

Dear Parents/Guardians of Queen Mary students,

Each year, students in all elementary grades throughout BC receive instruction in sexual health education. This information is included in the Physical and Health Education program mandated for all BC students by the Ministry for Education. From time to time, schools bring in experts in the field to address this topic with the school community. We are excited to inform you that this year Saleema Noon Sexual Health Educators will be visiting our school to work with parents and students in **Kindergarten to Grade 7**.

In their Body Science presentations, Saleema Noon and her team of experienced educators work with children of all ages, teaching them about healthy bodies and healthy sexuality in ways they find non-threatening and entertaining. In age-appropriate terms, children learn about how their bodies change, and what those changes mean.

Link here for further information on the content of the sessions: www.saleemanoon.com/workshops/body-science-at-school/

Based on research and many years of experience as sexual health educators, they identify three reasons why providing this information starting in kindergarten is crucial:

1. Most importantly, studies from all over the world consistently show that children who are educated about healthy bodies, healthy boundaries and healthy sexuality are at reduced risk of child sexual abuse. Even if children are not asking questions yet (some never will) we need to give them information about their bodies and help them to develop strong personal boundaries. Sexual offenders (the majority of which are known to the victim) prey on children who aren't educated about their bodies and therefore lack the skills to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate touching. These children find it hard to say "no", especially to an adult, and may not report abuse for fear of getting in trouble.
2. Young children are easiest to teach. They are excited to be body scientists, and accept the information very matter-of-factly. Older children and teens, however, often find it difficult to talk about sexual health openly, especially with their parents! This means we have to navigate the embarrassment barrier before they can accept the information they need. The good news is that young children only absorb information they are ready for...everything else just goes over their head. More good news, studies show that children who learn about healthy bodies at an early age from reliable adults in their life delay sexual activity.
3. Children today are exposed at earlier and earlier ages to all things involving sex and sexuality. We, as responsible adults, need to stay one step ahead of this by arming our children with accurate information about sexual health before they get their questions answered on the playground, by older friends or online. We need to teach them to think critically about what they hear, and this allows parents need to establish themselves early as their child's number one source of sexual health information throughout their development.



Student sessions will take place in person during the school day January 18th and 19th. The content of the presentations is supported by current research as being age appropriate and we believe that it contributes to healthy child development. Some of the topics covered in the workshops will extend beyond the scope of the learning outcomes of the Physical and Health Education curriculum in B.C. For this reason, participation of students is not necessarily required. **Please inform your child's classroom teacher if you DO NOT wish your child to participate in these workshops, by contacting your child's teacher, by email or note, BEFORE Wednesday January 17th.** If "OPTING OUT" for your child, we will make sure your child does not "stand out" – we will tactfully engage your child in an alternate activity in another learning space during the time of the class session. If opting out, we also assume that you will take on responsibility for the delivery of this part of the curriculum at home.

Please also feel free to phone me at the school if you have any questions about Saleema Noon Sexual Health Educators' presentations.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Wilson, jwilson@sd44.ca
Principal, Queen Mary Elementary School

