

Sexuality Education

Information for parents of students
with handicaps, social maladjustments
or learning difficulties



Sexuality Education

The Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur has made content in sexuality education compulsory for all students from elementary school through secondary school. Through this content, the Ministère hopes to ensure that all students in Québec have access to sexuality education that is tailored to their age, level of development and reality.

Sexuality education is essential to the harmonious development of children and adolescents. It promotes a comprehensive, positive vision of sexuality and enables students not only to acquire knowledge, but also to develop respectful and egalitarian attitudes and behaviours. It is rooted in values such as equality between women and men, respect for diversity, respect for people's physical and psychological integrity, a sense of responsibility and well-being. And it supports the global development of all students.

Sexuality education for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties

Students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties are children and adolescents like any other, hence sexual beings. Their concerns and questions about sexuality are similar to those of their peers; and their needs are likewise psychological, emotional, relational and concerned with safety and self-esteem. Also like their peers, they have access to information that is sometimes contradictory (e.g. from those around them, their social environment, the media) or inaccurate, and they may have difficulty sorting it out. It is for this reason that they must receive sexuality education that takes their reality into consideration.

Sexuality is at the core
of each person's identity,
interpersonal relationships,
personal fulfillment and well-being.
Sexuality is not limited, therefore,
to sexual behaviours.

Students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties need sexuality education so that they can understand themselves better, develop appropriate relationship skills, adopt behaviours that show respect for themselves and others, and behave responsibly in dealing with issues related to sexuality (e.g. the virtual world, social media). They also need to take charge of their sexual and reproductive health to the full extent of their ability. It is important, too, to help them develop skills that will enable them to avoid risky situations and to report sexual assault and violence, should they occur.

Certain beliefs or prejudices conveyed in the social environment and in the media present people with a handicap or disability as being dependent, asexual or having limited ability with regard to sexuality. This may impact the development of identity and affect self-esteem as physical or cognitive limitations may make students more vulnerable to isolation and discrimination, among other things.

Best practices in sexuality education apply also to these students. For example, it is important to broach topics with care, create a positive and caring environment, take the students' questions into account and involve the parents in the sexuality education process.

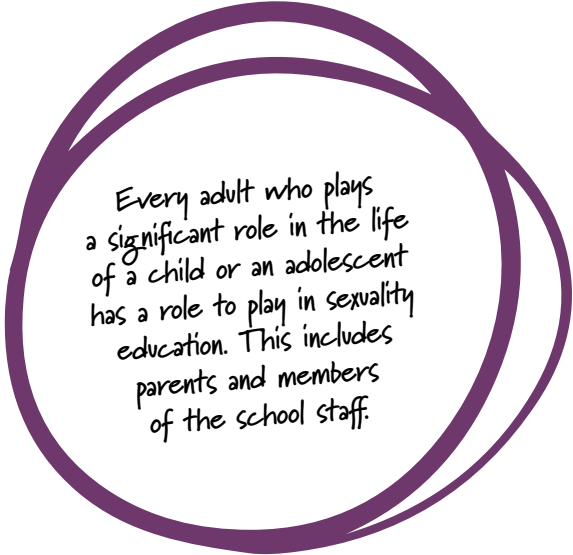
The roles of parents and schools

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 children's well-being while respecting their values and taking their needs into account. Indeed, it is in the family that children first become aware of different modes of life, social interaction and self-expression. And it is there that they learn to understand themselves and to give and receive affection, love and empathy.

School staff already have certain competencies 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 applied 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 needed to help create a respectful climate for sharing and to choose the opportune moment for intervening in sexuality education.

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 children to live harmoniously with others. School is a place where students can reflect, engage in discussion with their peers and receive consistent, accurate and quality information from adults.



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

