

Your body. Whose rules?

Sex ed, children's rights, culture and religion

Public, and political, debate has resurfaced around the Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum, and in particular “sex ed”. While the political stakes for various parties in this debate are what is overwhelmingly foregrounded, the stakes of how children and youth are informed, or not informed, about their health and sexuality, are highest for the kids themselves; it is well documented that not having accurate information about one’s body has serious health consequences. But this is not only about health. This highly politicized battle has invariably been centred on which group of adults has the power to determine the best interests of the child. This focus does nothing short of threatening the health and lives of our children. Setting up discussions about what our children should learn in school as a battle between parents and the government misses a fundamental aspect of what is at stake — namely, the health, sexuality, and self-expression of the province's youth.

It's not just parents, educators, governments, religious/cultural leaders and communities whose rights and powers are at stake when we talk about sexual health education for kids. Children have rights of their own, under domestic law and international treaty obligations, especially the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Canada is a signatory. Adolescents, whatever the values held by their families, are subjects and agents. They are no one's property. Children and youth own their own bodies and they have legal rights not only to information, but to freedom of expression, to identity, and to autonomy.

Join us at this free public lecture on Wednesday, October 3rd, 7:00 – 8:30 pm
Ellis Hall Auditorium, Ellis Hall, Queen's University

Featuring our keynote speaker: Dr. Rebecca Bromwich, Program Director of the Graduate Diploma in Conflict Resolution in the Department of Law and Legal Studies, Carleton University

Respondents:

Dr. Pamela Dickey Young, Full Professor and Acting Director of the School of Religion, Queen's University

Dr. Colleen Davison, Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Health Sciences at Queen's University