



Opt Options for
Sexual Health

Are You Getting Enough?

**Youth Advocacy Toolkit to Help You
Improve School Sexual Health
Education (SSHE)**

August 2005



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Advocating for School Sexual Health Education	3
The Joys of Advocacy.....	4
A 5 Step Guide to Advocacy Success.....	5
Tools	11
Deep breath: Dealing with the Opposition.....	12
Assessing the Quality of School Sexual Health Education in Your School.....	13
Building an Alliance.....	17
Working with Parents.....	19
Working with Teachers and Other Sexual Health Educators.....	20
Mapping your Moves.....	21
Questions for School Board Candidates.....	23
Working with the Media.....	24
Working with the School Board.....	26
Sample Letters for the School Principal, School Board Chair and Ministry of Education..	28
Directory	33
The Who's Who in Sexual Health Education in BC.....	34
Resources	39
Related Resources.....	40
Tell me Straight-up: Helpful Definitions.....	46
A Brief History of School Sexual Health Education.....	49
Back that thang up! Support for School Sexual Health Education.....	51
Teaching Sexual Health in BC Schools.....	53
Making a Statement: Consensus Statements on School Sexual Health Education.....	58
References.....	60



Introduction

Welcome to the Youth Advocacy Toolkit, *Are You Getting Enough*, for youth who want to use their voice and wisdom for the purpose of improving school sexual health education (SSHE) for themselves and others.

Please note that throughout this toolkit we use the abbreviation SSHE, which stands for 'school sexual health education'.

What is this toolkit about?

Youth have a right to comprehensive (a fancy word for broad) and accurate sexual health education (SSHE) in BC. And, youth are the experts of their lives! Therefore, your voice is crucial for advocating for the improvement of SSHE. Yes, it is helpful to have adults advocate for youth. However, youth-driven advocacy is such a unique, invaluable and empowering act! Not only are youth being acknowledged, but as a youth yourself, you are providing the gift of authentic power and meaning to your advocacy work. In other words, you are truly keeping it real! Understand that your capability for advocacy is already present and strong, because you are an expert. This toolkit provides you with the necessary tools to mobilize that source of power.

In using this toolkit, you are calling for school boards and the Ministry of Education to make sure that you are getting comprehensive and accurate sexual health information.

A similar toolkit, named *Your Power as a Parent*, has been developed for parents who want to improve the sexual health education their children receive in their schools. Both toolkits are part of a larger campaign being undertaken to make SSHE better in BC.

How was this toolkit developed?

To develop this toolkit, YouthCO AIDS Society ("YouthCO") held a youth focus group to chat about what youth want and need to assist them in their advocacy efforts. In addition to having discussions with advocate allies and research on other relevant youth advocacy toolkits, the input from the focus groups was used to create a draft version of the toolkit. Youth then had the opportunity to review the proposed toolkit and make suggestions and comments for the final draft.



How do I use this toolkit?

This toolkit has been designed to give you an easy-to-follow set of tools for advocating for SSHE. You do not have to use all of the tools that are in this toolkit. Use the strategies that you feel are the most appropriate.

How do I share this information?

An important part of advocacy is building alliances. Share this information with other youth and invite them to get involved. Get together and use your collective strengths and expertise to advocate for improved SSHE! To learn more about alliance building check out *Building an Alliance* in the *Tools* section of this toolkit.

Who is YouthCO?

YouthCO AIDS Society provides youth-driven awareness initiatives and support services around HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C in order to create opportunities for youth to make well-informed, wise decisions around their sexual health and substance use. We work with youth between the ages of 15 - 29 throughout BC to promote harm reduction and population health in the areas of outreach, prevention/education, volunteer opportunities, advocacy and support to our peers.

Who is OPT?

Options for Sexual Health (OPT) is a society that celebrates healthy sexuality, its diversity of expression, and a positive sexual self-image for individuals throughout life. OPT works to reduce unplanned pregnancy and promote optimal reproductive health by providing quality education, information and clinical services to all British Columbians.



Youth Advocacy Toolkit

Advocating for School Sexual Health Education



The Joys of Advocacy

What is advocacy?

Simply put, advocacy is *actively* supporting a cause and trying to get other people to support it as well. Advocacy takes many forms and can be a small, short-term project or a major campaign. Advocacy isn't something that is only done by professionals or politicians. Anyone can be an advocate – but you need to know your stuff. So the first step in your advocacy mission is to access and nourish your expertise.

Why advocate?

By advocating, you are taking an active part in improving the sexual health education students receive in school. Advocacy takes time, passion and commitment. It can also be very rewarding! Not only are you influencing change, but the very process of being involved can lead to greater understanding, new learning, a stronger community and satisfaction in knowing you are making a difference in the lives of children and youth in BC.



A 5 Step Guide to Advocacy Success

Step 1: Know Your Stuff

- Do some research to find information about the history and background of SSHE, who has power over influencing and delivering it, and what SSHE programs/policies are currently in place.
- To prepare you for the possibility of opposition, find out more about those who oppose SSHE and what their arguments are. For more information see *Deep Breath: Dealing with the Opposition* in the *Tools* section of this toolkit.

Tips

- People hold a lot of different values and beliefs about sexuality, as it is a personal part of all of us. The point of this toolkit isn't to judge those beliefs, but rather to ensure that youth have access to education that will help you make informed decisions about your lives.
- Read the *Tools*, *Directory*, and *Backgrounders* sections of this toolkit to help you get started – we've done some of your homework already!
- Check out the *Resources* section at the end of this toolkit for other relevant websites.
- Check out the sexual health resources at your school library and local public library.
- To answer any questions you may have about sexual health, call the Facts of Life Line at 1-800-739-7367



Step 2: Assess the Current Situation in Your Community

In your school, find out who teaches SSHE and when it's being taught during the school

Tip

In some school districts, only teachers provide SSHE. In others, it's the school counsellors or independent educators.

year.

- Use the *Directory* in this toolkit to find out who has decision-making and influential power over the development and delivery of SSHE in your community.
- What do other people think? For example, what is the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) doing about SSHE? Who else in the community is actively doing something about SSHE?
- What do other youth think? Hold a youth discussion group and get talking! This is a great way to collect thoughts, opinions, and expertise from youth regarding sexual health education in their schools.

Tip

See *Assessing the Quality of School Sexual Health Education in Your School* in the Tools section for a helpful checklist of questions to ask your group

Check out what others have done:

- The South-East Kootenay School District organized a half-day community workshop to explore what's working and not working in SSHE, how to fix it and who should be responsible for taking action. Follow-up workshops are planned.
- In Squamish, parents, teachers and students worked on organizing both joint and separate education sessions so everyone could understand what SSHE was taking place in the classroom.
- The Kelowna School District recently involved several community organizations in their review and update of the SSHE curriculum.



Step 3: Build an Alliance

- Create a list of potential partners.
- When you approach people, clearly explain your purpose and why you think their input would be valuable.
- Express the importance of the issue, your commitment to it and your vision for how it can be different – people like to know that change is possible and enthusiasm is contagious.
- Ask potential partners what they can specifically do to actively support your cause, such as signing a petition, participating in a discussion group, presenting for the school board etc.
- Share with each other what you've all learned from your research and your experiences.

Tips

-
- Use *Building an Alliance* in the *Tools* section for ideas on who to approach for your alliance.
- The *Directory* section lists organizations and people who are the decision-makers of SSHE. As your alliance builds, you may want to approach these people to be a part of it.
- Be open to new ideas and generous suggestions from others. Working in a team is hard but rewarding.
- Check out *Working with Parents* as well as *Working with Teachers and Other Sexual Health Educators* in the *Tools* section for tips on teaming up with these groups.



Step 4: Get Organized

- It's time for you and your alliance to get things organized!
- Determine a vision and key messages for your alliance. See *Mapping your Moves* in the *Tools* section for planning tips.
- Make a plan for your advocacy efforts. What needs to be done? Who is going to do it? What's the timeline? See *Mapping your Moves* in the *Tools* section for planning tips.
- Here's a list of just some of the strategies to consider. For further help, see the relevant tools in the *Tools* section.
 - At election time, ask school board trustee candidates what their plans of action are for SSHE (see *Questions for Political Candidates*).
 - Engage the media (see *Working with the Media*).
 - Get on the agenda and make a presentation to your local school board (see *Working with the School Board*).
 - Write letters to your school principal, the chair of your local school board and/or the Minister of Education (see *Sample Letters for the School Principal, School Board Chair and Minister of Education*).
- Make sure your goals are realistic and easy to achieve.

Tips

- At this point you may be really excited to get started and may be tempted to skip this step and just get on with it. Way to go! But, remember that things will work better if you take the time now to map out your plan. If you don't, it may come back and bite you later.
- If you start your efforts at the time of the year when SSHE is being taught in your school, people will be more interested in being involved.



Step 5: Let Youth Voice Be Heard!

- You know your background, you know what's happening at your school, you have a plan – it's time to send a message to the decision-makers in your community.
- Put your plan into action – now's the time to use your voice and expertise!
- Learn from your mistakes and celebrate your successes; be sure to promote the good work of your alliance.





Opt Options for
Sexual Health

Youth Advocacy Toolkit

Tools



Tool for Advocacy Step 1

Deep breath: Dealing with the Opposition

Opposition is to be expected and it can actually be a helpful experience. Opposition catches people's attention and addressing your opponents' arguments can actually strengthen your own.

Here are some tips for how to approach the controversy and make it work to your advantage:

- Find out in advance who opposes comprehensive SSHE and what their arguments are.
- Include those arguments in your presentation, letter, etc. and counter them using what you and your alliance members have learned through your research about and experience with SSHE.
- Choose your battles: don't argue for the sake of arguing – argue to make a point.
- Don't burn any bridges – be cooperative and know to what extent you're willing to compromise. You may need the cooperation of your opponents later.
- Be assertive, not aggressive in your verbal and written communication
 - When speaking, remember to breathe, speak calmly, without raising your voice and try not to interrupt others
 - When writing or speaking, avoid sarcasm, offensive and accusatory language
- Much of the concern some people have about SSHE comes from a lack of knowledge about sexual health in general, including their own. Have information and resources available for people to take away with them and check out privately if they want to (see the *Resources* section of this toolkit).
- Keep in mind that your opposition may come from a set of values just as valid as your own.
- It may be a lack of interest, rather than opposition, that you encounter in your efforts; here's how to generate enthusiasm about SSHE:
 - Make a connection between SSHE and how it will influence all individuals in the community; for example, how personal sexual health and behaviour are related to health and social services, economic and education potential, and community attitudes.
 - Don't simply point out what is wrong – it is important to include an alternative vision of what's possible, of what could be. Everyone wants to be a part of something bigger and better and to believe that change is possible.



Tool for Advocacy Step 2

Assessing the Quality of School Sexual Health Education in Your School

Here is a checklist to help you gather some information on how the sexual health education you're getting (or not getting!) at school measures up.

PART I: How School Sexual Health is Viewed in Your Community

1. Does the school or School Board have a "Healthy Schools" policy or program that promotes health education, helps students build healthy relationships with others, and makes them feel safe and respected? Is sexual health education included?

Tips

- To get a better idea of the "healthy school" concept, you may want to look at a report by the Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, called "An Ounce of Prevention", that describes the philosophy of the healthy school. You can read his report at www.healthplanning.gov.bc.ca/pho/.
- Another source of information about youth health and behaviour, including sexual health, is the McCreary Centre Society website, www.mcs.bc.ca

2. Does your school offer a safe, supportive and confidential environment in which students can get sexual health information, seek answers to their questions, or disclose experience with sexual violence?
3. Does your school make it easy to get accurate and comprehensive sexual health information as part of your right to health education?



Tips

To explore question #3 you might want to ask:

- Does the School Board give students a voice in determining what will be covered in sexual health education classes?
- Can students access reliable websites that provide sexual health information on school computers?

What resources are available in the library?
Have any been banned from the school?

4. What is your school's policy with regard to diversity of sexual expression? Does your school allow for such student groups as Gay-Straight Alliances? Does your school have an active program to prevent and deal with discrimination that includes gender and sexual orientation?

Tips

To learn more about school-based programs addressing diversity of sexual expression, you may want to contact YouthQuest! at www.youthquest.bc.ca

PART 2: Matching Sexual Health Courses to Your Needs

1. Does the School Board consult students every so often about your needs, that the sexual health education program should meet?
2. Are youth fully included in the group that prepares and reviews course material for your school?
3. Do students receive some sexual health education every year?
4. In your opinion, is the timing of what sexual health information students get each year the most appropriate to meet their needs? What would work better?
5. Does the sexual health course material at your school cover all options available to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection in a way that balances risks and benefits?
6. Is sexual health linked to any other subjects at your school?
7. Does the course material encourage students to examine their values, interact with others and make informed choices for themselves in non-judgmental terms?
8. Are male and female students taught sexual health together, or are they separated?
9. How do you think schools could measure how well sexual health is being taught?



PART 3: Resources and Community Links for Quality Sexual Health Education

1. What is in place that links your school and other youth services in the community to support you and your peers? How could these links be better?
2. Does your school provide easy access to information about community resources available to meet students' sexual health needs (for example, sexual health clinics, social service agencies, youth clinics)? Is there a bulletin board for this information? If you have a school paper, is this information in the paper?
3. Is there any place in your school where students can get condoms? If so, are they free? If not, are they affordable?
4. Here are some of the qualities a good sexual health teacher should have according to the Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education:
 - Really knows the subject of human sexuality
 - Really knows about sexual health issues relevant to youth
 - Is sensitive and positive about sexual feelings as a natural part of life
 - Recognizes the outcome that religious, cultural and other personal experience may have on a student's values and beliefs about sexuality
 - Can handle conflicts in class that come from differing values and beliefs surrounding sexual health and sexuality
 - Understands the issues related to sexual orientation and can deal with them well in the classroom
 - Understands and can explain how the media influence our views of sexual health
5. When you think about the teachers you've had for sexual health and the qualities listed above, what is your opinion about how well trained they were to teach the subject? What ideas do you have about how they could be helped to do better?
6. A number of community organizations offer sexual health education. What is the policy of your school or School Board about bringing in outside experts to teach sexual health? How does your school decide who is qualified to come into the school to teach sexual health to students?
7. Does your school or School Board have a program in place for training youth as peer educators, with careful training and supervision, and clear definitions of roles and responsibilities? If so, how well does it work? How could it be better?



DEBRIEF

Ask your group members how they feel about what they have learned. Make sure to invite them to be involved in a campaign to change the SSHE curriculum by visiting www.dontjustdoit.com



Tool for Advocacy Step 3

Building an Alliance

Why an alliance?

- There is power in numbers.
- An alliance increases the amount you can accomplish.
- It allows for the sharing of tasks.
- It demonstrates community support for an issue beyond an individual or small group.
- It allows each member to contribute her/his own expertise.
- It encourages each member to spread the message to others to get even more support.
- It builds enthusiasm and the energy needed to get things moving.

Whom to approach

When building an alliance around SSHE, there are many sources of supporters who may be interested in joining. They include:

- Youth
- Parents
- Groups of organized parents, such as the Parent Advisory Council at your school and/or the District Parent Advisory Council
- School teachers and staff, including nurses and school counsellors
- Youth-serving organizations
- HIV/AIDS prevention and service organizations
- Independent sexual health educators
- Family planning providers/pregnancy prevention organizations
- Public and community health professionals and officials, such as doctors, nurses, particularly from youth clinics, sexual/reproductive health specific clinics and community health centers
- Representatives of the regional health authority
- Civil rights groups
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) organizations



- Anti-violence organizations
- Women's groups
- Anti-racist groups
- Teachers' unions – in BC, this is the BC Teachers' Federation
- Elected officials (federal, provincial and/or municipal)
- Religious leaders and organizations

Tips

Start with the groups most connected and involved with the school/local community and then branch out into the other community organizations and political groups/individuals.



Tool for Advocacy Step 3

Working with Parents

Parents can be powerful sources of support. Check out *Back that Thang up! Support for Sexual Health Education* in the *Backgrounders* section of this toolkit and you will read about research that shows a strong sense of support from parents for a youth voice in improving sexual health education in schools. Here are some tools to help you take the opportunity to mobilize that support:

- Ask your parents what they think about the SSHE and what changes they would like to make.
- Share with your parents your thoughts about SSHE that you receive and what changes you may want to see.
- Include parents and members of your school's Parental Advisory Committee in your alliance.
- Ask parents to help organize your discussion group. For example, ask parents to book a space, make the schedule, and order the refreshments.
- Parents can help spread your message to other parents, including your school's PAC.
- Invite parents to help you present for influential groups (e.g. your school board, PAC).
- There is a similar advocacy toolkit on SSHE for parents (available at www.opt2act.org); print it out and pass it along.
- You may have the "what-if-my-parents-won't-be-supportive" fear. That might happen. This is when you really need to know where you stand. Although research does show strong public support for school-based sexual health education, not all parents will feel the same way.

Tips

- Respecting diversity is an important advocacy tool. Be sensitive and aware that not *all* parents have the exact same values and beliefs related to SSHE. Parents may want to be an important source of knowledge and values for their kids, but they don't always have the confidence or know-how to deal with sexual health.
- Check out *Deep Breath: Dealing with the Opposition* in the *Tools* section to learn helpful ways of communicating your message. If you don't feel comfortable approaching your parents or if you don't receive the response you were hoping for, find another adult with whom you think it might be easier to talk to about advocacy. For example, approach one of your friend's parents, another adult family member, or an adult family friend.



Tools for Advocacy Step 3

Working with Teachers and Other Sexual Health Educators

Developing relationships with the people who actually teach sexual health at school will increase your knowledge and strengthen your advocacy mission. Here are some helpful tools:

- Different people teach sexual health in different school districts. It can be teachers, school counsellors or independent educators outside of the school.
- Ask teachers/counsellors who teach sexual health at your school about the challenges they face in teaching the subject.
- Invite sexual health educators inside and outside of your school to join your alliance.
- Ask teachers how you as a youth expert can support their sexual health education work and how to demonstrate that support.
- Teachers are great resources – they can help spread your message and provide you with helpful information about SSHE and the inside scoop about how things work at your school and school board.
- Invite teachers and other sexual health educators to start a youth SSHE advocacy club at the school.
- Ask a teacher or two to educate other teachers at your school about this toolkit as part of a professional development project (you know, one of those Pro-D days that you get time off school for).

Tips

- A good starting place is focusing on educators who teach sexual health at your school, such as Planning 10 teachers, guidance counsellors, and school nurses.
- Think of teachers from other courses with whom you have a connection, or from whom you sense an open vibe.
Also, approach teachers who are involved with school associations and councils such as the Gay/Straight Alliance and Student Council.



Tools for Advocacy Step 4

Mapping your Moves

At this stage, you may be excited to get going...but before you get ahead of yourself, it's a good idea to make a plan of action to ensure your alliance members are on the same page.

- Decide with your alliance what your overall vision is. It doesn't have to be big and fancy; it may be as simple a statement as improving the sexual health education in your school.
- Brainstorm things that would need to change to make the vision a reality. Decide as a group which of those things you can influence the most. These will become the goals of your advocacy campaign.
- Develop 3 - 4 key messages that reflect the overall vision and goals of your advocacy effort and that your alliance members agree to; these messages will be used and repeated in all the strategies you choose. See the box on the next page for tips on developing your messages.

Developing your messages

- Messages should be short sentences (no more than 12 words each) of simple language that are easy to remember.
 - Messages should include personal stories and anecdotes – compelling messages have a personal element.
 - Where possible, refute arguments against SSHE in your messages.
 - Messages should be repeated and often!
 - Developing messages is hard but important work. Be patient and prepared to put in the time.
-
- Choose the strategies you think will be the most helpful.
 - Make a plan of every task related with reaching your goals (see all of the helpful tools in this *Tools* section).
 - Decide how you want to communicate your message and to whom: is it the public, is it the local school board, is it your MLA, etc. Using the *Directory* in this toolkit, include in your plan a list of whom to contact and when to do so.



- Give some thought to the time it will take to do each task and the skills and ability that will be needed. Then share with each other what talents each of you bring to the alliance.
- You may want to have specific roles for certain people (e.g. media spokesperson, chair, presenter, etc.).
- Remember to have a way of checking in to ensure people have done what they've signed on for and if not, how to reorganize the work (e.g. action items from minutes, etc.).
- Create a list of members and write down your vision, key messages and goals to have as background information about your alliance.
- It's just a plan – try to stick to it but if something isn't working, don't be afraid as a group to try something else.

Tips

- Be specific when listing tasks – sometimes it's the small things that take the most time!
- See if there are any events coming up that will make your efforts more timely (e.g. World AIDS Day, a school board trustees election, etc.).
- Not everyone in the community will agree with your message for improving SSHE; take some time to figure out how to communicate your message in a calm and reasonable way that takes opposing views into account. See *Deep Breath: Dealing with the Opposition* in the *Tools* section of this toolkit for tips on how deal with resistance.
- Remember that you're not forcing anyone to learn more about sexual health. Your goal is to create better options for your peers.
- There are many other advocacy strategies from putting up posters and setting up an information display to organizing rallies and creating a petition. For tools on how to do this, see the toolkits cited in the *Resources* section.
- If you decide to put posters and notices up in your school, you have to get approval from the office.
To get involved in a youth-driven, province-wide campaign that is currently underway to change the SSHE curriculum, visit www.dontjustdoit.com.



Tools for Advocacy Step 4

Questions for School Board Candidates

Election time for school board trustees can be a great opportunity for advocacy! This checklist of questions was created to support you in asking school board trustee candidates what their plans of action are for SSHE.

These questions do not imply or promote endorsement of any position or particular candidate. They are intended to give you some idea of where all candidates stand on the issue of SSHE.

- As a youth, school sexual health education is important to me. Where do you stand with this and how will you use your position to influence the sexual health education children and youth receive in BC?
- I am a youth. What will you do to ensure that my voice is heard and considered when planning changes to sexual health curriculum?
- If elected, what will you do to ensure youth receive accurate and comprehensive school sexual health education?
- What is your plan for funding sexual health education in our schools?



Steps for Advocacy Step 4

Working with the Media

Getting media exposure can do much to educate the public about the issue, to raise awareness about your efforts to improve SSHE in your community and most importantly, to motivate members of the public to support your mission.

Tips

- Do not use the media if your alliance is in disagreement or at a time when bigger political issues are getting most of the media coverage.
- Do not involve the media *before* you have developed your key messages. Conflicting or unclear messages can do much damage to a campaign.

Choose someone from your alliance to be the media spokesperson. The spokesperson should be someone who will communicate the group's message, not his or her own, to the media. Also, try and choose someone who is comfortable on camera/radio and who may have experience working with the media.

Once you have developed your messages (see box in *Mapping your Moves* in the *Tools* section), here are some of the ways to engage the media in your campaign.

8. Prepare and distribute a press release about your activities.

- Journalists get tons of press releases, so make yours catchy and about something significant enough to get attention (an event, a major achievement or groundbreaking decision).
- A press release should help journalists to produce a story, so include: an outline of your action/response to an action, background information on the issue/event and your alliance, an invitation to media you are holding an event, and contact information.
- Be clear, concise and try to keep it to one page.

Tips

Try to avoid jargon and explain technical terms and abbreviations if necessary



9. Being interviewed for television, radio, and print media.

- This opportunity may arise in response to your press release, or you may use public call-in or talk shows to get your voice heard.
- Develop good relationships with journalists and give them background information in advance if possible.
- Prepare up to three messages and make sure to repeat them!
- Speak in short but complete sentences. Try and stick to a limit of 10 to 15 seconds for answering questions.
- Think of challenging questions prior to your interview and practice your answers.
- If you don't have the answer to a question, say so and let your interviewer know that you will try to find the answer and provide it prior to their deadline.

Tips

Avoid being defensive; just state your position clearly

10. If you see an article recently published in the newspaper related to SSHE, write a letter to the editor in response to it.

- Write a short letter in response to the article (maximum 250 words).
- Include the title or subject of the article and date it appeared.
- Include your contact information in your letter for verification.

Tips

Be timely. Respond as quickly as possible, even the same day as the piece appeared



Tool for Advocacy Step 4

Working with the School Board

Why approach the School Board?

- The School Board determines how curriculum will be delivered in a school district, including SSHE.
- The School Board has a responsibility to the community.

Getting the School Board's attention may be tough. They're dealing with many issues and have a complex agenda to manage, so be patient. Here are some steps to help you along:

- Log on to the School Board's website and find out how it works (e.g. who is on the board, when they meet, etc.)
- School Board meetings are open to the public – attend one first to get a feel for what they are like
- Contact the secretary of your local school board to find out which committee or person to contact to get your alliance on the agenda of an upcoming School Board meeting.
- Send information packages about your alliance and its goals to School Board members.
- Before making any assumption, ask a school board trustee how the School Board has supported SSHE in the past.

Tips

If you give school board trustees the heads up, they may be more willing to work with you

If you and your alliance members get an opportunity to present to the School Board, here are some tips for rocking it:

- Before going to the School Board, practice your presentation in front of friends or family. This may help you feel more prepared and warmed up.
- Once you are at the School Board meeting, try to stick to the time you are given for your presentation.
- Start with a personal story that will capture people's attention.
- Introduce your topic and provide a summary of your presentation at the end.



- State your key messages and repeat them throughout your presentation.
- Include counter-arguments to SSHE and challenge them.
- Speak clearly, make eye contact with your audience and try not to read from your notes.
- Put a human face to the issue – let the board know how SSHE affects the entire community. For example, on average, there are 12 pregnancies a day in BC in the 15 to 19 age group, etc.
- Provide an alternative – let people know there is something they can do to make a difference.
- Show your enthusiasm for the issue.
- Thank people for listening.

Tips

- Suggest to the school board that it may be easier for them to address the concerns about SSHE in a community gathering or other public event rather than one-on-one.

Make sure to get a copy of the minutes from the School Board meeting so that you have written record of the discussion and any decisions coming out of it. Minutes are often posted on the School Board's website.



Tool for Advocacy Step 4

Sample Letters for the School Principal, School Board Chair and Ministry of Education

The letters in this section are just samples. Your words are, of course, the best ones to use to put your thoughts forward.

Letter A is to the BC Minister of Education. This letter asks the Minister to get more accountability (meaning to be responsible for one's actions) from School Boards in regards to the quality of sexual health education youth receive. The letter offers several suggested actions for you to consider including.

Letter B is to the Chair of your School Board. It has several choices to select from in terms of what you might ask for.

Letter C is to the Principal of your school. It offers some choices for what you might ask the Principal to address.



LETTER A

The Honourable Shirley Bond
Minister of Education
Province of British Columbia
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC
V8W 9E2

Dear Minister:

I am writing to share with you my thoughts and ideas about how school sexual health education can be improved. Did you know that in BC there is a daily average of 12 pregnancies among young women 15 to 19? I also recently learned that sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates are really high among youth. I believe that what students learn in school about sexual health can have a huge impact on their lives and can really help me in my own life too. As a youth myself, I want to make sure that I do my part in helping students receive good sexual health education.

I am aware that your Ministry has recognized the importance of sexual health by making sexual health education mandatory for all students. I think that is really great. I think the next step is to make sure that this education is of high quality. That is why I am asking you to add more requirements in the accountability contracts school boards must sign, to evaluate the usefulness of sexual health education they deliver.

I have a few suggestions for how this could be included in the contract:

- In the part of the contract where the school board describes the district it manages, rates of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections among youth should be discussed.
- The resources given to schools and school planning councils for sexual health education should be reported.
- One goal in all the contracts could be related to sexual health education. The goal could cover things like looking for the best techniques used in other school districts, involving student's thoughts about what they need to learn, setting up peer educator programs, and even providing education for parents to help them do their part better.
- School boards could be asked to report on how they have connected schools and other community services to support sexual health for students.

I believe that over a longer time period, successful sexual health education should change pregnancy and STI rates for the better.

As a past member and Chair of the Prince George School Board, you have had experience with how School Boards go about making changes and meeting new challenges. Please consider using your experience, and your new role, to help make the important changes I am suggesting.

Thank you for your considering this letter.

Sincerely,



LETTER B

The Chair of the Board
School District #

Dear

I am writing to share with you my thoughts and ideas about how school sexual health education can be improved. Did you know that in BC there is a daily average of 12 pregnancies among young women 15 to 19? I also recently learned that sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates are really high among youth. I believe that what students learn in school about sexual health can have a huge impact on their lives and can really help me in my own life too. As a youth myself, I want to make sure that I do my part in helping students receive good sexual health education.

Our School Board has a big influence over the quality of sexual health education students receive. For that reason I am asking the School Board to consider taking the following steps:

- Talk with students to make sure that schools are teaching us what we need to know when we need to know it.
- Meet with school planning councils and parent advisory council, to ensure that enough resources are given to sexual health education.
- Find and share with other School Boards the best techniques used elsewhere for teaching sexual health.
- Talk with our teachers to ensure that those teaching sexual health feel they are prepared to deliver the best possible educational experience for youth.
- Bring youth peer sexual health educator programs where they do not exist.
- Support parent education programs to help them do their part of the job better.
- Promote connections between our schools and other community services to support confidential and non-judgmental access to sexual health services for students.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,



LETTER C

The Principal
[School]

Dear,

I am writing to share with you my thoughts and ideas about how school sexual health education can be improved. Did you know that in BC there is a daily average of 12 pregnancies among young women 15 to 19? I also recently learned that sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates are really high among youth. I believe that what students learn in school about sexual health can have a huge impact on their lives and can really help me in my own life too. As a youth myself, I want to make sure that I do my part in helping students receive good sexual health education.

As the Principal of your school, you play an important role in influencing the quality of sexual health education students receive. For that reason I am asking you to consider taking the following steps:

- Make sure that students get to review our sexual health education needs on a regular basis, so they can be addressed well. Also similar consultation with parents should take place to communicate those decisions.
- Support for teachers teaching sexual health, to ensure they feel comfortable and well trained.
- Talk with other Principals to find and share the best techniques used elsewhere for teaching sexual health.
- Introduce a youth peer sexual health educator program.
- Promote connections between our schools and other community services to support confidential and non-judgmental access to sexual health services for students.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,





Youth Advocacy Toolkit

Directory



The Who's Who in Sexual Health Education in BC

The power over education in Canada lies with the provinces. The School Act is the piece of provincial legislation in BC that gives the Government, through the Ministry of Education, the right to set required curriculum, educational standards, and policies to guide school boards for K-12 education. There are many players involved in the delivery of SSHE. Check out the most critical ones listed below.

Ministry of Education

Related Responsibilities

- Determines education policies
- Gives out overall funds for the education system
- Develops mandatory curriculum, including SSHE content, through IRPs (Integrated Resource Packages)
- Establishes yearly accountability contracts with each school district that are the school boards' commitment to improving student achievement
- conducts District Review of various school districts each year

The BC Ministries of Health and Education have set up a shared position called the Director of Health-Promoting Schools, to encourage coordination of health and education programs for students. To contact the Director, email EDUC.Initiatives@gov.bc.ca.

Information about the current Minister of Education can be found on the Ministry's website: www.bced.gov.bc.ca

Information about the current official Opposition critic for education can be found at: <http://nid-15496.newsdetail.bc.ndp.ca/>

To find out who your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) is, visit: <http://www.legis.gov.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm>



School Board

There are currently 61 school districts in the province of BC. Each district has a board of locally elected trustees that serve as the School Board; these elections take place every 3 years.

Related Responsibilities

- Works with School Planning Councils (see below) to determine how to implement curriculum and programming in a given area
- Approves, modifies or rejects the school plans developed by the School Planning Councils
- Determines allocation of staff and resources in the school, which could influence the delivery of sexual health education and the availability of outside resources, etc.

To determine which school district you are in and to connect to that district's website visit: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools/bcmap.htm>

Each school district has its own website on which you can find the list of your local school trustees. You can also find information on School Board meetings and the issues that the School Board is currently working on. As you become an advocate for SSHE, it's a good idea to keep up on what's in your local School Board's agenda.

Tip

Because they are local and accountable to the community, School Boards are a good starting point for your advocacy efforts.

School Planning Council

School Planning Councils consist of:

- the school principal
- one teacher representative from the teaching staff
- three representatives from the school's Parent Advisory Council
- one student from Grade 10, 11 or 12, where applicable, selected annually by the school principal

Related Responsibilities:

- Formalizes the role of parents in developing plans to improve student achievement in BC schools



- Develops, monitors and reviews school plans that are part of the district accountability contracts with the Ministry of Education
- Provides advice to the School Board, including advice related to education services and programs within the school

Tips

SPCs are formed at the beginning of the school year; school plans for the year are developed in the spring prior. To get in touch or involved with the SPC at your school, contact the school principal

Principal

Related Responsibilities:

- Is a member of, and provides information and leadership to, the School Planning Council.
- Often participates in the Parent Advisory Council.
- Oversees curriculum delivery.

Tips

Given the principal's role in the SPC, you may want to connect with the principal before contacting the Council about SSHE.

Teachers

Related Responsibilities:

- Deliver SSHE or arrange for outside educators to do so
- Elect one representative to the School Planning Council

Tips

- Teachers are valuable resources. See *Working with Teachers and Other Sexual Health Educators* for tips on working with teachers.
- Teachers are expected to follow the policies set by the principal and the school board. But they can give you good info on what happens in the classroom around SSHE.
- Many teachers have told us that they need to know that parents support them in delivering SSHE. Let teachers and/or counselors in your school know about your alliance.



Parent Advisory Council (PAC)

Related Responsibilities

- Advises the School Board and the principal and staff of the school regarding any matter relating to the school, other than those assigned to the School Planning Council
- Topics PACs often offer advice and assistance on include curriculum (including SSHE) and improving relationships and communicating with the community

Tips

- Each school district also has a District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) that acts as a link between parents and individual PACs and the School Board. DPAC members often have a role in School Board committees related to SSHE. To contact the DPAC in your area, visit your school district's website.

The role of parents through PACs is described in the *School Act*. To find out more about the PAC at your school, visit your school district's website or phone your school and request the contact information for the PAC chair

Other Parent and Professional Organizations

These organizations are less directly involved in the delivery of SSHE but are good organizations to be aware of in your advocacy efforts.

British Columbia School Trustees Association

www.bcsta.org

BCSTA is the association of elected school trustees from across the province.

BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils

www.bccpac.bc.ca

The BCCPAC is the association of PACs across the province.



BC School Superintendents Association

www.bcssa.org

The BCSSA is the association of senior managers in BC school districts.

BC Teachers' Federation

www.bctf.bc.ca

The BCTF is the union of public school teachers in BC.

BC College of Teachers

www.bcct.ca

The BCCT is the professional self-regulatory body for BC teachers.

Students and Student Organizations

Students currently have no official role in the determination of the sexual health curriculum they are taught. However, students are experts! Working with other students is a powerful way of gaining strength for your cause. Student bodies and associations are also great resources!

- **Student Council**

Student Councils are responsible for promoting school spirit, organizing school-related activities.

- **The British Columbia Association of Student Activity Advisors**

http://www.bcasaa.bc.ca/

The BCASAA is an organization that works to promote and enhance the development of student leadership in schools, and to empower the youth of BC to be leaders in their communities.



Resources



Related Resources

Other Campaign Resources

www.dontjustdoit.com

This is the site of the BC SexEd Curriculum Builders, which is a group of young people (and those who care about them) taking an active part in the sexual health education.

www.opt2act.org

This is the site of the SSHE campaign being lead by Options for Sexual Health with other partners including YouthCO AIDS Society, ANKORS, the Vancouver School Board, Youthquest! and the Island Sexual Health Society.

Other Advocacy Toolkits for Sexual Health Education Advocacy

<http://www.ppfa.org/pp2/portal/educationoutreach/advocacy/>

This is the Planned Parenthood Federation of America site, which features an advocacy toolkit for *The Reality-based Education and Learning for Life* that can be used by professionals, parents, and other community members to advocate for responsible sexuality education.

<http://www.ppfca.ca/ppfc/toolkit/english/main.htm>

The Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada website features a toolkit for rural communities, *The How to Rural Toolkit for Sexual Health Programs & Services*.

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/advocacykit.pdf>

This Toolkit provides in-depth information on how to improve adolescent reproductive health and sexual health programs and policies by organizing at the state and local levels. It includes information on building coalitions, conducting needs assessments, planning public education campaigns, working with the media, educating policy makers, and responding to opposition.

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/youth/advocacy/myvoicecounts/toolkit/toolkit.pdf>

This toolkit, entitled *My Voice Counts*, is designed to assist youth in organizing around the My Voice Counts campaign around youth's reproductive and sexual health. It provides useful tips and guidance for grassroots campaigns in general.

<http://www.aidsmap.com/en/docs/6F2FA05C-8B05-4136-9048-27B0C95091E4.asp>



This toolkit is produced by the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, and while specific to HIV/AIDS, has a wealth of information and tools on media work, communications and other advocacy tactics.

Sexual Health Education Information

<http://www.optionsforsexualhealth.org/about/advocacy/advocacy.htm>

This is the Options for Sexual Health site where you can access reports about the state of sexual health information in BC.

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/irp.htm>

This is the BC Ministry of Education's site, which outlines the Career and Family Planning curriculum (called IRPs – Integrated Resource Packages) for grades

K - 12 , which is where the bulk of sexual health information is taught.

www.mcs.bc.ca

This is the website of the McCreary Centre Society, a society that carries out community-based research and projects about the health of young people. You can access their annual Adolescent Health Survey results on this site, as well as other reports about the health, including sexual health, of youth in BC.

http://www.safehealthyschools.org/old_files/gateway.htm

This gateway is designed to help teachers and other educators locate good lesson plans and classroom-based learning activities in sexuality education.

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cgshe-ldnemss/cgshe_toc.htm

This site has the *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education*, a report produced by Health Canada in 2003 and it proposes a framework that outlines the philosophical and guiding principles for the development, delivery and evaluation of sexual health education.



www.seiccan.org

The Sexual Health Information and Education Council of Canada is a national educational organization that works to promote public and professional education about human sexuality. This site has reports and information on sexual health education in Canada.

General Sexual Health Information

Facts of Life Line 1-800-739-7367

Staffed by nurses and trained volunteers, you can call this line for anything related to sexual and reproductive health.

www.optionsforsexualhealth.org

Options for Sexual Health works to reduce unplanned pregnancy and promote optimal reproductive health by providing quality education, information and clinical services to all British Columbians. On this site, you will find sexual health information for youth, parents and professionals as well as information about OPT services.

www.youthco.org

YouthCO is a non-profit, youth-driven organization working to involve youth ages 15-29 from all communities in addressing HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and related issues. This site offers information on HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C from a youth perspective.

www.planetahead.org

Condomania, an initiative of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, is made up of teen website committee members, youth peer educators, and program staff who care about young people and their sexual health. Sexual health information for youth and information for parents can be found on this site.

www.sexualityandu.ca

A Canadian website devoted to sexuality education and information, administered by The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecology of Canada.



www.ankors.bc.ca

ANKORS is based in Nelson, BC and provides support and advocacy services to people living with HIV or AIDAS, their friends and families in the East and West Kootenay/Boundary region. Their services are outlined on this site.

www.youthquest.bc.ca

YouthQuest's goal is to provide youth aged 14-21 who are grappling with their sexual identity a non-judgmental and nurturing space where they can find their own truth without the pressure they find at home, at school, and in all aspects of their lives when they test the boundaries of identity.

www.purposesociety.org

The Purpose Society has an HIV/AIDS program including the *Transmit Knowledge – Not HIV* program.

<http://www.religioustheology.org/matters.html>

The Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing has articles about youth sexuality and religion.





Opt Options for
Sexual Health

Youth Advocacy Toolkit

Backgrounders



Tell me Straight-up: Helpful Definitions

Understanding jargon is a helpful tool to when advocating for school sexual health education. Below are some definitions that will support you in your mission.

A

Abstinence: Abstinence means different things to different people. Generally speaking, abstinence means not engaging in sexual activity. Specifically, it means to abstain from risk activities, including “no-penis-in-the-vagina”, “no-penis-in-the-anus”, and “no oral sex”.

Abstinence-only education: This is education that stresses abstinence as the only acceptable option. The curriculum may also include exclusively risk-focused information about other options, sometimes in exaggerated or inaccurate terms, without explaining the benefits.

Accountability: To be responsible for one’s actions; to demonstrate the usefulness of policies, procedures and programs.

Advocacy: To actively support a cause and working to involves others to do the same; a strategy for making social change.

Allies: Individuals who work together for a common cause.

C

Coalition: An alliance of people working for a common cause.

Coalition Building: The process of getting people together to support a cause.

Collaboration: To work together.

Community: A group of people connected to each other based on where they live, the work they do, their ethnic background, the way they live, etc.

Comprehensive Sexual Health Education: This means curriculum that is broad and achieves successful personal learning based on current, reliable information, in three main areas:

- All the available options for protection from sexually transmitted infections and prevention of unplanned pregnancy, their risks, benefits and availability.
- Understanding relationships, the particular characteristics of sexual relationships, and the importance of matching personal decision-making with personal values.



- Sexual self-expression and the diversity of sexual expression, in non-judgmental terms.

Consensus Statement: A shared agreement.

Consistent Sexual Health Education: Sexual health education for students each year from Kindergarten to Grade 12, with a contribution of time and environment that assures successful learning.

D

Determinants of Health: The range of factors (e.g. gender, ethnicity, income, education) that determine the overall health and well-being of a population.

Discussion group: A small group discussion guided by a leader to learn about opinions on a topic or issue.

E

Empowerment: A process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to action.

Evaluation: The gathering of information to answer important questions about activities, characteristics and outcomes of a program.

H

Health Promotion: The process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health.

I

Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs): documents that provide information required by K-12 teachers to implement a course and that contain learning outcomes and tools/resources for teachers.

Interview: A one-on-one meeting to gather in-depth information about an issue.

L

Liability: The state of being legally responsible.

Literature Review: An examination of research on a topic or issue.

M

Media/Press Release: A short document that provides information about your organization's events and activities to the media (newspaper, TV, radio, etc.).

Mission Statement: A clear, concise statement that says who the organization is, what it does, for whom and where.



N

Non-judgmental sexual health education: In sexual health education this means promoting respect for other perspectives. This encourages students to explore questions of interest or concerns, seek information or ask for help. It is important for educators to be aware of their comfort level with the subject matter and to help students access another educator if not comfortable.

Non-Profit/ Not-for-Profit: A club, society, or association that is organized and operated solely for social welfare, civic improvement, pleasure, recreation, or any other purpose except profit.

O

Objective: Specific measurable results of the planned work: how much, of what, will be accomplished by whom.

Outcome Evaluation: An assessment used to identify the results of a program's effort.

P

Partnerships: Alliances between individuals and/or groups.

Petitioning: Asking people to sign a form in support of an issue.

S

Social Mobilization: The process of using a number of techniques, such as advocacy, behavior change techniques, and social marketing, each one building on the next to make lasting changes in society.

Stakeholders: Key individuals or organizations that are involved in or influenced by an issue.

Strategy: An overall map that guides activities toward clear goals.

Survey: A tool for gathering data – usually involves using a questionnaire.

Y

Youth-Driven: Youth collaborating from a place of leadership, strength, passion, creativity and commitment to create social awareness and change.

Youth Voice: Youth freely stating their ideas and opinions; youth accessing and voicing their inner truth. Youth Voice is an honorable concept and is respected for its authenticity and empowering spirit. An environment that is inclusive of “youth voice” is one in which youth are 1) able to say what they need to say in their own way, 2) listened to respectfully, and c) given serious and respectful consideration in all decisions that affect them.



A Brief History of School Sexual Health Education

Efforts to make SSHE better have gone on for a very long time. Here are some of the more recent activities:

- For many years, guidelines for the school system on teaching sexual health have been in the works. In 1997 Health Canada released an updated set of *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education*.

Tip: To get a taste of some of these guidelines, make sure to check out *Assessing the Quality of School Sexual Health Education in Your School* in the *Tools* section of this toolkit! They are to be used for *Step 2: Assess the Current Situation in Your Community*.

- In 1998 the BC Ministry for Children and Families did a review of sexual and reproductive health education and services for youth. The review (released in 1999) stated that sexual health education should follow the following principles:
 - The purpose of reproductive health programs is to provide age-appropriate information to promote healthy behaviours.
 - Youth should have a voice in planning, delivery and putting these programs in place.
 - The approach should be consistent throughout the province and be taught by specially trained and certified educators.
 - Reproductive health education programs must be long-term (ideally K to 12) appropriate to age, and should be evaluated.

We're not there yet. SSHE needs youth input, consistent evaluation, and standards for those who teach it.

- In 1999 a report from the Council of Ministers of Education recommend stronger support for teachers, parents and students, and better monitoring and reporting of how strong sexual health education programs are.

Teachers, students and parents in BC say there is more work to be done.

- Also in 1999 Health Canada issued another report on consultations with the provinces, this one called *A National Framework for Sexual and Reproductive*



Health in Canada. This report recognizes that sexual health is important to us all, is a normal part of life, and is something to be dealt with openly.

- In 2001 a review of the curriculum of the Personal Planning (PP) K to 7 and Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) 8 to 12 programs led to the revision of curriculum for Grades 10 to 12, as the “Planning 10” component.
- Currently, The Ministry of Education has a new proposed program for Grades 8 and 9, called “Health and Career Education”. The program is optional for schools in the 2005-06 school year and will be mandatory after that.
- Next year the Ministry of Education plans to introduce “Health and Career Planning” for K to Grade 7, optional in 2006-07 and mandatory the following year.

Fact: In 1867 birth control was legal in Canada. Parliament made it illegal two years later. It was still illegal in 1967. It was against the law to sell contraceptive products or to teach anything about them– even by physicians and nurses. Birth control wasn’t legal again until 1969.



Back that thang up! Support for School Sexual Health Education

What comes to mind when you hear the term, “The Talk”? You probably picture an awkward moment between youth and their parent(s) that ends up being a total disaster because the discussion seems forced.

The reality is that many parents are supportive of the need to teach youth what they need to know. However, there is also the possibility that some parents may not feel comfortable having “The Talk”. And, some youth may want to learn about sex from their parents first, but they may not feel comfortable asking about it and may not even receive “The Talk”.

Let’s face it - “The Talk” is not an easy task to accomplish. This is one of the reasons why SSHE is so important. School is the one place common to most youth, and where teachers are trained to teach.

Let’s check out the support for SSHE!

- A McIntyre and Mustel survey in June 2001 found that 83% of British Columbians support publicly funded comprehensive sexual health education in school.
- In 2004 Options for Sexual Health (OPT) did a study of the quality of sexual health education in BC schools, using the *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education*. OPT surveyed students, parents, educators, school authorities, and public health nurses and administrators. Five themes came up:
 1. Good sexual health education in BC is influenced by changes in funding, school priorities and the comfort levels and training of teachers and educators.
 2. There is concern and confusion about the delivery and evaluation of sexual health education in BC. It would be helpful to assist parents, educators, and school authorities to become more familiar with what makes successful sexual health education.
 3. Sexual health education should be more than just prevention education. Students said that they want much more information.
 4. A narrow approach does not provide education and support very well with respect to regarding diversity, particularly culture, and sexual orientation.
 5. Participants felt that solutions will be found in regular evaluation and community input.



- In September and November 2004, BC adults were asked in an Ipsos Reid survey: “How much influence do you feel that teenagers should have over the sex education curriculum taught in schools?” In both surveys 77% of adults supported youth having “a great deal or a moderate amount” of say over sex education curriculum.

Conclusion: These surveys show that the great majority of adults as well as youth support sexual health education in schools. It appears that there is a lot of confidence in the ability of youth to define their learning needs. This really backs up the idea of youth as experts!



Teaching Sexual Health in BC Schools

Exactly what are students expected to learn about sexual health according to the Ministry of Education's standards?

- The Ministry of Education prepares Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs) that define learning outcomes schools are expected to achieve. School Boards then convert these IRPs into curriculum for their students.
- Sexual health learning outcomes are found in a group of IRPs related to personal development and career planning.
- For years the key IRPs have been called Personal Planning (PP) for younger students and Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) for older students.
- Changes in PP and CAPP in the classroom have been under way since 2003. The first change was the introduction of Planning 10 to replace the CAPP program in Grades 10 to 12.
- In 2005 Health and Career Planning has been introduced to replace CAPP in Grades 8 and 9. Next year similar changes will be introduced to the Kindergarten – Grade 7 program.
- The sexual health content of the curriculum is spread across many IRPs
- There is repetitiveness in the outcomes, and students do report that repetition can occur in the information they receive from year to year.
- There is also the potential for gaps to occur.

See below for the key learning outcomes related to sexual and reproductive health from each of the IRPs, grouped by grade-level.

Tip

If you want to see the full IRPs, please consult the Ministry of Education's website at www.bced.gov.bc.ca.



Kindergarten and Grade 1 (Personal Planning: to be revised in 2006)

It is expected that students will:

- use appropriate vocabulary to identify physical characteristics that distinguish males from females
- demonstrate awareness of the ability of living things to reproduce
- know appropriate and inappropriate touching behaviours
- demonstrate ability to access help in abuse situations
- demonstrate awareness of the influence of family on attitudes and values regarding healthy living

Grades 2 and 3 (Personal Planning: to be revised in 2006)

It is expected that students will:

- describe the influence of family and peers on attitudes and values regarding healthy living
- use avoidance and assertiveness skills in abuse situations/ demonstrate awareness of legal and societal support for abuse prevention
- describe how living things reproduce
- describe responsible ways to acts on various feelings

Grade 4 (Personal Planning: to be revised in 2006)

It is expected that students will:

- describe the influence of the media and community on personal attitudes and behaviours regarding healthy living
- identify health related services and resources that can contribute to healthy living
- describe how the physical characteristics of males and females develop
- recognize the various types of abuse including physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect
- apply safety guidelines to protect self and others from exploitation and abuse
- explore appropriate strategies for sharing and expressing feelings
- demonstrate awareness of the factors that influence self-esteem
- identify positive ways to initiate, maintain and end friendships



Grade 5 (Personal Planning: to be revised in 2006)

It is expected that students will:

- identify the dynamics of individual and group friendships
- describe possible consequences of exploitation and abuse
- identify factors that influence their attitudes respecting healthy living
- identify the physical, emotional and social changes associated with puberty
- describe the family's role in developing moral and behavioural standards

Grade 6 (Personal Planning: to be revised in 2006)

It is expected that students will:

- refine strategies for sharing and expressing feelings
- describe one's individuality within the social group
- explain the concept of stereotyping
- related changes at puberty to the human reproductive system
- describe the physical, emotional and social changes associated with puberty
- access and evaluate sources of information related to physical, emotional and social development
- distinguish between supportive and non-supportive relationships

Grade 7 (Personal Planning: to be revised in 2006)

It is expected that students will:

- analyze the relationships between a variety of feelings and behaviours
- demonstrate an ability to manage their responses to their feelings
- list indicators of both healthy and abusive relationships
- describe characteristic patterns in abusive relationships
- evaluate personal attitudes that promote health
- describe the responsibilities that accompany friendships and other relationships
- identify stereotypical views of gender roles in families
- describe factors that influence the development of healthy relationships
- explain how the human reproductive system works
- assess the factors that influence decision making regarding relationships



Grade 8 (Health and Career Education: Optional in 2005-06, mandatory from 2006-07)

It is expected that students will:

- set personal goals for attaining and maintaining a healthy lifestyle
- identify factors that influence healthy sexual decision making
- demonstrate an understanding of the consequences of contracting sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS (e.g., symptoms, short-term and long-term health issues)
- assess the importance of healthy relationships (e.g., with friends, family, teachers, mentors)
- identify school and community sources of information and support for individuals in unhealthy, abusive, or exploitative relationships (e.g., school counsellor, help line)

Grade 9 (Health and Career Education: Optional in 2005-06, mandatory from 2006-07)

It is expected that students will:

- relate the characteristics of a healthy lifestyle to their ability to maximize personal potential
- describe practices that promote healthy sexual decision making
- assess the short-term and long-term consequences of unsafe sexual behaviour (e.g., unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS, negative impact on future goals)
- propose strategies for building and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships (e.g., effective communication skills, effective expression of emotions, setting and communicating personal boundaries)
- describe skills for avoiding or responding to unhealthy, abusive, or exploitative relationships (e.g., assertiveness skills, refusal skills, communication skills, accessing help and support)



Grades 10 to 12 (Planning 10)

It is expected that students will:

- analyse factors that influence health (e.g., physical activity, nutrition, stress management)
- analyse health information for validity and personal relevance
- demonstrate an understanding of skills needed to build and maintain healthy relationships (e.g., effective communication, problem solving)
- analyse factors contributing to a safe and caring school (e.g., respect for diversity, prevention of harassment and intimidation)
- evaluate the potential effects of an individual's health-related decisions on self, family, and community
- analyse practices that promote healthy sexual decision making (e.g., recognizing influences, accessing accurate information, applying informed decision-making skills)
- analyse practices associated with the prevention of HIV/AIDS



Making a Statement: Consensus Statements on School Sexual Health Education

Want to know what the word is regarding SSHE? In May 2004, Options for Sexual Health (OPT) held a consensus conference on SSHE in BC that included youth, parents, educators, school authorities, public health services representatives, and public policy makers. Here is a list of youth-specific statements that participants developed: read these statements as characteristics of good quality sexual health education.

- Access to accurate and comprehensive sexual health education is recognized as a basic right and need of all individuals.
- An essential building block to the lifelong health of people is continuous access, from kindergarten to Grade 12, to comprehensive and accurate sexual health information appropriate to age, cognitive development, sexual orientation and cultural context.
- Through kindergarten to Grade 12, students' voices in determining what they learn about their sexual health should be promoted and respected by involving them at all stages of program design, provision and evaluation in a manner appropriate for their age and cognitive development.
- In support of students, every effort must be made to provide a non-judgmental, confidential, safe and supportive environment, acceptable to them, in which they can acquire knowledge about their sexual health, sexuality and gender identity from appropriately trained educators in school and other community supporting services.
- Sexual health is a personal responsibility. In the context of a sexual relationship this responsibility is shared. Students of all gender expressions need equal information about themselves and one another.



References



References

- Advocates for Youth. (2005). *Advocacy Kit*. Retrieved July 2005 from <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/advocacykit.pdf>
- Azrak, S., Dhingra, N.K. and Stacks, J. (2005). My Voice Counts! Campaigns for Youth's Reproductive and Sexual Health: Advocacy and Organizing Toolkit. Retrieved July 2005 from <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/youth/advocacy/myvoicecounts/index.htm>
- BCPWA. (2005). Advocacy Actionkits. Retrieved July 2005 from http://www.bcpwa.org/empower_yourself/actionkits/
- Beazley, R., Doherty-Poirier, M., Lovato, C., MacKinnon, D., McCall, D., Otis, J. and Shannon, M. (1999). *Schools, Public Health, Sexuality and HIV: A Status Report*. Toronto: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). Retrieved July 2005 from <http://www.schoolfile.com/AIDSreport/AIDStoc.htm>
- Canada Council for the Arts. (2004). *Arts Advocacy: Tips and Strategies for Artists, Arts Organizations, Board Members and Cultural Supporters*. Retrieved July 2005 from <http://www.canadacouncil.ca/aboutus/advocacy/ik127305739560625000.htm>
- Ginsler & Associates Inc. (2000). *Voluntary Sector Public Policy Toolbox*. Retrieved June 2005, from <http://www.ginsler.com/html/toolbox.htm>
- Health Canada. (2003). *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education*. Retrieved July 2005, from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cgshe-ldnemss/pdf/guidelines_e.pdf
- Health Canada. (1999). *A Report from Consultations on a Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.
- International HIV/AIDS Alliance (2002). *Advocacy in Action: a toolkit to support NGOs and CBOs responding to HIV/AIDS*. Retrieved July 2005 from <http://www.aidsmap.com/en/docs/6F2FA05C-8B05-4136-9048-27B0C95091E4.asp>
- National Assembly on School-Based Health Care (2005). *School-Based Health Centre Advocacy Toolkit*. Retrieved July 2005 from <http://www.nasbhc.org/APP/advocacy%20tool%20kit.pdf>
- Options for Sexual Health (2004). *Hit and Miss: A Consensus Conference on Sexual Health Education in BC – Report on Proceedings*. Vancouver: Options for Sexual Health.
- Options for Sexual Health (2004). *An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Sexual Health Education in BC Schools*. Vancouver: Options for Sexual Health.



Planned Parenthood Association of BC (1999) *Subsidized Contraception or Subsidized Babies: Meeting the Reproductive Health Care Needs of British Columbia Youth*. Vancouver: BC Ministry of Children and Families.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America (2000). *Reality-based Education and Learning for Life*. Retrieved July 2005 from <http://www.ppfa.org/pp2/portal/files/portal/educationoutreach/sexualityeducation/education-real-life-kit.xml>

Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada. (2005). *The How To Rural Toolkit for Sexual Health Programs and Services*. Retrieved July 2005 from <http://www.ppfca.ca/ppfc/toolkit/english/main.htm>

Roberts, A. (2001). *SafeTeen: Powerful Alternatives to Violence*. Vancouver: Polestar.

School Act. (1996). RSBC 1996, c.412.

SEICCAN (2004). "Sexual Health Education in the Schools: Questions and Answers." *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, Vol. 13 (3-4), Fall/Winter, pp. 129–141.