

# **Benchmarks for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Prevention in Sexual Health Education**


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This project has been funded by  
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For full project acknowledgements and a description of the project consultation and development process, please see the Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Prevention within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education: <https://sieccan.org/gbv>.



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# WORKING GROUP

## SIECCAN

Jessica Wood – *Research Specialist and Project Lead, ON*

Ada Madubueze – *Sexual Health Education Coordinator, AB*

Jocelyn Wentland – *Project Manager/Research Associate, BC*

Alexander McKay – *Executive Director, ON*

## WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Valérie Auger-Voyer – *Ending Violence Association of Canada, ON*

Fred Chabot – *Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, ON*

Taylor Demetriooff – *White Ribbon, MB*

Julie Descheneaux – *Université du Québec à Montréal, QC*

Serena Dixon – *Centre for Sexuality, AB*

Iehente Foote – *Native Youth Sexual Health Network, Kanien'kehá:ka from Kahnawake (Mohawk Territory), QC*

Susan Hornby – *Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health, PEI*

Yvonne Houssin – *Native Youth Sexual Health Network, BC*

Brittany Jakubiec – *Egale, PEI*

Matthew Johnson – *MediaSmarts, Ottawa, ON*

Jennifer Butler – *FOXY – Fostering Open Expression Among Youth, NWT*

Farrah Khan – *Possibility Seeds, ON*

Ivan Leonce – *YouthCo, BC*

Nathalie Lozano – *Canadian Women's Foundation, BC*

Shireen Noble – *Canadian Public Health Association, ON*

Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah – *Canadian Centre for Gender & Sexual Diversity, ON*

Andrea Haefele – *Ontario Health and Physical Education Association (Ophea), ON*

Charlene Senn – *University of Windsor, Windsor, ON*

Jody Shynkaruk – *Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, SK*

Lisa Smylie – *Indigenous Services Canada, ON*

## REVIEWER GROUP

Salsabel Almanssori – *University of Windsor, ON*

Claire Crooks – *University of Western Ontario, ON*

Zackary Derrick, QC (Student Reviewer) – *University of Victoria*

Kyle Drouillard (Student Reviewer) – *University of Ottawa, ON*

Alan Martino – *University of Calgary, AB*

Abel Koka (Student Reviewer) – *University of Manitoba, MB*

Kaitlynn Mendes – *University of Western Ontario, ON*

JJ (Jessica) Wright – *MacEwan University, AB*

Ashley Young – *Sexual Violence New Brunswick, NB*

### Design and translation

Graphic design by Pam Sloan Designs

French translation by  
Jean Dussault and Josée Dussault



# **Benchmarks for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Prevention in Sexual Health Education**

# Benchmarks for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Prevention in Sexual Health Education

**Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive problem that has significant implications for the sexual health and well-being of young people in Canada.**

As noted in the *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention within School- Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (CSHE)*, GBV:

- Is violence that is committed against someone based on their gender, gender identity, gender expression, or perceived gender (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022).
- Can take many forms (e.g., physical violence, sexual violence, technology-facilitated violence, gender/sexual identity-based bullying, human trafficking, intimate partner violence, etc.)
- Exists on a continuum (e.g., more subtle forms such as rape jokes or transphobic comments, and more overt forms such as harassment and sexual assault, etc.).
- Occurs in many types of interpersonal relationships (e.g. peer, romantic, family, etc.) and in many settings (e.g., home, school, public, private, and online spaces, etc.)

It is, therefore, critical that all young people have access to GBV prevention education that increases their awareness and understanding of GBV, and the skills/information needed to prevent it.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EARLY AND FOUNDATIONAL APPROACH TO GBV PREVENTION IN COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION (CSHE)

**Sexual health education that is early, ongoing, and comprehensive is key to providing youth with the information and skills needed to understand and prevent GBV. There is substantial evidence that sexual health education is most effective when it begins early and includes a foundational, building block approach to teaching young people critical sexual health and GBV prevention concepts and skills** (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021; Schneider & Hirsh, 2020; SIECCAN, 2019; 2020).

Young people in Canada want to receive sexual health education in school that is appropriate for their age/developmental level, inclusive, relevant, and scientifically accurate (Narushima et al., 2019; Laverty et al., 2021; SIECCAN, 2020). Most parents in Canada support a comprehensive approach to sexual health education and want foundational topics introduced in the early grades (Weaver et al., 2002; Wood et al., 2021).

In a national survey, the majority of parents agreed that sexual health education should promote gender equality and the prevention of GBV (83%) and reduce homophobia (74%) and transphobia (73%; Loveless et al., 2022).

**Early integration of GBV prevention in sexual health education is essential for all youth.** It is especially important for youth who are at an increased risk of experiencing GBV (e.g., girls and young women, 2SLGBTQINA+ youth, Indigenous youth, racialized youth, newcomer youth, youth with disabilities). For example, researchers suggests that sexual violence victimization begins at an earlier age for 2SLGBTQINA+ youth (Valido, 2021; Walters et al., 2013), and children with intellectual and/ developmental disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual abuse than children without disabilities (Murray, 2019; Wissink et al., 2015).

GBV prevention in sexual health education is also critical for youth who may be at increased risk of perpetrating violence. In a national study of adolescents in the United States, 9% of young people aged 14-21 years reported some type of sexual violence perpetration in their lifetime (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2013). The most common age of first sexual violence perpetration was 16, and perpetration began earlier for boys/young men than girls/young women. Among those who perpetrated sexual violence before the age of 15, 98% were boys/young men.

**Early GBV prevention in sexual health education is critical to help youth develop the skills to understand and recognize different forms of GBV, intervene to help others, and support their peers who may have experienced GBV.**

Youth spend a significant amount of time with peers in the school environment. A substantial number of 2SLGBTQINA+ youth in Canada report experiences of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic harassment and bullying in schools, especially in middle school and early high school grades (Campbell & Taylor, 2021). In a national survey of 4000 youth across Canada, 62% of 2SLGBTQINA+ youth said they felt unsafe at school (compared to 11% of cisgender, heterosexual students; Campbell & Taylor, 2021). Feeling unsafe at school was especially prevalent among trans students, with 83% reporting that they felt unsafe.

Youth experience violence across interpersonal relationships (e.g., bullying with peers, violence in dating relationships) and adolescents who perpetrate and experience violence in peer contexts (i.e., bullying) are more likely to perpetrate and experience violence in dating relationships (Exner-Cortens et al., 2023). Thus, there is a significant need for the early disruption of GBV across interpersonal contexts and settings (e.g., within the school, public spaces, dating relationships, etc.).

GBV prevention in sexual health education can also help youth critically evaluate and challenge the restrictive gender norms and stereotypes that contribute to GBV. Young people observe and learn about gender roles, attitudes, and power dynamics from a young age (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021; Schneider & Hirsch, 2020). Attitudes and beliefs about gender and sexuality are further shaped by the youth's social environment, including their culture, family, educators, and peers. It is important that youth are introduced to concepts that "disrupt stereotypical and harmful biases related to gender and sexual orientation, during this formative time" (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2020, p. 23). Addressing gender stereotypes from an early age may also promote safer school environments for 2SLGBTQINA+ youth (Schneider & Hirsch, 2020).

Finally, though some young people do not want to engage in sexual and/or romantic relationships (e.g., asexual or aromantic youth), youth need access to GBV prevention information in sexual health education before they engage in sexual activity and romantic partnerships.

### Early sexual health education can help young people to:

Learn important information about bodies, development, and bodily autonomy.

Develop self-protective knowledge, skills, and the ability to report GBV (e.g., sexual abuse, sexual violence, homophobic bullying and harassment).

Understand how to access sexual health and GBV support services.

Develop bystander intervention skills needed to recognize and intervene in instances of GBV.

Understand their rights to sexual and reproductive services and how to advocate for effective and appropriate services.

Understand the diversity of experiences related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

Challenge and change gender-stereotyping processes and biases that can form early (e.g., between the ages of 3-7 years) and contribute to GBV.

Develop the social-emotional skills needed to engage in healthy relationships (e.g., empathy, respect).

Understand the ways that our social environment (e.g., norms, culture, media, etc.) impacts how we think about gender, sexuality, and relationships.

Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021; Manheim et al., 2019; Schneider & Hirsh, 2020; SIECCAN, 2019; 2020; UNESCO 2018; 2021



## A foundational, building block approach to effectively integrating GBV prevention in sexual health education:

- Is part of a long-term teaching process that introduces key information and skills in the early grades and aims to continually review and build upon core GBV prevention skills and knowledge. For example:
  - In the early grades, young people can learn information and skills to identify and communicate personal boundaries (e.g., personal space, consent for holding hands or giving/not giving a hug) and to respect the personal boundaries of others (e.g., communicating to others that they understand a boundary; stopping an activity when someone says they do not like it; developing strategies to deal with feelings of disappointment or rejection). In later grades, students can build on these skills by learning about the importance and role of consent in sexual relationships and understanding how factors such as power dynamics and gender equity can impact whether a person is able to consent to sexual activity.
  - Learning about bodily autonomy in the early grades can facilitate understanding key concepts related to sexual rights. Youth can begin learning about the right to bodily autonomy early on to understand that everyone has fundamental human rights. In later grades, learning can incorporate information related to understanding how bodily autonomy is linked to sexual health, examining the ways that sexual rights can be violated, and increasing capacity for self-advocacy related to sexual health and for upholding the human rights of others.
  - In the early grades, young people can begin to learn how our social environment impacts the way we think about/express ourselves and how we interact with other people (e.g., that there are different cultural or social expectations or ideas about how girls, boys, and nonbinary people “should be/act”, and that people are treated differently and/or unfairly based on these ideas and expectations). In later grades, young people can learn how gender stereotypes and differential power dynamics contribute to GBV and develop skills for challenging and changing power dynamics in their interpersonal relationships and community environments. Such skills and information can be built upon to help understand how different forms of oppression (e.g., racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, etc.) intersect to contribute to GBV.
  - Learning about digital image sharing in the early grades (e.g., developing the skills to ask whether someone wants their photo taken, asking peers whether they are comfortable with their photo being posted on social media, etc.) can be expanded upon when youth are older to discuss the ethical and legal aspects of technology-facilitated sexual violence.
- Includes age and developmentally-appropriate content for young people (*UNESCO, 2021*) while maintaining flexibility and incorporating needed changes for neurodiverse youth and youth with disabilities.
- Considers and accounts for the fact that some youth may have already experienced GBV and/or perpetrated GBV and may be processing these experiences as they encounter material in school curricula.

## A foundational, building block approach to effectively integrating GBV prevention in sexual health education:

- Incorporates a range of topics/concepts that focus on the enhancement of sexual health and well-being (e.g., building capacity to communicate about sexual consent and to have satisfying, safe, and respectful relationships; increase in awareness and respect for human rights related to sexuality; increase in self-acceptance and self-esteem etc.) and the prevention of outcomes that can negatively impact sexual health and well-being (e.g., decrease in harmful attitudes that contribute to GBV; decrease in sexual assault; decrease in discrimination/violence based on sex, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation, etc.; SIECCAN, 2019).
- Supports opportunities for cross-curricular engagement (i.e., creating links with GBV-related information in other subject areas such as history, civics, etc.).
- Should reflect the approaches and principles identified in the Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence within School-Based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (SIECCAN, 2023).

## IN IMPLEMENTING THE BENCHMARKS, SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS SHOULD AIM TO:

Align with the Core Principles of Sexual Health Education

Be trauma-informed

Focus on human rights

Incorporate and support Indigenous programs and approaches

Avoid shame or fear-based approaches

Be culturally responsive

Incorporate intersectional and anti-racist approaches

Address specific GBV prevention concepts within the context of ethics, values, and care.

Address the specific needs of youth who are disproportionately at risk of experiencing GBV (i.e., young women and girls, 2SLGBTQINA+ youth, Indigenous youth, racialized youth, newcomer youth, and youth with disabilities).

### According to the *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education*:

“The development of skill sets and the provision of sexual health information should begin in the early grades (i.e., kindergarten through grade 3), and continue throughout students’ education.” (SIECCAN, 2019, p.84).

This is in line with international guidance recommending that sexual health education “should start early, be age-and-developmentally appropriate, and should follow an incremental approach” (UNESCO, 2021, p.12).

## PURPOSE OF THE BENCHMARKS

The Benchmarks in this document provide guidance for educators, policy makers, and program planners aiming to effectively incorporate GBV prevention into sexual health education.

**The Benchmarks specify the minimum information and skills to be addressed within sexual health education and denote when key GBV prevention topics/concepts should begin being taught to young people. Topics and concepts should be revisited at later grades to ensure that information and skills are retained and can be built upon.** This is especially important for students who may have missed key information, need additional time for review, and to solidify skill development.

While numerous concepts and topics need to be included to ensure that sexual health education is comprehensive (e.g., reproductive health information, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, etc.), the Benchmarks identified here focus on specific concepts related to GBV prevention and awareness and are not meant to constitute a CSHE curriculum. As noted throughout the *Guidelines for Integrating GBV Prevention within School-based CSHE*, some topics are related to information about violence and/or raising awareness about GBV, while others are central to establishing the foundational skills needed to prevent GBV.

**GBV prevention concepts are situated under the following CSHE topic strands:**

Gender Norms, Roles, and Stereotypes

Autonomy and Consent

Values and Rights

Relationships

Digital Media Literacy and Technology Use

Sexual and Gender Diversity

Violence: Awareness and Support

Bodies: Sexual Health and Well-being

Though some concepts overlap with multiple topic strands, they are presented here within the topic strand with which they are most closely linked to provide an overview of GBV prevention in sexual health education. The Benchmarks are presented by age and grade, with the recognition that specific ages of youth in each grade may change depending on province/territory.

### The Benchmarks are informed by:

1. A human rights perspective
2. Evidence and research, including examinations of national and international documents focused on GBV prevention and sexual health education
3. Youth perspectives on sexual health education; and
4. Professionals who work in the field of GBV prevention and sexual health education.



# **Key Benchmarks for the Integration of GBV Prevention in Sexual Health Education: Listed by Age/Grade**

# Key Benchmarks for the Integration of GBV Prevention in Sexual Health Education: Listed by Age/Grade

GBV prevention concepts are situated under the following CSHE topic strands:

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

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
Gender Norms, Roles, and Stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand that our social environment impacts the way we think about our lives (e.g., there are specific social and cultural ideas or “rules” about how different genders are supposed to act/be; what we see in media can impact how we think about gender, family and relationships).</li> <li>Understand that 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 factors.</li> <li>Identify ways to treat people of all genders (and other intersecting identities) with respect and dignity.</li> </ul>
Autonomy and Consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn about setting and respecting bodily autonomy and personal boundaries (e.g., asking for a hug, respecting a person’s “yes’ or “no”).</li> <li>Learn about safe touch, body safety, and inappropriate touch.</li> <li>Learn about consent within 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).</li> <li>Understand that communication can happen verbally and nonverbally.</li> <li>Learn to communicate with others (e.g., peers, family members).</li> </ul>

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
<b>Values and Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand that everyone has and should respect human rights (including the right to privacy, education, autonomy, safety, and self-defense).</li> <li>• Develop social-emotional skills and values for engaging in healthy relationships (e.g., empathy, respect).</li> <li>• Identify one’s own feelings and the feelings of others (e.g., peers).</li> <li>• Identify strategies to process/manage feelings (e.g., developing empathy, self-regulation when experiencing anger or disappointment, and seeking help when anxious or sad, etc.).</li> <li>• Understand that our social environment impacts our values related to gender, relationships, and family (e.g., the kinds of relationships we value, how we treat others, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand that there are many different kinds of relationships, families, and communities.</li> <li>• Learn to treat others with dignity and respect in relationships (e.g., friendships, family relationships).</li> <li>• Learn to identify characteristics of equitable, positive, and satisfying relationships (e.g., mutual respect, good communication, trust, honesty, non-violent conflict resolution, etc.).</li> <li>• Learn strategies for building community (e.g., friendships, family, community activities).</li> <li>• Develop conflict resolution skills (e.g., learning that language matters and words can hurt, identifying solutions).</li> <li>• Understand the difference between expressing feelings in respectful/caring ways and disrespectful/uncaring ways.</li> </ul>
<b>Digital Media Literacy and Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about consent with regard to digital images (e.g., asking friends if they want to have their photo taken).</li> <li>• Learn how to navigate online environments safely and respectfully.</li> <li>• Understand 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>• Learn ways to identify credible online information (e.g., asking a trusted adult, or using credible websites suggested by educators).</li> <li>• Understand that media representations can influence the way we think about our lives (including gender, sexuality, and relationships) in positive and negative ways.</li> <li>• Learn about stereotypes in media.</li> </ul>

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
<b>Sexual and Gender Diversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn that gender identity, gender expression, sex assigned at birth, and sexual identity (e.g., sexual orientation) are different concepts.</li> <li>• Understand that there is a range of gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations.</li> <li>• Learn about diverse cultural conceptions of gender.</li> <li>• Learn about Indigenous ways of knowing regarding gender.</li> <li>• Understand how the people in one's life identify themselves and learn how to be respectful of people's identities (e.g., using the person's stated pronoun, learning how to pronounce their names).</li> </ul>
<b>Violence: Awareness and Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn how to engage in and recognize help-seeking behaviors.</li> <li>• Learn about peer pressure related to violence (including harmful comments) and strategies for handling peer pressure.</li> <li>• Learn how to identify unsafe situations/relationships.</li> <li>• Understand and recognize forms of discrimination, abuse, and violence (e.g., bullying, sexual abuse, racism).</li> <li>• Learn information about disclosing experiences of abuse.</li> <li>• Understand that violence can occur in different places (e.g., school, home) and in different kinds of relationships (e.g., peers, family, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Bodies: Sexual Health and Well-being<sup>1</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn the accurate names for body parts, including genitals.*</li> <li>• Understand that all bodies are different and should be respected.</li> <li>• Understand that growing up includes many overlapping and varied physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual changes (e.g., some people go through puberty at an earlier age, some at a later age).</li> <li>• Identify ways to support and care for one's body as it grows and changes.</li> <li>• Identify different sensory experiences in the body (e.g., feeling relaxed during calming activities, feeling excited during fun activities, feeling anxious in situations that cause stress, etc.).</li> </ul>

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



## GRADE 4 TO GRADE 5 (AGES 9-10)

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
<b>Gender Norms, Roles, and Stereotypes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand what gender roles/stereotypes are and how they can impact the way we think about people and our own lives.</li> <li>• Understand how gender stereotypes can contribute to GBV.</li> <li>• Learn about the social attitudes and systemic factors that contribute to GBV (e.g., misogynistic beliefs, racism, ableism, transphobia, homophobia, biphobia, etc.).</li> <li>• Identify ways to challenge and change social attitudes that can contribute to GBV (e.g., strategies for promoting gender equality and positive peer influence).</li> </ul>
<b>Autonomy and Consent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand that consent is critical to all types of interpersonal relationships and interactions (e.g., with peers, in public and private settings, etc.).</li> <li>• Understand that consent is linked to partnered sexual activity.</li> <li>• Understand that people engage in sexual activity/do not engage in sexual activity for many reasons.</li> </ul>
<b>Values and Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify one's values related to relationships, sexuality, gender, and family.</li> <li>• Learn about ethics in relationships (e.g., ethical aspects of consent, ethics of care in relationships).</li> <li>• Understand that there are many kinds of human rights, including sexual rights.</li> <li>• Understand that GBV is a violation of human rights.</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how inequality within relationships (e.g., differences in age, gender, income, etc.) can impact relationships.</li> <li>• Develop/use strategies for creating and maintaining equitable, positive, and satisfying interpersonal relationships (e.g., communication skills, building trust, being honest and respectful, etc.)</li> </ul>

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
<b>Digital Media Literacy and Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the difference between credible sources of information and inaccurate sources of information.</li> <li>• Use strategies for navigating online environments/using technology safely and respectfully.</li> <li>• Identify gender, racial, and sexual orientation stereotypes in media.</li> <li>• Identify positive media representations related to gender, race, sexual orientation, and relationships.</li> <li>• Understand communication technology safety and respect (e.g., asking or pressuring others to send images, sending/not sending images, consent in sharing images, sexting, etc.).</li> <li>• Understand that media depictions of people and relationships do not necessarily reflect real life.</li> <li>• Learn how to find needed information without accessing harmful content (e.g., sexist content).</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual and Gender Diversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand that sexuality is part of being human and that people have different ideas about what sexuality means to them and how they express their sexuality.</li> <li>• Understand that it is wrong to discriminate based on a person's sexual identity, gender identity, or gender expression.</li> <li>• Understand the different terms related to gender identity and sexual orientation (including discussions on asexuality).</li> <li>• Learn about diverse cultural conceptions of sexuality.</li> <li>• Learn about Indigenous ways of knowing regarding sexuality.</li> <li>• Understand that sexual identity is complex and varied (e.g., some people know from a young age, others know later in life, some people experience fluidity in their identities while others do not, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Violence: Awareness and Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about and develop bystander intervention knowledge and skills.</li> <li>• Learn about abuse within intimate relationships and develop strategies to seek help/support.</li> <li>• Identify ways to respond when someone has experienced violence.</li> <li>• Learn how to identify grooming behaviours (i.e., manipulative behaviours that abusers use to gain access to victims, such as isolating the victim, sharing "secrets", desensitization to touch and sexual content, etc.) and understand what those behaviours may look like in person and online.</li> <li>• Learn about the prevention of sexual exploitation and human trafficking.</li> <li>• Learn about myths related to GBV (e.g., that it occurs primarily between strangers, that it does not happen in same-gender relationships, that it only occurs within the context of romantic partnerships, that it does not happen in public spaces, etc.).</li> </ul>

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
<b>Bodies: Sexual Health and Well-being<sup>1</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the physical, psychological, emotional, and social changes associated with puberty.*</li> <li>• Understand that there is overlap in how bodies change during puberty and the variation in people’s experiences* (e.g., differences related to body parts, hormones, disability, cultural ceremonies, or traditions related to growing up, etc.).</li> <li>• Understand information related to reproduction.*</li> <li>• Understand that people can feel pleasure from different types of activities (e.g., hugging, cuddling, kissing, different kinds of sensory activities and pressure) and that what feels good differs across people.</li> </ul>

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

## GRADE 6 TO GRADE 8 (AGES 11 - 13)

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
<b>Gender Norms, Roles, and Stereotypes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about the intersecting social factors that impact attitudes and beliefs about romantic and sexual relationships.</li> <li>• Learn about the intersecting social factors that impact attitudes and beliefs about gender and sexual identity.</li> <li>• Understand how gender norms, roles, and stereotypes are linked to people’s willingness to engage in non-consensual sharing of sexual images.</li> <li>• Understand how gender and sexual norms can impact the way a person thinks about and/or expresses their own gender and sexual identity.</li> <li>• Understand how gender and sexual norms impact a person’s sexual health and other social outcomes.</li> <li>• Develop skills to critically evaluate gender and sexual norms, roles, and stereotypes in one’s social and cultural environment</li> </ul>

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
<b>Autonomy and Consent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about the legal aspects of sexual consent (e.g., laws designed to protect youth from sexual exploitation, age of consent laws and close-in-age exceptions, consent and substance use, etc.).</li> <li>• Understand how power dynamics may impact a person’s ability to consent to sexual activity.</li> <li>• Understand how power dynamics may impact a person’s ability to engage in safer sex practices (e.g., barrier use).</li> <li>• Address information, motivation, and behavioral skills to set/respect sexual and relational limits and practice safer sex (e.g., consent communication skills, communication about barrier use during sex, etc.).</li> <li>• Understand and develop strategies for dealing with interpersonal and sexual rejection.</li> <li>• Learn how alcohol and drugs can impact decision-making and social interactions.</li> </ul>
<b>Values and Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand advocacy related to sexual health (e.g., self-advocacy, group advocacy).</li> <li>• Understand the rights related to self-defense when one’s boundaries have been violated (e.g., right to verbal or physical defense; understanding how power dynamics can impact a person’s ability to engage in various forms of self-defense).</li> <li>• Understand the difference between sexual rights, needs, responsibilities, and wants.</li> <li>• Identify how sexual and reproductive rights are related to various social and rights movements (e.g., Truth and Reconciliation, #MeToo, reproductive justice).</li> <li>• Understand how values of empathy, care, and respect can be incorporated into sexual and romantic relationships.</li> <li>• Understand how values of empathy, care, and respect can be incorporated into peer and other interpersonal relationships (e.g., by standing up for others, intervening and/or help-seeking when there is a problem in private and public settings, etc.).</li> </ul>

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
<b>Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about power dynamics in sexual and romantic relationships and the factors that contribute to power differences (e.g., how power imbalances based on gender or sexual identity impact a person’s ability to leave/remain in an unsatisfactory or abusive relationship; how to create more equal relationships).</li> <li>• Learn about the emotional components of interpersonal and sexual relationships.</li> <li>• Identify and develop conflict resolution skills for interpersonal relationships (e.g., peer, romantic, and sexual relationships).</li> <li>• Learn about and develop skills for ending interpersonal relationships (e.g., peer, romantic, sexual) in a respectful way, including strategies for respectfully dealing with one’s own feelings (e.g., sadness, rejection, anger, loneliness, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Digital Media Literacy and Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the importance of consent in sharing sexually explicit images of oneself or others, and asking for sexual images/content from others.</li> <li>• Understand the legal and ethical aspects of sharing digital sexual content.</li> <li>• Learn about the different moral disengagement strategies people use to justify the non-consensual sharing of digital sexual images (e.g., victim-blaming, denying, or ignoring the harm, etc.).</li> <li>• Understand how/when to ask for help and develop strategies for accessing help (e.g., talking to a trusted adult, reporting to a moderator, etc.) when encountering problems in online environments (e.g., harmful content, harassment, grooming, etc).</li> <li>• Understand that digital blackmail is a form of violence (e.g., image-based sexual abuse).</li> <li>• Understand the difference between sources of GBV prevention information that are accurate and credible, and sources that are not credible, inaccurate, and/or promote attitudes that contribute to GBV (e.g., misogynistic material).</li> <li>• Learn strategies to identify credible sources of information that promote consent and the enhancement of sexual health and well-being.</li> <li>• Understand that sexually explicit media can include stereotypes about gender and sexuality and may not be representative of real sexual relationships.</li> </ul>

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
<b>Sexual and Gender Diversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop ways to communicate respectfully with and about people of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations.</li> <li>• Understand that there are many ways that people express themselves sexually and that sexual expression does not always involve partnered sexual activities.</li> <li>• Understand the different social factors that contribute to positive sexual health and well-being outcomes and relationships for different groups of people (e.g., protective factors for 2SLGBTQINA+ people such as school and family support, access to effective sexual health care and information, etc.).</li> <li>• Understand the different factors that impact how a person views gender, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation (e.g., family, culture, peers, school environment, media, etc.).</li> <li>• Identify ways to promote respect, care, and inclusion for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in various social environments (e.g., school, community).</li> </ul>
<b>Violence: Awareness and Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how to access GBV support services (e.g., shelters, counseling services for victims/survivors, counseling services for perpetrators/potential perpetrators or people who think they may have been abusive) and be linked to relevant support services in the community.</li> <li>• Identify ways to support someone who has experienced GBV.</li> <li>• Understand the range of experiences that fall under the umbrella of GBV (e.g., that GBV occurs on a spectrum ranging from subtle acts of violence to overt acts of violence, that GBV includes violence against 2SLGBTQINA+ people, etc.).</li> <li>• Understand the impact and/or consequences of sexual violence on victims/survivors, bystanders, and perpetrators.</li> <li>• Understand the social, cultural, interpersonal, and individual factors that contribute to sexual violence perpetration.</li> <li>• Understand how to recognize and respond to signs of violence in dating relationships.</li> <li>• Understand how experiences of GBV can impact family and interpersonal relationships (e.g., intergenerational trauma).</li> <li>• Understand the different factors that impact whether a person is believed and supported when they disclose experiences of GBV (e.g., social attitudes and myths, including rape myths and victim blaming, etc.).</li> <li>• Understand ways to support people who have experienced transphobic, homophobic, and/or biphobic violence.</li> </ul>

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
<b>Bodies: Sexual Health and Well-being<sup>1</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about the ways that trauma can impact sexual health and well-being.</li> <li>• Learn about reproductive coercion/ control (i.e., pressuring someone about their reproductive decision-making; taking steps to prevent someone from making autonomous decisions about their reproductive health) and the impact it can have on sexual health and well-being.</li> <li>• Understand the importance of STI and pregnancy testing for the victims/survivors in cases of sexual coercion/assault.</li> <li>• Understand how to access confidential STI testing and treatment services in the community and the limits to confidentiality.</li> <li>• Understand the range of contraceptive options and pregnancy options (e.g., abortion, adoption, having and parenting a baby) and how to access confidential reproductive health care (including pregnancy testing and access to emergency contraception, such as Plan B).</li> <li>• Understand that there are a range of behavioural options to reduce the chance of STIs and unwanted/unintended pregnancies (e.g., not engaging in sexual behaviours that involve risk for STI and pregnancy, using barriers, engaging in lower-risk sexual activities) and develop skills to communicate about various options with a partner and respect a partner's decisions.</li> <li>• Understand that many romantic and sexual activities can be pleasurable (e.g., cuddling, kissing, masturbation, oral sex, penetrative sex).</li> </ul>

## GRADE 9 TO GRADE 10 (AGES 14 - 15)

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
<b>Gender Norms, Roles, and Stereotypes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand sexual scripts (e.g., traditional sexual scripts, scripts about sexual consent, sexual scripts for 2SLGBTQINA+ relationships), how they may impact attitudes and sexual behavior, and identify ways to challenge and change problematic sexual scripts.</li> <li>• Understand how gender inequality, gender norms and stereotypes, and sexual norms can influence sexual behavior and increase/decrease a person's risk of experiencing or perpetrating GBV.</li> <li>• Develop skills to critically reflect and assess the gender stereotypes one holds, and the gender stereotypes reflected in the community and other social environments (e.g., school, work).</li> </ul>

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
<b>Autonomy and Consent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the impact of drugs and alcohol on consent, sexual interactions, and safer sex.</li> <li>• Understand how trauma might impact how a person can navigate sexual consent.</li> <li>• Continue discussions about consent within sexual relationships in greater detail/complexity (e.g., examine how power imbalances in relationships and gender norms impact sexual consent).</li> </ul>
<b>Values and Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how sexual and reproductive rights have been/can be violated through institutional policies and actions (e.g., forced sterilization, systemic removal of children, lack of access to reproductive technology, police violence, inequitable access to critical medications such as PrEP, PEP, and emergency contraception such as Plan B, etc.).</li> <li>• Identify individual and collective responsibilities for upholding sexual and reproductive rights (e.g., advocating for sexual health, reducing violence, etc.).</li> <li>• Identify the different national and international documents related to sexual rights and understand how different documents are used to promote sexual rights and help prevent/reduce GBV.</li> <li>• Examine how one's own values are related to/align with one's own sexual and interpersonal decision-making (e.g., decision to have/not have sex, ability to communicate with a partner, decision to support/not support peers who are experiencing different forms of GBV, decision to engage in/not engage in reproduction of harmful language and behaviours, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand that there are various romantic and/or sexual relationship types and structures (e.g., casual relationships, committed relationships, monogamous partnerships, ethically/consensually non-monogamous partnerships, etc.).</li> <li>• Understand the ethics of responsible interpersonal and sexual interactions.</li> <li>• Develop strategies for enhancing interpersonal relationships (e.g., romantic and sexual partners), including respectful ways to approach a potential partner and how to understand/respect each person's needs in a relationship.</li> <li>• Develop skills to critically reflect on romantic and sexual relationships (e.g., determine if you are happy in a relationship and getting your needs met, examine how other social factors such as peers and media impact the way you think about your relationship).</li> </ul>
<b>Digital Media Literacy and Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the importance of learning about the privacy levels of digital platforms (e.g., social media and sites that post sexual content such as pornography).</li> <li>• Develop skills to critically assess the portrayal of gender, sexuality, and relationships in sexually explicit media.</li> </ul>



Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
Sexual and Gender Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued discussions about sexual and gender identities in greater detail/complexity (e.g., use anti-racist, intersectional perspectives to reflect on the social factors and personal experiences that impact the way each person thinks about their own gender and sexual identities)</li> </ul>
Violence: Awareness and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the differences between sex trafficking and sex work (e.g., legal differences, consent differences, etc.)</li> </ul>
Bodies: Sexual Health and Well-being <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the sexual response cycle and how it does and does not relate to pleasure, desire, arousal, and consent (e.g., understanding that physiological arousal does not equal consent).</li> <li>Recognize that pleasure can be an important part of sexual activity (whether alone or with a partner) and that each person is responsible for learning about pleasure and ensuring that consent and boundaries are respected in the mutual pursuit of pleasure.</li> </ul>

## GRADE 11 TO GRADE 12 (AGES 16-17)

Topic/Strand	Benchmarks
Gender Norms, Roles, and Stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Across all topics/strands, continue discussions and opportunities for skill development from previous grades but in greater detail/complexity.</b></li> <li>Understand advanced information related to how different social factors and attitudes contribute to GBV (e.g., gender inequality, misogynistic beliefs, gender norms, systems of oppression such as racism, transphobia, ableism, etc.) and how and why different groups of people are disproportionately impacted by GBV (e.g., from an intersectional perspective).</li> <li>Understand and apply advanced information related to promoting sexual rights (e.g., advocating for social change and gender equity) and developing social environments and interpersonal relationships that are meaningful, consensual, equitable, respectful, safe, and satisfying.</li> </ul>
Autonomy and Consent	
Values and Rights	
Relationships	
Digital Media Literacy and Technology	
Sexual and Gender Diversity	
Violence: Awareness and Support	
Bodies: Sexual Health and Well-being <sup>1</sup>	

1 For extensive Benchmarks related to STI prevention in sexual health education, please see the *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education*, pg. 83.



**Key Benchmarks for the Integration of  
GBV Prevention in Sexual Health Education:  
Listed by Topic/Strand**

# Key Benchmarks for the Integration of GBV Prevention in Sexual Health Education: Listed by Topic/Strand

GBV prevention concepts are situated under the following CSHE topic strands:

Gender Norms, Roles, and Stereotypes

Autonomy and Consent

Values and Rights

Relationships

Digital Media Literacy and Technology Use

Sexual and Gender Diversity

Violence: Awareness and Support

Bodies: Sexual Health and Well-being

## GENDER NORMS, ROLES, AND STEREOTYPES

### Kindergarten to Grade 3 (Ages 4 - 8)

- Understand that our social environment impacts the way we think about our lives (e.g., there are specific social and cultural ideas or “rules” about how different genders are supposed to act/be; what we see in media can impact how we think about gender, family and relationships).
- Understand that 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 factors.
- Identify ways to treat people of all genders, (and other intersecting identities), with respect and dignity.

### Grade 4 to Grade 5 (Ages 9-10)

- Understand what gender roles/stereotypes are and how they can impact the way we think about people and our own lives.
- Understand how gender stereotypes can contribute to GBV.
- Learn about the social attitudes and systemic factors that contribute to GBV (e.g., misogynistic beliefs, racism, ableism, transphobia, homophobia, biphobia etc.).
- Identify ways to challenge and change social attitudes that can contribute to GBV (e.g., strategies for promoting gender equality and positive peer influence).

## GENDER NORMS, ROLES, AND STEREOTYPES

### Grade 6 to Grade 8 (Ages 11 - 13)

- Learn about the intersecting social factors that impact attitudes and beliefs about romantic and sexual relationships.
- Learn about the intersecting social factors that impact attitudes and beliefs about gender and sexual identity.
- Understand how gender norms, roles, and stereotypes are linked to people's willingness to engage in non-consensual sharing of sexual images.
- Understand how gender and sexual norms can impact the way a person thinks about and/or expresses their own gender and sexual identity.
- Understand how gender and sexual norms impact a person's own sexual health and other social outcomes.
- Develop skills to critically evaluate gender and sexual norms, roles, and stereotypes in one's social and cultural environment

### Grade 9 to Grade 10 (Ages 14 - 15)

- Understand sexual scripts (e.g., traditional sexual scripts, scripts about sexual consent, sexual scripts for 2SLGBTQINA+ relationships), how they may impact attitudes and sexual behavior, and identify ways to challenge and change problematic sexual scripts.
- Understand how gender inequality, gender norms and stereotypes, and sexual norms can influence sexual behavior and increase/decrease a person's risk of experiencing or perpetrating GBV.
- Develop skills to critically reflect and assess the gender stereotypes one holds, and the gender stereotypes reflected in the community and other social environments (e.g., school, work).

### Grade 11 to Grade 12 (Ages 16-17)\*

- **Across all topic/strands, continue discussions and opportunities for skill development from previous grades but in greater detail/complexity.**
- Understand advanced information related to how different social factors and attitudes contribute to GBV (e.g., gender inequality, misogynistic beliefs, gender norms, systems of oppression such as racism, transphobia, ableism, etc.) and how and why different groups of people are disproportionately impacted by GBV (e.g., from an intersectional perspective).
- Understand and apply advanced information related to promoting sexual rights (e.g., advocating for social change and gender equity) and developing social environments and interpersonal relationships that are meaningful, consensual, equitable, respectful, safe, and satisfying.

\* Benchmarks in Grades 11-12 (Ages 16-17) are the same across all topics/strands.

## AUTONOMY AND CONSENT

### Kindergarten to Grade 3 (Ages 4 - 8)

- Learn about setting and respecting bodily autonomy and personal boundaries (e.g., asking for a hug, respecting a person's "yes" or "no").
- Learn about safe touch, body safety, and inappropriate touch.
- Learn about consent within 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).
- Understand that communication can happen verbally and nonverbally.
- Learn to communicate with others (e.g., peers, family members).

### Grade 4 to Grade 5 (Ages 9-10)

- Understand that consent is critical to all types of interpersonal relationships and interactions (e.g., with peers, in public and private settings etc.).
- Understand that consent is linked to partnered sexual activity.
- Understand that people engage in sexual activity/don't engage in sexual activity for many reasons.

### Grade 6 to Grade 8 (Ages 11 - 13)

- Learn about the legal aspects of sexual consent (e.g., laws designed to protect youth from sexual exploitation, age of consent laws and close in age exceptions, consent and substance use etc.).
- Understand how power dynamics may impact a person's ability to consent to sexual activity.
- Understand how power dynamics may impact a person's ability to engage in safer sex practices (e.g., barrier use).
- Address information, motivation, and behavioral skills to set/respect sexual and relational limits and practice safer sex (e.g., consent communication skills, communication about barrier use during sex etc.).
- Understand and develop strategies for dealing with interpersonal and sexual rejection.
- Learn how alcohol and drugs can impact decision making and social interactions.

### Grade 9 to Grade 10 (Ages 14 - 15)

- Understand the impact of drugs and alcohol on consent, sexual interactions, and safer sex.
- Understand how experiences of trauma might impact the way a person is able to navigate sexual consent.
- Continue discussions about consent within sexual relationships in greater detail/complexity (e.g., examine how power imbalances in relationships and gender norms impact sexual consent).

## AUTONOMY AND CONSENT

### Grade 11 to Grade 12 (Ages 16-17)\*

- **Across all topic/strands, continue discussions and opportunities for skill development from previous grades but in greater detail/complexity.**
- Understand advanced information related to how different social factors and attitudes contribute to GBV (e.g., gender inequality, misogynistic beliefs, gender norms, systems of oppression such as racism, transphobia, ableism, etc.) and how and why different groups of people are disproportionately impacted by GBV (e.g., from an intersectional perspective).
- Understand and apply advanced information related to promoting sexual rights (e.g., advocating for social change and gender equity) and developing social environments and interpersonal relationships that are meaningful, consensual, equitable, respectful, safe, and satisfying.

\* Benchmarks in Grades 11-12 (Ages 16-17) are the same across all topics/strands.

## VALUES AND RIGHTS

### Kindergarten to Grade 3 (Ages 4 - 8)

- Understand that everyone has and should respect human rights (including the right to privacy, education, autonomy, safety, and self-defense).
- Develop social-emotional skills and values for engaging in healthy relationships (e.g., empathy, respect).
- Identify one's own feelings and the feelings of others (e.g., peers).
- Identify strategies to process/manage feelings (e.g., developing empathy, self-regulation when experiencing anger or disappointment, and seeking help when anxious or sad, etc.).
- Understand that our social environment impacts our values related to gender, relationships, and family (e.g., the kinds of relationships we value, how we treat others etc.).

### Grade 4 to Grade 5 (Ages 9-10)

- Identify one's own values related to relationships, sexuality, gender, and family.
- Learn about ethics in relationships (e.g., ethical aspects of consent, ethics of care in relationships).
- Understand that there are many kinds of human rights, including sexual rights.
- Understand that GBV is a violation of human rights.

## VALUES AND RIGHTS

### Grade 6 to Grade 8 (Ages 11 - 13)

- Understand advocacy related to sexual health (e.g., self-advocacy, group advocacy).
- Understand the rights related self-defense when one's boundaries have been violated (e.g., right to verbal or physical defense; understanding how power dynamics can impact a person's ability to engage in various forms of self-defense).
- Understand the difference between sexual rights, needs, responsibilities, and wants.
- Identify how sexual and reproductive rights are related to various social and rights movements (e.g., Truth and Reconciliation, #MeToo, reproductive justice).
- Understand how values of empathy, care, and respect can be incorporated into sexual and romantic relationships.
- Understand how values of empathy, care, and respect can be incorporated into peer and other interpersonal relationships (e.g., by standing up for others, intervening and/or help seeking when there is a problem in private and public settings etc.).

### Grade 9 to Grade 10 (Ages 14 - 15)

- Understand how sexual and reproductive rights have been/can be violated through institutional policies and actions (e.g., forced sterilization, systemic removal of children, lack of access to reproductive technology, police violence, inequitable access to critical medications such as PrEP, PEP, and emergency contraception such as Plan B etc.).
- Identify individual and collective responsibilities for upholding sexual and reproductive rights (e.g., advocating for sexual health, reducing violence etc.).
- Identify the different national and international documents related to sexual rights and understand how different documents are used to promote sexual rights and help prevent/reduce GBV.
- Examine how one's own values are related to/align with one's own sexual and interpersonal decision making (e.g., decision to have/not have sex, ability to communicate with a partner, decision to support/not support peers who are experiencing different forms of GBV, decision to engage in/not engage in reproduction of harmful language and behaviours etc.).

### Grade 11 to Grade 12 (Ages 16-17)\*

- **Across all topic/strands, continue discussions and opportunities for skill development from previous grades but in greater detail/complexity.**
- Understand advanced information related to how different social factors and attitudes contribute to GBV (e.g., gender inequality, misogynistic beliefs, gender norms, systems of oppression such as racism, transphobia, ableism, etc.) and how and why different groups of people are disproportionately impacted by GBV (e.g., from an intersectional perspective).
- Understand and apply advanced information related to promoting sexual rights (e.g., advocating for social change and gender equity) and developing social environments and interpersonal relationships that are meaningful, consensual, equitable, respectful, safe, and satisfying.

\* Benchmarks in Grades 11-12 (Ages 16-17) are the same across all topics/strands.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### Kindergarten to Grade 3 (Ages 4 - 8)

- Understand that there are many different kinds of relationships, families, and communities.
- Learn to treat others with dignity and respect in relationships (e.g., differences in age, gender, income etc.).
- Learn to identify characteristics of equitable, positive, and satisfying relationships (e.g., mutual respect, good communication, trust, honesty, non-violent conflict resolution etc.).
- Learn strategies for building community (e.g., friendships, family, community activities).
- Develop conflict resolution skills (e.g., learning that language matters and words can hurt, identifying solutions).
- Understand the difference between expressing feelings in respectful/caring ways and disrespectful/uncaring ways.

### Grade 4 to Grade 5 (Ages 9-10)

- Understand how inequality within relationships (e.g., differences in age, gender, income etc.) can impact relationships.
- Develop/use strategies for creating and maintaining equitable, positive, and satisfying interpersonal relationships (e.g., communication skills, building trust, being honest and respectful etc.)

### Grade 6 to Grade 8 (Ages 11 - 13)

- Learn about power dynamics in sexual and romantic relationships and the factors that contribute to power differences (e.g., how power imbalances based on gender or sexual identity impact a person's ability to leave/remain in an unsatisfactory or abusive relationship; how to create more equal relationships).
- Learn about the emotional components of interpersonal and sexual relationships.
- Identify and develop conflict resolution skills for interpersonal relationships (e.g., peer, romantic, and sexual relationships).
- Learn about and develop skills for ending interpersonal relationships (e.g., peer, romantic, sexual) in respectful way, including strategies for respectfully dealing with one's own feelings (e.g., sadness, rejection, anger, loneliness etc.).



## RELATIONSHIPS

### Grade 9 to Grade 10 (Ages 14 - 15)

- Understand that there are various romantic and/or sexual relationship types and structures (e.g., casual relationships, committed relationships, monogamous partnerships, ethically/consensually non-monogamous partnerships, etc.).
- Understand the ethics of responsible interpersonal and sexual interactions.
- Develop strategies for enhancing interpersonal relationships (e.g., romantic, and sexual partners), including respectful ways to approach a potential partner and how to understand/respect each person's needs in a relationship.
- Develop skills to critically reflect on romantic and sexual relationships (e.g., determine if you are happy in a relationship and getting your needs met, examine how other social factors such as peers and media impact the way you think about your relationship).

### Grade 11 to Grade 12 (Ages 16-17)\*

- **Across all topic/strands, continue discussions and opportunities for skill development from previous grades but in greater detail/complexity.**
- Understand advanced information related to how different social factors and attitudes contribute to GBV (e.g., gender inequality, misogynistic beliefs, gender norms, systems of oppression such as racism, transphobia, ableism, etc.) and how and why different groups of people are disproportionately impacted by GBV (e.g., from an intersectional perspective).
- Understand and apply advanced information related to promoting sexual rights (e.g., advocating for social change and gender equity) and developing social environments and interpersonal relationships that are meaningful, consensual, equitable, respectful, safe, and satisfying.

\* Benchmarks in Grades 11-12 (Ages 16-17) are the same across all topics/strands.

## DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY AND TECHNOLOGY USE

### Kindergarten to Grade 3 (Ages 4 - 8)

- Learn about consent with regard to digital images (e.g., asking friends if they want to have their photo taken).
- Learn how to navigate online environments safely and respectfully.
- Understand 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).
- Learn ways to identify credible online information (e.g., asking a trusted adult, using credible websites suggested by educators).
- Understand that media representations can influence the way we think about our lives (including gender, sexuality, and relationships) in positive and negative ways.
- Learn about stereotypes in media.

### Grade 4 to Grade 5 (Ages 9-10)

- Understand the difference between credible sources of information and inaccurate sources of information.
- Use strategies for navigating online environments/using technology safely and respectfully.
- Identify gender, racial, and sexual orientation stereotypes in media.
- Identify positive media representations related to gender, race, sexual orientation, and relationships.
- Understand communication technology safety and respect (e.g., asking or pressuring others to send images, sending/not sending images, consent in sharing images, sexting, etc.).
- Understand that media depictions of people and relationships do not necessarily reflect real life.
- Learn how to find needed information without accessing harmful content (e.g., sexist content).

### Grade 6 to Grade 8 (Ages 11 - 13)

- Understand the importance of consent in sharing sexually explicit images of others, before sending images of oneself to others, and in asking for sexual images/content from others.
- Understand the legal and ethical aspects of sharing digital sexual content.
- Learn about the different moral disengagement strategies people use to justify the non-consensual sharing of digital sexual images (e.g., victim-blaming, denying, or ignoring the harm etc.).
- Understand how/when to ask for help and develop strategies for accessing help (e.g., talking to a trusted adult, reporting to a moderator, etc.) when encountering problems in online environments (e.g., harmful content, harassment, grooming etc).
- Understand that digital blackmail is a form of violence (e.g., image-based sexual abuse).
- Understand the difference between sources of GBV prevention information that are accurate and credible, and sources that are not credible, inaccurate, and/or promote attitudes that contribute to GBV (e.g., misogynistic material).
- Learn strategies to identify credible sources of information that promote consent and the enhancement of sexual health and wellbeing.
- Understand that sexually explicit media can include stereotypes about gender and sexuality and may not be representative of real sexual relationships.

### Grade 9 to Grade 10 (Ages 14 - 15)

- Understand the importance of learning about the privacy levels of digital platforms (e.g., social media, sites that post sexual content such as pornography).
- Develop skills to critically assess the portrayal of gender, sexuality, and relationships in sexually explicit media.

### Grade 11 to Grade 12 (Ages 16-17)

- **Across all topic/strands, continue discussions and opportunities for skill development from previous grades but in greater detail/complexity.**
- Understand advanced information related to how different social factors and attitudes contribute to GBV (e.g., gender inequality, misogynistic beliefs, gender norms, systems of oppression such as racism, transphobia, ableism, etc.) and how and why different groups of people are disproportionately impacted by GBV (e.g., from an intersectional perspective).
- Understand and apply advanced information related to promoting sexual rights (e.g., advocating for social change and gender equity) and developing social environments and interpersonal relationships that are meaningful, consensual, equitable, respectful, safe, and satisfying.

\* Benchmarks in Grades 11-12 (Ages 16-17) are the same across all topics/strands.

## SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY

### Kindergarten to Grade 3 (Ages 4 - 8)

- Learn that gender identity, gender expression, sex assigned at birth, and sexual identity (e.g., sexual orientation) are different concepts.
- Understand that there are a range of gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations.
- Learn about diverse cultural conceptions of gender.
- Learn about Indigenous ways of knowing regarding gender.
- Understand how the people in one's life identify themselves and learn how to be respectful of people's identities (e.g., using the person's stated pronoun, learning how to pronounce their names).

### Grade 4 to Grade 5 (Ages 9-10)

- Understand that sexuality is part of being human and that people have different ideas about what sexuality means to them and how they express their sexuality.
- Understand that it is wrong to discriminate based on a person's sexual identity, gender identity, or gender expression.
- Understand the different terms related to gender identity and sexual orientation (including discussions on asexuality).
- Learn about diverse cultural conceptions of sexuality.
- Learn about Indigenous ways of knowing regarding sexuality.
- Understand that sexual identity is complex and varied (e.g., some people know from a young age, others know later in life, some people experience fluidity in their identities while others do not etc.).

## SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY

### Grade 6 to Grade 8 (Ages 11 - 13)

- Develop ways to communicate respectfully with and about people of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations.
- Understand that there are many ways that people express themselves sexually and that sexual expression does not always involve partnered sexual activities.
- Understand the different social factors that contribute to positive sexual health and well-being outcomes and relationships for different groups of people (e.g., protective factors for 2SLGBTQINA+ people such as school and family support, access to effective sexual health care and information etc.).
- Understand the different factors that impact how a person views gender, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation (e.g., family, culture, peers, school environment, media, etc.).
- Identify ways to promote respect, care, and inclusion for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in various social environments (e.g., school, community).

### Grade 9 to Grade 10 (Ages 14 - 15)

- Continued discussions about sexual and gender identities in greater detail/complexity (e.g., use anti-racist, intersectional perspectives to reflect on the social factors and personal experiences that impact the way each person thinks about their own gender and sexual identities)

### Grade 11 to Grade 12 (Ages 16-17)\*

- **Across all topic/strands, continue discussions and opportunities for skill development from previous grades but in greater detail/complexity.**
- Understand advanced information related to how different social factors and attitudes contribute to GBV (e.g., gender inequality, misogynistic beliefs, gender norms, systems of oppression such as racism, transphobia, ableism, etc.) and how and why different groups of people are disproportionately impacted by GBV (e.g., from an intersectional perspective).
- Understand and apply advanced information related to promoting sexual rights (e.g., advocating for social change and gender equity) and developing social environments and interpersonal relationships that are meaningful, consensual, equitable, respectful, safe, and satisfying.

\* Benchmarks in Grades 11-12 (Ages 16-17) are the same across all topics/strands.

### Kindergarten to Grade 3 (Ages 4 - 8)

- Learn how to engage in and recognize help seeking behaviors.
- Learn about peer pressure related to violence (including harmful comments) and strategies for handling peer pressure.
- Learn how to identify unsafe situations/relationships.
- Understand and recognize forms of discrimination, abuse, and violence (e.g., bullying, sexual abuse, racism).
- Learn information about disclosing experiences of abuse.
- Understand that violence can occur in different places (e.g., school, home) and in different kinds of relationships (e.g., peers, family, etc.).

### Grade 4 to Grade 5 (Ages 9-10)

- Learn about and develop bystander intervention knowledge and skills.
- Learn about abuse within intimate relationships and develop strategies to seek help/support.
- Identify ways to respond when someone has experienced violence.
- Learn how to identify grooming behaviours (i.e. , manipulative behaviours that abusers use to gain access to victims, such as isolating the victim, sharing “secrets”, desensitization to touch and sexual content, etc ) and understand what those behaviours may look like in person and online.
- Learn about the prevention of sexual exploitation and human trafficking.
- Learn about myths related to GBV (e.g., that it occurs primarily between strangers, that it doesn’t happen in same-gender relationships, that it only occurs within the context of romantic partnerships, that it doesn’t happen in public spaces etc.).

## VIOLENCE: AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

### Grade 6 to Grade 8 (Ages 11 - 13)

- Understand how to access GBV support services (e.g., shelters, counseling services for victims/survivors, counseling services for perpetrators/potential perpetrators or people who think they may have been abusive) and be linked to relevant support services in the community.
- Identify ways to support someone who has experienced GBV.
- Understand the range of experiences that fall under the umbrella of GBV (e.g., that GBV occurs on a spectrum ranging from subtle acts of violence to overt acts of violence, that GBV includes violence against 2SLGBTQINA+ people etc.).
- Understand the impact and/or consequences of sexual violence on victims/survivors, bystanders, and perpetrators.
- Understand the social, cultural, interpersonal, and individual factors that contribute to sexual violence perpetration.
- Understand how to recognize and respond to signs of violence in dating relationships.
- Understand how experiences of GBV can impact family and interpersonal relationships (e.g., intergenerational trauma).
- Understand the different factors that impact whether a person is believed and supported when they disclose experiences of GBV (e.g., social attitudes and myths, including rape myths and victim blaming etc.).
- Understand ways to support people who have experienced transphobic, homophobic, and/or biphobic violence.

### Grade 9 to Grade 10 (Ages 14 - 15)

- Understand the differences between sex trafficking and sex work (e.g., legal differences, consent differences etc.)

### Grade 11 to Grade 12 (Ages 16-17)\*

- **Across all topic/strands, continue discussions and opportunities for skill development from previous grades but in greater detail/complexity.**
- Understand advanced information related to how different social factors and attitudes contribute to GBV (e.g., gender inequality, misogynistic beliefs, gender norms, systems of oppression such as racism, transphobia, ableism, etc.) and how and why different groups of people are disproportionately impacted by GBV (e.g., from an intersectional perspective).
- Understand and apply advanced information related to promoting sexual rights (e.g., advocating for social change and gender equity) and developing social environments and interpersonal relationships that are meaningful, consensual, equitable, respectful, safe, and satisfying.

\* Benchmarks in Grades 11-12 (Ages 16-17) are the same across all topics/strands.

### Kindergarten to Grade 3 (Ages 4 - 8)

- Learn the accurate names for body parts, including genitals\*.
- Understand that all bodies are different and should be respected.
- Understand that growing up includes many overlapping and varied physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual changes (e.g., some people go through puberty at an earlier age, some at a later age).
- Identify ways to support and care for one's body as it grows and changes.
- Identify different sensory experiences in the body (e.g., feeling relaxed during calming activities, feeling excited during fun activities, feeling anxious in situations that illicit stress etc.).

### Grade 4 to Grade 5 (Ages 9-10)

- Understand the physical, psychological, emotional, and social changes associated with puberty\*.
- Understand that there is overlap in how bodies change during puberty and variation in people's experiences\* (e.g., differences related to body parts, hormones, disability, cultural ceremonies, or traditions related to growing up etc.).
- Understand information related to reproduction\*.
- Understand that people can feel pleasure from many different types of activities (e.g., hugging, cuddling, kissing, different kinds of sensory activities and pressure) and that what feels good differs across people.

### Grade 6 to Grade 8 (Ages 11 - 13)

- Learn about the ways that trauma can impact sexual health and well-being.
- Learn about reproductive coercion/ control (i.e., pressuring someone about their reproductive decision-making; taking steps to prevent someone from making autonomous decisions about their reproductive health) and the impact it can have on sexual health and well-being.
- Understand the importance of STI and pregnancy testing for the victims/survivors in cases of sexual coercion/assault.
- Understand how to access confidential STI testing and treatment services in the community and understand the limits to confidentiality.
- Understand the range of contraceptive options and pregnancy options (e.g., abortion, adoption, having and parenting a baby) and how to access confidential reproductive health care (including pregnancy testing and access to emergency contraception, such as Plan B).
- Understand that there are a range of behavioural options to reduce the chance of STIs and unwanted/unintended pregnancies (e.g., not engaging in sexual behaviours that involve risk for STI and pregnancy, using barriers, engaging in lower-risk sexual activities) and develop skills to communicate about various options with a partner and respect a partner's decisions.
- Understand that many romantic and sexual activities can be pleasurable (e.g., cuddling, kissing, masturbation, oral sex, penetrative sex).

## BODIES: SEXUAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

### Grade 9 to Grade 10 (Ages 14 - 15)

- Understand the sexual response cycle and how it does and does not relate to pleasure, desire, arousal, and consent (e.g., understanding that physiological arousal does not equal consent).
- Recognize that pleasure can be an important part of sexual activity (whether alone or with a partner) and that each person is responsible for learning about pleasure and ensuring that consent and boundaries are respected in the mutual pursuit of pleasure.

### Grade 11 to Grade 12 (Ages 16-17)\*

- **Across all topic/strands, continue discussions and opportunities for skill development from previous grades but in greater detail/complexity.**
- Understand advanced information related to how different social factors and attitudes contribute to GBV (e.g., gender inequality, misogynistic beliefs, gender norms, systems of oppression such as racism, transphobia, ableism, etc.) and how and why different groups of people are disproportionately impacted by GBV (e.g., from an intersectional perspective).
- Understand and apply advanced information related to promoting sexual rights (e.g., advocating for social change and gender equity) and developing social environments and interpersonal relationships that are meaningful, consensual, equitable, respectful, safe, and satisfying.

1 For extensive Benchmarks related to STI prevention in sexual health education, please see the *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education*, pg. 83.

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

\* Benchmarks in Grades 11-12 (Ages 16-17) are the same across all topics/strands.





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