

February 14, 2019

Dear High School families,

As you know, one of our school's founding principles is *Health Must Come First*. We live this commitment on a daily basis, from the mutually respectful environment we foster to the diverse academic and co-curricular options available to our students. We are intentional and strategic in creating an atmosphere which is conducive to meaningful lifelong learning, and one that supports healthy relationships above all else.

A dimension of the learning experience that is undergoing significant change is our Sexuality Education Program. Newly updated, and now mandated by the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur, this program will be delivered to all primary and secondary students across the province. Here at St. George's, we have spent the 2018/2019 school year familiarizing ourselves with the most recent program in its entirety, engaging all High School faculty and guidance personnel in the process, and are in the preparation phase for a 2019 roll-out.

We know that making this comprehensive curriculum meaningful and relevant to our students means creating a culture where invaluable topics, such as sexual growth, body image, identity, gender roles, stereotypes and sexual norms are integrated into our course curriculum and facilitated by our faculty within their disciplines. Because of this, topics of discussion and collaborative lessons and activities will exist more naturally and help to foster a safe space for our students to speak openly and better understand the complexities of sexual development during adolescence.

To ensure effective coordination and implementation of the Sexuality Education Program at St. George's High School, a current teacher will assume the role of faculty coordinator for all lessons, Grades 7 through 11. Their focus will be on supporting teachers in the delivery of course-specific lessons, sourcing resources, engaging external specialists, and mentoring faculty members interested in further promoting the program. In addition, our faculty coordinator will collaborate with our guidance counsellor to ensure optimal student learning within those topics that require the expertise of external specialists (E.g. teen pregnancy and STBBIs). Together, they will engage the services of community partners who specialize in sexual education workshops, information sessions and special presentations. The ACCM education and prevention department is an example of one such partner.

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At St. George's, we recognize that sexuality is a core aspect of each person's identity, interpersonal relationships, personal fulfillment and well-being. That said, research indicates that although adolescents across the province take their sexual health very seriously, they admit to a lack in knowledge. It is also known that sexual health-related issues are a leading health concern for postsecondary students in Quebec. Using this newly developed curriculum as a platform, we are proud to assume the institutional responsibility of providing all of our students with a thorough and progressive Sexuality Education Program in the 2019/2020 academic year. We are confident that empowering our faculty and guidance team with this comprehensive program, and engaging them at the core of its delivery, will prove effective in servicing the needs of our students and mitigating the risks of negative sexual health-related outcomes.

We look forward to collaborating with our parent body through the implementation of this program and wish to highlight the fact that the complementary nature of our roles as school and parents serves to reinforce and optimize both our efforts.

For more information on the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur's Sexuality Education Program, including content overview by grade and the role of the parent in supporting its successful delivery, please visit:

<http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/references/publications/results/detail/article/sexuality-education-parents/>

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael O'Connor'.

Michael O'Connor,
Assistant Head, High School