

Service de santé de l'enfance et de la jeunesse (SSEJ)

This public service promotes health and the prevention of health risks in children and minors enrolled in the public schools of the canton

The SSEJ received the mandate for sex education beginning in 1924. Originally part of the adolescent curriculum, sex education was extended to all age levels in the 1970s. Today, specially trained health instructors continually adapt the objectives of their classes to the needs of young people according to healthcare and social progress.

The professionals of the SSEJ

These professionals intervene as a complement to the relational and sexual education provided by parents.

They work closely with school superintendants, faculty and social counsellors.

They call upon the medico-educational department and child protective services in case of serious problems.

They are:

- **24 specialised sex education instructors** who speak in classes and participate in projects throughout the course of study and at specialised institutions.
- **72 school nurses and 11 school physicians** who contribute to the promotion of health and risk prevention during check-ups and whenever necessary.

**School is a
place to
talk about
sex, too!**

**At primary
school, lower and
upper secondary
school**

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References :

- Ethical charter for sex education at school. Artanes. 2011 :
<http://www.artanes.ch/images/stories/folder/charte.pdf>
- www.sante-sexuelle.ch

Sex education adapted to each phase of child and adolescent development:

The sex education provided by the SSEJ

includes:

- enriching knowledge about sex and relationships
- reinforcing values such as self-respect and respect for others
- establishing the limits between what is private and what is not
- providing reference points for the image of sexuality given by society (the media)
- informing students of the risks and means for the prevention of risks related to sexual relations, including teenage pregnancy, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases
- developing the skills required to express experiences or emotions, and to say “no”
- preventing various forms of violence (maltreatment, sexual abuse, homophobia, etc.)
- providing information on sex-related rights
- indicating the people or institutions that may be consulted if necessary

Description of courses in the classroom

Based on questions asked by the children or adolescents, the specialised sex education instructors of the SSEJ open the discussion and provide answers, taking a positive point of view of sexuality. Their objective is to promote health and well-being.

Primary school

In Year 4: “Carefully, confidently” (3 periods)

- contributing to the prevention of sexual abuse through the empowerment of each individual and the reinforcement of the concept of privacy
- developing the ability to express emotions and seek assistance.

In Year 6: “The story of life” (4 periods)

Based on the questions asked by children (“Where did I come from?”), the following subjects are covered:

- boys’ and girls’ bodies
- conception
- pregnancy
- relationships with other people and society
- abuse prevention

In Year 8: “The story of life” (4 periods)

The dialogue with the children is oriented towards their future lives:

- puberty
- sexuality
- self-respect and respectful relationships with others
- prevention of abuse over digital media (harassment, sexting)
- introduction to risk prevention: teenage pregnancy, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Lower secondary school

In Year 10 (4 periods)

- the physical, relational and social dimensions of sexuality
- clarifying knowledge about puberty and procreation
- preventing the risks of teenage pregnancy, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases
- encouraging self-respect and respect for others in relationships
- peer pressure
- introduction to sexual diversity and the prevention of discrimination.

In Year 9 or 11 (2 periods)

The programme is based on the demands and concerns of school superintendants, such as:

- prevention of sexual discrimination and homophobia
- prevention of sexual violence between peers over digital media
- other problematic behavior (consumption of psychoactive substances and alcohol, harassment, etc.).

Upper secondary school

In Year 12 or 13 (2 periods)

- raising awareness about relational and sexual difficulties, stereotypes and gender roles
- prevention of violence related to gender identity and sexual orientation
- prevention of undesired pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases as well as other risky behaviour.