

# Sexuality education

Information for parents of a student in

## Secondary

### Québec schools have been providing sexuality education for almost 40 years

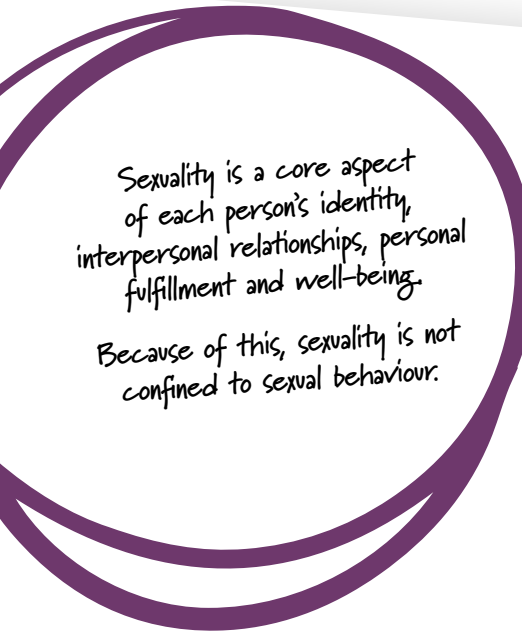
Québec schools have exercised their responsibility with respect to sexuality education for almost 40 years. Initially, this responsibility was addressed through the implementation of the Personal and Social Education program. Today, sexuality education is even more necessary than it was when it was introduced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

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

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

The Ministère has defined the learning content to be covered each year so that it meets children's needs as they mature. The learning content will not be offered as a new subject and it will not be evaluated. In secondary school, every student will receive 10 to 15 hours of sexuality education each year.

In secondary school, the learning content enables students to better understand themselves, to develop romantic relationships based on taking care of themselves and others, and to reflect on various issues such as consent and safe sexual behaviours. It therefore helps them to make informed choices. It also helps to reduce their vulnerability to sexually transmissible and blood-borne infections (STBBIs), unplanned pregnancies, sexual assault and homophobia.



*Sexuality is a core aspect of each person's identity, interpersonal relationships, personal fulfillment and well-being. Because of this, sexuality is not confined to sexual behaviour.*

### Sexuality education

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

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

## The school principal and the school team work together to determine when and by whom the content is taught

The school principal and the school team work together to determine when the content is taught and to assign the staff responsible. The governing board of every school approves the planning on a yearly basis. The Ministère seeks to ensure that, in every school, several adults address the topic with sensitivity and accuracy.

Planning sexuality education activities involves distributing the workload in accordance with the competencies and interest of teachers and complementary educational services staff (psychologist, psychoeducator and spiritual life and community involvement animators, among others). Staff members will have received training from the school board or private schools, based on the support and materials provided by the Ministère. Schools can also draw on the knowledge of professionals in the health and social services system, such as school nurses and community organizations.

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

## The role of parents and schools

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

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

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

## SECONDARY I

### Themes covered

#### Comprehensive View of Sexuality

- › Become aware that during adolescence, they will gradually adopt new roles and behaviours related to their sexuality and increasingly make their own decisions

#### Sexual Growth and Body Image

- › Reflect on the advantages of having a positive body image
- › Understand how certain norms can influence body image

#### Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms

- › Recognize the role of puberty in the consolidation of their gender identity

#### Emotional and Romantic Life

- › Become aware of the role of feelings of love and attraction in adolescence
- › Understand how feelings of love and attraction help them to become aware of their sexual orientation

Adolescents are interested in relationship questions and explore romantic feelings. Adolescents' romantic relationships satisfy their needs for security, self-fulfillment and recognition. They enable adolescents to construct their identity as romantic partners and to explore mutual support and shared trust.