

Dear Ferris Families,

Each year, students in all elementary grades throughout BC receive instruction in sexual health education. This information is included in the Physical and Health Education program mandated for all BC students by the Ministry for Education. From time to time, schools bring in experts in the field to address this topic with the school community. We are excited to inform you that this year a Saleema Noon Sexual Health Educator will be visiting our school to work with parents and students in **Grades K-7**.

In their Body Science presentations, Sarah Watt (a member of Saleema Noon's team) will be working with Ferris students, teaching them about healthy bodies and healthy sexuality in ways they find non-threatening and entertaining. In their own language, children learn about how their bodies change, and what those changes mean.

Based on research and many years of experience as sexual health educators, they identify three reasons why providing this information starting in kindergarten is crucial:

1. Most importantly, studies from all over the world consistently show that children who are educated about healthy bodies, healthy boundaries and healthy sexuality are at reduced risk of child sexual abuse. Even if children are not asking questions yet (some never will) we need to give them information about their bodies and help them to develop strong personal boundaries. Sexual offenders (the majority of which are known to the victim) prey on children who aren't educated about their bodies and therefore lack the skills to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate touching. These children find it hard to say "no", especially to an adult, and may not report abuse for fear of getting in trouble.
2. Young children are easiest to teach. They are excited to be body scientists, and accept the information very matter-of-factly. Older children and teens, however, often find it difficult to talk about sexual health openly, especially with their parents! This means we have to navigate the embarrassment barrier before they can accept the information they need. The good news is that young children only absorb information they are ready for...everything else just goes over their head. More good news, studies show that children who learn about healthy bodies at an early age from reliable adults in their life delay sexual activity.
3. Children today are exposed at earlier and earlier ages to all things involving sex and sexuality. We, as responsible adults, need to stay one step ahead of this by arming our children with accurate information about sexual health before they get their questions answered on the playground, by older friends or online. We need to teach them to think critically about what they hear, and this allows parents to establish themselves early as their child's number one source of sexual health information throughout their development.



Please join us for an informative **Parents Workshop** via Zoom on **May 18, 6:30-8pm**. In this session, Sarah Watt will give an overview of student presentations and, using humor and straight talk in an open, interactive environment, will show parents how easy it is to convey healthy, meaningful messages about sex and growing up to young children.

Student sessions will take place in person on May 23, 24, 25. The content of the presentations is supported by current research as being age appropriate and we believe that it contributes to healthy child development.

Please feel free to contact me at the school if you have any questions and/or concerns about Saleema Noon Sexual Health Educators' presentations.

Sincerely,

Neal Campbell

Principal, Ferris Elementary School

