



Fédération
des comités de parents
du Québec

ACTION Parents

Volume 45 • Number 3 • March 2022

Respect and protection of our youth: a shared responsibility

- Advices for parents
- For safe and inclusive schools

ACTION Parents

Volume 45 • Number 3 • March 2022

Action Parents is a magazine for parents active in Quebec schools, and more broadly, all parents and partners in the education sector.

To consult this March issue as well as previous issues, visit our website at: www.fcpq.qc.ca.

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WORD FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Dear readers,

In this issue of *Action Parents*, you will find information on sexuality education, on the regulatory and legal frameworks in the school environment and on the role of parents in supporting their children.

To inform and equip parents, we have asked partner organizations to collaborate on this issue. We would like to thank all the contributors for sharing their points of view, their advice and their tools, with the goal of providing violence- and bullying-free environments for students, so that they can live and develop with respect for their physical and mental integrity.

I hope that this issue of *Action Parents* will provide you with food for thought on the role of parents, schools and all adults involved with young people in protecting them and respecting their rights.

Parents, this magazine is yours. Please contact us with your comments and suggestions. Do you want to contribute to the next magazine? Write to us!

Happy reading!

Stéphanie Rochon

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Parents,

Incidents of bullying and violence in our schools and in the spaces that young people frequent are making the news more and more frequently. This is without mentioning all the situations that are not known to the public or that are simply not denounced. Each event is a painful reminder that the security and respect of our youth are fragile and must be a shared responsibility among all the adults around them, as well as between youth themselves.

Like all Quebec parents, the FCPQ's parents' committees are very concerned about violence and bullying and have had the opportunity to discuss and reflect on solutions on several occasions in recent months.

The Student Ombudsman reform bill introduced in November 2021 was an opportunity to consult with engaged parents and reflect on the best practices to ensure that students' rights are respected. In fact, we have tabled recommendations to improve the bill, so that the Student Ombudsman is truly independent, accessible and transparent with real impacts. The Federation will follow the next steps of the legislative process closely to ensure that its recommendations are considered and that the reform is implemented quickly.

This reform will certainly be a major step towards better protection of students' rights, but FCPQ members want to go even further. Indeed, at our General Council last November, Federation delegates unanimously voted in favour of implementing a new policy in all Quebec ele-

mentary and secondary schools, with the objective of preventing and fighting sexual violence and that could be adapted to the reality of each school.

These policies are key to framework legislation seeking to prevent and combat sexual violence in schools. The Federation has requested that this bill be studied, particularly in support of the youth groups that are calling for its adoption.

To keep parents' committees well-informed and support them in their deliberations, the FCPQ has met with partner organizations dedicated to preventing and combating violence. We realize that while there are resources to prevent and combat violence and bullying in the school environment and in society, they are insufficient at this time.

As parents, I encourage all of us to listen to young people when they tell us how they feel and what they need, and to help them when they tell us that their rights are not being respected.

We all have a role to play in ensuring that our children feel safe and secure, both at school and at home. Let's work together for violence-free living and learning environments!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Roy'.

Kévin Roy

A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL

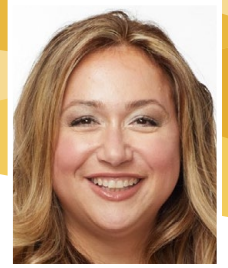
Parents frequently believe that they have no say in what happens within the walls of their children's schools. However, this does not have to be the case. You can and should be a powerful force for change, especially when it comes to ensuring that your child and other students feel safe, supported, and respected.

Asking the principal or other school leaders specific questions about how the school handles issues like social and emotional learning, ensuring students treat each other with respect, and bullying, harassment, or exclusion is a good place to start.

When you have concerns about your child's safety and well-being, you may first consider asking questions regarding your own child, such as what the school is doing to penalise the student who is harassing your child. However, physical and emotional safety are school-wide concerns. The way your child is treated is part of a larger set of relationships and interactions at that school; this is commonly referred to as school climate in the educational realm. Every day, school leaders must commit to making the school climate positive, supportive, and caring so that all students feel safe and are treated respectfully by their peers and teachers. As a result, it's often best to ask these questions at the start of the year. Even though everyone is busy, it helps to bring up school climate issues before they become a problem.



Katherine Korakakis
President



When you ask specific, concrete questions, you are expressing your expectations for the school. It sends a message to the school that you hold them accountable: that they must recognise and address the issues, including making any necessary changes. Being proactive in improving the school climate sends powerful messages to your child. It demonstrates that you care about how she feels at school and are taking steps to make it a better, more supportive environment. It also demonstrates to her that when she encounters a problem, she can take action to resolve it — and it demonstrates to your child the importance of caring about everyone in the school community, not just themselves.

First, speak with the principal, as he or she is ultimately responsible for what occurs at school. If the principal does not respond to your request for a meeting after repeated attempts, contact the vice principal, a teacher, or another member of staff. Even if the principal is very receptive, you may require assistance. Although your voice is powerful on its own, it is amplified when combined with the voices of other parents. Encourage a few more parents to join you in approaching the principal. Alternatively, you might ask the school's parent group (PPO, Governing Board) to pose the queries you want answered. It's critical to show you're serious while remaining polite and calm, no matter who asks. Make it clear that your goal is to collaborate to improve the school. Pointing fingers rarely accomplishes this goal; however, being firm but respectful often does. Plan out when and how often you'll meet with the principal to that end. Also, try to work around the principal's busy schedule so you can get the necessary follow-up without being labelled as overly demanding, unreasonable, or a helicopter parent.

Here are four key questions to get the discussion started with your principal:

1. How do teachers and other staff know what to do when they witness violent, nasty, or other harmful behaviour? Who and how do they receive training?
2. Who is in charge of keeping an eye on what happens in the restrooms, hallways, and other locations outside of classrooms?
3. Is there a curriculum at the school that teaches social and emotional skills like conflict resolution, emotional awareness, empathy for others, and ethical issue resolution? If so, what program is it, and are there any studies proving that it works?

4. For high schools, does the school conduct regular surveys to determine whether students feel safe, respected, and cared for? How are the responses used to help the school? And how are these responses communicated to students and parents?

You may work with your child's school to ensure that all children feel secure, supported, and respected with greater information and communication.



Tomorrow
we're voting to elect
our class
representative.

Mom, I'm running
for election to
my student council.

Dad, why is it important to vote?

What's the point
of a by-election?

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HOW TO HELP AN IMPRESSIONABLE CHILD

While friends are usually a good influence, a child can sometimes change suddenly with a new companion. Is this the case with your little one? Have they gone from being a quiet, dedicated student to a class disruptor who never does their homework? Don't worry; Alloprof offers you some strategies to help children who can be influenced to assert themselves.

Talk about the situation

Have you noticed certain changes to your child's attitude, motivation, or academic performance? The first thing you should do is discuss it with them so they're aware of the possible consequences of their actions.

Then, you can work together to figure out why they might be getting influenced. To learn more, you can ask them a few questions:

- "What do you think will happen if you express your opinion?"
- "Can you explain to me why you copied your friend?"
- "How do you feel about the choice you made?"
- Etc.

Encourage your child to be themselves

Impressionable children often think that everyone is special except for them. As a result, they tend to do or say things to get a rise out of their peers. Here are some things you can say to help your child see themselves more accurately:

- "Diversity makes the world beautiful."
- "To make true friends, you need to be yourself."
- "Friends don't stop liking each other just because they have different opinions."
- "Do these actions reflect the person you would like to be?"
- "How can we fix the situation?"
- Etc.

alloprof parents



Build their self-esteem

To have a strong sense of self-worth, you need to have good self-esteem. Since impressionable children often lack self-esteem and tend to believe their opinion is worthless, it's important to rectify the situation. To help build your child's self-esteem, you can do the following:

- Encourage their efforts
- Spend quality time with them
- Listen to their ideas
- Point out their qualities
- Etc.

Encourage self-expression

Learning to express your opinion and assert yourself is possible and begins at home. Encourage your child to talk about their needs and share their thoughts by giving them the opportunity to assert their opinion on different topics:

- What to eat for dinner
- When to start their homework
- When to have bath time
- Etc.

Spot bad influences

The better a child can differentiate between good and bad influences, the easier it will be for them to assert themselves and set boundaries. To help them understand, you can encourage them to question their behaviours when they're around certain people:

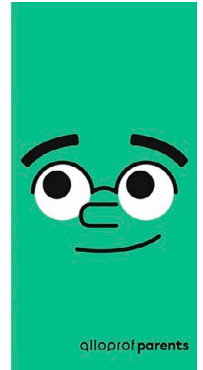
- "Am I afraid to express my ideas?"
- "Am I uncomfortable when I copy this person?"
- "What is my inner voice telling me?"
- "Do I respect myself when I act this way?"
- Etc.

ABOUT ALLOPROF

Alloprof engages Quebec students and their parents in educational success by offering them free, professional and stimulating academic support services. Last year, the organization helped more than 700,000 students and parents, 60 million times!

5 ways to help your child exercise good judgment

- 1 Talk about the situation.
- 2 Encourage your child to be themselves.
- 3 Build their self-esteem.
- 4 Encourage self-expression.
- 5 Spot bad influences.



CONTEST

When helping means winning

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**Enter for a chance
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TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT SEXUALITY

Talking about sexuality with your child is not always complex and delicate. I tell parents that they discuss subjects daily with their children without them even realizing it.

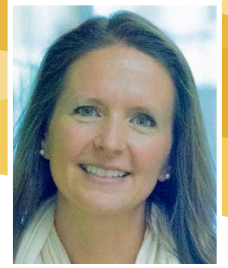
It is important to situate sexuality in its entirety, which includes five dimensions: biological, relational, moral, sociocultural and psycho-affective. This means announcing the birth of a baby; talking about their new romantic relationship; respecting a child's privacy when he is in the bathroom; enrolling her in an activity she enjoys that defies stereotypes; these are all engaging in sexuality education with your child.

It would be more accurate to say that certain themes make you uncomfortable or are taboo in your home. It is common for parents of elementary-aged children to tell me of their discomfort when asked the question "How are babies made?" or talk about changes associated with puberty.

At the secondary level, it is the themes surrounding first sexual relations, gender identity and sexual orientation that embarrass some parents. Our comfort level when talking about the many topics related to sexuality can be influenced by a multitude of factors: our education, our way of communicating, the bond established with our children and the way in which our own sexuality education was done at home with our parents.



Valérie Morency
Sexologist, specializing in
sexuality education



A few tips

Talking about sexuality requires, among other things, openness, flexibility, listening and respect. I remind parents that the important thing when talking about sex is to do their best, with their strengths and limitations.

Here are some tips to help you:

- **Communication and trust.** Establishing good communication and a bond of trust with your child early on will make everything easier as they grow up. For example: spending some time alone with him, asking him how his day was, being present during important moments in his life.
- **Proactive parenting: Initiate the discussion with your child.** Think about what you want to share as information and values that are important for you to pass on to her. There is no need to launch into a long speech. Sometimes concise information has more impact.
- **Parent on hold: Let the child's questions come.** Tell your child that you are open to answering her questions, that you are there for her and will do your best to answer them. You might even suggest doing the research with her in a reliable book or website.
- **Name the discomfort.** State that certain topics are likely to make you feel uncomfortable. You are human after all.
- **Inquire or refer.** Read about the subject(s) you know less about. You could also refer to specialists, such as sexologists, to guide you in your approach. Know that sexuality education does not rest solely on your shoulders – you could refer the child to the other parent, a family member or a friend.



- **When a child is less receptive or shows discomfort during a discussion.** Buy books and place them in a common private space such as the bathroom. He may feel more comfortable consulting it in complete privacy. You can also write a letter or email to your child, giving him the freedom to read it at his convenience.

In the end, sexuality education is not always a laborious exercise. Getting informed, preparing and asking for help when needed will give you more confidence to

do it. Then all that will remain is to put in place the last element: choosing the right moment to talk about it. It is not in the middle of their homework, during their television time or in front of their classmates that you will succeed in getting their full attention. Why not make an appointment with your child and make it a special moment, or enjoy it at bedtime? It is up to you to find the way that suits your family while respecting everyone's limits. I believe you can succeed!

Source: Projet Mosaik, ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

Resources (in French): www.valeriemorency.ca · [Projet Mosaik](#) · [Pour une sexualité en santé](#) Facebook Page

Books: *La sexualité chez l'enfant et l'adolescent* (Mareau and Sahuc, 2007)
La sexualité de l'enfant expliqué aux parents (Saint-Pierre, Viau and Millard, 2021)
Encyclopédie de la vie sexuelle 4-6 ans, 7-9 ans, 10-13 ans (Fougère, 2016)

(French only)





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COOL! LISTENING TO OUR CHILD'S HUNGER

Do you ever worry that your child is not eating enough or eating too much? These concerns can lead us to want to control the amount of food they eat without really listening to their needs. While this strategy can at first be reassuring, it is counterproductive in the long term.

Indeed, when we tell our child to consume a precise quantity of food, it is as if we were telling them that they cannot trust their own body. As a result, they might get into the habit of relying on external elements (e.g., instructions from an adult, quantity of food on their plate) and not their own bodily signals to determine the quantity of food to consume. Moreover, using this approach puts pressure on our children, which can associate mealtime with a negative experience.

On the other hand, by trusting them and letting them determine for themselves the quantity of food they consume, you allow them to develop autonomy to respond adequately to their own bodily needs. As a bonus, it promotes development of a positive relationship with food. This increases the chances that your child will enjoy eating and consume the amount of food they really need.

How can you support your child to listen to their hunger?

- Encourage them to connect with the sensations they feel when eating. Invite them to take the time to savor each bite. You can also occasionally ask about their level of hunger before, during and after a meal.
- Verbalize your own feelings related to the meal. For example: "I love this recipe, but my belly is full. I'll have another plate tomorrow," or "I'm still hungry, I'm going to get a second bowl."
- Share your meals as a family as often as possible, avoiding distractions at the table (e.g., television, digital devices).
- Create a pleasant and friendly atmosphere where your child feels free to eat whatever they want from the choices offered.



Andréanne Poutré
Dietitian



- Avoid commenting on the amount of food eaten, even if meant to be positive. Instead, describe foods by their colors, textures, flavors, etc. Discuss things other than the food served on the table. Take the opportunity to talk about your day or play word guessing games!
- Offer dessert even if your child has not finished their plate. It is normal for them to save some space to eat it.
- Don't aim for perfection. Just like an adult, sometimes your child may overeat and feel uncomfortable, or under-eat and be hungry shortly after eating.

In short, the decision of whether to eat the foods offered and the quantity consumed should always be up to your child. Your role is to offer a variety of nutritious foods on a regular schedule in an appropriate and enjoyable setting.

Even if it's not always easy, trust them! Try to let go of the amount of food they eat.

To learn more, read the article in Vifa Magazine: **Chouette, on écoute la faim de notre enfant : 5 raisons de lui faire confiance** (in French)

Chouette, on mange! is an initiative of groupe de travail sur la saine alimentation pendant l'enfance de la Table québécoise sur la saine alimentation (TQSA).

SAINE ALIMENTATION À L'ÉCOLE : DES OUTILS GRATUITS POUR Y PARVENIR!

LA COALITION POIDS A DÉVELOPPÉ DES OUTILS POUR SOUTENIR L'ADOPTION DE SAINES HABITUDES ALIMENTAIRES CHEZ LES JEUNES ET LEUR RÉUSSITE ÉDUCATIVE. DÉCOUVREZ DES IDÉES INSPIRANTES ET UN MODÈLE DE RÉOLUTION PRÊT À ÊTRE UTILISÉ PAR LES CONSEILS D'ÉTABLISSEMENT.



Promouvoir un meilleur partage des responsabilités quant à l'alimentation à l'école

Une initiative conjointe avec l'Association québécoise de la garde scolaire

Départagez les responsabilités de l'école, de l'élève et du parent en ce qui a trait aux repas et collations. En plus de contribuer à des liens positifs entre l'équipe-école et les parents, cela soutient le développement d'une relation saine avec les aliments pour l'enfant.

Améliorer et planifier l'offre alimentaire lors des activités spéciales

Faites le plein d'idées pour célébrer différemment et sainement lors des événements spéciaux, en plus de permettre aux intervenants et aux parents de se coordonner pour leur offre d'aliments.



Être une école favorable à la saine hydratation

Pour que l'eau devienne le premier réflexe d'hydratation chez les jeunes, l'école peut optimiser son environnement. Bâissez des milieux favorables où l'eau est la boisson la plus accessible et attrayante!



Récompenser les élèves sans nuire à la saine alimentation

Certaines récompenses peuvent avoir des effets indésirables. Découvrez pourquoi et explorez des récompenses gagnantes et faciles à intégrer dans le contexte scolaire.



cqpp.qc.ca/nos-outils

coalition poids
québécoise sur la problématique du

Une initiative parrainée par l'Association pour la santé publique du Québec

#METOOSCOLAIRE

Take action on behalf of all youth!



According to Statistics Canada (2014), 55% of victims of sexual assault in Canada are minors, even though they represent only 20% of the population.

More concretely, in Quebec sexual assault affects a substantial number of children and adolescents. In fact, “in 2006, about one in 10 men (9.7%) and nearly one in four women (22.1%) in Quebec reported having experienced at least one incident of sexual assault involving contact before the age of 18,” which represents 1,357,600 Quebecers (Tourigny, M., Hébert, M., Joly, J., Cyr, M. and Baril, K., 2008). Nevertheless, **“only a third of young people would reveal the sexual assaults of which they were victims when they were still minors”** (INSPQ, 2017).

Young people are often referred to professionals because they have physical or behavioral problems (e.g., absenteeism, emotional instability, isolation, substance use, hyperactivity, etc.) which after further investigation turn out to be the result of sexual violence. According to studies (INSPQ, 2017), between half and 80% of adult sex offenders say they committed their first crimes as teenagers.

LA VOIX DES JEUNES COMPTE

To detect incidents of sexual violence among youth, one must have strong suspicions and be familiar with the verbal, behavioral and physical indicators of abuse as well as the indirect physical and behavioral signs. The absence of appropriate protocols for receiving disclosures and accompanying victims (or even documenting attacks), however, relegates the reality of sexual violence among minors to the status of marginal concern.

As a result, many young victims of sexual violence will delay disclosing the acts they have suffered or will never disclose them, depriving them of the necessary protection and services. This double violation of their physical and psychological integrity stems directly from the absence of a clear, accessible safety net adapted to the realities of youth and from our collective inability to effectively protect them from reprisals and re-victimization. They therefore have no safe spaces in which to denounce, and their rights are constantly threatened for lack of supervision with clear guidelines.

Most victims are forced (by all sorts of factors) to interact in their daily lives with their abuser who has often not received any sanction.

Victims then find themselves having to bear the burden of moving homes, classroom, sports team or school, since accommodations and services adapted to their situation are rarely offered. The same goes for children who manifest problematic sexual behavior (under 12 years old) and aggressors, because the absence of spaces and resources aimed at supporting and empowering them fosters a culture of impunity while drastically increasing the risk of repetition/recidivism.

These criminal acts with a highly traumatic potential require immediate, specialized and integrated interventions.

It is therefore urgent to enact legislation dedicated to this issue that would allow schools to become a crucial space for raising awareness, prevention and screening, since all youth in Quebec must pass through the education system.

This is also the main message of our youth collective “*La voix des jeunes compte*”, because “**The law is fundamental. Let’s protect our youth!**”

La voix des jeunes compte is a group of young women aged 15-20 who have been mobilizing for more than 4 years against sexual violence in Quebec schools, which are crucial for raising awareness and prevention. It is all conducted with the aim of Quebec adopting a law to offer elementary and secondary school students the same protections as those granted to CEGEP and university students, to recognize the importance of sexuality education courses and provide more support, tools and training to school teams. The youth collective is calling for real and lasting changes to counter sexual violence in all Quebec schools and is supported by youth worker Clorianne Augustin, who has been accompanying them for more than 5 years, and Mélanie Lemay, mentor for the collective and co-founder of Québec contre les violences sexuelles.



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**UN PLAN D'ACTION SÉCURITAIRE, FLEXIBLE
ET ADAPTÉ À LA RÉALITÉ DES ÉCOLES
POUR PERMETTRE AUX JEUNES
DE BRILLER QUOI QU'IL ARRIVE**

**ON FAIT TOUTE UNE SCÈNE
POUR DES JEUNES PASSIONNÉS**

**SECONDAIRE
EN
SPECTACLE**



Mona Greenbaum
Executive Director
LGBT+ Family Coalition



THE INCLUSION OF LGBT+ REALITIES IN SCHOOLS

Bullying and verbal harassment take place in schools from the start of elementary school.

Even before gender identity and sexual orientation are a topic of discussion, students are using LGBT+phobic slurs to target fellow students who do not conform to society's heterocissexist gender norms. Sensitive, artistic, or unathletic youth assigned as boys, and those assigned as girls who excel in sports or who do not dress in a feminine way or are not considered pretty, can easily become targets.

Young people feel attacked by gender norms and stereotypes. LGBT+phobia transmitted between young people have negative effects on targeted students. The fear of being identified as LGBT+ and being stigmatized because of it is a significant cause of depression, anxiety and even suicidal distress.

Experienced, anticipated or observed LGBT+phobic acts lead to a variety of negative consequences. Many victims of LGBT+phobia experience psychological and emotional problems (stress, depression), anxiety and low self-esteem. Some have suicidal thoughts or have even attempted suicide. These problems are linked, directly or indirectly, to LGBT+phobia experienced at school and the climate of insecurity that reigns there. Since many of these young people have difficulty forming and maintaining friendships at school, isolation is an integral part of their school experience, and some students report using drugs or alcohol to forget about their problems.

LGBT+phobia also has an impact on academic success. Since they anticipate LGBT+phobic episodes or are forced to meet their aggressors daily, many victims report feeling uncomfortable at school and having difficulty concentrating in class. Some miss classes (often physical education) or even entire days of school because of the feeling of insecurity experienced in their school environment. To varying degrees, their academic success is compromised by this lack of security. In some cases, living with LGBT+phobia leads to a significant

drop in academic success, while other students report having changed or having wanted to change schools to free themselves from the bad experiences that followed them from year to year. In some cases, students go as far as dropping out or expressing a desire to drop out to escape LGBT+phobic harassment.

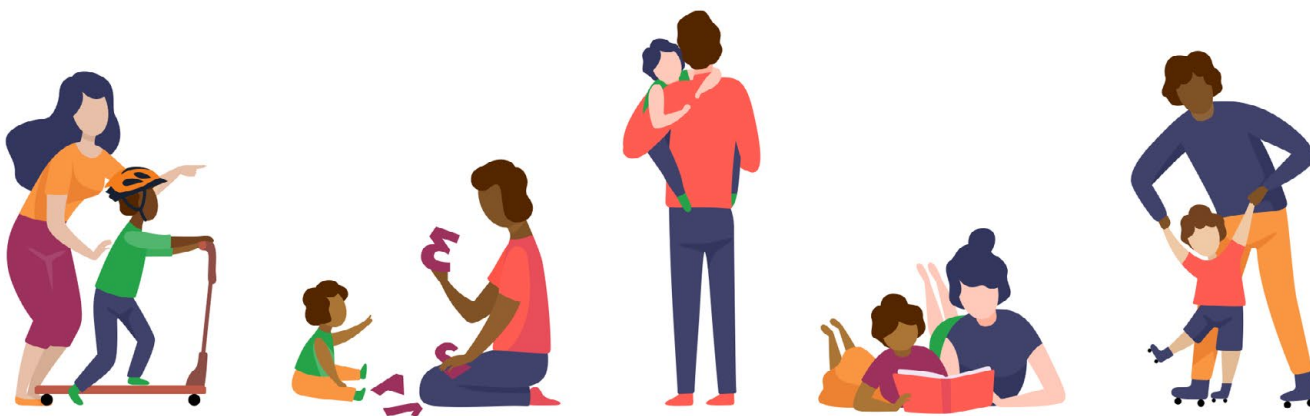
Schools are there to prepare students for active and engaged citizenship. To meet the needs of all students, schools have adapted to include the voices, perspectives and experiences of all members of our diverse society. This was exemplified by the introduction of the *Ethics and Religious Culture* course in the education program, as well as the inclusion of LGBT+ people in the sexuality education program in Quebec schools.

It is essential to deal with the question of the plurality of genders, sexual orientation and relationships, as well as equality between people to ensure that all children can see themselves reflected in the curriculum. In addition to increasing our efforts to make schools more inclusive for the diversity of students and their families, we must specifically focus on issues related to the plurality of genders, gender expression, sexual orientation and relationships. If we hope to live in a society that values all people, and where every child can succeed, we must find ways to teach that include the diverse experiences of gender, sexuality and relationships.



**For more information and strategies,
visit the [LGBT+ Family Coalition website](#).**

Agir pour une éducation égalitaire



Adopter une approche égalitaire, c'est permettre à chaque enfant de découvrir ses intérêts et de développer ses compétences.

Des exemples ?

- Lire aux enfants des histoires qui présentent des modèles variés de filles et de garçons, de femmes et d'hommes.
- Remettre en question les affirmations comme « Les filles sont meilleures en français » ou « Les garçons sont plus actifs ».
- Amener les enfants à découvrir des activités habituellement associées à l'autre sexe.
- Demander aux enfants d'accomplir différentes tâches dans la maison, sans égard aux stéréotypes sexuels.

Offrons à nos enfants de meilleures chances de s'affirmer et de réussir en évitant les stéréotypes sexuels !

Visitez [Québec.ca/consequencesdesstereotypes](https://quebec.ca/consequencesdesstereotypes) pour en apprendre davantage ou pour vous abonner à l'infolettre destinée aux parents, au personnel enseignant, et aux éducateurs et éducatrices.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF SHARING EXPERIENCES



Alycia Dufour

Head of Communications, GRIS-Québec

A human formula

Awareness workshops are designed to bring together a group of young people and two adults from a sexually and/or gender diverse background. The formula is always the same: each guest introduces himself or herself, talks about their sexual orientation and gender identity, and then talks about his or her family, job and passions. After that, everything is possible: youth are invited to ask questions in an open and friendly atmosphere, and whether they have the right words or whether the subject is sensitive or taboo, the policy is clear: they can express themselves freely if it is done with mutual respect.

From the beginning of the session, after an awkward silence, the questions come. The young people were full of curiosity, and one could sense that they have wanted for a long time to be given this space to speak, and the collaboration between the youth and the guests grows. For example, the guest initially questioned about his homosexuality is now asked about his passion for sports. This is the kind of magical moment that we witness during a typical GRIS-Québec awareness workshop: the person with a diverse sexual or gender identity is no longer defined by their label but is seen in all their complexity.

Positive role models

The reason the school-based testimonies work is that they are based on a need felt by young people to have access to a diverse representation. By presenting adult models who are fulfilled in their sexual orientation and gender identity, we counter the negative discourse surrounding these realities, as homophobia, transphobia and bullying are unfortunate but common reactions to the unknown. Awareness-raising workshops aim to ground young people by exposing them to real, authentic and accessible stories of people who experience sexual and gender diversity daily and with whom they can identify, regardless of their own sexual orientation or gender identity. Especially in adolescence, exposure to different pathways can be crucial to the exploration that characterizes this period, and these sessions are a great response to that. Many of the comments received confirm that the workshops help to unify the classrooms, reduce tension, prevent bullying and open dialogue.

Fostering community involvement

GRIS-Québec's awareness workshops are made possible by the work of its trained volunteers. It is thanks to the people who want to give back to their community that the workshops themselves become a motor for community involvement. Youth who have been visited at school by GRIS-Québec volunteers and who felt challenged by the program became volunteers as adults, a common occurrence at GRIS-Québec. This shows that instilling the value of involvement in young people at an early age transforms not only their personal lives, but also that of an entire community.



ABOUT GRIS-QUÉBEC

Active in the Capitale-Nationale since 1996, GRIS-Québec is a non-profit community organization whose mission is to raise awareness, accompany and support individuals and communities in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. Through its awareness workshops GRIS-Québec has carved out a place for itself in teacher lessons and with students from the third cycle of elementary to secondary 5. The schools are unanimous: these opportunities for sharing foster the development of listening skills, openness and respect, in addition to providing young people with tools for understanding themselves and the world around them.

To learn more about the awareness workshops, or to discover all the services offered by GRIS-Québec visit <https://grisquebec.org/>

To follow our latest news join us on Instagram and Facebook!

There are also GRIS organizations in several other regions of Quebec.



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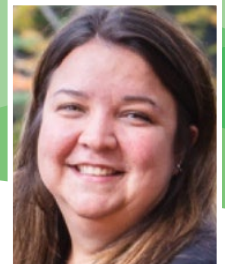


PREVENTION IN SCHOOLS: ESSENTIAL FOR CHILDREN'S SAFETY



Janie Bergeron

Coordinator, Regroupement des organismes ESPACE du Québec



As parents we strive for safe environments for our children. However, at some point in their lives, children may face various forms of violence from an adult or another child.

Young people from all walks of life can be victims of abuse. Whether it is verbal, emotional, physical, sexual or neglect, we know that these abuses of power can cause harm to the well-being and development of children.

Schools have clear guidelines and tools to support adults who must intervene in such situations. When you consider that a bullying incident occurs every seven minutes in the schoolyard and every 25 minutes in the classroom¹, it becomes clear that all children will be affected by such events, whether as bullies, victims or witnesses, beginning in elementary school.

The importance of addressing concepts of violence prevention early in children's lives cannot be overstated, so that they become an integral part of their socialization. It is therefore important to equip not only adults, but all children from an early age, to know their rights, develop self-assertion, understand the different forms of violence including bullying, and how to recognize and react to them in a very concrete way when necessary.

Beyond the policies adopted by schools, there is our commitment as adults, which at its core is about listening, empathizing and providing support. Some problems confided by children may seem insignificant to us, but the situation is important for the child no matter what the problem is. We must therefore give each confidence they share the attention it deserves to help them as best we can. The child will then know that we are there and that itself can already make a big difference.

Prevention can be done simply and through different methods. For example, in a violence prevention approach, the use of role playing is a successful strategy to capture the attention of all children while encouraging their active involvement. This technique allows for feedback where children learn to recognize their feelings and find strategies to deal with violent situations. The search for solutions can be done in a safe group setting where there is room for creativity, allowing children to feel equipped should they find themselves alone with an aggressor.

By emphasizing respect for basic rights and simple strategies when their rights are not respected, we help children feel less vulnerable to violence and thus ensure that all children can live a safe and violence-free childhood.

Prevention works!



¹ The Canadian Department of Justice's Building Safer Communities newsletter, Spring, 2003, Issue 7.



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UNDERSTANDING THE SEXUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Louise Groleau, sexologist



Since the fall of 2018, the Ministry of Education has required elementary schools to implement a sexuality education program for all children from kindergarten to grade 6. In this text sexologist Louise Groleau answers the most frequently asked questions among parents.

Teachers have become acquainted with the compulsory content and are now bringing it to their classes. Many have the good fortune to count on the expertise of educational advisers who are sometimes themselves sexologists, while other schools invite sexologists, nurses or workers from various organizations to support them in this mandate.

Sexuality begins to develop from birth, and primary school children exhibit sexualized behaviors throughout their journey. Children in this age group are primarily driven by curiosity, exploration, the need to feel pleasurable sensations and not by fantasies or genitalized pleasure.

Some parents worry that this sexuality education program affects the innocence of children, but it seeks to convey a positive view of sexual health.

3 questions frequently asked by parents

1- Why explain to them at their age what sexual acts are?

This is not addressed in elementary school, only in secondary. Moreover, a parent can always discuss this topic with their child.

2- Why talk to them about masturbation?

This theme is not directly addressed in elementary school. The main recommendation of the program consists of explaining to children that it is an intimate gesture that must be experienced in a private place, like their room at home, and not in a public place.

3- Should the LGBTQ+ alphabet be explained to them?

The program addresses sexual diversity and respect for differences without explaining in detail what each of the letters signify. Talking about sexual orientation is recommended in the third cycle of elementary school, specifically in grade 6.

Curiosity and exploration

Children's questions relate to conception, birth, anatomical differences, emotions, stereotypes, sex roles, gender identity, puberty and even sexual orientation. We know that they seek answers where they can, and too often by using the Internet. As their critical thinking skills are not yet fully developed, they often indiscriminately believe what they read or accidentally discover and access age-inappropriate information. They also like to use expressions and words relating to sexuality. Some will use it to joke, to name private parts or to observe the reaction of adults.

Emotional life and growth

Throughout primary school children develop friendships and learn to manage pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Some also show romantic interests while simultaneously expressing pleasure, joy, fear or even disgust at certain sexual behaviors, even if these behaviors are healthy.

A collaboration between parents and school

Sexuality education begins very early in childhood and is the result of collaboration between school and family. The themes and objectives of the Ministry of Education program have been thought out and developed by multidisciplinary experts considering the psychosexual development of children, research and conclusive studies on children's sexuality.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

- Aidersonenfant.com
- Communication-jeunesse
- Kaléidoscope
- Fondation Marie-Vincent

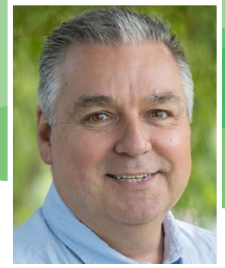
Sex education content has also been planned in secondary schools since September 2018. It takes into account various dimensions and subjects: knowledge of the body, body image, sexual stereotypes, feelings of love, etc. Here is the content planned according to the age of the students.

Summary table Themes and learning content in sexuality education												
Kindergarten	Elementary						Secondary					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	I	II	III	IV	V	
Sexual Growth and Body Image › Parts of the body › Expressing needs and feelings	Comprehensive View of Sexuality › Aspects of sexuality (body, heart, mind)	Sexual Growth and Body Image › Sexual organs › Appreciating your body and personal hygiene	Comprehensive View of Sexuality › Aspects of sexuality (body, heart, mind and messages conveyed by the social environment)	Sexual Growth and Body Image › Main changes associated with puberty › Feelings about growing up	Sexual Growth and Body Image › Physical and psychological changes associated with puberty › Role of puberty in growth	Comprehensive View of Sexuality › Dimensions of sexuality (biological, psychoaffective, socio-cultural, interpersonal and moral)	Comprehensive View of Sexuality › Entering adolescence	Emotional and Romantic Life › Romantic relationships › Challenges involved in first dating relationships	Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms › Reflect in critical manner on representations of sexuality in the public space	Emotional and Romantic Life › Recognizing symptoms of violence › Solutions to prevent or deal with violence	Comprehensive View of Sexuality › Being comfortable with one's sexuality all one's life	
Pregnancy and Birth › Steps in making a baby › Welcoming a new baby	Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms › Gender roles and stereotypes › Respect for differences	Emotional and Romantic Life › Interpersonal relationships › Expressing feelings	Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms › Stereotypes in social environments and in the media › Influence of stereotypes	Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms › Establishing egalitarian relationships	Sexual Assault › Preventing and dealing with sexual assault in a real or virtual context	Sexual Growth and Body Image › Understanding the changes associated with puberty › Body image	Sexual Growth and Body Image › Advantages of having a positive body image › Influence that social norms can have on body image	Sexual Violence › Myths and prejudices about sexual assault › Concept of consent	Emotional and Romantic Life › Benefits of a romantic relationship based on mutuality › Managing conflicts in a healthy way in a romantic relationship	Sexual Behaviour › Sustaining emotional intimacy and sexual intimacy	Emotional and Romantic Life › Meaningful emotional and romantic relationships	
	Sexual Assault › How to recognize a situation of sexual assault › Reporting an incident to an adult	Pregnancy and Birth › The egg and the sperm › Development of a fetus	Sexual Assault › How to recognize different forms of sexual assault › Preventing and dealing with sexual assault	Emotional and Romantic Life › Representations of love and friendship › Attitudes and behaviours in interpersonal relationships		Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms › Impacts of sexism, homophobia and transphobia › Respect for sexual diversity and respect for rights	Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms › Role of puberty in consolidating one's identity	Sexual Behaviour › Sexual behaviour during adolescence › Respect for choices concerning sexual behaviour	Sexual Violence › Active role to prevent or report sexual assault › Helpful attitudes toward victims of sexual assault	STBBIs and Pregnancy › Steps to take after unprotected or poorly protected sexual relations › Development of safe sexual behaviours	STBBIs and Romantic Life › Risks of STBBIs and pregnancy associated with different contexts of a sexually active lifestyle › Ethical issues	
						Emotional and Romantic Life › Romantic and sexual awakening during puberty	Emotional and Romantic Life › Feelings of love and attraction › Awareness of sexual orientation	STBBIs and Pregnancy › Importance of sexual and reproductive health › Positive attitude toward using protection	STBBIs and Romantic Life › How protection methods work › Development of safe sexual behaviours			

FIGHTING BULLYING AND VIOLENCE AT SCHOOL



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du Québec



Hervé Charbonneau

Training & Activity Coordinator, FCPQ

(This text first appeared in the October 2018 edition of Action Parents and is updated here to reflect changes in the Education Act.)

Since 2012 all schools in Quebec must adopt a plan to combat bullying and violence.

In the case of public schools, this plan and its update are **adopted** by the governing board, as proposed by the school administration¹. Thus, by your presence on the governing board, you, the parents, become part of a process aimed at ensuring that all students benefit from an environment where intimidation and violence have no place.

A detailed plan

It is up to the administration to develop, with the participation of school staff, the plan to combat bullying and violence and submit it to the governing board for approval.

The law is also clear as to what this plan must contain, namely:

- analysis of the school's situation regarding bullying and violence
- measures to prevent bullying and violence in all their forms and for any reason (cultural differences, sexual orientation or identity, disability, physical characteristics, etc.)

- measures favoring the collaboration of parents
- procedure for reporting an act of bullying or violence or for filing a complaint in this regard, and specifically, the procedure for denouncing cases of cyberbullying
- actions to be taken when an act of bullying or violence is reported by a student, member of school staff or any other person
- measures to ensure the confidentiality of reports or complaints
- support or supervision measures offered to victims, witnesses and perpetrators
- disciplinary sanctions applicable according to the seriousness or repetitive nature of acts observed
- the follow-up to be done for any report or complaint

The law also provides for mandatory distribution of a document explaining the plan to combat bullying and violence to all school parents. It is up to the governing board to ensure that this document is drafted in a clear and accessible manner.

The plan must also be reviewed **annually** and updated as needed, to ensure that it considers changing realities, particularly regarding the forms of intimidation and violence and the reasons for them. Just think, among other things, of the emergence of social phenomena such as sexting, or even the recognition of the right to sexual and gender diversity at school age.

Updating the anti-bullying and violence plan may also be necessary following an event or situation that highlights certain shortcomings in the current plan.



¹ Education Act, section 75.1

Accountability

It is important to remember that the governing board must carry out an annual evaluation of the school's results regarding the fight against bullying and violence, and that it must submit a document stating this evaluation to parents and school staff members as well as the student ombudsman².

For the sake of our youth

Bullying and violence have significant, sometimes even tragic, impacts on the safety, health and development of our youth. That's why it's essential to give your school's anti-bullying and anti-violence plan the attention it deserves.

When was the last time you spoke about the anti-bullying and anti-violence plan at your governing board?

TO KNOW MORE:

<https://www.fcpq.qc.ca/parents/agir-face-a-lintimidation/>

<http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/school-boards/dossiers/bullying-and-violence-in-the-schools/>

² Education Act, section 83.1



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TRAINING

The FCPQ offers webinars in which you can participate alone or in a group. Lasting up to two hours, the webinars provide essential content on a variety of topics related to parenting skills and parent involvement in school governance structures. Consult our program and register at <https://www.fcpq.qc.ca/formations-activites/webinaires/>.

ADVISORY SERVICES

Do you have questions about governing boards, parents' committees, special needs advisory committees, or even the Quebec Education Act? Our team of advisors offers a support and information service concerning the school sector, its structures and its functioning. The service is free and provided for parents in the public school network.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The FCPQ offers its assistance in the event of a crisis to help you find constructive solutions to complex situations, or even conflicts at the heart of your committees.

VIDEO CAPSULES

The FCPQ has created video capsules that offer, in just a few minutes, essential information on subjects of interest for engaged parents, such as governing boards, annual general assemblies, the complaint-handling process, special needs advisory committees, etc. These capsules are available on our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/FCPQofficiel.



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