

The Ontario Curriculum: Grades 1-8: Health and Physical Activity: 2010

What the draft document of the revised Health and Physical Activity curriculum (2010) intended for students to learn about human development and sexual health on a grade-by-grade level. (The curriculum is now under review, following protests from religious groups and some parents.)

Grades 1 to 3

"Particular emphasis is placed on having students learn how to take responsibility for their own safety, at home and in the community, how to stand up for themselves, and how to get help in situations of abuse. Students also learn to understand and apply basic concepts related to healthy food choices, healthy relationships, diversity, and substance use and potentially addictive behaviours. They learn the names of body parts, begin to understand how their bodies work and develop, and acquire an understanding of some of the factors that contribute to healthy physical and emotional development."

Grade 1

- Identify body parts, including genitalia (e.g. penis, testicles, vagina, vulva), using correct terminology

Grade 3

- Describe how visible differences (e.g., skin, hair, and eye colour, facial features, body size and shape, physical aids or different physical abilities, clothing, possessions) and invisible differences e.g., learning abilities, skills and talents, personal or cultural values and beliefs, gender identity, sexual orientation, family background, personal preferences, allergies and sensitivities) make each person unique, and identify ways of showing respect for differences in others.
- Particular emphasis is placed on having students learn how to take responsibility for their own safety, at home and in the community, how to stand up for themselves, and how to get help in situations of abuse. Students also learn to understand and apply basic concepts related to healthy food choices, healthy relationships, diversity, and substance use and potentially addictive behaviours. They learn the names of body parts, begin to understand how their bodies work and develop, and acquire an understanding of some of the factors that contribute to healthy physical and emotional development.

Grades 4 to 6

"Because students at this age are approaching or beginning puberty, the curriculum expectations provide an opportunity for students to develop the knowledge and skills that they will need to understand the physical, emotional, and social changes that they are experiencing or are about to go through. Topics include reproduction, self-concept, relationships, stress management, and decision making. Students who are well informed, who have had the opportunity to do some thinking in advance, and who have been able to practise the appropriate decision-making skills are likely to make wiser decisions about their health.'

Grade 4

- Describe various types of bullying and abuse (e.g., social, physical, verbal), including bullying using technology (e.g., via e-mail, text messaging, chat rooms, websites), and identify appropriate ways of responding.
- Describe the physical changes that occur in males and females at puberty (e.g., growth of body hair, breast development, changes in voice and body size, production of body odour, skin changes and the emotional and social impacts that may result from these changes.
- Describe the physical changes that occur in males and females at puberty (e.g., growth of body hair, breast development, changes in voice and body size, production of body odour, skin changes and the emotional and social impacts that may result from these changes.
- Demonstrate an understanding of personal care needs and the application of personal hygienic practices associated with the onset of puberty (e.g., increased importance of regular bathing/ showering and regular clothing changes; use of hygiene products; continuing importance of regular hygiene practices, including hand washing, oral health care, and care of prosthetic devices and residual limbs.

Grade 5

- Identify the parts of the reproductive system, and describe how the body changes during puberty.
- Describe emotional and interpersonal stresses related to puberty (e.g., questions about changing bodies and feelings, adjusting to changing relationships, crushes and more intense feelings, conflicts between personal desires and cultural teachings and practices), and identify strategies that they can apply to manage stress, build resilience, and enhance their mental health and emotional well-being (e.g., being active, writing feelings in a journal, accessing information about their concerns, taking action on a concern, talking to a trusted peer or adult, breathing deeply, seeking cultural advice from elders).
- Explain how a person's actions (e.g., negative actions such as name calling, making homophobic or racist remarks, mocking appearance or ability, excluding, bullying, sexual harassment; positive actions such as praising, supporting, including) can affect the feelings, self-concept, emotional well-being, and reputation of themselves and others.

Grade 6

- Identify factors that affect the development of a person's self-concept (e.g., environment, evaluations by significant others, stereotypes, awareness of strengths and needs, social competencies, cultural and gender identity, support, body image, mental health and emotional well-being, physical abilities).
- Describe how they can build confidence and lay a foundation for healthy relationships by acquiring a clearer understanding of the physical, social, and emotional changes that occur during adolescence (e.g., physical: voice changes, skin changes, body growth; social: changing social relationships, increasing influence of peers; emotional: increased intensity of feelings, new interest in relationships with boys or girls, confusion and questions about changes).
- Assess the effects of stereotypes, including homophobia and assumptions regarding gender roles and expectations, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or culture, mental health, and abilities, on an individual's self-concept, social inclusion, and relationships with others, and propose appropriate ways of responding to and changing assumptions and stereotypes.

Grade 7 and 8

"The human development and sexual health expectations recognize that students at this age are developing their sense of personal identity, which includes their sexual identity. Students may already be involved in or contemplating sexual activity or dealing with relationship issues that affect their self-concept and sense of well-being. Consequently, there is an emphasis on developing the skills needed for maintaining healthy relationships and acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions about their sexual health. Key topics include delaying sexual activity, preventing pregnancy and disease, understanding how gender identity and sexual orientation affect overall identity and self-concept, and making decisions about sexual health and intimacy."

Grade 7

- Explain the importance of having a common understanding with a partner about delaying sexual activity until one is older (e.g., choosing to abstain from any genital contact; choosing to abstain from having vaginal or anal intercourse; choosing to abstain from having oral-genital contact), the reasons for not engaging in sexual activity, and the need to communicate clearly with each other when making decisions about sexual activity in the relationship. Identify common sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and describe their symptoms. Identify ways of preventing STIs, including HIV, and/or unintended pregnancy, such as delaying first intercourse and other sexual activities until a person is older and using condoms consistently if and when a person becomes sexually active. Assess the impact of different types of bullying or harassment (e.g., intimidation, ostracism, pressure to conform, gang activities) on themselves and others, and identify ways of preventing or resolving such incidents (e.g., communicating feelings; reporting incidents involving themselves or others; encouraging others to understand the social responsibility to report incidents and support others rather than maintaining a code of silence or viewing reporting as "ratting"; seeking help from support services; learning skills for emotional regulation; using strategies for defusing tense or potentially violent situations).
- Demonstrate an understanding of physical, emotional, social, and psychological factors that

need to be considered when making decisions related to sexual health (e.g., sexually transmitted infections [STIs], possible contraceptive side effects, pregnancy, protective value of vaccinations, social labelling, gender identity, sexual orientation, self-concept issues, relationships, desire, pleasure, cultural teachings).

- Explain how relationships with others (e.g., family, peers) and sexual health may be affected by the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty (e.g., effect of physical maturation and emotional changes on family relationships, interest in intimate relationships and effect on peer relationships, risk of STIs and/or pregnancy with sexual contact).

Grade 8

- Identify and explain factors that can affect an individual's decisions about sexual activity e.g., previous thinking about reasons to wait, including making a choice to delay sexual activity and establishing personal limits; perceived personal readiness; peer pressure; desire; curiosity; self-concept; awareness and acceptance of gender identity and sexual orientation; legal concerns; awareness of health risks, including risk of STIs and blood-borne infections; concerns about risk of pregnancy; use of alcohol or drugs; personal or family values; religious beliefs; cultural teachings; access to information; media messages), and identify sources of support regarding sexual health (e.g., a health professional [doctor, nurse, public health practitioner], a community elder, a teacher, a religious leader, a parent or other trusted adult, a reputable website).
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender identity (e.g., male, female, two-spirited, transgendered, transsexual, inter-sex) and sexual orientation (e.g., heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual), and identify factors that can help individuals of all identities and orientations develop a positive self-concept. Develop their understanding about sexual health (e.g., about issues such as abstinence; the choice to delay first intercourse; setting sexual limits; safer sex and pleasure; use of contraception, including condoms, for pregnancy and STI prevention), using knowledge of self and of safe-sex practices and contraception (including condom use), seeking additional information and support as needed, and practising (e.g., through role play) the communication, assertiveness, and refusal skills that may be needed for decision making in real-life contexts.
- Analyse the attractions and benefits associated with being in a relationship (e.g., support, understanding, camaraderie, pleasure), as well as the benefits, risks, and drawbacks that relationships involving different degrees of sexual intimacy can pose for themselves and others e.g., hurt when relationships end or trust is broken; in more sexually intimate relationships, risk of STIs and related risk to future fertility, unintended pregnancy, sexual harassment and exploitation; potential for dating violence.

Note: This is a summary of key points from the sexual health and healthy relationships portion of the Ontario Curriculum: Grades 1-8: Health and Physical Education, as published on the Ministry of Education website in April 2010. For discussion purposes only. All copyright to this material remains with the copyright holder: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

For further analysis of the curriculum changes, please see posts on Ann Douglas' blog at ParentCentral.ca: <http://thestar.blogs.com/anndouglas>