

Learning about Healthy Relationships, including Consent

Students can learn about consent as they develop skills for healthy relationships across the Health and Physical Education curriculum. In response to additional consultation and research, opportunities to learn specifically about consent have been strengthened with the additional revisions of the curriculum. This learning happens in a developmentally appropriate way, beginning with learning to listen, watching body cues and showing respect for others, in addition to learning how to use communication skills and to stand up for oneself. The learning in the curriculum is recursive with topics and concepts being built upon in different parts of the curriculum as students get older. In older grades, students continue to develop communication, assertiveness and refusal skills and corresponding skills of showing respect, listening and responding to the needs of others. Specific learning about what consent looks like and expected behaviours within relationships is included as a part of the learning.

Throughout the revised Gr. 1-12 curriculum there are comprehensive learning opportunities related to building skills for healthy relationships including understanding consent through:

- relationship and social skills, including how to identify and build healthy relationships
- recognizing and describing exploitive behaviours
- adaptive, management and coping skills such as demonstrating the ability to stand up for themselves and others
- refusal skills and strategies, and how to take action to get help
- respect and fair play

Focus of Learning

Gr. 1-3	Gr. 4-6	Gr. 7-8	Gr. 9-10	Gr. 11-12
<p>Developing skills for healthy relationships in Grade 1 continues from learning in kindergarten. Students learn to identify and name feelings and emotions.</p> <p>Expectations include opportunities for young students learn what healthy relationships look like (and what they do not look like).</p> <p>Students at the primary level are developing self-awareness and learning communication skills to stand up for themselves. They are also learning to listen to others and respect what others are saying.</p> <p>From a young age, the foundation of learning about consent begins by students learning that relationships are a two way street. It is not only one person’s responsibility to “say no”, but it is also the other person’s responsibility to listen, respect individual choices, contribute to positive relationships, and not behave in ways that may cause harm in the first place.</p> <p>Skills for healthy relationships are incorporated across the curriculum in explicit and implicit ways. As students are learning explicitly about the characteristics of different types of relationships, skills for seeking help if needed are also incorporated throughout the curriculum.</p>	<p>Opportunities to develop the skills for healthy relationships – both in person and online – are enhanced throughout the curriculum.</p> <p>As part of learning about consent, students need to understand that they should not to share sexual pictures or information and also not to ask for it. Legal implications of sharing sexual photos or information online are included.</p> <p>As students are learning specifically about threatening situations, including harassment, updates were made to include gender identity and gender expression to reflect the incidence of bullying targeted at students who identify as LGBTQ2S.</p> <p>Learning about harassment related to gender identity is not done in isolation. Students learn about a variety of contexts in which harassment may be an issue.</p> <p>The understanding about consent evolves in junior grades as students build their understanding about what consent means in a variety of relationships - peer relationships, relationships in the media and relationships that could be romantic ones.</p> <p>Students continue to learn the important concept that consent is the responsibility of both people.</p>	<p>Although all of the learning that students are doing related to healthy relationships can apply in both face-to-face and online contexts, learning about safe online communication and the connection to consent is included explicitly in both the junior and intermediate division.</p> <p>They learn about the benefits and potential risks associated with use of technology. Students learn about consent related to sexting.</p> <p>Language is more specific to reflect the different types of activities students may be engaged in or thinking of being engaged in, and to be clear about the importance of understanding both partner’s responsibilities when it comes to intimate relationships.</p> <p>More specific detail about what consent – specifically sexual consent – looks like is included so students have the knowledge and skills to make sound decisions about matters affecting their health and well-being before they are experience real-life situations in which decisions have to be made.</p> <p>Mention of pleasure is intentionally included. Research indicates that if young people are enabled to feel more relaxed about their own bodies, and about what makes them feel good, then they may be less affected by the pressures to engage in sexual activity against their wishes or in ways that they do not feel comfortable.</p>	<p>Examples are included in the curriculum to encourage thinking about how this learning may be applied in a number of contexts, for example for First Nations, Métis or Inuit students, for students with a physical or cognitive disability and students of all gender identities and sexual orientations.</p> <p>The expectations in Grade 9 in particular have been enhanced significantly related to learning about consent, and safe online communication. Students in Ontario are required to take one mandatory HPE credit and the majority students take the Grade 9 course.</p> <p>Thinking in advance about sexual health includes considering one’s personal values and thinking about what that means regarding sexual activity in the same way a person might think about their overall health (e.g., setting fitness goals, considering healthy eating choices, personal safety).</p> <p>Concepts such as being aware of and respectful of the body language of others is included again in the curriculum as reinforcement from earlier grades.</p> <p>Expectations illustrate the two-way aspect of consent and also illustrate different situations (other than sexual) where students may apply their understanding of consent and healthy relationship and communication skills.</p>	<p>In older grades in high school, the learning continues to develop with a focus on considering what knowledge and skills students need to make safe and healthy choices throughout their lives.</p> <p>In senior grades, there is also the opportunity for deeper learning about legal aspects related to relationships, consent and potential harassment or abuse.</p>