



Dear Parents/Guardians of Lavington Elementary,

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, **Sarah Watt** of Saleema Noon Sexual Health Educators will be joining us via Zoom to work with the intermediate students. In addition, all parents will have access to Saleema's online learning platform, *Body Science Online*, for 30 days so they can see exactly what their children will learn in class.

To obtain access to Body Science Online please use the link provided, May 28th deadline
LAVINGTON (DEADLINE MAY 28)

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zo50vIaw3X8JEk79he9rsNV2oeU4x-h9-o2wdHkVr9U/edit>

After completing her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology at UBC and working with survivors of physical and sexual violence for several years, Sarah was keen to dive into work supporting sexual health, well-being, and empowerment. In 2017 she completed the Sexual Health Educator Certification through Options for Sexual Health, where she also provides sexual health information and resources as a long-time volunteer. More recently, Sarah completed a Master of Public Health at SFU focusing on population health and health equity. As an educator on the team, Sarah's warm and lighthearted approach helps to cultivate comfort and curiosity in students. When she's not in the classroom, Sarah is either working in sexual health research or she's glued to a good book (tearjerkers are her favourite!).

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 her many years of experience as a sexual health educator, Saleema identifies three reasons why providing this information 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

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t 604.418.9417
e saleema@saleemanoon.com
w www.saleemanoon.com





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 **live Zoom Presentation for Parents** on **Tuesday June 1st, 2021 from 6:30-8pm**. In this session, Sarah will give an overview of student presentations and, using humor and straight talk in an open, interactive environment, will show parents how easy it is to convey healthy, meaningful messages about sex and growing up to children. In addition, all parents will have access to Body Science Online for 30 days so they can see exactly what their children will learn in class. Link provided already.

Sarah will join the **intermediate students (Grades 4-7)** via Zoom in their classroom on **Wednesday June 2nd** Sarah will show pre-recorded, animated videos of Saleema Noon's Body Science Online workshops for each intermediate grade followed by a live Q and A sessions. 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 Sarah. If you do not wish your child to attend, we ask that you notify our office no later than **May 28th**. Attendance at the parent presentation before making this decision is strongly encouraged.

Sincerely,

Nigel Maccagno
Principal

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t 604.418.9417
e saleema@saleemanoon.com
w www.saleemanoon.com

