

**A Grade-by-Grade Guide for Muslim parents with
Questions and Answers regarding:**

The Revised Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum (Sex-ed portions) 2015

With input from: [links]

- **Dr. Aisha Sherazi, Muslimlink.ca**
- **Mr. Jeewan Chanicka, M. Ed, Principal of Public School**
- **Imam Sikander Hashmi, Kanata Muslim Association**

Compiled by: Mrs. Anela Jadunandan
Member of the GTA Muslim community

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Page</u>
Preface - Reasons for a revised Curriculum	1
Background	2
Grade 1	3
Grade 2	4
Grade 3	5
Grade 4	6
Grade 5	7
Grade 6	8
Grade 7	9-10
Grade 8	11-12
Conclusion	13
Khutbah (Sermon on Revised Curriculum)	13

PREFACE

This guide was prepared to assist Muslim parents (as well as other parents) or groups who are concerned about the "sex-ed" portion of the revised Health and Physical Education Curriculum to be introduced into Ontario public schools in the Fall of 2015. I've chosen to compile this document because various useful information from recognized Muslim Imams, scholars and educators were not in one place. Meanwhile, other companion Guides for Muslim families and educators are also being developed at this time.

The world we live in is changing rapidly. This means our children are being exposed to a lot more than we did, and a lot earlier. Computer technology and access to the internet, through smart phones, iPads, etc. are influencing our children immensely. This means, there is added pressure on parents and educators to find a way to deal with the barrage of images and messages our children are exposed to.

Some reasons the Ministry of Education updated the Health and Physical Education Curriculum

- The last time Ontario's Health and Physical Education (H&PE) Curriculum was updated was in 1998. This means it was likely written in 1997-- almost 18 years ago. The world has changed since then. Ontario's H&PE Curriculum is the last to be updated in Canada.
- The Ontario Ministry of Education revised the curriculum in consultation with parents, teachers, OPHEA (Ontario Physical Education Association), public health specialists and human rights experts.
- Kids are naturally curious. Many children have access to smart phones, iPads, and laptops and are watching explicit sex/adult sites (e.g. pornography) on the internet--unknowing to their parents.
- These adult sites give kids false/wrong information - e.g. violence against women/girls is okay as long as it is done for pleasure. We must try to counteract this.
- Many girls are now going through puberty at an earlier age which is between 8 and 10 years old. This means they can get pregnant earlier and therefore need to learn about sex-education earlier.
- Public data shows that "Pregnancy rates are down" (data between 1995-2005), that's the good news however, alarmingly, sexually transmitted diseases have gone up by 40-60%.
- The intent is not to interfere with what parents, mosques and religious leaders teach. The Ministry is not trying to change family values, it is trying to keep up with explicit information and images that are out there. **Parents must still teach their children about family values at home, like they have done.**
- The revised curriculum also speaks about ABSTAINANCE, CONSENT and DELAYING SEXUAL ACTIVITIES. These are values that Muslims and many other parents hold important.
- Expressed consent is something new in the curriculum which young people must learn about. It is more than just "no means no". If a person gives consent to intimacy then changes his or her mind, the other person must stop.
- Our group asked that the curriculum changes be "age appropriate and culturally sensitive" as much as possible.
- There are millions of parents in Ontario. The Ministry said there is not enough time, money or resources to consult with every parent. Therefore, each school allowed the Chair of their School Community Council (4,000) to be the parent who provided input into the revised curriculum.

The Minister of Education, Liz Sandals consulted with twenty GTA Imams and Muslim leaders in December 2014, (myself included) at 4 separate meetings regarding the revised curriculum. This particular revised curriculum has had the most widespread consultation ever undertaken.

Why We Should Not Oppose Ontario's Revised Health and Physical Education Curriculum -- without knowing the facts.

BACKGROUND

In January 2015, a document was widely distributed with some critical questions/objections that Muslim parents should ask about the revised Physical and Health Education Curriculum - mostly concerning the "sex-ed" portions. Recently, there have been many rallies and protests organized by groups that oppose the revised Curriculum. In response, some Muslim Imams and Leaders have been analyzing the curriculum and have provided answers and guidance to the questions. The material relating to sex is only about 10% of the Curriculum. It also includes health lessons about nutrition, physical activities, etc. The Curriculum does not dictate HOW something should be taught, only WHAT should be taught. It is up to the schools/school boards to decide how it should be taught. There are probably more Muslim children attending public schools rather than private Islamic schools in Ontario. Private Islamic schools are not required to follow this curriculum.

[Dr. Aisha Sherazi](#) columnist with the Ottawa Citizen, has provided her comments from an Islamic point of view to the questions while Anela Jadunandan has provided the appropriate portion of the curriculum that relates to the questions. [Jeewan Chanicka](#), Principal of a Public Elementary School in Ontario recently wrote an article in the [Muslimlink](#) on the topic.

At the end of this document, there is a link to a Khutbah (Friday sermon) on the revised curriculum given by [Imam Sikander Hashmi](#) of the Kanata Muslim Association in Ottawa, Ontario who is a writer, teacher and marketer. He offers practical advice to Muslim parents as well as Six Tips on how to deal with this issue. Last but not least, [Dr. Sheema Khan](#), columnist with the Globe and Mail has provided guidance on this topic. Other Muslim organizations are also working on producing additional material to help parents on this topic. InshaAllah, this Guide will help to answer some important questions from Muslim parents and it is hoped the revised curriculum will serve to education and help our children - and not hurt them. After all, they are growing up in a world that many of us never encountered.

Also, there has been some speculation that a former Deputy Minister of Education had a hand in crafting the contents of the revised curriculum. As a matter of fact, Deputy Ministers are not "subject matter experts". In drafting this curriculum, the Ontario Government consulted with parents, students, teachers, faculties of education, universities, colleges and numerous stakeholder groups including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), the Ontario Public Health Association and the Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition.

The 2015 revised curriculum contains 239 pages. The curriculum also talks about "**delaying sexual activities until students are older**" (see Grade 7) which is absolutely necessary.

Last but not least, if some parents absolutely don't want their child to benefit from the revised "Sex-ed" portion of the curriculum, they still have the choice of opting out from some classes. They could opt out of some of the lessons, but not all. However, they should not take away the rights of those parents who would like their child to learn about the topic in whole. It will be mandatory for all students to learn the Human Rights aspects of the curriculum.

GRADE 1 to Grade 8 - The revised Curriculum "Human Development and Sexual Health" portion is posted below each caption.

The questions/objections from the "Muslim parent" are printed before each Grade.

Muslim parent said: "Grades 1 – 8 revised curriculum introduces sexual information in greater detail with graphics at earlier ages."

Dr. Aisha Sherazi said: In reality, the proper names for body parts will be taught in Grade 1 (6 year olds) — something child-abuse investigators have long urged.

Grade 1 – Page 93. This is what a 6-year-old will learn about.

How to identify the human body parts by its proper names. Child abuse investigators have long urged that the curriculum also include these body parts for two reasons:

- (1) If a child is hurt, he or she can identify the body part that hurts; and
- (2) If a child is being touched inappropriately, he or she can identify where someone touched them.

Here is what the revised Curriculum says:

Human Development and Sexual Health

C1.3 identify body parts, including genitalia (*e.g., penis, testicles, vagina, vulva*), using correct terminology [PS]

Teacher prompt: "We talk about all body parts with respect. Why is it important to know about your own body, and use correct names for the parts of your body?"

Student: "All parts of my body are a part of me, and I need to know how to take care of and talk about my own body. If I'm hurt or need help, and I know the right words, other people will know what I'm talking about."

GRADE 2 - Healthy changes in the body.

Note: There were no objections to this Grade from the Muslim parent.

Here is what the revised Curriculum says:

Human Development and Sexual Health

C1.4 outline the basic stages of human development (*e.g., infant, child, adolescent, adult, older adult*) and related bodily changes, and identify factors that are important for healthy growth and living throughout life [PS]

Teacher prompt: “How does your body change as you grow? What helps you to grow and be healthy?”

Student: “As you grow, you get taller and bigger. Your bones grow. Your muscles grow. You grow faster at some stages than at others and not everyone grows the same amount at the same time. When you’re an adult, your body doesn’t grow anymore, but it still changes – for example, your skin gets more wrinkled and your hair might turn grey. Things that help make you healthy all through your life are eating well, being active, getting enough sleep, and having people to care for you.”

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Teacher prompt: “When we look at growth and change throughout life, we can consider teachings from different cultures, including First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, about the cycles of birth, life, and death. Different First Nations have different teachings and ceremonies for each life stage, and about growing and changes in roles and responsibilities at each stage. For example, the Anishinabe People teach about seven stages of life, and believe that at each stage, learning traditional teachings, such as the seven grand-father teachings, from family, community, and elders contributes to healthy growth and living.”

GRADE 3 - Muslim parent said: "Students would be introduced to the topic of gender identity and sexual orientation".

Dr. Aisha Sherazi said: The first mention of the concept of same-sex relationships will be introduced to Grade 3 students (8 year olds). This might include a discussion about all families being important and loving. It would include information like, some families have two moms and others have two dads. Some families have only one parent. All families care for each other. This is the basic information that would be provided at this age. If parents have had this conversation, then it is not uncomfortable for kids to hear the same message in school. But parents can outline their religious viewpoint clearly to children, through the Quran and sunnah. By providing information to children about gender identity does not mean "indoctrinating" them into a different family system.

Here is what the revised Curriculum says:

Human Development and Sexual Health

C1.4 outline the basic stages of human development (*e.g., infant, child, adolescent, adult, older adult*) and related bodily changes, and identify factors that are important for healthy growth and living throughout life [PS]

Teacher prompt: "How does your body change as you grow? What helps you to grow and be healthy?"

Student: "As you grow, you get taller and bigger. Your bones grow. Your muscles grow. You grow faster at some stages than at others and not everyone grows the same amount at the same time. When you're an adult, your body doesn't grow anymore, but it still changes – for example, your skin gets more wrinkled and your hair might turn grey. Things that help make you healthy all through your life are eating well, being active, getting enough sleep, and having people to care for you."

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GRADE 4 - The Muslim parent did not comment on this grade, but here is Dr. Aisha Sherazi's comment:

Dr. Aisha Sherazi said: Grade 4 (9 year olds) students will learn about online safety as well as about puberty. This is essential. Most children have access to the Internet long before Grade 4, and are viewing materials that are not age appropriate (e.g. Porn). Giving them an awareness of the potential things they could come across does not hurt children, it would protect them. At Grade 4, they would be taught that their bodies are changing, and they would be given this information in a science style format. Children relate to information much better that way at this age.

Here is what the revised Curriculum says:

Human Development and Sexual Health

C1.5 describe the physical changes that occur in males and females at puberty (*e.g., growth of body hair, breast development, changes in voice and body size, production of body odour, skin changes*) and the emotional and social impacts that may result from these changes [PS]

Teacher prompt: "During puberty, the male and female bodies undergo many changes. Everyone experiences these changes at different rates and at different times. Increases in weight and body fat are normal. Sometimes it is difficult getting used to the changes that are happening so quickly. Feelings can be much more intense. What are some of the feelings you might have as you start to experience changes with puberty?"

Student: "Excitement, happiness, embarrassment, confusion, and fear are some of the feelings I might have. It is sometimes hard to recognize what I am feeling and why things feel different."

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Teacher prompt: "What can change socially as you start to develop physically?"

Student: "Relationships with friends can change, because sometimes people start being interested in different things at different times. Some people start 'liking' others. They want to be more than 'just friends' and become interested in going out. Sometimes people treat you as if you are older than you actually are because of how you look. Sometimes classmates, friends, or family make comments or tease you about the changes."

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Teacher prompt: "Some cultures have traditions associated with puberty that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. Can you give me some examples of these?"

Student: "In Judaism, a bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah is celebrated at age thirteen, when a boy or girl comes of age, according to religious law, and can now participate as an adult in the religious life of the community. Many Aboriginal societies have rites of passage that signal that adolescent boys and girls are ready to take on adult roles in society."

GRADE 5 - The Muslim parent did not comment on this grade.

Here is what the revised Curriculum says: (Students are 10 year olds)

Human Development and Sexual Health

- C1.3** identify the parts of the reproductive system, and describe how the body changes during puberty [PS]

Teacher prompt: "Female body parts that mature and develop as a part of puberty include the vagina, cervix, uterus, fallopian tubes, ovaries, endometrium, and clitoris. Male body parts that mature and develop during puberty include the penis (with or without the foreskin), scrotum, urethra, testicles, prostate gland, seminal vesicles, and vas deferens. These changes occur as people become capable of reproduction. What are some physical changes that happen during puberty?"

Student: "During puberty, girls will develop breasts and get their periods for the first time. An increase in weight and body fat is normal. Boys will become more muscular, get deeper voices, and grow facial and body hair. The penis and testicles will grow larger. Both boys and girls will grow hair under their arms, on their legs, and in their pubic area. The rate at which these changes occur will vary for each individual."

- C1.4** describe the processes of menstruation and spermatogenesis, and explain how these processes relate to reproduction and overall development

Teacher prompt: "Menstruation is the medical term for having a 'period' and is the monthly flow of blood from the uterus. This begins at puberty. Not all girls begin menstruation at the same age. Generally, every month, an egg leaves one of the ovaries and travels down one of the fallopian tubes towards the uterus. In preparation, the walls of the uterus develop a lining of extra blood and tissue to act as a cushion for the egg in case fertilization occurs. When an egg is fertilized, it attaches itself to the lining of the uterus and begins to develop into a baby. If fertilization does not occur, the lining of the uterus is no longer needed and is discharged through the vagina. This is the monthly flow of blood. The whole process is called the menstrual cycle. Can you summarize its purpose?"

GRADE 6 - The Muslim parent said: "The promotion of self-discovery through masturbation".

Dr. Aisha Sherazi said: Grade 6 (11 year olds) Students will be taught what masturbation is and will learn about healthy relationships and consent. Again, this is uncomfortable for many parents and the community, but we should teach our children that they should not touch themselves inappropriately, and that they should not touch others. If you have had an honest, open conversation about this issue with your child, they will recognize this concept when it is taught and realize there is a different approach, but be glad that you discussed it with them first.

Here is what the revised Curriculum says:

Human Development and Sexual Health

C2.5 describe how they can build confidence and lay a foundation for healthy relationships by acquiring a clearer understanding of the physical, social, and emotional changes that occur during adolescence (*e.g., physical: voice changes, skin changes, body growth; social: changing social relationships, increasing influence of peers; emotional: increased intensity of feelings, new interest in relationships with boys or girls, confusion and questions about changes*) [PS]

Teacher prompt: "By getting questions answered and understanding that questions and changes are 'normal', adolescents will be better equipped to understand themselves, relate to others, respond to challenges and changes in relationships, and build confidence. What are some questions that young people might have as changes happen during puberty and adolescence?"

Student: "Is how I am feeling normal? Why is my body different from everybody else's? How do you tell someone you like them? Who can answer my questions about...?"

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Teacher prompt: "Things like wet dreams or vaginal lubrication are normal and happen as a result of physical changes with puberty. Exploring one's body by touching or masturbating is something that many people do and find pleasurable. It is common and is not harmful and is one way of learning about your body."

GRADE 7 - The Muslim parent said: "Classroom instruction would include anal and oral sex".

Please note that the revised Curriculum was not created as a "How to Manual". Rather, curriculums are created to ensure that they remain current and relevant and is developmentally appropriate from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in all subjects.

Dr. Aisha Sherazi said: Grade 7 (12 year olds) students will be warned about the risks of "sexting" as well as informed about sexually transmitted diseases and oral and anal sex. This is also essential. It is better to tell kids about things before they are exposed to them through friends, or worse still, TRY them. The reality is, this is early, but if they are aware and shocked by it, they will not get duped into trying it when they are older. Here is what the new Health and Physical Education Curriculum says about "anal and oral sex". Notice the document also talks about "delaying sexual activity until they are older". Needless to say, if you have explained to your child that anal sex is forbidden and is mentioned in the Quran, they will see there is a difference in opinion, but won't be shocked about it.

Here is what the revised Curriculum says:

Human Development and Sexual Health

C1.3 explain the importance of having a shared understanding with a partner about the following: delaying sexual activity until they are older (*e.g., choosing to abstain from any genital contact; choosing to abstain from having vaginal or anal intercourse; choosing to abstain from having oral-genital contact*); the reasons for not engaging in sexual activity; the concept of consent and how consent is communicated; and, in general, the need to communicate clearly with each other when making decisions about sexual activity in the relationship

Teacher prompt: "The term *abstinence* can mean different things to different people. People can also have different understandings of what is meant by having or not having sex. Be clear in your own mind about what you are comfortable or uncomfortable with. Being able to talk about this with a partner is an important part of sexual health. Having sex can be an enjoyable experience and can be an important part of a close relationship when you are older. But having sex has risks too, including physical risks like sexually transmitted infections – which are common and which can hurt you – and getting pregnant when you don't want to. What are some of the emotional considerations to think about?"

Student: "It's best to wait until you are older to have sex because you need to be emotionally ready, which includes being able to talk with your partner about how you feel, being prepared to talk about and use protection against STIs or pregnancy, and being prepared to handle the emotional ups and downs of a relationship, including the ending of a relationship, which can hurt a lot. Personal values, family values, and religious beliefs can influence how you think about sexuality and sexual activity. A person should not have sex if their partner is not ready or has not given consent, if they are feeling pressured, if they are unsure, or if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol."

See "Sexting" information on next page.

"Sexting" information from Toronto Newspaper below.

We might think we know what our kids are doing....

Here are 19 "Sexting" slogans parents don't realize their kids may be using. How the internet and smart phone era are changing our kids life.



GRADE 8 - The Muslim parent said: "The curriculum may lead to sexual activeness from early age".

Dr. Aisha Sherazi said: Grade 8 students (13 year olds) will be taught about "delaying sexual activity". This is the best advice that schools could give. For kids to be told, "Slow down", "There is no rush". And for those parents who are proactive, children can be told that intimate relationships outside of marriage are forbidden in Islam (and in some other religions too).

Here is what the revised curriculum says:

Human Development and Sexual Health

C1.4 identify and explain factors that can affect an individual's decisions about sexual activity (e.g., previous thinking about reasons to wait, including making a choice to delay sexual activity and establishing personal limits; perceived personal readiness; peer pressure; desire; curiosity; self-concept; awareness and acceptance of gender identity and sexual orientation; physical or cognitive disabilities and possible associated assumptions; legal concerns; awareness of health risks, including risk of STIs and blood-borne infections; concerns about risk of pregnancy; use of alcohol or drugs; personal or family values; religious beliefs; cultural teachings; access to information; media messages), and identify sources of support regarding sexual health (e.g., a health professional [doctor, nurse, public health practitioner], a community elder, a teacher, a religious leader, a parent or other trusted adult, a reputable website) [PS]

Teacher prompt: "How would thinking about your personal limits and making a personal plan influence decisions you may choose to make about sexual activity?"

Student: "Thinking in advance about what I value and what my personal limits are would help me to respond and make decisions that I felt comfortable with in different situations. I would be able to approach a situation with more confidence and stick to what I had planned. I would be less likely to be caught off guard and have to react without having thought through the options and possible consequences."

Teacher prompt: "Why is it important to get information from a credible source before making a decision about being sexually active? Why is this important for all students – including those with physical or cognitive disabilities?"

Students: "Having more information – and information that you can trust – helps you make better decisions for yourself. Taking time to get more information also gives you more time to think. Teens who consult a health professional before being sexually active are more likely to use protection, such as condoms, if they choose to be sexually active." "Teens with physical or cognitive disabilities still need information about sexual health, just like everybody else. They may be dealing with different issues, like adapting sexual health information to their particular needs, or with variations on the same issues, like privacy and self-image."

Grade 8 continued on next page

PAGE 2 OF 2 -- Grade 8 (Age 13) ... Continued

Demonstrate an understanding of gender identity (e.g., male, female, two-spirited, transgender, transsexual, intersex), gender expression, and sexual orientation (e.g., heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual), and identify factors that can help individuals of all identities and orientations develop a positive self-concept [PS]

Teacher prompt: “Gender identity refers to a person’s internal sense or feeling of being male or female, which may or may not be the same as the person’s biological sex. It is different from and does not determine a person’s sexual orientation. Sexual orientation refers to a person’s sense of affection and sexual attraction for people of the same sex, the opposite sex, or both sexes. Gender expression refers to how you demonstrate your gender (based on traditional gender roles) through the ways you act, dress, and behave. Gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation are connected to the way you see yourself and to your interactions with others. Understanding and accepting your gender identity and your sexual orientation can have a strong impact on the development of your self-concept. A person’s self-concept can develop positively if the person understands and accepts their gender identity and sexual orientation and is accepted by family and community. It is harder to develop a positive self-concept, however, if the way a person feels or identifies does not meet perceived or real societal norms and expectations or is not what they want, or if they do not feel supported by their family, friends, school, or community. A person’s self-concept can be harmed if a person is questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation and does not have support in dealing with their feelings of uncertainty. What kind of support do people need to help them understand and accept their gender identity and sexual orientation?”

Student: “Having role models that you can relate to – for example, people of similar ages or cultures – is important. So is having all gender identities and sexual orientations portrayed positively in the media, in literature, and in materials we use at school. Family, school, and community support are crucial. Additional help can come from trusted adults, community organizations, and school support groups such as gay-straight alliances.” --- **End**

CONCLUSION

Dr. Aisha Sherazi

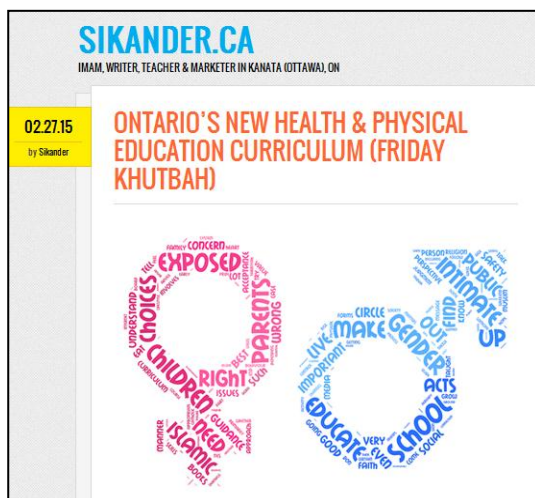
As parents, we genuinely feel that we must teach our children certain values ourselves, but not feel threatened by the outside world. We can withdraw our children from some of the lessons of the Sex-ed classes if we choose. However, it will be doing a disservice to our children because curiosity will make kids enquire about what took place in the class. This is when information can get distorted. Also, students are not allowed to be "exempted" from the entire curriculum. We may feel uncomfortable speaking to our children on certain topics, but it is far better if we try to do this than leave it up to them to find out the wrong way.

Jeewan Chanicka

Myth: Curriculum will be encouraging children to be homosexuals.

Fact: The curriculum reflects the diversity of Ontario, and teaches students to appreciate and respect the visible and invisible differences between people. It reflects the laws of the Province, including The Ontario Human Rights Code that explicitly prohibits discrimination on grounds including age, colour, race, ethnicity, disability, family status, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Mr. Chanicka recently published an article in the **Muslimlink Magazine**. Since Muslims are a minority in the Canadian population, the Ontario Human Rights Code also protects us from being discriminated against. The curriculum is built on the principle that regardless of race, gender, religion or sexual orientation, all students have the right to a safe and positive learning environment. It is not a "how-to manual" – it teaches kids that we are all different and that should be respected.

Khutbah from Br. Sikander Hashmi, Imam at the Kanata Muslim Association, Ottawa. Br. Hashmi gave a sermon on Friday Feb. 27, 2015 on Ontario's New Sex-ed Curriculum. It sheds light on the topic and offers practical advice to Muslim parents as well as "Six Tips" on how to deal with this issue. The site also has other links on Muslim parenting. Please go to Sikander Hashmi's page [here](#) and click on **Ontario's new Health and Physical Education**. It is audio only, but it will be the best 30 minutes you'll spend this week. You can post comments/feedback on his page also.



Other resources

5 Myths And Facts About Ontario's Updated Sex Education Curriculum by Huff Post Karyn Pickles: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/karyn-pickles/ontario-sex-education-curriculum-update_b_6746012.html

Myths vs. Facts:

<http://www.rainbowschools.ca/secondary/manitoulins/s/support/MythsvsFacts-HPE20150222Sectors.pdf>

The Sky is (not) falling: <http://www.picklesink.com/the-sky-is-not-falling-part-2-myths-and-facts-about-the-2015-ontario-sex-education-curriculum/>

How to raise boys in the era of internet porn by Steve Biddulph of John Mark Ministries:

<http://www.jmm.org.au/articles/32333.htm>

We hope this guide has been of help to you.

If you have questions, or suggestions for improvement, kindly contact:

Anela Jadunandan via email: thejads@rogers.com