



Media Release

March 16, 2022

School District 22 Releases \$15,000 for Sexual Health Education

Championing an inclusive and consistent approach to sexual health at the forefront of SD22 curriculum.

School District 22 (Vernon) has committed additional funds and staffing to formulate and implement a district wide sexual health program to address current gaps in sex education.

In recent years, sexual health has been in the hands of individual teachers. While this approach allowed teachers to tailor the curriculum for the needs of the students in their classrooms, it also meant that there was a wide variation in what sexual health information students had access to. The new district wide sexual health program has been divided into two methods of delivery based on whether it is delivered at the elementary or secondary level.

To address sexual health in our elementary schools, we have allotted \$10,000 to provide access for kindergarten to grade seven teachers for the Saleema Noon Learning Platform modules for the Body Science Online lessons. This program consists of a set of up-to-date and age-appropriate instructional videos for teachers to use with students. The Saleema Noon Learning Platform is currently being used by other districts in the province including SD No. 67-Penticton/Skaha and has been endorsed and selected by Parent Advisory Councils at several of SD No. 22 elementary schools that have already made use of Saleema Noon's resources.

Sexual health with younger students focuses on topics such as reducing their vulnerability to sexual abuse by helping them to understand appropriate versus inappropriate touching, what to do if someone makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe, the role of boundaries and how to set them, ways to respect themselves and others and basic human anatomy. Intermediate students will receive lessons on puberty and what to expect from their changing bodies, as well as information that can help them make informed decisions about their sexual health. The idea at the elementary level is to lay the groundwork that will help prepare students to stay safe and think critically about information they might hear from their friends, the internet, and the media, as well as to empower them to take responsibility for their sexual health as they embark on their adolescent years.

Enhancing sexual health education was identified as a top priority by a large group of students during the consultation process for SD No. 22 Vernon and the 2023 strategic plan. "We don't want sexual health to only be about bodies and puberty, we want to learn to make healthier decisions for ourselves and not to have to rely just on what we see or can find on the internet" (Anonymous SD No. 22 Student). At the secondary level, the program will build on what students learned in previous years. Topics are based on the complex issues youth face such as self-image, how to stay safe online by understanding the warning signs of predatory behaviours, the risks of sending and receiving sensitive images of themselves or others, how to critically digest media that

normalizes troublesome sexual behaviour and dynamics, and healthy decision making for their physical, emotional, and psychological health.

The use of \$5000 is planned to provide release days for Amanda Mackay, a current teacher in SD No. 22 with specialized knowledge in teaching sexual health to secondary students, to facilitate sessions to grade eight students during P.E block at each secondary school in the district. These sessions would be instructed with the assigned classroom teacher present as a way of increasing each teacher's capacity to address the topics and to build their knowledge and skills in sexual health. In future years we will expand high school offerings to higher grades as well, but grade 8 is a critical place to start.

For more information, please contact:

Dr. Christine Perkins, Superintendent of Schools
cperkins@sd22.bc.ca

or

Christine Love, Director of Instruction, Student Support Services
lfriesen@sd22.bc.ca

or

Kristen Zuest SD No. 22 - Mental Health Liaison and Healthy Promoting Schools Coordinator
kzuest@sd22.bc.ca