stake. The fact is, humility is called for. Young people greatly appreciate frankness. Fortunately, more and more educators do not hesitate, when they find it necessary, to consult other competent resource persons, such as school nurses, sexologists, doctors and psychologists.

The questions that children and adolescents ask about sexuality can serve as a good starting point for sex education. This way, educators can be sure of taking the students’ experiences into account and responding to their actual preoccupations. This should not prevent educators from giving a structured, coherent presentation, since sex education is not limited to answering spontaneous or anonymous questions from students.

Introducing the topic of sexuality can sometimes induce stress, as we have already mentioned, and this is entirely understandable. Educators can present students with certain rules to facilitate discussion and reassure them about the content of the exchange expected. (See Appendix I for more on this subject.)

3.1 Questions Asked by Children and Adolescents

Although some of the questions asked by children or adolescents may seem naive or amusing, and others may be disconcerting for those who must answer them, most of their concerns are not purely theoretical. Their questions reflect what is really going on around them, and even more importantly, their most immediate concerns. According to a recent survey by Tel-Jeunes (2002), the majority of the topics reflected in the questions young people ask resource persons on this telephone help line concern romantic relationships (25.5%), sexuality (26.1%), friends and family (13.5%) and personal problems (11.8%). In fact, the simple curiosity of the younger ones and the anxieties of the older ones about being “normal” stem from the same process: the acquisition and assertion of their identity. As examples, here are some questions asked by children and adolescents. They were recorded during sex education activities in the schools.

Most of these questions were collected anonymously, and it is precisely because the students’ anonymity was guaranteed that they were able to express their anxieties and questions without fear of being judged by others. Any interventions in this regard must be carried out with consideration for the modesty, sensitivity and psychosexual development of the audience addressed.

5- to 6-year-olds

- How did the baby get into Mommy’s tummy?
- What is a penis for?
- Why does Mommy bleed?
- Why should I never get into a car with a stranger?

7- to 8-year-olds

- How can Daddy’s and Mommy’s cells join together?
- What does “making love” mean?
- When will my breasts grow?
- What is a condom?
- Can children get AIDS?
- Why don’t I have a best friend?

9- to 10-year-olds

- What is menstruation? At what age does it start?
- Do you make a baby every time you make love?
- How are twins made?
- Why do hairs start to grow at a certain age? Why do they grow in certain areas of the body?
- What is a striptease?

11- to 13-year-olds

- When was sex invented?
- Is it bad to have sex before marriage?
- How do you know when you can do it? (Have sex for the first time)
- Does an abortion hurt?
- What is the normal size of a penis?
- My brother often looks at Penthouse magazine (naked girls). Why does he do that?
- A boy touches me in places I don't like. I'm scared. Help me!
- A boy is asking me to go out with him. If I say yes, how do I tell my parents? If I say no, how can I not hurt him?
- What is giving a blowjob?
- How many times should you go out with a girl before you have sex?
- What do people do after they've been sexually assaulted?
- Why are there abusers?
- What can you do to have a girlfriend, besides being handsome?
- Are we allowed to have an abortion at our age?
- Is it true that if the boy's penis is too big or too long, it can hurt the girl?
- Is it true that girls have two openings? I've heard about it, but is it really true?
- Do boys have virginity?
- Why do guys think you don't love them if you don't have sex with them?

14- to 15-year-olds

- What do you do when the condom breaks?
- What is it like the first time? How do you feel afterward?
- Is it OK to have sex when you are young?
- Why do girls make noises when they're having sex?
- Do you have any advice for me about how to get over a guy I'm still in love with?
- How do you tell someone you love them when you're too embarrassed?
- Why are there homosexuals?
- How do you know if someone has AIDS?
- How do you know if you have an STD?
- What is oral sex?
- What is an orgasm?
- Why do guys always look at girls, even if they have a girlfriend?
- How do you know if a guy really loves you? If he respects you?
- How can I tell my parents that I'm taking the pill?
- How should you react if some friends do something you don't approve of at a party?
- Should your parents know if you have a steady boyfriend?
- How far can you go the first time you meet someone?
- Why don't our parents give us straight answers to our questions?
- Is it bad to masturbate?
- What is true love?
- Am I normal if I haven't kissed a boy yet and I'm 15?
- Is it normal to watch porn films?
- Do you always have to talk when you're making love?
- How can you make your breasts bigger?
- Is sodomy an act of love?
- My boyfriend wants me to suck him? Is that OK?
- Will I poison my girlfriend if she swallows my sperm when she's sucking me?

- I'm in love with a boy and he doesn't love me. Should I make love with him?
- Are loving and making love the same thing?

16- to 17-year-olds

- How do you control jealousy?
- How do you handle loving a girl who doesn't love you back?
- Why do couples today separate more than they used to?
- How should girls react when a boy comes on to them?
- Is it normal for a couple who really love each other to have a lot of little fights?

- How do you know if girls are sincere?
- I'd like to know how to tell somebody you're not in love with them anymore without hurting their feelings?
- Does marriage still have some value?
- One of my friends thought she was pregnant. How could I have helped her? I felt helpless.
- Do guys feel anything during sex between penetration and ejaculation?
- Why do people make such a big fuss about sex? I don't think there's anything special about it. Am I frigid?
- Why do boys have to be circumcised?
- What should I do to get my boyfriend excited? What should I wear?
- What does seropositive (seronegative) mean?
- If I didn't like making love with a boy, does that mean I'm a lesbian?
- Do you need any gadgets to make love?
- How do you become gay?



As you can see, children and adolescents do not only ask questions about anatomy, puberty or the prevention of STDs. Their questions reveal both the diversity of their preoccupations and the importance of dealing with the whole spectrum of emotions and relationships during sex education activities.

Anchor Points for Sex Education in the Context of Education Reform

How does the education reform provide for sex education? In the current context, what are the anchor points upon which one can base one's actions? Through the Québec Education Program, the Ministère de l'Éducation intends to offer all students "an education that will help them better understand the world around them so that they can integrate into it harmoniously and act responsibly in the complex situations which they must individually and collectively face." (Boucher 2001, 3) Similarly, in the document entitled Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success, the Ministère invites all members of the school team and their partners to unite their efforts in meeting the current needs of students. It hopes to contribute to the development of accomplished and inspired men and women, who are mindful of others and capable of critical judgment concerning the social changes they will experience as adults.



4.1 The Legal and Regulatory Framework

According to the *Education Act* (see the box below), the mission of a school is to “impart knowledge to students, foster their social development and give them qualifications.” In working toward the sexual education of young people, educators can contribute significantly to their learning and socialization.

EDUCATION ACT

Mission of the school (s. 36)

To impart knowledge to students, foster their social development and give them qualifications, while enabling them to undertake and achieve success in a course of study.

Responsibilities

School boards

School boards implement programs of study established by the Minister (s. 222.1) and establish complementary educational services, in accordance with the objectives set out in the *Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education* (s. 224).

Governing boards

Governing boards analyze the situation prevailing at the school, especially students' needs and the challenges tied to their success, as well as the characteristics and expectations of the community. They adopt the school's educational project, oversee its implementation and periodically evaluate it (s. 74). They approve the school's success plan and its proposed implementation (s. 75). Furthermore, they approve the rules of conduct and the safety measures proposed by the principal (s. 76) as well as the implementation of the complementary educational services program (s. 88) prescribed by the Basic school regulation and determined by the school board.

The *Education Act* stipulates that every school board is responsible for ensuring that the programs of study are implemented (s. 222.1) and for establishing the complementary educational services program, in conformity with the Basic school regulation (s. 224). The school board must distribute the resources related to complementary educational services based on the needs expressed by the schools.

At the school level, it is the governing board that approves the implementation of the complementary educational services program. Therefore, it may decide to devote special attention to promotion and prevention services and to support measures such as sex education.

The Basic school regulation mentions that the purpose of preschool, elementary and secondary education services is the overall development of the student. All approaches to sex education are related directly to this objective. Moreover, the same regulation stipulates that complementary educational services must encourage the student's progress by means of four different services programs (see box on the next page).

BASIC SCHOOL REGULATION FOR PRESCHOOL, ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

- s. 1 The educational services offered to students include preschool education services, elementary and secondary instructional services, complementary educational services and special services.
- s. 2 The purpose of preschool, elementary and secondary school education services is to further the overall development of students.
- s. 3 The purpose of complementary educational services is to encourage the students' progress in diverse learning.
- s. 4 A program established for student services under the first paragraph of section 224 of the *Education Act* (R.S.Q., c. I-13.3) shall include the following:
- 1° support services designed to provide students with conditions that are conducive to learning;
 - 2° student life services designed to foster students' autonomy and sense of responsibility, their moral and spiritual dimensions, their interpersonal and community relationships, as well as their feeling of belonging to the school;
 - 3° counselling services designed to help students throughout their studies, with their academic and career choices, and with any difficulties they may encounter;
 - 4° promotion and prevention services designed to provide students with an environment conducive to the development of a healthy lifestyle and of skills that are beneficial to their health and well-being.



4.2 Complementary Educational Services

According to this new Basic school regulation, the school board organizes its complementary educational services in programs to which many different types of personnel may contribute (professionals, teachers, support personnel, etc.). This organization by program rather than by service favours a decompartmentalization of professional practices that fosters optimal, concerted interventions with students.

In terms of content, complementary educational services activities provide fertile ground for establishing links between learning carried out in class and various tasks that students must accomplish elsewhere, in a context closer to their daily reality. They therefore provide a means of fostering the cross-curricular nature of learning and competencies advocated in the Québec Education Program.

As an example, when a spiritual care and guidance, and community involvement animator participates with other professionals and teachers in carrying out activities during a theme week focusing on love, he or she is contributing to the establishment of extracurricular school-life services. A nurse who offers guidance to a young woman who is afraid she may be pregnant is providing a service of assistance in finding solutions to the difficulties this young person is facing. A special education teacher who participates in a school radio broadcast dealing with violence in relationships is contributing to promotion and prevention services. A psychologist working with a teacher to organize a workshop on respecting different sexual orientations is offering support services ensuring that students have appropriate learning conditions. Complementary educational services activities can be carried out in various forms: with the whole school, with the students in a single cycle or grade, with groups outside the school, in subgroups or on an individual basis. For example, a

subgroup of students might be encouraged to write and present a play on the subject of young people's relationships. Students in one cycle might be invited to participate in a noon-hour debate on the school dress code. All the students could participate in a poetry contest on respecting oneself and others. The process could also be carried out on an individual basis, especially in the case of a student with a particular problem.

Actions may involve not only students, but also school personnel or parents. To carry out such activities, the school may enlist the cooperation of the community: professionals from the health and social services sector, youth group home worker, specialist in municipal recreation, etc.

4.3 The Québec Education Program

In the Québec Education Program,² sex education concepts may be integrated into several subject areas, including the particular subjects of English language arts, moral education and science and technology, where they can be useful in putting learning content in context.

For example, the Québec Education Program includes a broad area of learning entitled “Health and Well-Being.” This contains the following educational aim: “To ensure that students develop a sense of responsibility for adopting good living habits with respect to health, safety and sexuality.” This educational aim is then broken down into several focuses of development (see box on the following page). It is therefore possible to include the topic of sexuality in the development of certain subject-specific or cross-curricular competencies proposed in the Québec Education Program. For example, in English language arts, a student research project on the prevention of STDs and AIDS could contribute to the competencies “Uses information” or “Uses information and communications technologies.” In taking a position on the topic, students would learn to exercise their critical judgment. In presenting the results of their research, they would be working on their ability to communicate appropriately.

Other subject areas could come into play in exploring this topic. For example, in a visual arts course, students could be encouraged to create an advertisement on the subject. In the science and technology course, students could evaluate the risk factors associated with different sexual behaviours.

It is increasingly necessary to develop interdisciplinary activities in the schools because, in the rapidly evolving world in which students are living, it is vital to organize knowledge and to present and organize learning content and experiences around core topics that are meaningful to students. This means helping students to construct a culture for themselves that enables them to understand and to act in the society they are and will be living in. (Sierra 1999, 339)

When teachers refer to sex education to provide context for their own subjects, they can draw not only on broad areas of learning such as health and well-being, but also on other areas, such as media literacy, when, for instance, discussing recognition of sexist, stereotyped and violent messages, the gap between reality and its virtual or fictional representation, etc.

2. See Appendix II, *A Summary Table of the Québec Education Program* (Gouvernement du Québec, 2001b).

QUÉBEC EDUCATION PROGRAM

Examples of elements of the Québec Education Program that could be related to sex education

Subject Areas*

Personal Development

Moral Education: Constructs a moral frame of reference

Takes a reflective position on ethical issues, etc.

Cross-Curricular Competencies

Intellectual: Uses information, exercises critical judgment

Methodological: Uses information and communications technologies

Personal and Social: Constructs his/her identity

Communication: Communicates appropriately

Broad Areas of Learning

Health and Well-Being

Focuses of Development:

Self-awareness and awareness of his/her basic needs: physical needs; needs for safety; self-affirmation; respect for his/her physical and psychological inviolability; need for acceptance and growth; need for recognition and fulfillment

Awareness of the impact of his/her choices on health and well-being: diet; physical activity; sexuality; hygiene and safety; stress management and management of emotions; influence of his/her behaviours and attitudes on his/her psychological well-being

Active lifestyle and safe behaviour: physical activities in the classroom, at school, in the family and elsewhere; safe behaviour in all circumstances; healthy lifestyle

References to elements of sex education can simultaneously touch on several broad areas of learning and a number of subject areas while fostering the development of various cross-curricular competencies.

Moreover, an integrated approach to sex education provides an opportunity to group the prevention of several problems under the same topic. Examples could include teen pregnancy, STDs, equality between the sexes, sexual orientation and homophobia.



* The subject areas, cross-curricular competencies and broad areas of learning are only presented as examples; other components of the Québec Education Program could also provide a context for sex education.

4.4 Shared Responsibilities

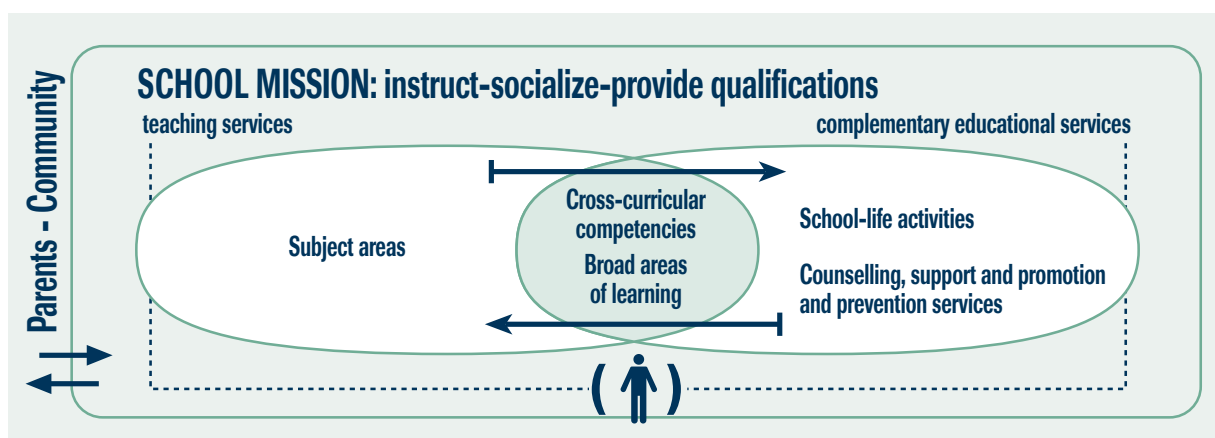
All school personnel share a common responsibility for sex education in cooperation with partners in the community.

“Given the comprehensive nature of the cross-curricular competencies and the broad areas of learning, the development of these competencies and the integration of the learning process with the broad areas of learning are part of all activities at school, and are the responsibility of all staff members.” (Québec 2001b)

In summary, the diagram below illustrates different anchor points of the reform that allow sex education to be integrated into teaching services and complementary educational services. The overriding idea is that the responsibility for guiding students in this area no longer falls on one professional, a particular teacher, or even a single program, but rather becomes a responsibility assumed by all the members of the school team working in cooperation with each other and with partners in the community, carrying out learning and support activities, both in the context of school subjects and in other complementary educational services activities.

4.4.1 The Health and Social Services Sector: Special Partners in the Community

The diagram below shows the advantages to the school of collaborating with the community in developing competencies related to sexuality. Participants from the health and social services sector can make valuable contributions, especially since the new public health program for Québec (Québec 2003) contains objectives related to issues of sexuality. This program proposes the development and implementation of intervention, promotion and prevention programs that foster a concerted, overall approach to health in elementary and secondary schools, including the development of personal and social competencies in children and adolescents, the establishment of an environment conducive to health and well-being and the support of parents. Sex education is one of the elements in this overall approach. Learning activities can be selected in cooperation with health professionals who will provide support and guidance.



4.5 The Sex Education Process: Examples

The Québec Education Program and the new organizational framework for complementary educational services propose that these activities be implemented in the school life of the students. The socioconstructivist approach builds on what the student already knows in order to construct, and sometimes reconstruct, learning. It emphasizes questioning and reflection rather than limiting itself to so-called specialized responses. The fact that an interdisciplinary approach is favoured for these activities helps ensure that the responsibility for sex education does not fall on a single person. Nevertheless, it is important to coordinate these activities so that the responsibility is not constantly handed back and forth.

This kind of teamwork will enable colleagues to share both their apprehensions and their innovative ideas as well as provide an opportunity to analyze sex education practices. There must be an awareness that educators are not in a position of holding authoritative knowledge, but are rather in a position of questioning themselves and their work. (Lecorps 1999, 15) In addition to the participation of school professionals (nurses, psychologists, social workers, etc.), the contribution of outside partners may also be beneficial (sexologists, community groups, police, youth protection professionals, theatre companies, youth workers, etc.).

To illustrate the type of cooperation that is possible between the various school professionals, two examples are given below. The first concerns a situation involving elementary school students, and the second involves secondary school students.

4.5.1 Elementary School

To explain the story of birth to students in the first and second grades, a teacher may read a book adapted for children that tells where babies come from and how they are born. In a visual arts class, children could be asked to draw themselves in their mother's stomach. They might attach a photograph of their mother when she was pregnant, or a baby picture of themselves to their drawing. In the social sciences, children could make a time line showing the stages of a human life from birth to death. In a science class, after doing research guided by a teacher, they might explain to the class how mosquitoes, cats and birds are born. They could then compare the time line of human life to that of the insect or animal they chose. All these activities would contribute to helping them discover the story of birth and the richness and complexity of life, especially human life.

4.5.2 Secondary School

In Secondary Cycle One, various educators could introduce the topic of body image. Thus, in science and technology, students could be asked to identify all the physiological changes that happen to boys and girls at puberty and the effect of this on the perception of their own body. In moral education class or in Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education class, students could be encouraged to discuss the influence on their own body image of stereotypes of beauty presented in the media (slimness, muscles, fashion). The physical education teacher could relate body image to the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. The school psychologist could contribute by leading a debate on the importance of developing a positive body image. In the history course, with the aid of photographs, students could be encouraged to reflect on the concept of beauty in different periods and cultures. A photo exhibit could be organized in the school foyer for which students would select photographs of public figures they consider beautiful. In cooperation with the spiritual care and guidance, and community involvement animator, a debate could be held on the values underlying the question, "Why are we so fascinated by beauty and what are the traps that we can fall into if we judge ourselves solely on appearance and having a perfect body?" Students would be encouraged to distinguish between being at ease in one's body and the sometimes frenzied effort to acquire the ideal body image. These sex education activities will have more impact if the topics are treated consistently by the various educators involved in the process and if they are motivated to this end. Close collaboration of all participants is essential.

When discussions and instruction regarding interpersonal relationships and moral judgments take place in a climate of trust and respect, they can foster a productive exchange of ideas. This may seem simple in theory, but in practice it could be difficult to achieve. How does one go about introducing the very first element of sex education? To facilitate the task of educators and ensure the smooth running of sex education courses, certain ground rules should be explained to the students (see Appendix I).

The effectiveness of an activity is directly related to the presentation of simple, frank information, devoid of sensationalism and delivered with an attitude of respect and openness. All the information conveyed will be of no consequence if it is not backed by a clear pedagogical aim, an appropriate sensitivity to the stage of development of the child or adolescent, and superior listening skills.



Significant Features in Child and Adolescent Development Relevant to Sex Education Measures

The table below gives a summary of the significant features of child and adolescent development. They give a brief illustration of the psychosexual development of young people. In any sex education measure it is important to consider the age, stage of development and social and cultural references of young people in order to avoid burdening them with concerns that they do not yet have, or at the other extreme, treating them with condescension inappropriate to their level of maturity.



**EARLY CHILDHOOD
(5 years)**

**CHILDHOOD
(6-11 years)**

**ADOLESCENCE
(12-17 years)**

Significant features of psychosexual development

5 years

- Awareness and appreciation of their sexual identity
- Discovery of different parts of their bodies
- Curiosity about sexual functions

6-7 years

- Development of their bodies and discovery of its multiple functions
- Curiosity about sexual functions (conception, pregnancy and birth, etc.)

8-11 years

- Physical, emotional, psychological and social differences associated with the male and female sexes
- First feelings of emotional attraction

10-11 years

- Gradual awakening of sexual attraction

12-14 years

- Sexual growth and maturation
- Consolidation of their sexual identity
- Desire for acceptance from others (conformism and loyalty)
- Desire for closeness (friends, boyfriends/girl-friends)
- Sexual and emotional awakening

15-17 years

- Role of desire and prospect of acting it out
- Development of emotional intimacy and sexual intimacy
- Passage from adolescence to adulthood, involving greater responsibility in sexual and social roles
- Feelings of invincibility and magical thinking
- Importance of circle of friends
- Sexual and emotional relationships

The Nature of Sex Education Activities

This table offers a basic outline of sex education activities for preschool, elementary and secondary education. Examples of more detailed activities, projects and learning situations are suggested in Appendix III.

EARLY CHILDHOOD (5 years)	CHILDHOOD (6-11 years)	ADOLESCENCE (12-17 years)
<p>TOPICS</p> <p>The Human Body: Male and Female</p> <p>5 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of differences and similarities between the bodies of girls and boys • Knowledge of the various body parts associated with pregnancy and birth 	<p>TOPICS</p> <p>The Human Body: Male and Female</p> <p>6-7 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the various body parts associated with conception, pregnancy and birth <p>6-9 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of differences and similarities between the bodies of girls and boys 	<p>TOPICS</p>
	<p>The Scope of Human Sexuality</p> <p>6-11 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of the multidimensional aspects of sexuality (biological, psychoaffective, sociocultural, interpersonal and moral) 	<p>The Scope of Human Sexuality</p> <p>12-17 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of the multidimensional aspects of sexuality (biological, psychoaffective, sociocultural, interpersonal and moral)

TOPICS

Roles and Sexual Stereotypes**5 years**

- Assertion of one's own sexual identity, while respecting the differences and diversity of others

TOPICS

Roles, Sexual Stereotypes and Social Norms**6-11 years**

- Assertion of one's own sexual identity, while respecting the differences and diversity of others
- Understanding of the importance of sexual roles in the acquisition of one's identity and exercise of critical judgment concerning the restrictive nature of sexual stereotypes conveyed in society; effect on personal development

8-11 years

- Awareness of the existence of a multitude of stereotypes of male and female images concocted to serve the purposes of marketing and consumerism

TOPICS

Roles, Sexual Stereotypes and Social Norms**12-17 years**

- Distinguishing roles assigned exclusively to one sex or the other: the negative or positive effect on personal development and on society

Puberty and Body Image**10-11 years**

- Understanding of the anatomical, psychological and emotional changes that occur at puberty
- Progressive management and acceptance of one's changing body image
- Awareness of the negative effect of stereotyped and idealized body models on one's own body image
- Development of a critical sense regarding stereotyped representations of male and female bodies in the media

Human Sexual Growth and Body Image**12-14 years**

- Knowledge of anatomical, psychological and emotional changes related to puberty
- Embracing and accepting one's changing body image
- Realization and critical analysis of the effect that stereotyped and idealized body models can have on accepting one's body image

TOPICS

Sexual Exploitation**5 years**

- Identification of attitudes and behaviours that can prevent situations of sexual exploitation
- Identification of basic rules of safety for preventing sexual exploitation

TOPICS

Emotional and Romantic

Relationships: meaningful emotional relationships; awakening of romantic feelings

8-11 years

- Awareness of the importance of interpersonal relationships for a rich emotional life (family, friends, school personnel, other social contacts, etc.)
- Expression of questions, perceptions, fears, disappointments and hopes related to love

10-11 years

- Awareness of the emergence of a desire to be liked and to be in love

Sexual Awakening**10-11 years**

- Understanding of the universal nature of the process of attraction connected to puberty

Sexual Exploitation**6-11 years**

- Identification of attitudes and behaviours that help to prevent situations of sexual exploitation
- Reflection on basic safety rules in the prevention of sexual exploitation
- Development of ability to break the silence if one is a victim of sexual harassment or exploitation

8-11 years

- Awareness of the importance of breaking the silence and denouncing situations of sexual violence to avoid the repetition of abuse with other victims

TOPICS

Emotional and Romantic

Relationships: meaningful emotional relationships; awakening of romantic feelings; romantic relationships and painful disappointments; emotional and sexual intimacy; sexual orientation

12-17 years

- Realization of the importance of interpersonal relationships for a rich emotional life (family, friends, school personnel, other social contacts, etc.)
- Reflection on the desire to be popular, attraction and seduction in adolescence
- Understanding of the phenomenon of sexual orientation and adoption of respectful attitudes toward various sexual orientations

12-14 years

- Awareness of the emotional and interpersonal issues involved in first romantic and sexual relationships

15-17 years

- Awareness of elements to emphasize in order to best experience emotional and sexual intimacy

Sexual Violence: violence in young people's romantic relationships; sexual exploitation; commercialization of sexuality (pornographic films, Internet pornography, erotic telephone lines, etc.)

12-17 years

- Identification of attitudes, behaviours and strategies that help to prevent sexual violence

15-17 years

- Awareness of how the myths about sexual violence can affect individuals and society
- Awareness of the role of every citizen in the prevention of sexual violence

TOPICS

TOPICS

TOPICS

Sexual Health**10-11 years**

- Gradual awareness of the emotional implications of responsible sexual conduct (respect for oneself and others, maturity, communication skills, etc.)
- Awareness of the active role each person can play in the preservation of sexual health
- Identification of certain events that can negatively affect a person's sex life (STDs, AIDS, unwanted pregnancy)

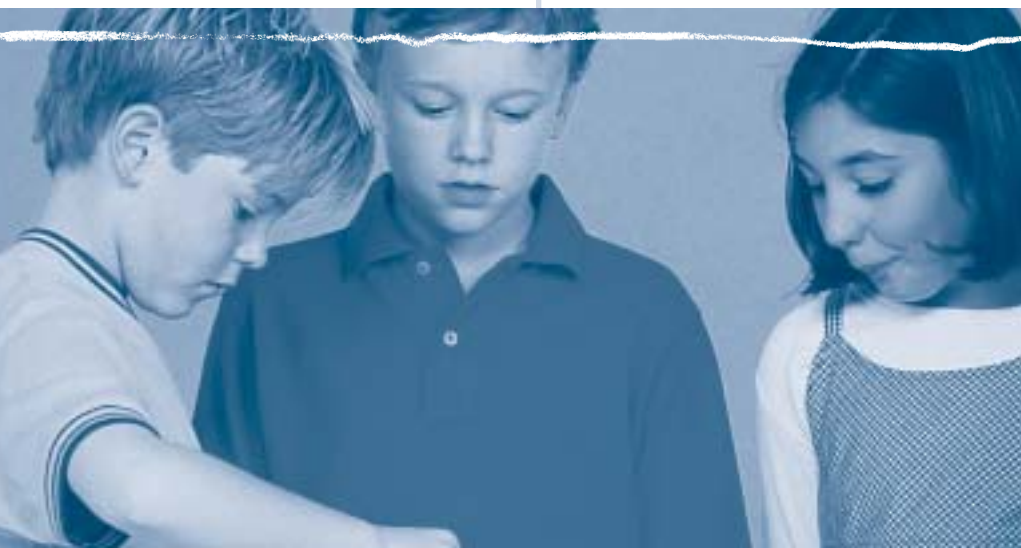
Sexual Health and the Expression of Human Sexuality: sexual conduct (management of risk and desire; well-being and pleasure); STDs and AIDS; choices and options related to teenage pregnancy; contraception and voluntary interruption of pregnancy; parenthood and adolescence; drugs, alcohol and sexuality

12-17 years

- Adoption of attitudes and behaviours that promote the respect of one's own and others' limits in the expression of sexuality
- Critical reflection concerning the adoption of responsible behaviour in romantic and sexual relationships
- Knowledge of STDs, including modes of transmission, symptoms and treatments
- Identification of behaviours involving risk (and the degree of risk) and prevention behaviours (self-assertion, delaying first sexual relations, safe sex practices—use of condoms—etc.)
- Understanding of community resources related to prevention of pregnancy, STDs and AIDS

15-17 years

- Reflection on how the adoption of responsible sexual behaviours regarding contraception, STD/AIDS prevention and respect for the limits of each individual does not rule out pleasure and spontaneity
- Understanding of various methods of contraception and protection; presentation of those adapted to the reality of adolescence and the importance of using two methods of protection (the pill and condoms)
- Reflection on the meaning and demands of being a parent
- Reflection on the issues surrounding voluntary interruption of pregnancy
- Demystification of sexual thrill-seeking (pleasure at all cost) versus the gradual discovery of sexual satisfaction (assured pleasure)
- Understanding of the effects of drug and alcohol consumption on sexual expression



The Stakeholders in Sex Education

All adults who work with children and adolescents are to some extent responsible for sex education. Attitudes about sexuality, in conjunction with the messages adults convey spontaneously in the form of jokes, insinuations or clear statements, represent the first elements of sex education that children and adolescents receive. These messages complement those they hear from their friends and the media, but unfortunately, do not always convey clear pedagogical aims.



Although adults may no longer be scandalized at the very idea of talking about sex with young people, as they once were, we have to admit that today's world is charged with sexual references and that children and adolescents are exposed to a surprising number of sexual messages. This is all the more reason to provide them with information and encourage them to reflect on the meaning and values of the various messages they receive and on the role of sexuality at different stages of our lives. For adults, becoming involved in the emotional and sexual education of children and adolescents implies more than a simple learning activity in the classroom or a short talk between a father and son, etc.

It implies taking time to convey messages properly, with attention to the quality, diversity and frequency of the desired exchange of ideas, always respecting the child's or adolescent's level of development.

In the same vein, the implementation of a sex education measure may prove illusory if it is not founded on the cooperation of the teaching personnel and other members of the school team, as well as on a partnership with parents and the community. If all these stakeholders work together as a team, the strength and coherence of their concerted action will be of great benefit to students.

7.1 Students

The principal stakeholders at the centre of these measures are, of course, the students themselves, as they are the first ones affected by the changes they are going through as children or adolescents, and by the questions they have about the phenomenon of sexuality.

The principal stakeholders at the centre of these measures are, of course, the students themselves, as they are the first ones affected by the changes they are going through as children or adolescents, and by the questions they have about the phenomenon of sexuality.

Students are also observers and players in an evolving society where sexuality is paraded, and sometimes bought and sold. In fact, sexuality sometimes seems to be becoming more and more virtual. Under such conditions, it is not always easy to distinguish myth and fiction from reality. It is not easy to understand the subtlety of feelings associated with gestures and words. Sexuality is a rich and complex phenomenon and it involves intimate experience, which render it delicate and even intimidating for people to discuss. However, students should not hesitate to bring up their questions and reflections. They owe it to themselves to look for clarification and answers to their questions. In adolescence, they have a responsibility to adopt safe and respectful behaviours toward themselves and others. However, it remains the responsibility of the adults who live with these young people, whether at home, at school or in the community, to support and guide them in their search for information and reference points.

7.2 Parents

Parents, without a doubt, have the first responsibility for the sex education of their children. They have many opportunities to intervene, in accordance with the values to which they subscribe and taking into account the personality of their child.

Though they are far from indifferent to the climate of permissiveness that currently predominates and are well-intentioned as to the self-fulfillment of their children, parents still fear for their offspring. Parents have a duty to help their children become adults who are well-informed about sexuality, while setting certain limits for them, and providing them with a coherent education. It is also the parents' responsibility to create a climate of trust that will allow children to ask the questions that are preoccupying them. Parents will not hesitate to explain the values they adhere to concerning the issues raised. They can reinforce the actions taken by the school in the area of sex education. If they deem it necessary, they can seek out the information and support that they need, by participating in information sessions or by drawing on the resources of the school or the local CLSC. Any process of sex education is closely related to that of emotional education and all parents can fulfill this mandate simply and honestly. In short, the basis of sex education is self-esteem and self-affirmation.

Nevertheless, at a certain age, young people distance themselves from their parents, and are less likely to confide in them. They become more modest and prefer to discuss sexuality with their friends or at school, where emotional relationships seem less confining. Also, many parents are not disposed to give their children the kind of sex education that they need. There is no reproach to parents intended here. In plain terms, many parents are embarrassed by the subject and simply have difficulty talking about it. The school offers a more formal learning context in comparison to other sources of sex education such as family, friends and the media.



Teaching Personnel, Professionals and Support Staff in the Education Sector and in the Health and Social Services Sector

It is essential that all stakeholders in the education and health and social services sectors be committed to the harmonious psychosexual development of children and adolescents.

The misconception that promoting sex education encourages young people to engage in precocious sexual activity increases the resistance to sex education measures in the schools.

However, various studies have confirmed the opposite: young people who have had access to proper sex education were more likely to delay their first sexual relation, preferring to wait for the appropriate time (Zelnik and Kim 1982; Kirby 1985; Dawson 1986; Zabin et al. 1986). As Jocelyne Robert (1992: b-2) has so aptly put it, "Sex education does not promote sex, it promotes life!" [free translation]

The great majority of adults in schools are faced with handling situations involving sex education every day (somebody's pain over a breakup, somebody's preoccupations with body image; harassment in the schoolyard; revelations of sexual abuse; jealousy; overt or covert seduction among students in the classroom, spontaneous questions from the youngest students about love and sexuality, etc.). The school is much more than a place of learning, it is a social environment. Sex education initiatives must therefore be placed in the broader perspective of the person and his or her interactions with others, and not be limited to one particular intervention.

The transmission of knowledge alone is not sufficient to ensure that students will acquire particular competencies or abilities. The ups and downs of human relationships, personal tastes and aspirations, and various external influences all offer possibilities for learning. All young people can learn, reflect, find out where they stand and understand their reactions provided they are given the appropriate tools and environment. Québec has long been a leader in matters of pedagogy and psychosocial intervention. Educators in both the education and the health and social services sectors have always refined their approaches on a regular basis, questioned their results and revised their teaching and intervention strategies.

Teachers stand in the forefront of any implementation of sex education in the schools as they are well positioned to make connections among the situations they witness in the classroom and in the school, the subject-specific learning and the sociosexual and biological realities to which the students are exposed. Moreover, the ongoing relationship that teachers maintain with students fosters a climate in which simple, frank discussions can take place. Talking about sexuality requires not only good communication skills, but also accurate knowledge and critical judgment. Teachers, like parents, should not hesitate to consult other resources in the community when they deem it necessary.

Complementary educational services provide an opportunity for various educators to interact with children and adolescents outside the regular classroom hours. In short, all these educators should act consistently and cooperatively to integrate the elements of sex education into the Québec Education Program, whether they are part of the broad areas of learning, the cross-curricular competencies or the subject areas. They should likewise cooperate in implementing all sex education measures. Moreover, such measures accord well with the philosophy of the new frame of reference for organizing complementary educational services (Québec 2002b), which argues for a more integrated approach to educational actions in the area of health and well-being.

It is possible that some educators may feel ill at ease or unqualified to make a contribution to such a process. In this case, professional development may be a legitimate and necessary step. It can provide a solid basis for developing sex education measures. It may be wise to first gather together a few volunteers and offer them the necessary guidance and training so that others can gradually join the process. Naturally, the greater the number of teachers and other staff members involved in the process, the wider the scope of the interventions.

In fact, professional development will be a major factor in ensuring the quality of sex education. As school administrators, governing boards and school boards come to realize the validity of such an approach, it will be to their advantage to set up training sessions in sex education for all educators, especially with the support of community partners (CLSCs, universities, community organizations, etc.). Moreover, the Ministère de l'Éducation recognizes that personnel training is essential to the "new direction for success," in the current education reform. It has stated that "in-service training and upgrading activities are part of a broader process—which we will refer to as continuous professional development—whose ultimate goal is a better adaptation of educational services to today's challenges." (Québec 1999, 10)

The school administration plays a major role in implementing a concerted approach to sex education in its own establishment. As for the governing board, it acts as a catalyst by including these concerns in the educational actions of the school.



In summary, sex education serves as a path toward personal growth for students, provided that it is carried out with conviction, intelligence and sensitivity by all those participating in the process.

Stakeholders in a Sex Education Process:

the students, as the primary players affected by this process, in which their own growth and psychosexual development is involved

the parents, as the first persons responsible for the overall education of their children and as partners of the school

the teachers, as providers of support for students in their subject-specific studies and in their school-life educational activities, and as observers of the students' concerns and experiences related to their psychosexual development

the professionals, as providers of support for teachers in integrating concepts into school subjects; as providers of support for students through individual assistance and the organization of special activities integrated into school life; as providers of support for other personnel in the school and school board

the support staff (librarians, special education personnel, monitors, child-care services personnel, etc.), as providers of support, especially in facilitating access to information sources, identifying specific requests for help and collaborating in various educational projects

the governing boards and school administration, as those responsible for the educational project: both have an administrative role and act as both catalysts and coordinators of the educational project

the school board, as promoter of sex education measures in the schools and as a provider of services and training for school personnel

the community (universities, community organizations, etc.), as a supporter of the school team

Conclusion

Over the last few decades, we have all witnessed important social changes: the decline of Church influence, the women's movement, the legalization of contraception and voluntary interruption of pregnancy, the breakdown of traditional models of the couple, the gay and lesbian movement, increased revelation of sexual abuse, the exploitation of sexuality in consumer products, contemporary hedonism and egocentrism, Internet pornography, new reproductive technologies, medications to increase sexual performance, etc. Young people, like adults, do not live in isolation. They are both observers and actors in a society and a changing culture in which, inevitably, sexuality is evolving.



The advances made by a society are evidence of its will to progress and its capacity to fulfill and liberate itself. Some of these changes, especially those regarding the recognition of human rights and freedoms, must be seen as fortunate. Others may sometimes appear disturbing (e.g., the eroticization of violence in certain media).

The liberation of sexuality has meant that a number of sexual phenomena, which had long been veiled under taboo and silence, have been suddenly thrust into the foreground. What had once been private has begun to occupy more and more public space. Faced with this constant bombardment of sexual messages, it is important to help children and adolescents interpret their meaning. The role of the adults who guide these young people is thus crucial.

However, most adults (parents, education and health professionals, etc.) have been so heavily conditioned about sex that they sometimes find it difficult to find the right way to promote healthy sex education. Sexuality was so taboo that the subject is still very delicate for them, not to mention that it inevitably, though not exclusively, deals with intimate experience. There was a time when few adults spoke to children and adolescents simply and frankly about sexuality. Those who dared attempt it were convinced of the validity of such an effort. As Marie-Paule Desaulniers has rightly said, "To talk about sex education is to talk about a limited present and a hoped-for future. It is astonishing to realize that it requires more moral guarantees, scientific truths, psychological certainties and social consensus to undertake this particular type of education than any other. Prudence has become an alibi." [free translation]

If adults today are concerned about the quality of life of future generations, they must divest themselves of certain prejudices and exaggerated fears related to learning about sexuality, and in so doing take a more proactive stance on the matter. The intellectual and emotional honesty that they demonstrate will ensure that young people are able to grasp the complexity and richness of human sexuality.

With the right combination of simplicity, transparency and generosity, educators will be delighted with the results of such an exchange of ideas. Children and adolescents have an obvious need for adults with tested convictions, accurate knowledge, a concern for truth, an attitude of openness, kindness and understanding, as well as a desire to help young people better understand themselves, grow and acquire self-esteem.

Sex education is not limited to educational activities in the classroom, though these may be very relevant and effective. The frame of reference of complementary educational services and the Québec Education Program provide an opportunity to design and implement sex education within a completely new perspective. The provincial program for public health proposed by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux complements the proposal regarding sex education. This is not a sex education based on "catching up, emergencies or compensation." (Desaulniers 1990, 90) These measures must be implemented in a short- and medium-term process.

In summary, every sex education measure derives not only from a positive and wide-ranging vision of sexuality and from specific competencies related to sex education intervention, but also from a humanistic philosophy of dealing with children and adolescents. The current challenge of sex education is to enable young people to engage in accurate, critical and sensitive reflection on sexuality and its expression.

Ten Ground Rules for Providing Sex Education

The purpose of these rules, adapted from Cooperman and Rhoades (1992), is to create a trusting atmosphere in which students know what is expected of them and their classmates. Teachers may present these rules, or students could discuss rules and formulate their own list to ensure that each meeting is successful. Teachers are free to add any rules they feel are important or that the students may have overlooked. Here is a list of rules that could be suggested to students. Teachers should establish the rules based on what is important to them and what is appropriate for the group's age.

1 Be sensitive and respectful of the feelings of others. Listen closely to what others say. (Example for adolescents: "Everyone has their own opinion regarding sexuality, regardless of their sex, age, religion, social background, etc. You can have a point of view without ever being involved in a romantic relationship or having a sexual experience. Therefore, you should feel comfortable sharing your thoughts and comments with the group.")

2 Do not make any heavy-handed or categorical comments. Avoid making students feel ridiculous or insulting them after they have asked a question or made a comment that seems outlandish.

3 You have the right to pass, that is, not to answer a question. Personal behaviour should not be discussed in class. (This reassures students who may be afraid or hesitant about taking sex education courses.) Similarly, whenever a teacher feels that a question is too personal, he/she may remind students of the rule and encourage them to discuss the pros and cons of a particular behaviour or situation by referring, if necessary, to different points of view: social, moral, biological, emotional, legal, interpersonal, religious, etc.).

4 Try to use proper terms. If students do not know the right word, they should use expressions that they know and the teacher will tell them the appropriate term.

5 Do not personalize questions or situations. Avoid saying “My aunt told me that . . .” or “If my brother watches porn movies, does it mean . . .?” Say rather, “Someone told me that . . .” (Children and pre-adolescents easily disclose information about their private lives or those of others. This strategy should keep any information that is too personal or not relevant from being revealed.)

6 Avoid telling other students outside the classroom about comments made by fellow members of the class. (Discretion is important. This rule is somewhat idealistic given that children and adolescents usually tell others everything and enjoy doing so. Nevertheless, it is important to remind them that discretion is a sign of respect. This will come with time. Similarly, educators should also respect the rule of confidentiality, except when required by law, such as in a case of sexual exploitation.)



7 All questions are welcomed and valid.

(Example adapted for adolescents: “At your age, sometimes you think that you are the only one concerned by a certain aspect of sexuality—worrying about emotional and physical changes, feelings of being in love, etc.—when, in fact, many of your friends are asking themselves the same questions and are experiencing the same feelings. We are afraid of others judging us, we are afraid of not being ‘normal.’ These classes will give you the opportunity to discuss your concerns as well as the issues and joys of adolescence. Therefore, you should feel comfortable asking what is on your mind. However, if you submit an anonymous question that I choose not to answer, it’s not because it’s not ‘acceptable.’ It may just be that I don’t think it’s in the best interests of the class or I don’t feel ready to have a general discussion on the topic. In that case, come and see me individually and I will try to answer your question.” Of course, all questions of substance should not be ignored just because they risk sparking a debate of ideas and opinions.)

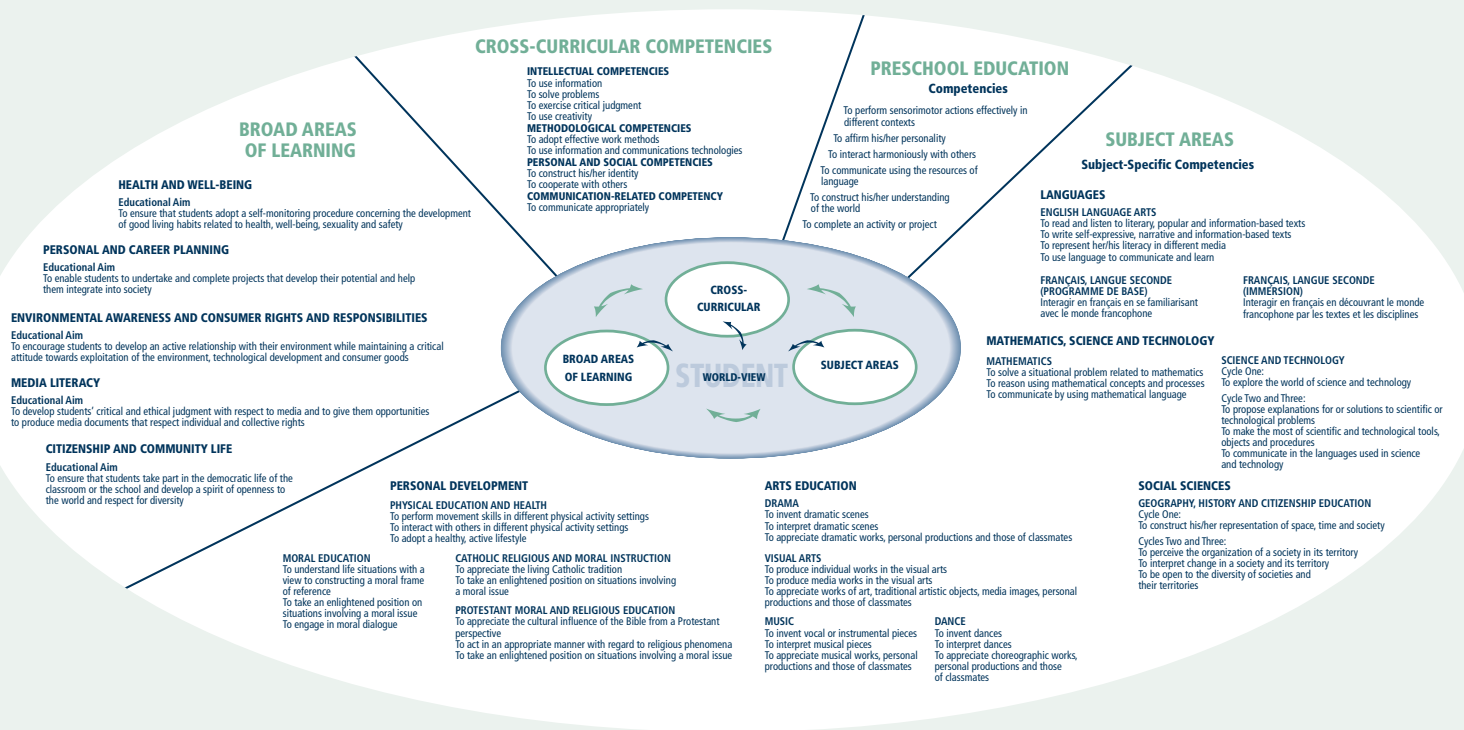
8 Perhaps it would be useful to talk to your parents about the points discussed in class. Be specific when telling them about your classroom experience and don’t exaggerate the content. (To facilitate this, the educator should summarize the subject at the end of the class, especially for very young students.)

9 Speak for yourself. Use the pronoun “I” to state your opinions and feelings.

10 If you or somebody you know has a problem with the class, come directly to me. (The purpose of this rule is to minimize rumours and to teach children and adolescents to talk about their dissatisfactions or concerns. Of course, it is important to accept the criticism and not punish the person who came to you.)



A Summary Table of the Québec Education Program: Preschool Education and Elementary Education



Examples of Activities, Projects and Learning Activities Related to Sex Education

Sex education should not be limited to a singular pedagogical activity, but should rather form part of an overall approach. Such an undertaking requires that members of the school team work together more closely. Although this approach may seem “novel,” certain educators are already using it in their schools. As such, the educational aim must be clear and precise for all those involved and take into account the fact that they do not all use the same instructional tools. Tools may vary according to the educator’s style or the students’ level of development.

Those who have paved the way in sex education know all too well that they can sometimes experience magic moments with students when dealing honestly and simply with themes related to love and sexuality. At other times, they feel like they are in over their head and that the proposed pedagogical activities do not seem to spark a real interest in students or allow for the objectives to be met. Sharing among colleagues thus becomes beneficial to all. We are not talking here about finding the magic solution (which, by the way, does not exist), but rather about committing oneself to personal and collegiate thinking about messages to be delivered and ways of delivering them. Sexuality lies at the heart of every man’s and woman’s identity. From early childhood, students need to be encouraged to reflect on the complexity and richness of human sexuality. Early childhood is also the time to prevent the development of problematic situations involving sexual expression.

The following pages sort the topics of sex education into categories. These categories are the basic framework for providing children and adolescents with sex education. The learning activities proposed in this document do not constitute an official sex education program, but are rather guidelines for actions that may be developed and improved according to your needs and style, while respecting the spirit of the topics to be addressed.

Early Childhood (5 years)

Sex education for preschool children should be presented simply in the form of play activities. Providing sex education is directly linked to the focuses of development and the cross-curricular competencies mentioned earlier. Children will be given correct information about the differences between boys and girls, thus helping them affirm their identity. In addition, discussion of the equality of the sexes, both in public and in private, will help them reach their full potential regardless of their sex. Their ability to assert their sexual identity is a prerequisite to the prevention of all forms of exploitation, particularly sexual exploitation. They will also learn clear rules of safety and security. This approach will enable them to apply simple problem-solving methods.

Childhood (6-11 years)

Elementary school students see their world broaden considerably from grade one to grade six. Their natural curiosity and spontaneity make them receptive to various learning methods. Any new information gives them a better grasp of their universe. As it is often difficult for them to distinguish true from false, particularly where sexuality is concerned, it is interesting to take note of the progress of their intellectual development

following activities in sex education. Similarly, near the end of elementary school, physical changes related to puberty make them sensitive about their image and how others perceive them. Nevertheless, they are still receptive to any critical analysis of peer pressure and media influence on their perceptions of love and sexuality. This exchange of ideas allows them to better construct their identity and assert themselves as boys or girls. Similarly, discussing ideas with their classmates helps them learn to talk about topics related to intimacy and emotion in a safe environment.

Adolescence (12-17 years)

Preadolescence and adolescence is an eventful time. From age 12 to 17, what is “normal” is at the heart of young peoples’ concerns, which makes them extremely vulnerable to outside influence. They often fret about how they are perceived by others and sometimes have difficulty distancing themselves enough to assert themselves. Sex education measures should not only prevent them from being disconcerted by sexual reality, but also from trying to live up to unrealistic models. These measures should be carried out progressively while respecting the children’s level of development.

Young people, aged 12 to 17 are intrigued by a number of phenomena related to sexuality, such as body image, seductive allure, romantic relationships, sexual performance, etc. They find other issues disturbing, such as STDs and AIDS, teen pregnancy, sexual harassment and aggression. Every discussion about these issues presents a unique opportunity to learn about sexuality in general and about their own sexuality. In fact, discussing their ideas among friends enables them to learn about themselves and about their classmates, without becoming obsessed with their own image. Furthermore, exercising critical judgment (with respect to the media in particular) better equips them to construct their identity without being limited to simply imitating trends. Their intellectual ability is in full development, which, in principle, should foster discussion and debate. However, as

far as sexuality is concerned, their fear of being judged is very strong. Therefore, it is important to remind them that they all have an opinion on sexuality, whether they have already had a girlfriend/boyfriend or not, and whether they have already engaged in sexual activities or not. Experience is not the only key to learning or to serious reflection. Most of them believe that their sexual life will be or has been a determining factor in their lives. It is therefore important to encourage them to reflect on the conditions that will lead them to make an informed choice.

In short, like any other topic in life, exploring the topic of sexuality helps young people to demystify it. Moreover, any sex education measure must be carried out gradually while respecting the students’ level of development.





Early Childhood (5 years)

EXAMPLES

The learning situations presented below can be integrated into various projects. Note that these outlines are presented as suggestions only.

TOPICS

THE HUMAN BODY: MALE AND FEMALE (5 years)

Identification of differences and similarities between the bodies of girls and boys

Have the children name the different parts of the body. Demonstrate to what extent our bodies are wonderful machines that must be cared for. Then, ask them to point out what distinguishes boys from girls. Using an anatomical chart, have them give the proper names for the different genital organs (penis, vulva, vagina, etc.).

Knowledge of the various body parts associated with pregnancy and birth

Using a photo album of their baby pictures, have the children state what they know about their birth (weight, height, birth at home or at the hospital, time spent in an incubator, those present at the birth, etc.). Invite a parent into the classroom to tell a simplified version of the story of their child's birth.

ROLES AND SEXUAL STEREOTYPES (5 years)

Assertion of one's own sexual identity while respecting the differences and diversity of others

Ask each child to draw a self-portrait; present the drawings and then ask the children to take turns explaining their drawings and stating what they like about themselves. Summarize by saying that there are similarities and differences between boys and girls and that each person is unique.

Using illustrations representing all kinds of toys (toys traditionally intended for boys, toys traditionally intended for girls and toys that could be considered neutral), ask the children if they refer to toys for girls, toys for boys or toys for both. Finish by stating that all toys can be for either boys or girls.

Read a story to the children, in which the main character does activities that go against traditional stereotypes of girls and boys. Discuss this topic with the children.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (5 years)

Identification of attitudes and behaviours that can prevent situations of sexual exploitation

Using mime and illustrations, demonstrate pleasant and unpleasant feelings and situations that are generally associated with these feelings. For example, eating chocolate cake (pleasant), falling off your bike (unpleasant), being pushed by a friend (unpleasant), receiving a present (pleasant).

Identification of basic rules of safety for preventing sexual exploitation

Use situations where children have expressed some form of sexual curiosity (indulging in sexual games, spying on classmates in the bathroom, etc.) to bring up the issue of respecting intimacy. Ask them to identify the intimate parts of the body (parts usually hidden by bathing suits or underwear) and explain that nobody can touch these parts except for their parents or their doctor for hygienic or medical purposes. Explain the differences between accidental touching, acceptable touching and unacceptable touching.

Use a neutral-sex puppet (cat, bear, etc.) to explain the rules of safety for preventing sexual exploitation to the children (for example, "your body belongs to you, you should say "no" to somebody who wants to touch your private parts for no reason—example of a valid reason: medical examination in the presence of another adult—or who asks you to touch his or her private parts. If that happens, you have to tell a grown-up about it right away.") Then, the children should take turns explaining the rules of safety in their own words. If needed, ask a psychologist or a nurse to help you.



CHILDHOOD (6-11 years)



TOPICS

EXAMPLES

The learning situations presented below can be integrated into various projects. Note that these outlines are presented as suggestions only.

THE SCOPE OF HUMAN SEXUALITY (6-11 years)

Identification of the multidimensional aspects of sexuality (biological, psychoaffective, sociocultural, interpersonal and moral) (6-11 years)

Within a meaningful context, using a problem as an example, have the students list all the words they associate with the term “sexuality” and divide the words into groups according to whether they relate to the biological, psychoaffective, cultural, interpersonal or moral aspects of sexuality. Discuss the reasons for sometimes using crude or vulgar words when talking about sexuality (especially when referring to sexual anatomy). (8-9 years)

In arts education, ask the students to make a collage to illustrate all the dimensions of sexuality. Have them present and explain their collage to their classmates. (10-11 years)

Divide the students into teams and have them evaluate the content of a book intended for their age group dealing with the theme of sexuality. The librarian (of the school or of the school board) could draw up a list of available books beforehand. Then, as a group, establish the criteria for evaluating the resource, and then do an overall evaluation (for example, “Did I like this book? Would I recommend it to other kids my age?”). (10-11 years)

THE HUMAN BODY: MALE AND FEMALE (6-9 years)

Identification of differences and similarities between the bodies of girls and boys (6-9 years)

During arts education activities (drawing, crafts), focus on the differences and similarities between the bodies of girls and boys. (6-7 years)

Knowledge of the various body parts associated with pregnancy and birth (6-7 years)

Bear in mind that pages of dictionaries that feature words related to female and male sexual anatomy are of particular interest to children. Discuss why these images prompt giggles and feelings of embarrassment and discomfort. Reassure them by explaining what modesty is and that it is “normal” to react in such a way when seeing a person’s intimate parts. However, it is important to know your own body well, including the parts of your sexual anatomy. (8-9 years)

A pregnant employee in the school or a mother of one of the students can provide an opportunity to discuss conception, pregnancy and birth. (8-9 years)

ROLES, SEXUAL STEREOTYPES AND SOCIAL NORMS (6-11 years)

Assertion of one's own sexual identity while respecting the differences and diversity of others (6-11 years)

Understanding of the importance of sexual roles in the acquisition of one's identity and exercise of critical judgment concerning the restrictive nature of sexual stereotypes conveyed in society; effect on personal development (6-11 years)

Awareness of the existence of a multitude of stereotypes of male and female images concocted to serve the purposes of marketing and consumerism (8-11 years)

In an activity entitled *May I present my idol*, ask the boys to present their male idols and to explain why they admire them. Have the girls do the same and explain why they admire their female idols. With the students, identify the qualities that these men and women share. (6-7 years)

From a personal selection of their favourite toys and games, determine with the students which toys or games they consider to be "for boys" and which they consider to be "for girls." Then discuss why these categories exist; demonstrate that all children, girls and boys, can play with whichever toy they wish. (6-7 years)

Propose various topics to the students: "Fashion," "Cars," "I like school," etc., and reflect on the spontaneous reactions of the girls and boys. For example, can a boy be interested in fashion? And, can a girl be interested in cars? Is it possible that it is difficult for a boy to say that he likes going to school? Discuss how stereotypes can sometimes prevent someone from realizing their full potential. (8-9 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, have the students list the characteristics of a "real" boy and of a "real" girl. Discuss how not corresponding to these specific characteristics (stereotypes) may lead to mocking and insults. (For example, calling a boy who likes art or who took a babysitting course a fag; treating a girl like an idiot because she is blond.) (10-11 years)

During English language arts class, have the children illustrate the qualities and faults most often associated with boys and those most often associated with girls and examine how certain expressions lead to prejudices about sexual roles. For example, when we say, "Girls are real chatterboxes" shouldn't we distinguish gossip from articulate expression? Similarly, when we say that boys break everything, shouldn't we distinguish clumsiness from positive strength? (10-11 years)

With the students, analyze the content of a music video to identify the sexual stereotypes and sexist messages, especially with respect to seduction, including sexual seduction. First, play the video without the sound, then with the sound. Translate the words of the song. This theme could be used as part of a second language course. (10-11 years)

With the help of the physical education and health teacher, suggest to the students that they evaluate the school's special activities (for example, at the end of the activity) as well as the recreational activities organized by the municipality. Do these activities involve elements of sexism? Do girls and boys feel that they are oriented toward a specific type of activity that is stereotyped? This critical examination will enable students to understand the importance of realizing their full potential, regardless of their sex. (6-11 years)

PUBERTY AND BODY IMAGE (10-11 years)

Understanding of the anatomical, psychological and emotional changes that occur at puberty (10-11 years)

Progressive management and acceptance of one's changing body image (10-11 years)

Awareness of the negative effect of stereotyped and idealized body models on one's own body image (10-11 years)

Development of a critical sense regarding stereotyped representations of male and female bodies in the media (10-11 years)

With the students, watch an audiovisual document that deals with the changes associated with puberty and ask them to write a short essay about the good and bad points of becoming a teenager. (10-11 years)

During physical education and health, have the children list the benefits of physical activity on their perception of their body and on their general well-being. (10-11 years)

During physical education and health, have the students describe what they believe to be an ideal body and compare their perception to reality. With the students, discuss the diversity of people's bodies and the importance of appreciating one's own body image. Allow them to express whether they think it is easier for girls or for boys to accept their body image. (10-11 years)

Using magazines, have the students draw up a list of ads that rely almost exclusively on the beauty of the body (slimness, muscles, etc.) to boost the sales of a product. Discuss what effects these types of ads have on their own body image during preadolescence. Ask them to create a collage, using magazine clippings to represent the ideal body. Encourage them to reflect on whether the perfect body exists. This activity is related to the broad area of learning "Media Literacy" and to the subject area "Arts Education." (10-11 years)

With a nurse, ask the students to express what they hate or fear about puberty, and what they like or see as being positive. The nurse should take care to reassure them when necessary. (10-11 years)

EMOTIONAL AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: - MEANINGFUL EMOTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS - AWAKENING OF ROMANTIC FEELINGS

(8-11 years)

Awareness of the importance of interpersonal relationships for a rich emotional life (family, friends, school personnel, other social contacts, etc.) (8-11 years)

In English language arts, have the students use the lyrics of a love song to illustrate first love and the importance associated with being in love. With the students, prepare a photo exhibit on love. (8-9 years)

With the school professionals, organize a poetry contest revolving around the theme self-respect and respect for others and end the contest with a presentation of selected poems. (10-11 years)

Expression of questions, perceptions, fears, disappointments and hopes related to love (8-11 years)

Ask the students to discuss, in same-sex teams, different types of love. What is the difference between loving your parents, your friends, your idol or your boyfriend/girlfriend? Present their conclusions to the entire class. Then explain the differences between "friendship," "love" and "being in love." (8-9 years)

Awareness of the emergence of a desire to be liked and to be in love (10-11 years)

Around Valentine's Day, in art class, ask the children to make a card for someone they love (parent, friend, grandparent, teacher, etc.). Encourage them to write, in their own words, why they love the person. (8-9 years)

Have the students write a letter to their best friend that explains why the person means so much to them. Reading these letters beforehand may enable the educator to identify students that are feeling rejected or lonely. If necessary, send the children in question to a psychologist or a social worker. (8-9 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, discuss what it means to have a boyfriend or girlfriend at their age, the influences and pressure they feel from their classmates to correspond to the norms and ways to assert their choices. Invite a sexologist from a youth centre into the classroom to discuss the desire to be liked and be in love: "What are we prepared to do to have a boyfriend or girlfriend?" "Do we have to have one?" Discuss the downfalls of doing things just because we think it is what is expected of us. (10-11 years)

With the spiritual care and guidance, and community involvement animator in your school, organize a poetry night. In class, the students will have each written a poem about love. They will recite their poem during the evening before parents and friends. Make sure to set the tone of a real poetry reading, using soft lighting, ambient music, etc. (10-11 years)

During geography, history and citizenship education class, have the students compare the courting rituals (age, context, way of approaching the other) of their grandparents, parents and older sisters or brothers and have them identify the different social norms with respect to romantic relationships according to the time period. Make it clear that no matter the type of couple (heterosexual, gay or lesbian), a love affair unites them. Invite a grandparent into the classroom to tell his or her love story. This activity should be carried out in connection with the subject area Social Sciences. (10-11 years)

In English language arts class, have the students choose a song or an excerpt from a soap opera, movie or music video involving heartbreak. Highlight the feelings expressed by the person experiencing the heartbreak. Then have them identify realistic ways of dealing with heartbreak. (10-11 years)

With the school psychologist, have the students discuss the psychological changes that occur during adolescence: mood swings, distancing from parents, teenage pseudo-crises, body image, desire to be liked, first love. (10-11 years)

SEXUAL AWAKENING (10–11 years)

Understanding of the universal nature of the process of attraction connected to puberty (10–11 years)

During physical education and health, inform the students of the benefits and inconveniences of playing a sport in same-sex and mixed teams. Explain the connection between body changes related to puberty and romantic attraction and sexual awakening. Discuss why they are starting to feel modest and experiencing feelings of embarrassment, fear of being judged by their classmates and fear of disappointing the person they like. (10–11 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, talk about how being curious about sexuality and fearing ridicule for their preoccupations is normal at their age. Discuss the importance of seeking answers from those they trust. (10–11 years)

With the school principal, encourage the students to reflect on why there are rules regarding public displays of affection at school (holding hands, kissing, etc.). (10–11 years)

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (6–11 years)

Identification of attitudes and behaviours that help to prevent situations of sexual exploitation (6–11 years)

In English language arts, read a story about sexual abuse to the students (for example, a boy who has been fondled by his uncle and who has been sworn to secrecy). Discuss the difference between a good secret and a bad secret and the importance of not keeping a secret that makes you sad. (6–7 years)

Reflection on basic safety rules in the prevention of sexual exploitation (6–11 years)

With the school psychologist, social worker or principal, invite youth protection professionals to meet with the school staff to go over the procedures to follow when reporting a situation of negligence or sexual abuse. (6–11 years)

Development of ability to break the silence if one is a victim of sexual harassment or exploitation (6–11 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, discuss children's rights and lead a discussion on whether adults hold all rights over children. Make the connection between the discussion and situations of sexual exploitation. (8–9 years)

Awareness of the importance of breaking the silence and denouncing situations of sexual violence to avoid the repetition of abuse with other victims (8–11 years)

As part of a school project, invite a theatre company that deals with the subject of prevention of sexual abuse to perform at the school. (8–11 years)

Have the students play role games revolving around the theme of harassment (taxing, sexual harassment, vulgar jokes, rude comments, fondling). Discuss the consequences of all forms of harassment and identify concrete, realistic, nonviolent ways of putting an end to these situations. Ask a police officer to come into the classroom to discuss solutions to sexual harassment. (10–11 years)

During geography, history and citizenship education class, explain the concept of the "responsible citizen." Make it clear that a responsible citizen would tell someone they trust if a child were being sexually exploited or abused so that it could be stopped. Explain the basics of the law so that the students understand that all children have rights. (10–11 years)

During babysitting courses, have the students list the most difficult problems that can occur while babysitting. Discuss ways of dealing with suspicions or discovery of violence or sexual abuse. State how important it is to talk to an adult they trust. (10–11 years)

SEXUAL HEALTH (10–11 years)

Gradual awareness of the emotional implications of responsible sexual conduct (respect for oneself and others, maturity, communication skills, etc.) (10–11 years)

Awareness of the active role each person can play in the preservation of sexual health (10–11 years)

Identification of certain events that can negatively affect a person's sex life (STDs, AIDS, unwanted pregnancy) (10–11 years)

Discuss what it means to boys and girls to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. Identify the limits of sexual expression on their age group. Make connections between these limits and the consequences of first unprotected sexual relations. (10–11 years)

With a nurse, divide the students into same-sex groups and ask them the following questions: "Why do we talk to you about sexual relations at your age?" "Does that shock you, surprise you or make you laugh?" A spokesperson from each group should provide a summary of their group's discussion. Hold a class discussion that emphasizes the fact that health includes sexual health and the importance of critical reflection before deciding to engage in sexual activities. (10–11 years)

Discuss the different ways of preventing STDs and AIDS. Make it clear that the diseases or infections have nothing to do with bad luck or fate. As far as sexuality is concerned, each individual has the means of protecting themselves, by conducting themselves in such a way as to avoid passing on bacteria or viruses. Make the connection between this and the vaccination against hepatitis B they had in grade four. Mention the connection between protection measures and prevention of unwanted or early pregnancy. (10–11 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, have the students write about what being a parent involves and the needs of a young child (for example, "How much does it cost to take care of a baby?" "How much time, affection and attention does a young child require?"). Ask them to share their thoughts with the other students. (10–11 years)



ADOLESCENCE (12-17 years)

EXAMPLES

The learning situations presented below can be integrated into various projects. Note that these outlines are presented as suggestions only.

HUMAN SEXUAL GROWTH AND BODY IMAGE (12-14 years)

Knowledge of anatomical, psychological and emotional changes related to puberty (12-14 years)

Embracing and accepting one's changing body image (12-14 years)

Realization and critical analysis of the effect that stereotyped and idealized body models can have on accepting one's body image (12-14 years)

In science and technology class, with the students, record all the physiological and hormonal changes that occur at puberty for boys and for girls. Analyze with them how sexual hormones affect their physical growth and moods (significant variation within a short period of time). (12-14 years)

In English language arts class, ask the students to write a very short story in which the main character is going through an adolescent crisis. Tell them to take into account the physical, emotional and interpersonal aspects. Encourage the students to explain what makes the character happy or unhappy. Then, hold a discussion in a large group on whether the notorious adolescent crisis actually exists as it is so often portrayed. (12-14 years)

With the team of school professionals, continue discussing ideas during a noon-hour debate in which all the students in the cycle are invited to discuss the following theme: "Adolescent crisis: myth or reality?" (12-14 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, discuss with the students the effects of stereotypical beauty (slimness, muscles, fashion, etc.) on body image. Point out that their self-assessment of their own body image is often much too severe. (12-14 years)

In science and technology class, inform the students of the effects of becoming excessively concerned with being slim and explain that it may lead to eating disorders. However, it is important not to describe the techniques used by anorexic or bulimic girls. Some girls in the class may try to use these as effective slimming techniques. The school psychologist could be invited into the classroom to participate and to make connections between developing healthy lifestyle habits and a positive body image. (12-14 years)

During geography, history and citizenship education class, using pictures, illustrate how the concept of beauty has changed considerably since the turn of the century. Demonstrate the differences according to time periods and cultures. (12-14 years)

With the spiritual care and guidance, and community involvement animator, organize a photo exhibit in the school foyer. The students will have selected photographs of people they consider beautiful with a caption indicating why they think the person is beautiful. Then, the person responsible for the activity could organize a debate entitled: "Better to be rich and beautiful than poor and ugly." Why are we fascinated by beauty and what are the traps we fall into when we base everything on appearance? (12-17 years)

THE SCOPE OF HUMAN SEXUALITY (12-17 years)

Identification of the multidimensional aspects of sexuality (biological, psychoaffective, sociocultural, interpersonal and moral) (12-17 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, have the students prepare a collection of photographs that illustrate the various aspects of human sexuality, from birth to old age, while taking care to avoid explicit references to genital sexuality. (12-14 years)

With the school nurse, ask the students to list all the words that come to mind when they hear the word "sex." Write them on the board. Do the words chosen really illustrate the scope of human sexuality or do they relate primarily to genitality or specific sexual conduct? How do the students explain this? Discuss why talking about sexuality sometimes makes people uncomfortable or leads to embarrassment. (12-14 years)

Divide the students into groups and have them evaluate the content of various books intended for their age group that deal with themes related to sexuality. The librarian could draw up a list of available books beforehand. Then, as a group, establish the criteria for evaluating the resource, and then do an overall evaluation (for example, "Did I like this book? Did I learn from it? Would I recommend it?"). (12-14 years)

During geography, history and citizenship education class, have the students research love rituals from different cultures. With the spiritual care and guidance, and community involvement animator, encourage the students to put on a play illustrating these rituals. (15-17 years)

During English language arts courses, with the students, analyze the underlying messages of graffiti found in the washroom or jokes related to sexuality. Have them reflect on the reasons behind these messages (provocation, contempt, etc.) and their effects (gaining power over others, impressing someone or making someone feel destabilized or more vulnerable, etc.). (15-17 years)

EMOTIONAL AND LOVE LIFE (12-17 years)

- SIGNIFICANT EMOTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS
- AWAKENING OF SEXUAL AND AMOROUS FEELINGS
- ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS AND PAINFUL DISAPPOINTMENTS
- EMOTIONAL AND SEXUAL INTIMACY
- SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Realization of the importance of interpersonal relationships for a rich emotional life (family, friends, school personnel, other social contacts, etc.) (12-17 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, ask each student to describe the family member that is most important to them and to explain why. The activity could be done with a friend. The main idea is to establish criteria for deciding why this particular family member is so important to the student. (12-14 years)

Awareness of the emotional and interpersonal issues involved in first romantic and sexual relationships (12-14 years)

In English language arts class, present a novel to the students that they believe to be a beautiful love story and ask them to explain why they chose it. (12-14 years)

Reflection on the desire to be popular, attraction and seduction at adolescence (12-17 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, have the students list the different forms that an awakening of amorous feelings can take and the different outcomes of this awakening (desire to be in contact with someone, inability to overcome feelings of embarrassment, use of different strategies to attract attention, seeking out opportunities to seduce, etc., until their first kiss). (12-14 years)

Awareness of elements to emphasize in order to best experience emotional and sexual intimacy (15-17 years)

With the spiritual care and guidance, and community involvement animator, have the students create a mural entitled: "The wall of love." The mural will be covered in love messages: on one side, the boys will write their love messages and on the other side, the girls. The first name (fictive, if necessary) and the age of the author should be indicated. The students take inspiration from authors or ask those in their lives to share their nicest love messages (given or received). (12-17 years)

Understanding of the phenomenon of sexual orientation and adoption of respectful attitudes toward various sexual orientations (12-17 years)

In science and technology class, explain the natural human response to sexual arousal. Have them distinguish between elements associated with “nature” and those associated with “culture.” (15-17 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, ask the students to list the stereotyped images that are meant to illustrate boys’ and girls’ sexual drives. Make connections between purely physiological displays of desire (bodily reactions) and feelings and emotions that either come before or after (context of seduction, desire to be liked, imagination, emergence of a feeling of being in love, etc.). If necessary, work with a professional from outside the school (for example: a sexologist). (15-17 years)

With a social worker, in class, discuss the boys’ view of their quest for intimacy versus that of girls: “Just how much should you trust a new love? Should we tell each other everything? Should we keep some things private?” Have the students make connections between the concept of intimacy and commitment. (15-17 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, discuss issues related to emotional and sexual communication on the Internet (chatting). The anonymity that the Internet provides may give some a false sense of trust and lead to the person revealing a great deal of private information, thus creating a form of intimacy with the individual. This “game” may, however, lead to lying and romantic disappointments. How can one distinguish between truth and falsehood? (15-17 years)

Ask a professional who specializes in human relations (psychologist, social worker, nurse, etc.) to go to each class to explain the services available to students. Remind them to make it clear to students that asking for help is proof of self-worth and that young people do not have to bear the full weight of their problems all alone (for example: heartbreak, questioning their sexual orientation, sexual violence or intimidation, obsessive jealousy, concern about their health or their body image, etc.). (12-17 years)

During English language arts courses, ask the students to write what the terms “heterosexual,” “homosexual” and “bisexual” mean to them. Explain the various sexual orientations to them. (12-14 years)

During English language arts courses, ask the students to list popular expressions for designating homosexuals, bisexuals and heterosexuals. Analyze the etymology of these expressions to help the students identify the myths and disbeliefs that are associated with them and the attitudes of contempt they usually express. Discuss the consequences of these insults on the individual’s self-esteem. (12-14 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, organize a project entitled “Respect: where actions speak louder than words,” discuss the consequences of homophobia on a homosexual’s personal, family and social life and on the lives of those around him or her. Ask a young gay man or woman to speak about the difficulties and obstacles he or she faced or the support he or she received in structuring his or her identity as a gay man or woman. The students could each prepare two questions for the person. (15-17 years)

During geography, history and citizenship education class, tell the story of a man or a woman who recently “came out.” Point out the probable reactions of those in his or her life. Have the students reflect on the difference between affirming one’s personal identity as a gay man or lesbian and being open about it with one’s family, colleagues and friends. Discuss the prejudices related to homosexuality according to time period and culture. (15-17 years)

ROLES, SEXUAL STEREOTYPES AND SOCIAL NORMS (12-17 years)

Understanding of the importance of sexual roles in the acquisition of one's identity and exercise of critical judgment concerning the restrictive nature of sexual stereotypes conveyed in society; effect on personal development (12-17 years)

During French as a second language class, using popular French music videos, organize a contest to find the most sexist video and the least sexist video. Have the students do a critique of the types of messages about seduction and love conveyed by these videos (using the translated lyrics as support).

(12-14 years)

After a broadcast of a musical critique entitled "Sexy, but not sexist" or "Speak out, don't lash out" by the school radio club, ask the students to analyze various aspects of new productions in music (lyrics, album covers, video scenes, etc.) and point out intelligent creations that are not sexist or violent. The musical qualities of the song should not be criticized here, but rather their production and marketing, which may sometimes be facile, gratuitously attention-grabbing or provocative. (15-17 years)

During geography, history and citizenship education class, have the students compare their view of female and male roles in various cultures and time periods (male chauvinism, matriarchal societies, romanticism, etc.) and in various aspects of life (parental roles, household tasks, studies, career, etc.).

(15-17 years)

During geography, history and citizenship education class, review the details of the sections of the *Charter of human rights and freedoms* and make connections between it and the increased progress of societies that are concerned with equality of the sexes. (15-17 years)

SEXUAL VIOLENCE (12-17 years)

- VIOLENCE IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

- SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

- COMMERCIALIZATION OF SEXUALITY (pornographic films, Internet pornography, erotic telephone lines, etc.)

Identification of attitudes, behaviours and strategies that help to prevent sexual violence (12-17 years)

During physical education and health, with the sports, cultural and social activity leaders, discuss the difference between aggressiveness, fighting spirit, competitiveness and physical violence. Illustrate this through concrete examples and the practice of a sport. (12-14 years)

Awareness of how the myths about sexual violence can affect individuals and society (15-17 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, in response to spontaneous comments made by students, deal with the issue of massive distribution of pornographic and violent images on the Internet and discuss the consequences of these scenarios on the perception of female and male sexuality. The discussions should be based on what the students know about this world; there is no need to use explicit material to illustrate the points. (12-14 years)

Awareness of the role of every citizen in the prevention of sexual violence (15-17 years)

With the spiritual care and guidance, and community involvement animator in your school, during English language arts class, ask the students to make a video on violence in young people's romantic relationships. (15-17 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, encourage the students to reflect on the effects of fragmented and restrictive representations of sexuality conveyed in pornography and in overly romantic literature. Although these two forms of literature are at opposite ends of the spectrum, they both risk giving students an unrealistic image of romantic relationships and sexual intimacy. Therefore, ask the students to establish criteria for categorizing what is pornographic, erotic and romantic. (15-17 years)

Ask a social worker to explain the *Youth Protection Act*. Provide them with arguments outlining the advantages of a society that protects its children and adolescents from all forms of violence and exploitation. (15-17 years)

During English language arts courses, hold a debate on the theme of jealousy in which two teams go head to head. Ask the students to argue in favour or against the following statement: "Jealousy is a sign of love." The jury, composed of students and the teacher, should vote, taking into account the quality of reflection and the sensitivity of the speakers. Then ask the students to write a personal commentary in which they propose three solutions for combatting jealousy. (15-17 years)

During physical education and health, have the students distinguish between flirting (seduction) and sexual harassment. In what kind of situations does this occur (school hallways, classroom, the gym, etc.) and how should they react in a situation of harassment? Encourage the class to offer advice and ask the student committees to write a policy to prevent moral and sexual harassment in their school.

(12–14 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, inform the students of all the consequences of sexual aggression. Point out that it is the only crime where the victim feels guilty. (15–17 years)

Ask the spiritual care and guidance, and community involvement animator and the educator responsible for drug abuse education to organize an interactive stand to combat sexual violence. Survey the students on the types of violence that have occurred in their own school (classroom, school hallways, washrooms, bus, etc.) and allow them to propose solutions. The results of the survey should be submitted to the governing board with a view to implementing some of the proposed solutions.

(12–17 years)

Invite a community group into the classroom to discuss actions undertaken to counter violence among youths. Suggest that the students make a concrete commitment to this cause. (15–17 years)

SEXUAL HEALTH AND THE EXPRESSION OF HUMAN SEXUALITY (12–17 years)

- SEXUAL CONDUCT: MANAGEMENT OF RISK AND DESIRE
- SEXUAL CONDUCT: WELL-BEING AND PLEASURE
- STDs AND AIDS
- CHOICES AND OPTIONS RELATED TO TEENAGE PREGNANCY
- CONTRACEPTION AND VOLUNTARY INTERRUPTION OF PREGNANCY
- PARENTHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE
- DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND SEXUALITY

Adoption of attitudes and behaviours that promote the respect of one's own limits and those of others in the expression of sexuality (12–17 years)

Critical reflection concerning the adoption of responsible behaviour in romantic and sexual relationships (12–17 years)

Knowledge of STDs, including modes of transmission, symptoms and treatments

Identification of behaviours involving risk (and the degree of risk) and prevention behaviours (self-assertion, delaying first sexual relations, safe sex practices—use of condoms—, etc.) (12–17 years)

Understanding of community resources related to prevention of pregnancy, STDs and AIDS (12–17 years)

During English language arts courses, have the students do a role-playing activity based on the theme “How not to look ridiculous when you are in love.” Then ask them to list concrete, realistic ways of respecting their own limits. (12–14 years)

With the sports, cultural and social activity leaders, suggest that the students put on a play dealing with the same subject. (12–14 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, with the help of a professional from outside the school (for example, a sexologist), have the students define the expression “sexual object.” Identify the differences in perception between the boys and the girls. Discuss how feeling like a subject rather than an object affects their love and sexual lives. (15–17 years)

In drama class, and working with the spiritual care and guidance, and community involvement animator in your school, ask the students to write sketches that reflect adolescent romance: “I feel like being in love.” The best scenes will be selected and a group of students could perform them during an end-of-year or Valentine's Day presentation. (12–17 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, divide the class into teams of girls and teams of boys. Hold a debate on the following theme: “Is it true that boys are less responsible or less concerned about their sexual health (management of STDs and pregnancy prevention, parenting, etc.)?” They should make their arguments “for” and “against” to provide food for thought for the group session to follow. Ensure that they understand that the idea is not to settle accounts between girls and boys, but rather to understand the commitment and responsibility associated with choosing a sexually active lifestyle. (15–17 years)

Reflection on how the adoption of responsible sexual behaviours regarding contraception, STD/AIDS prevention and respect for the limits of each individual does not rule out pleasure and spontaneity (15–17 years)

Understanding of various methods of contraception and protection; presentation of those adapted to the reality of adolescence and the importance of using two methods of protection (the pill and condoms) (15–17 years)

Reflection on the meaning and demands of being a parent (15–17 years)

Reflection on the issue of voluntary interruption of pregnancy (15–17 years)

Demystification of sexual thrill-seeking (pleasure at all cost) versus the gradual discovery of sexual satisfaction (assured pleasure) (15–17 years)

Understanding of the effects of drug and alcohol consumption on sexual expression (15–17 years)

Organize a class with a philosophical twist: What is desire? Does it fill a gap? Is it the result of a search? Does it feed an irrational hunger? Invite a philosopher into the classroom to translate some great philosophers' thoughts on the subject (Aristotle, Spinoza, etc.). The students will then make connections with the management of sexual desire. (15–17 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, discuss why it seems so difficult for individuals to adopt preventive behaviours with respect to diseases and infections linked to sexual intimacy. Have the students evaluate how feeling in love or not wanting to disappoint or displease the other person can sometimes make people vulnerable. (12–14 years)

During English language arts courses, after listening to someone who is HIV-positive tell their story, ask the students to write a short essay on elements of the presentation that particularly affected them. (12–14 years)

Have the students create a publicity campaign in which responsibility is associated with pleasure. In other words, guide the students in indicating the advantages, other than the prevention of STDs and teenage pregnancies, of conducting themselves responsibly with regard to sexuality. (15–17 years)

In science and technology class, using illustrations, teach the students about epidemics. Discuss individuals' responsibility to the community to break the chain of transmission. Demonstrate the connections between this and STDs and AIDS. (12–14 years)

With the school nurse, organize a visit to a youth clinic (CLSC) to inform students of the services available to them. Ask the nurse at the CLSC to demonstrate various contraceptive methods. Distribute pamphlets to the students outlining the different local resources as well as other resources. (12–17 years)

In science and technology class, ask the students to differentiate between pharmaceutical, barrier, natural or other contraceptive methods. In addition, they could analyze the effects of these methods on their bodies and learn how to evaluate their true rate of effectiveness. (15–17 years)

During geography, history and citizenship education class, have each student describe what kind of mother or father they would like to be. Discuss issues, concerns and alternative solutions when faced with adolescent pregnancy, from both a boy's and a girl's perspective. (15–17 years)

During moral education or Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education courses, discuss the moral issues related to sexual consumerism: "Is fast sex in, and modesty out?" See how they react to various personalities' public displays of love or sex versus the importance of preserving their privacy. (15–17 years)

In science and technology class, discuss how consuming alcohol or drugs alters perceptions and sensations. (15–17 years)

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Tools for integrating sex education in the context of education reform

Tools for integrating sex education in the context of education reform

This document is intended for teaching personnel and complementary educational services personnel working in elementary and secondary schools and for their partners in the health and social services sector. Its production is timely because the reform of education is changing the way many things are done in our schools. For example, we are all aware that the Personal and Social Development program will be or has been eliminated with the implementation of the Québec Education Program. The new direction aims for the development of a range of competencies. As a result, sex education is no longer associated with a single subject or a single educator, and has now become the responsibility of a group of partners. The contribution of the complementary educational services personnel is essential to achieving the goals of the Québec Education Program and realizing the mission of the Ministère de l'Éducation, which is to provide instruction, to socialize and to provide qualifications.

The Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux have agreed to cooperate more closely to attain a common objective: the development of young people. This document will thus be made available to personnel in both sectors as a guide to help them integrate sex education into their work with youth.

This document is available on the Web sites of the Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux:

www.meq.gouv.qc.ca

www.msss.gouv.qc.ca