

Children and Healthy Sexuality: A Reference Tool for Child Care Providers, Kindergarten Teachers



Matching Children’s Sexuality Development With Best Teaching Practices

Infants and Toddlers

Developmental Expectations	Recommended Practices
Explore body parts, including genitals	Adults express healthy, accepting attitudes about children’s bodies
Develop positive or negative attitude about own body	Adults are attentive to infants during routines such as diaper changing and explain what is happening; caregivers consistently respond to infants to keep them comfortable so they learn security
Experience genital pleasure	Adults express healthy, accepting attitudes about children’s body functions
Encouragement to develop male or female identity	Adults praise accomplishments and help children to feel competent; parents are primary source of affection and care
Learn expected gender behaviours	Adults respect children’s developing preferences as a healthy indicator of self-esteem; caregivers plan for active and quiet play for all children

Preschoolers

Developmental Expectations	Recommended Practices
Aware of and curious about gender and body differences	Adults use children's natural curiosity to make sense of their world
Masturbate unless taught not to	Adults facilitate the development of self-control, use redirection, and have expectations which match child's developing capabilities
Engage in various forms of sex play	Adults use redirection and have age-appropriate expectations of child's behaviour; interactions are designed to promote positive self-esteem; adults design the play environment so supervision of children is possible at all times
Establish firm belief that they are either male or female	Adults facilitate opportunities to develop positive social skills; adults provide opportunities for children to gain understanding about themselves through observing and interacting with others
Enjoy bathroom humour	Adults use positive guidance techniques and have expectations which match child's development
Repeat curse words	Adults facilitate the development of self-control in children by using positive guidance such as modeling appropriate language
Curious about where they came from	Adults use children's natural curiosity to make sense of their world; adults help children to understand themselves through interacting with other people

Kindergarten and Primary Children

Developmental Expectations	Recommended Practices
Continue sex play and masturbation	Adults promote self-control through problem solving and redirection; adults try to prevent over stimulation and under stimulation based on child's development; adults change activity centers frequently so children have new things to do
Curiosity about pregnancy and birth	Adults build on children's internal motivation to make sense of the world; teachers and parents are partners in the educational process
Strong same-sex friendships	Adults facilitate the development of social skills at all times; adults ensure time spent with close friends; adults model and expect acceptance and appreciation of differences and similarities
Strong interest in stereotyped gender roles	Adults plan and implement activities and materials to enrich the lives of children
Have a basic sexual orientation	Adults view each child as a unique person; adults facilitate positive self-esteem
Choose gender-stereotypical activities	Adults provide a variety of activity choices, with children helping to select some topics; adults guide child's involvement in projects by extending their ideas and challenging their thinking
Tease and call names	Adults promote pro-social behaviour and facilitate the development of social skills; adults set clear limits and involve children in establishing rules for the classroom or the home

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Halton Region
 Dial 311 or 905-825-6000
 Toll free 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866)
 TTY 905-827-9833
www.halton.ca