

# Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!

## Growth & Development Curriculum Support for Grades 5 and 6

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### Getting Started

Welcome to the “**Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!**” curriculum support document.

You will find new activities, more inclusive language, and a greater responsiveness to gender equity and diversity. The goal of this document is to be consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code and Accepting Schools Act Bill 13, as well as acknowledge the importance of mental health in the success of all students.

Teaching Growth & Development classes can be an exciting part of the curriculum. This resource was designed to support teachers when they are introducing topics such as menstruation, puberty, and sexuality. By approaching these topics from a health perspective, this curriculum support document becomes part of health literacy.

During puberty, a major part of our self-image is formed, as well as our attitudes towards others. The information and activities provided in this curriculum support document can help your students move through this important time of change with greater confidence.

Included in this curriculum support document, you will find:

- Lesson plans
- Suggested lesson timeframes and materials
- Teacher Prompts- meant to be read out loud to students
- Exit cards to assess students’ learning
- Glossary (Appendix B) with defined words in bold when first seen in lesson plans
- Anatomical diagrams (labelled & unlabeled) (Appendix G)

It is suggested that teachers review the Ontario Child, Youth, and Family Services Act as well as their school board’s disclosure policy. Please see: It’s Your Duty – A Guide to Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect (Appendix K).

## **Diverse Students, Diverse Needs**

- Puberty is a critical time of self-discovery.
- Students come from diverse families who may or may not be biologically related, and may be made up of caregivers and/or guardians and/or relatives and/or parents all with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.
- Diversity also includes: varying cultural beliefs and values, varying amounts of personal freedom, and various levels of knowledge including familiarity about dictionary terms for anatomical body parts and sexual behaviours.
- Students have diverse genital anatomy and the diagrams may not reflect the diversity.
- Students have diverse gender identities and may express and explore their gender in many ways, including trans\* students whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth.
- Students have diverse sexual orientations including but not limited to:
  - questioning, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, straight, and asexual.
- Some students may have experienced sexual exposure or abuse.

## **'Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!' Program Values**

All educational programs are based on values that guide the teaching process. Puberty and sexuality can be sensitive topics for many and it is, therefore, important for educational programs that address these issues to have clearly articulated values.

This curriculum support document reflects the beliefs that:

- Parents, caregivers, guardians, and teachers are all partners in the education of children.
- Children benefit when they have access to developmentally appropriate puberty and sexual health education. This helps them to acquire the necessary information and skills to enhance their health and self-esteem. Children who are informed and comfortable communicating about this topic are believed to be at lower risk for sexual abuse.<sup>1</sup>
- Respect for self, as well as for the rights of others, must be stressed. Sexual health education encourages each student to be responsible for their own actions and to be aware of the consequences of their behaviour for themselves and for others.

This document serves as a guide as you teach Growth & Development classes to grades 5 and 6. Each lesson has discussion topics, student activities, and an "Additional Information" section for the teacher. There are also diagrams, handouts, resources, and a glossary located in the appendix of this package. The lessons are designed to be used with both grade 5 and grade 6 students. This can act as review for the grade six students.

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<sup>1</sup> Kenny, M. C. & Wurtele, S. K. (2008). Preschoolers' knowledge of genital terminology: A comparison of English and Spanish speakers. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, 3:4, 345-355.

It is recommended that the majority of the classes be conducted with all genders of students together whenever possible. Teaching puberty in an all-gender environment allows students to:

- learn to talk comfortably and respectfully with each other
- understand that they need to learn about others
- understand that many changes are the same for everyone
- learn that they are more alike than different.

## Assessment and Evaluation

Suggested opportunities for assessment and evaluation have not been highlighted as part of *Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!*

The Ontario Ministry of Education's *Growing Success Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools First Edition, Covering Grades 1 to 12, 2010* (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/success.html>) describes the policies and practices for assessment, evaluation and reporting in Ontario schools. Teachers are encouraged to use their professional judgement to determine how the following lessons and activities can best be used to assess student learning (i.e., Assessment for Learning, Assessment as Learning, Assessment of Learning) of the Healthy Living content for the topic of Growth & Development.

## Teacher and Parents/Guardians: Partners in Puberty and Sexual Health Education

While parents and other primary caregivers are the first and among the most important providers of puberty and sexual health education, studies have shown that over 85% of Canadian parents agreed with the statement "Sexual health education should be provided in the schools."<sup>2</sup>

It is important that schools inform parents and guardians about the delivery of this curriculum. This can be done by including it in a class newsletter or holding an information session for parents/guardians where the curriculum can be explained and the importance of this learning on the sexual literacy and empowerment of their children can be discussed.

Teachers can also receive support for program delivery from their School Public Health Nurse.

<sup>2</sup> Sex Information and Education Council of Canada. (2010). *Sexual health education in the schools: Questions and Answers*, 3rd edition. Retrieved from [http://www.sieccan.org/pdf/she\\_q&a\\_3rd.pdf](http://www.sieccan.org/pdf/she_q&a_3rd.pdf)

*Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health (October 2022)*



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Durham Health Connection Line | 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729  
**[durham.ca/sexualhealth](http://durham.ca/sexualhealth)**

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

