



Dear Parents/Guardians of Coquitlam River Elementary,

Each year, students in all elementary grades throughout BC receive instruction in 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, our school has also brought in experts in the field to address this topic with our school community. We are excited to inform you that this year Dr. Brandy Wiebe of Saleema Noon Sexual Health Educators will be visiting our school to work with parents and students Kindergarten to Grade 5.

A member of the Saleema Noon Sexual Health Educators team for seven years, Brandy has been involved in the field of sexual health education for over ten years. After completing her BA in sociology and women's studies at the University of Alberta, Brandy went on to volunteer at the University of British Columbia Sexual Assault Support Centre in public awareness and education upon starting her PhD at UBC. At the same time, Brandy became an OPT Certified Sexual Health Educator. Receiving her Ph.D. in sociology (specializing in sexuality) in 2009, Brandy has extensive experience teaching sexuality at the university level. She now focuses her attention on the elementary, middle and high school settings and loves teaching "Body Science" to children, teens and parents in a way that is fun, comfortable and meaningful. When not in the classroom, Brandy loves playing with her cat Cash and reading the Harry Potter series (over and over and over again). All this, AND she throws a mean fastball!

Based on her education and experience as a sexual health educator, Saleema identifies three reasons why providing this information starting at 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 protected from 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 (85% 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 surmount 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 above 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 intercourse.

*Smart decisions start here.*

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3. Unfortunately, children today are exposed at earlier and earlier ages to all things involving sex. 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 on the internet. We need to teach them to think critically about what they hear, and this allows parents need to establish themselves early as their child's number one source of sexual health information throughout their development.

Please join us for an informative **Presentation for Parents** on Wednesday, January 17<sup>th</sup>

**from 6:30-8pm.** In this session, Brandy will give an overview of student presentations and, using humor and straight talk in an open, interactive environment, she 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 during the school day on Thursday, January 18<sup>th</sup>.

The content of these sessions is supported by current research as being age appropriate and we believe that it contributes to healthy child development. Some of the topics Saleema Noon Sexual Health Educators cover in their workshops extend beyond the learning outcomes of the BC Physical and Health Education curriculum. For this reason, participation of students is not required. Attendance at the parent presentation is strongly encouraged, but not required.

**Please inform Mr. Jacobsen if you do not wish your child to participate in these workshops ([rjacobsen@sd43.bc.ca](mailto:rjacobsen@sd43.bc.ca)).**

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

Sincerely,

Principal, Coquitlam River Elementary