

The State of Sex-Ed in Canada



The State of Sex Ed in Canada – A Webinar

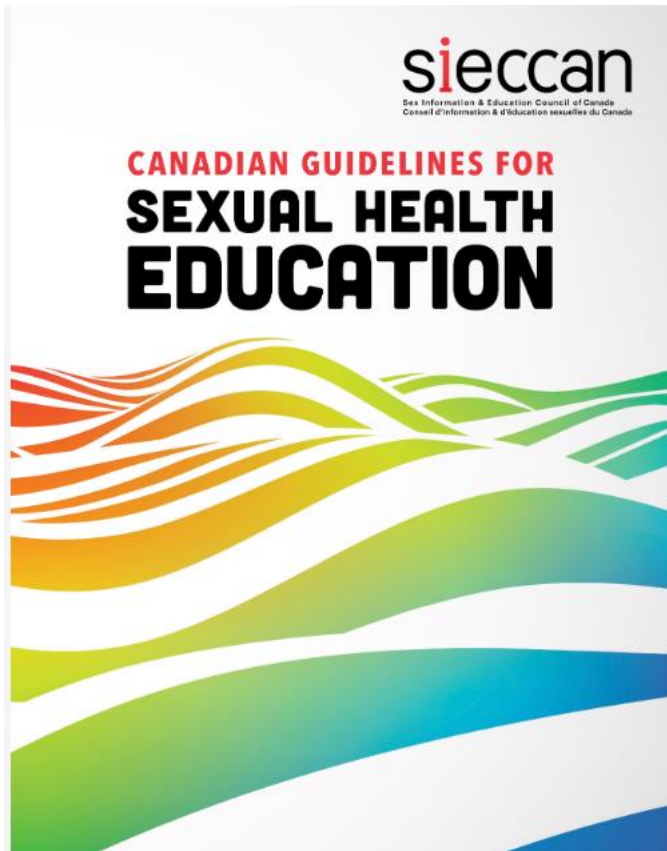
Facilitated by: Frédérique Chabot (she/her) and Makeda Zook (she/her)



abc



The 2019 Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education



- Accessible to all people
- Promotes human rights
- Scientifically accurate and uses evidence-based teaching methods
- Broadly-based in scope and depth
- Inclusive of the identities and lived experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, Two Spirit (LGBTQI2S+), and asexual people
- Promotes gender equality and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence
- Incorporates a balanced approach to sexual health promotion that includes the positive aspects of sexuality and relationships
- Responsive to and incorporates emerging issues related to sexual health and well-being
- Provided by educators who have the knowledge and skills to deliver comprehensive sexual health education and who receive administrative support



How do the 2019 Canadian Guidelines stack up against curricula?

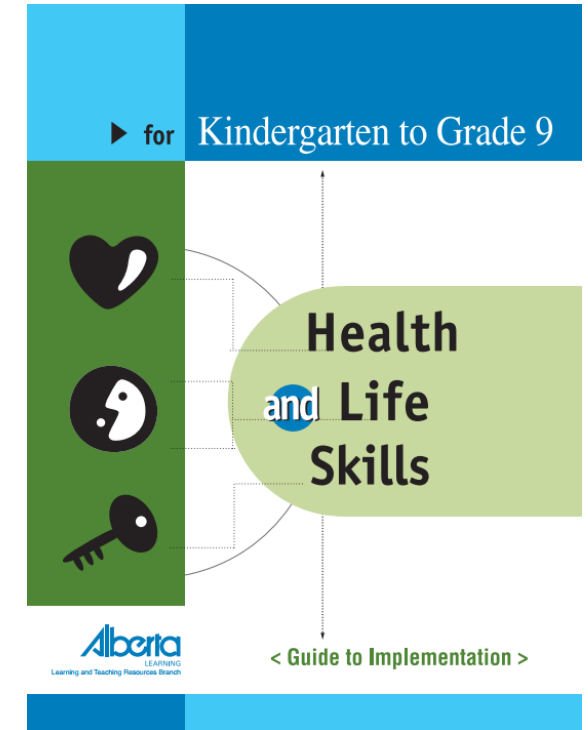
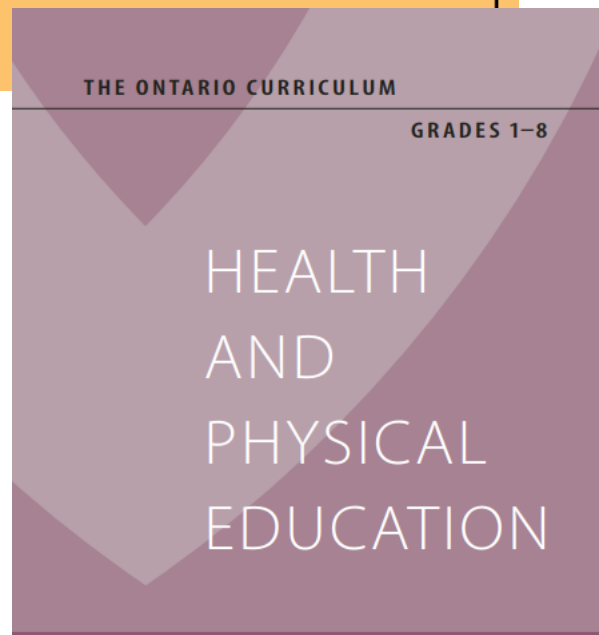
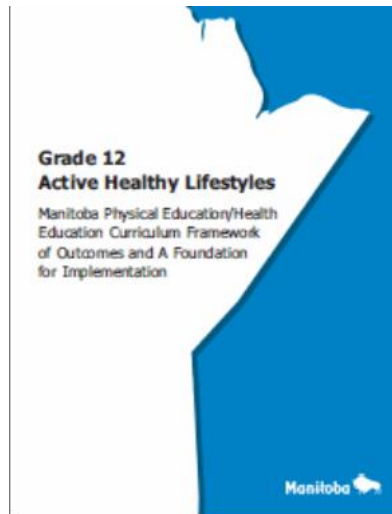


“Over the past couple years, one of my biggest goals has been to create sex-ed lesson plans for teachers that align the Saskatchewan curricular outcomes with international best practice standards, and more specifically the *Canadian Guidelines* for Sexual Health Education. I thought it would be an easy way to facilitate more integration of this critical information in classrooms. What initially seemed like a simple task became increasingly challenging once I realized that the curricula lack important topics such as consent and contraceptives, and do not broach crucial conversations around faith, disability, or substance use. In Saskatchewan, the health curriculum has not been updated since 2009. In the decade since its release, the world young people live in has changed drastically. The increasing popularity of social media and the availability of online pornography has created a challenging landscape for parents, educators, and more importantly, young people themselves to navigate. The current curricula do not have all the pieces of this puzzle, so it is challenging to create cohesive lesson plans that introduce the right information, at the right time.

—Natalya Mason, *sexual health educator,*
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

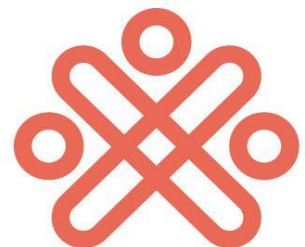


How did we do this?



2019

Ontario 



What we found: Inconsistency is the word

Ontario

INCLUDED CONTENT	YES ✓ OR NO ✗
Consent	✓
Pleasure and other positive aspects of sexuality	✓
Sexual orientation	✓
Gender identity and expression	✓
How to prevent gender-based violence, including slut shaming, sexist harassment, homophobia and transphobia, and sexual violence	✓
Healthy Relationships	✓
Sexuality and relationships in a digital age (including info on social media, prevention of cyberbullying, and safer sexting)	✓
Media literacy (including info on new media and porn in later grades)	✓
Puberty	✓
All pregnancy options (including abortion)	✗
Bodies and sexual function (including names for body parts and reproduction)	✓
Safer sex (including topics like STIs, condoms and other safer sex methods, and contraception options)	✓
Health information that is relevant to people who have a diversity of identities, experiences, and bodies	✓

Prince Edward Island

INCLUDED CONTENT	YES ✓ OR NO ✗
Consent	✓
Pleasure and other positive aspects of sexuality	✗
Sexual orientation	✓
Gender identity and expression	✗
How to prevent gender-based violence, including slut shaming, sexist harassment, homophobia and transphobia, and sexual violence	✓
Healthy Relationships	✓
Sexuality and relationships in a digital age (including info on social media, prevention of cyberbullying, and safer sexting)	✗
Media literacy (including info on new media and porn)	✓
Puberty	✓
All pregnancy options (including abortion)	✓
Bodies and sexual function (including names for body parts and reproduction)	✓
Safer sex (including topics like STIs, condoms and other safer sex methods, and contraception options)	✓
Health information that is relevant to people who have a diversity of identities, experiences, and bodies	✗



What about the quality of content?



Does the sex-ed
young people
receive make a
difference?

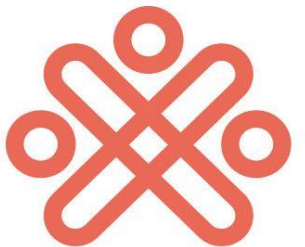


Pleasure is nowhere to be found



They should mention ‘orgasm’ at least once (...) I didn’t even know what one was. No one told me that there was a pleasurable side to this, that you can do this.⁸¹

Youth quoted in ‘Une éducation à la sexualité positive, inclusive et émancipatrice’



Sex is dangerous; abstinence is best remedy

“

It was heavily skewed towards the negative outcomes. In one presentation, I learned that “sex is like fire—it’s dangerous and should be handled with caution at all times.

Youth participant from Kitchener/Waterloo

”

that it
is NOT
Scary!

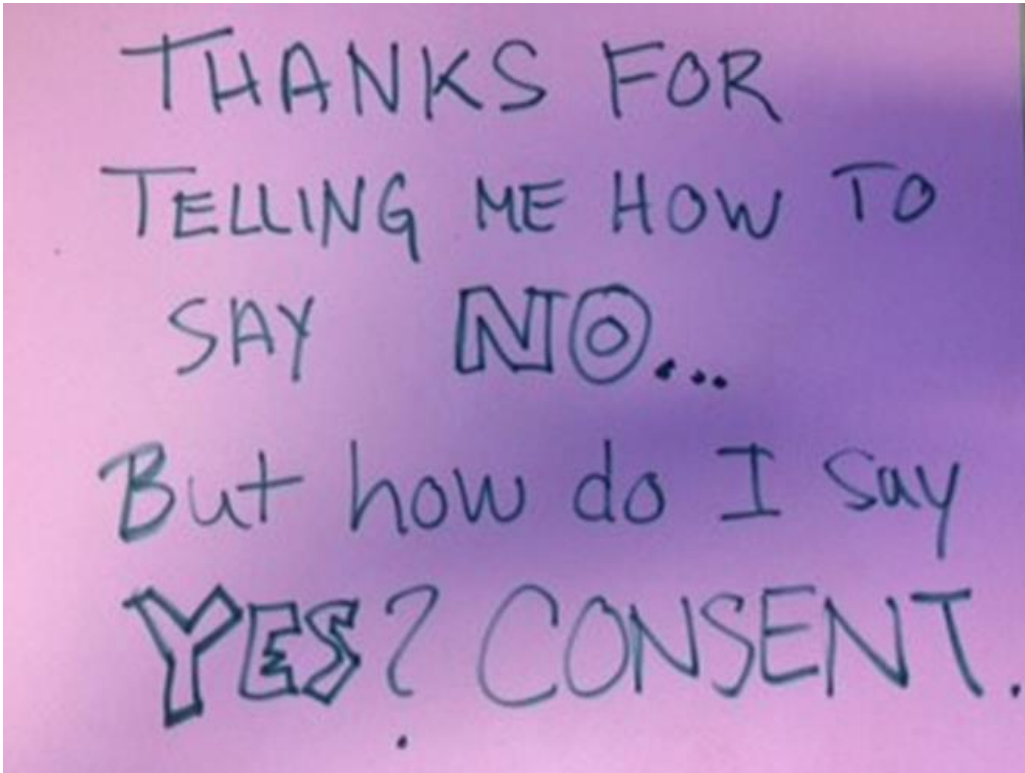
Saskatchewan: abstinence is consistently indicated as “the best and healthiest decision for adolescents.”

Manitoba: “recognize the importance of sexual abstinence as a responsible decision.”

Northwest Territories: “explain why sexual abstinence is a responsible choice for adolescents.”



Avoidance + Refusal = Sexual Assault Prevention



My sex-ed was a failure. I didn't learn about body parts and their proper names. I never learned about bad touches and that people I know can hurt me, too. I never learned about what to do or who to tell if someone abused me. I never learned that I have a right to my own body and a right to say no. I never learned it was ok to have a different sexuality or gender identity. I never learned about how to communicate and respect boundaries. I never learned how to support my friends or family if they experienced sexual or domestic violence. I never learned how to respond to rejection. I never learned that sex shouldn't or doesn't have to hurt. I never heard about reproductive control, like birth control and abortion. I was left to my own devices, many of which were unreliable, biased, and inaccurate, in learning about these topics.

24-year-old from Calgary, Alberta




“Imagined learners” are white, cis, hetero, able-bodied



The *Canadian Guidelines* are clear; sexuality education must be “accessible to all people inclusive of age, race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, STI status, geographic location, socio-economic status, cultural, or religious background, ability, or housing status.” And “[s]exual health education for Indigenous people... must be culturally safe and embody community-specific values related to sexuality and sexual health.”




Inconsistent delivery and lack of resources



“The biggest barrier is time. Even the minimal amount of time given is not followed through with by most teachers because they are under stress and having to cram in so many subjects and learning expectations that most often, unless the teacher is very committed and passionate about sex-ed, it will not be followed through with as much as it needs to be.” (Middle school teacher, Toronto, Ontario)

“It sometimes feels like subjects like math and language always take precedence/priority as an elementary school teacher. The attitude is if you get to sex-ed, then you get to it, but if you don’t, you don’t, kind of thing.” (Elementary school teacher, Halifax, Nova Scotia)

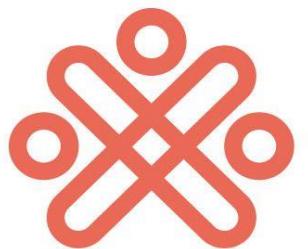


I think my teacher was trying to teach us well but was misguided and uninformed and had no real training or passion for sex-ed.

25 year-old from Toronto, Ontario



Where do we go from here?



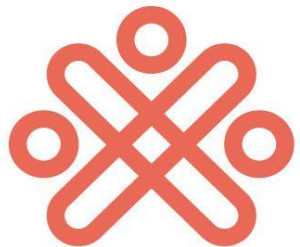
Stay healthy! Thank you + Questions?

Every person should have agency, autonomy, and understanding over their own bodies. It helps them make informed choices and be better citizens overall. They end up treating themselves and others in a more kind, inclusive, and respectful way. This makes relationships in and out of the schools stronger and more resilient. Also, comprehensive sexuality education (or body science) will reduce health care costs when more people have access to it and are better informed. This is a win-win-win situation! (...) It helps build more resourced youth and adults in our communities.

Specialized teacher from rural interior BC



If we didn't get to your question, we'll follow-up by email!



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Or contact Tara Henderson at
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Action Canada
for Sexual Health & Rights



Action Canada
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Testimonials – *Health & Education Sectors*

“*Beyond the Basics* is a wonderful supplement to any curriculum across the country! The layout is clear with good flow, the language used is easy to understand, and each area of this book can be adapted for any grade level. Any teacher who is uncomfortable with the idea of teaching these subjects needs this resource!”

~**Jennifer Henry, Elementary School Teacher, Vancouver BC**

“As a family doctor, I am deeply supportive of *Beyond the Basics* and the many educators who will use this book. As a mother, I am grateful for it. Whatever is being discussed in the school-yards and basements of the nation must be put into context by educators who have the resources and skills to communicate with young people at every age and stage.”

~**Dr. Danielle Martin, MD, Vice President Medical Affairs and Health Systems Solutions Women’s College Hospital**

“*Beyond the Basics* provides educators with a current and accessible blueprint for approaching sexual health topics with young people. It truly goes beyond the ‘birds-and-bees’ approach to tackle topics such as gender identity, consent, and body positivity, giving teachers like me the tools they need to address such topics with sensitivity and safety. It’s a fantastic resource to support the teaching of an important (and so-often ignored) area of the curriculum.”

~**Kim Snider, High School Teacher, Toronto ON**

