



HOLLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
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Dear Parents/Guardians of Holly Students,

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 Claire Connors of Saleema Noon Sexual Health Educators will be visiting our school to work with parents and students Kindergarten to Grade 7.

Claire is thrilled to bring her passion and expertise to the Body Science classroom. She received her Bachelor of Science Honors from Queen's University majoring in Life Sciences with a focus on Social Determinants of Health. Her interest in mental health led her to work as a family support worker, meeting with parents and youth to help them reconnect, develop childrearing skills, and live as happy, healthy families. After a move to Vancouver, Claire's volunteer work at the UBC Sexual Assault Support Centre inspired her to become an OPT certified sexual health educator. In this role she aims to provide inclusive, sex positive information to parents and students in an accessible manner. Her commitment to youth and whole body health extends beyond the classroom to her part time work as a climbing instructor at The Hive Bouldering Gym. And when not working or climbing you can probably find her at a home devouring science fiction novels!

In their Body Science presentations, Saleema Noon and her team of educators work with children of all ages, 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 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 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 (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.
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 **Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-8pm**. In this session, Claire Connors 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. A big thank you to our **Holly PAC** for sponsoring this excellent learning opportunity.

Student sessions will take place during the school day on **Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup>**. The content of the presentations 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 content of the BC Physical and Health Education curriculum. For this reason, parents may choose to have their children **OPT OUT** of the Body Science sessions with Claire. If you do not wish your child to attend, we ask that you notify our office no later than **Wednesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>**. This is necessary to allow us to plan alternate activities for your son/daughter. Attendance at the parent presentation before making this decision is strongly encouraged.

*Smart decisions start here.*

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