

HUMAN SEXUALITY EDUCATION

The human body includes right from the beginning...the capacity of expressing love, that love in which the person becomes a gift – and by means of this gift – fulfills the meaning of his being and existence. John Paul II January 16, 1980

Background:

“Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social and spiritual well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships. Sexual health can also be influenced by mental health, acute and chronic illnesses, and violence” (*Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education, 2003*).

“Sexuality is a gift from God and a fundamental part of what makes us human. Each of us is called to acknowledge this gift and the One who gave it. When we live our sexuality in the proper way, according to our state in life, others will be able to find God through us” (*Pastoral Letter to Young People on Chastity, 2011*).

Effective sexual health education is evidence-based and should be provided in an age-appropriate, culturally sensitive manner that is respectful of individual diversity, abilities and choices. Effective sexual health education also:

- Integrates the positive, life-enhancing and rewarding aspects of human sexuality while also seeking to prevent and reduce negative sexual health outcomes.
- Focuses on the self-worth, respect and inherent dignity of the individual.
- Helps individuals to become more sensitive and aware of the impact their behaviours and actions may have on others and society.
- Incorporates a lifespan approach that provides information, motivational support and skill-building opportunities that are relevant to individuals at different ages, abilities and stages in their lives.
- Is structured so that changes in behaviour and confidence is developed as a result of nonjudgmental and informed decision making.
- Encourages critical thinking and reflection about gender and gender-role stereotyping.
- Encourages a holistic understanding of the human person and sexuality, based in the Catholic understanding of the human person.

Procedures

1. Formal classroom instruction on human sexual health will be presented at appropriate grade levels and integrated into provincial Health Curriculum and the Religious Education Programs.
2. This information is to be presented in a Catholic, ethical context. It is essential that the teacher is steeped both in current sexual health information and the Catholic understanding of the Theology of the Body.
3. Use of community resource personnel is encouraged, provided the presentation is done in a manner respectful of the Catholic moral and ethical position, and in compliance with AP 208
4. The Alberta Catholic bishops provide a list of recommended resources to use in teaching Human Sexuality that meet the program of studies outcomes. These range from approved programs to specific sexuality lessons that a teacher can use to assist them in meeting the outcomes. Unapproved resources should not be used in the classroom to engage these topics.
5. Elk Island Catholic Schools recognizes that parents are the “first teacher” of their children. Parents must be in a position to make informed decisions regarding their choice to have their children participate within Human Sexuality Education. All students are expected to receive the Human Sexuality instruction in grades four to nine. At least two weeks prior to instruction, parents are to be provided with letters describing the learning outcomes for the Human Sexuality component at their child’s grade level. Included in this letter is a form providing parents with the opportunity to exempt their child from this instruction. Schools will provide alternate learning experiences at no academic penalty for the students who have been exempted, by their parents, from Human Sexuality instruction at school.

References:

The Canadian Catholic Bishops: *Pastoral Letter to Young People on Chastity* (2011)
The Alberta Bishops: *A Resource for an Inclusive Community* (2001)
Alberta Education: *Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12* Public Health Agency of Canada:
Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education (2003)