

# BENCHMARKS FOR COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION IN CANADA

## KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 3 (AGES 4-8)

<b>Autonomy and Consent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bodily autonomy, setting and respecting personal boundaries (e.g., asking for a hug, respecting a person's "yes" or "no"), and a person's right to privacy</li><li>• What privacy is<sup>1</sup> (e.g., something that you choose to keep just for you; all body parts are private) and the difference between private (e.g., bathroom) and public spaces (e.g., school, shared living areas, etc.)</li><li>• Consent in the context of interpersonal relationships (e.g., asking a friend if they want to be tickled, asking a classmate if they would like help putting on their jacket; asking if someone wants their photo taken, etc.)</li><li>• Components of verbal and nonverbal communication</li><li>• Safe touch, body safety, and unsafe, unwanted, and inappropriate touch</li><li>• Trusted adults who young people can ask questions about health and well-being (e.g., parents, caregivers, health care professionals, teachers, etc.)</li><li>• Situations where a young person may need a trusted adult to help them make decisions related to health and well-being (e.g., taking medications, personal care such as using the bathroom or for hygiene, etc.)</li></ul>
<b>Values and Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Everyone has and should respect human rights (including the right to privacy, education, autonomy, safety, and self-defence)</li><li>• Importance of understanding one's own feelings and the feelings of others (e.g., peers, siblings, etc.)</li><li>• Social-emotional learning strategies to process/manage feelings (e.g., developing empathy, self-regulation when experiencing anger or disappointment, seeking help when anxious or sad, etc.)</li><li>• Social-emotional skills and values for engaging in healthy relationships (e.g., empathy, respect, care for self and others, etc.)</li><li>• Our social environment (e.g., our community, culture, religion, family members, etc.) impacts our values related to gender, relationships, and family (e.g., the kinds of relationships we value, how we treat others, etc.)</li></ul>

<p><b>Interpersonal Relationships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different types of relationships, families, and communities; different kinds of love</li> <li>• All people should be treated with dignity and respect (inclusive of gender, ethnicity, race, disability, income, age, illness or health status, immigration status, family configuration, and the intersection of these identities and circumstances, etc.)</li> <li>• Importance of communication in all interpersonal relationships</li> <li>• Characteristics of equitable, positive, and satisfying relationships (e.g., mutual respect, healthy communication, trust, honesty, non-violent conflict resolution, etc.)</li> <li>• Strategies for building community (e.g., friendships, family, community activities, etc.)</li> <li>• Conflict resolution skills (e.g., learning that language matters and words can hurt, identifying solutions, etc.)</li> <li>• Difference between expressing feelings in respectful/caring ways and disrespectful/uncaring ways</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gender Norms, Roles, and Stereotypes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our social environment impacts the way we think about our lives (e.g., specific social and cultural ideas or “rules” about how different genders are supposed to be/act; media can impact how we think about gender, family, and relationships)</li> <li>• Some people are treated differently and/or unfairly due to their gender identity, gender expression, sexual identity, racial identity, ethnicity, disability status, etc. and/or a combination of these and other factors</li> <li>• Our social environment (e.g., peers, family members, community, media, etc.) can impact how we behave and treat others (e.g., through peer pressure or by being positive role models)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gender and Sexual Orientation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each person has a gender identity and should be treated with respect and dignity</li> <li>• Each person has a sexual orientation and should be treated with respect and dignity</li> <li>• Gender identity, gender expression, sex assigned at birth, and sexual orientation are different concepts</li> <li>• There are a range of gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations</li> <li>• Diverse cultural conceptions of gender</li> <li>• Indigenous perspectives on gender</li> <li>• How the people in one’s life identify themselves and how to be respectful of people’s identities (e.g., using the person’s stated pronouns, learning how to pronounce their names, etc.)</li> <li>• Importance of self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-respect, and having a positive self-concept</li> </ul>

<b>Bodies and Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate names for all body parts, including genitals<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Growing up includes many overlapping and varied physical, emotional, social, mental, and/or spiritual changes (e.g., people grow and change at different rates)</li> <li>• All bodies are different and should be respected</li> <li>• All bodies have a range of experiences (e.g., joy, pleasure, pain, being sick, etc.); how to communicate feelings about one's body (e.g., feeling good about one's body, feeling curious about one's body and how it works, etc.)</li> <li>• Importance of caring for and developing self-esteem, self-acceptance, and respect for one's body</li> <li>• Ways to support and care for one's body as it grows and changes</li> </ul>
<b>Reproductive Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People have a right to choose when or if they have children and how many children they want to have</li> <li>• Some families have children and some families do not</li> <li>• Different ways that a child can join a family (e.g., adoption, fostering, pregnancy, etc.)</li> <li>• If a child experiences pain or discomfort in their genitals, they should talk to a trusted adult.</li> </ul>
<b>Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Prevention and Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What vaccines are; what vaccines do</li> <li>• What germs are; how germs can be shared/transmitted</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual Health Enhancement and Well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joy and pleasure are normal feelings that people experience across their lifetime</li> <li>• Positive sensory and emotional experiences in the body (e.g., feeling relaxed during calming activities, feeling excited during fun activities, feeling joy when spending time with friends, etc.)</li> <li>• Different components of health (e.g., physical health, mental health, etc.) that are interconnected and need to be cared for</li> </ul>

<p><b>Digital Media Literacy and Technology</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consent with regard to digital images (e.g., asking friends if they want to have their photo taken; consent to have your own photo taken, etc.)</li> <li>• Communicating respectfully with others online</li> <li>• Limiting who is able to communicate with us online</li> <li>• Seeking help to deal with online problems</li> <li>• What private information is and the potential impacts of sharing private information (both a person’s own private information and someone else’s private information)</li> <li>• Resources for finding credible online information (e.g., asking a trusted adult, using credible websites suggested by trusted adults, etc.)</li> <li>• Media representations can influence the way we think about our lives (including gender, sexuality, and relationships) in positive and negative ways</li> <li>• Stereotypes in media can impact the way a person feels about themselves and others</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gender-Based Violence Awareness and Prevention</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to engage in and recognize help-seeking behaviours</li> <li>• What is meant by a trusted adult and how to identify trusted adults in one’s life</li> <li>• Difference between privacy (e.g., choosing to keep something to/for yourself), surprises (e.g., birthday gift for a friend), and secrecy (e.g., someone asking you not to tell trusted adults about something, such as photos being taken or touching, etc.)</li> <li>• How to identify unsafe situations/relationships</li> <li>• Recognize forms of discrimination, abuse, and violence (e.g., bullying, sexual abuse, racism)</li> <li>• How to disclose experiences of abuse and the limits of confidentiality</li> <li>• Gender-based violence can occur in different places (e.g., school, home, online) and in different kinds of relationships (e.g., peers, family, etc.)</li> <li>• Peer pressure related to gender-based violence (including harmful comments) and strategies for handling peer pressure</li> </ul>

1 See Silverberg (2015) for language on privacy.

2 Educators should be aware of and inclusive to variations in reproductive or sexual anatomy, including intersex (see Brömdel et al, 2021; Holmes, 2022)