

Ministry of Education

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Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Ministère de l'Éducation

Ministre

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Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2



April 19, 2017

Jessica Spirak
Tanyakar45@hotmail.com

Dear Jessica Spirak,

Thank you for your thoughtful email sharing your suggestions about drug use prevention education for young people. I am pleased to respond.

The safety and well-being of students is our top priority. Like you, we believe that students need to have the best information possible so they can make informed decisions about their health and well-being.

The recently updated health and physical education curriculum contains comprehensive education that aims to discourage and prevent drug use among young people. Student learning about tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and other illegal drugs occurs within the Healthy Living topic: Substance Use, Addictions and Related Behaviour. The curriculum helps students acquire the knowledge and skills they need to develop, maintain, and enjoy healthy living as well as to solve problems, make decisions, and set goals that are directly related to their personal health and well-being.

Beginning in Grade 1, students learn about behaviours harmful to one's health such as smoking. In Grade 2, students develop their understanding of the difference between prescription and non-prescription medicines. In Grade 3, students are required to demonstrate an understanding of the different types of legal and illegal substance abuse and its impact on themselves and others. In Grade 4, students learn to identify and describe the health effects of harmful substances such as nicotine, carbon monoxide, and tar found in tobacco products (including cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, chewing tobacco, snuff) and in second-hand smoke. In Grade 5, students are expected to develop and demonstrate interpersonal skills (assertiveness, refusal skills) and thinking processes to avoid alcohol use, and other harmful substances. In Grade 6, students identify the effects of cannabis use and other drugs. In Grades 7-8, students explore factors influencing drug and tobacco use, learn more about the health impacts of substance use and apply decision-making strategies to make healthy choices.

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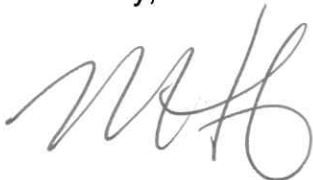
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The Ministry of Education is responsible for developing curriculum policy, while school boards are responsible for implementing policy. Under the direction of boards and principals, teachers plan units of study, develop a variety of teaching approaches, and select appropriate resources to address the curriculum expectations, taking into account the needs and abilities of their students.

In your email you mentioned the need for an "action plan to keep our communities safe". Each school in Ontario must have in place a safe and accepting schools team responsible for fostering a safe, inclusive, and accepting school environment. You may wish to speak with your school principal to find out about this team and what is being done to keep students safe in your school.

I very much appreciate hearing directly from students like you! Thank you very much for taking the time to write to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MH', written in a cursive style.

Mitzie Hunter, MBA
Minister