

# RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION



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## How do we teach children about sexual health?

### What you need to know:

Lifelong healthy sexuality starts with what people learn as children.

The British Columbia (BC) curriculum includes education on sexual health, putting teachers in a position to support children in making healthy life choices. Teachers with access to helpful resources are better equipped to help students understand safe sexual relationships.

Researchers point to regular training for teachers on matching lessons to students' needs as they grow and using stakeholder input for this training as best practices for sexual education.

### What is this research about?

As a natural part of human development, young people face important decisions on sexuality. Offering them access to good sexual health education can provide the understanding they need to make healthy choices.

Educators, particularly grade school teachers, are in a strong position to support young people in building lifelong habits for healthy relationships. Mental and sexual health are part of the curriculum. As a result, teachers in BC seek resources for approaching these topics.

This is why the BC [Ministry of Education](#) engages with the [Ministry of Children and Family Development](#) (MCFD)'s Child and Youth Mental Health Policy Branch, the [Provincial Office of Domestic Violence](#) (PODV) and others to develop resources teachers find useful.

### What did the researchers do?

This project identifies mental and sexual health resources, pulling together best practices in other provinces and internationally.

The research questions:

- What are the best practices for effective sexual health teaching resources?
- What resources reflect these best practices?



*Young people face important decisions about their sexual relationships. Access to good sexual education can give them the knowledge they need to make safe choices (Photo credit: freestocks-photos from Pixabay).*



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## What did the researchers find?

The researchers found that other countries such as the United Kingdom are also refreshing curriculums. At the elementary level new curriculums focus on healthy relationships. At secondary schools the focus is relationships and sexual health.

Based on their findings the researchers recommend:

- Training teachers so they are comfortable with sexual health material
- Matching teaching with students' ability to understand
- Starting young and reinforcing key messages as learners grow
- Getting input from all stakeholders, making sexual health everyone's responsibility

## How can you use this research?

Policymakers will find the researchers' suggestions helpful in matching sexual health education in BC with international best practices. Teachers and guardians can use the suggested resources to guide children's learning. Sexual health and antiviolence groups may add information from the report to their programs.

The intent of this research was to give MCFD and PODV information to prepare sexual health resources for teachers.

## About the researchers

Satinder Virdi and Suzanne Wood are University of Victoria (UVic) graduate students. This project was completed as part of the [Graduate Studies \(GS\) 505](#) course and supervised by instructors Drs. Gord Miller and Wayne Mitic. Facilitated by UVic [Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization](#), GS 505 is a partnership between MCFD and UVic. This project was prepared on behalf of MCFD.

## Keywords

Sexual health; sexual education; mental health; teaching resources; youth; children; British Columbia; curriculum; anti-violence

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## Territory acknowledgement

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