

Dear Family,

We are ready to begin Theme Three of *Fully Alive*, our family life program. Catholic schools recognize that parents or guardians are the first and most important teachers of their children. This is especially true in the areas that are introduced and explored in Family Life Education. Because the partnership of home, church, and school is so important, this letter is written to let you know what we talk about in class, and to offer some ideas for your involvement.

Family Life Education, consistent with our faith, has been an integral part of the Religious Education program for many years. The goal is to present a Catholic view of human life, sexuality, marriage, and family, complementing your efforts as parents or guardians to teach your children at home. Family Life Education also incorporates content about human development and sexual health from the Ontario Health and Physical Education (HPE) Curriculum. More detailed information on the specific HPE expectations addressed in this theme of *Fully Alive* can be found on the website of the Institute for Catholic Education (www.iceont.ca).

The *Fully Alive* program is supported and approved by the Catholic Bishops of Ontario. Additional information about *Fully Alive* is available to you on the Ontario Bishops' website (www.acbo.on.ca).

About Theme Three

Theme Three of *Fully Alive* is called “Created Sexual: Male and Female.” God made us male and female, and all of God’s creation is good. In earlier grades, this theme was presented through a continuing story, which emphasized God’s plan for new life as the result of the love of mothers and fathers. In later grades, the message is unchanged, but the approach is more direct. As students enter puberty, they need to know about the changes they will experience, and about the responsibilities of being created male and female and following God’s plan for them.

In Theme Three we will:

- explore the idea that we do not *have* bodies, we *are* bodies; God created us as body/spirit persons.
- consider the major systems of the body, and learn that the reproductive system has unique characteristics.
- learn about the adult female and male reproductive systems and about human fertility in adult women and men.
- discuss the physical changes of puberty, as well as some of the emotional and social changes.

Working together at school and at home

- At school, the students will be completing several sheets about the adult reproductive systems, human fertility, and the changes of puberty, and will bring these sheets home. One section of these sheets asks the students to list any questions they still have about these topics. Be sure to ask your child about the questions he or she may have. Some children are not comfortable asking questions in front of other students, and prefer to ask at home. You will find detailed information about the topics in this theme in the Online Family Edition of *Fully Alive* (www.acbo.on.ca).

- Girls need to know about changes of puberty and be prepared well in advance of the beginning of menstruation. Again, you will find helpful information in the Online Family Edition of *Fully Alive*. You should also be aware that girls who develop early can experience teasing by peers. It is difficult to be among the first people going through the changes of puberty, and equally difficult to be among the last. Parents or guardians can help ease the situation by being present, listening to their child, and discussing their concerns.
- At school, the students will be discussing modesty and the importance of respect for the gift of sexuality by the way they speak, dress, and act. Unfortunately, they are also exposed to many examples of disrespect for sexuality, especially in the media. When the opportunity comes up, such as watching together television programs and commercials, it's important to discuss this issue with your child, and emphasize the need for respect for oneself as a girl or boy, and for others.

Looking Ahead

New terms in Grade 5 that are related to the female reproductive system and have not appeared previously in the student book are *vulva*, *cervix*, *ovaries*, and *fallopian tubes*. New terms related to the male reproductive system are *urethra*, *scrotum*, *testicles*, and *vas deferens*. The only new term related to female fertility is *menstruation*, and new terms related to male fertility are *semen*, *ejaculation*, and *erection*. Other new terms introduced in Grade 5 are *fertilization* and *implantation*. In Grade 6, the students review human reproduction and the changes of puberty, and study the development of a new human life from conception and implantation through the three trimesters of pregnancy.

As parents and guardians, you are the primary teachers of your children in all areas of faith and morals, including sexuality. In keeping with the primacy of your role as parent or guardian, you retain the right to request your child be exempted from the program if you believe it is in your child's best interest and prefer to accept the responsibility of providing an education in sexuality at home.

If you have any questions or concerns, I encourage you to contact me, or to arrange to discuss them with our school principal.

Teacher: _____ Date: _____