

SEXUAL ORIENTATION and GENDER IDENTITY (SOGI)

Rationale

The Board of Education recognizes that students who identify as LGBTTTQ+ may face challenges within our schools and communities. These individuals, as well as their families, are frequently the targets of homophobic, transphobic or heterosexist behaviours. This often results in a struggle with a variety of profound social consequences including discrimination, harassment, physical and sexual violence, social and emotional isolation, substance abuse, homelessness, school truancy and dropping-out, self-harm and suicide.

A responsive, safe, and inclusive school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. Discrimination is not part of such an environment. As students learn by example, all members of the school community are expected to model respectful conduct regardless of perceived differences and should refuse to tolerate any form of discrimination due to an individual's actual or perceived LGBTTTQ+ status or identity.

Action

The Board of Education strives to create school and district culture which supports diversity, including a welcoming learning and working environment for everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. The Board is therefore committed to the following 10 key components of effective SOGI policy¹:

1. Common Language
 - 1.1 The Board strives to ensure that all parties be well-informed and equipped with appropriate and respectful language.
 - 1.2 The Board acknowledges that language is ever evolving and that the individual is always the expert on how they may identify and on what language or terms they consider respectful and inclusive of themselves.
2. Safety/Anti-Harassment
 - 2.1 All schools and the District will have Codes of Conduct that explicitly include language prohibiting the harassment, bullying, or violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.

3. Self-Identification

- 3.1 Individuals will have the right to self-identification, which includes the name by which they wish to be addressed and their pronoun of choice that corresponds to their gender identity.
- 3.2 Whenever possible and permitted by law, requests made by a student, or the parent/guardian, to change the student's official record to reflect their name and/or gender identity of choice will be accommodated.
- 3.3 Whenever possible, at the request of a student or of a students' parent(s)/guardian, the student's name and/or gender identity of choice will be included on class lists, timetables, student files, identification cards, etc.
- 3.4 Unless the student or the student's parent/guardian has specified otherwise, communications between school and home will use a student's legal name and the pronoun corresponding to the student's gender assigned at birth

4. Confidentiality and Privacy

- 4.1 A student's trans status, legal name, or gender assigned at birth may constitute confidential personal information that will be kept confidential unless its disclosure is legally required or unless the student or the student's parent(s)/guardian have given authorization.
- 4.2 In situations where school staff or administrators are required by law to use or to report a trans student's legal name or sex, such as for purposes of data collection, school staff and administrators will adopt practices to avoid the inadvertent disclosure of such information.
- 4.3 Students have the right to discuss and express their gender identity and/or gender expression openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much private information to share will be respected.

5. Dress

- 5.1 Students have the right to dress in a manner consistent with their gender identity or gender expression. This includes students who may dress in a manner that is not consistent with societal expectations of masculinity/femininity.
- 5.2 School dress codes will not contain gender specific language.

6. Gender Integrated and Inclusive Activities

- 6.1 Schools will focus on integrated and inclusive activities. To the extent that gender segregated activities continue to exist, students will have the option to be included in the group that corresponds to their gender identity or, in the case of gender non-conforming students, the group in which they would like to participate.

7. Educator Training

7.1 Professional Development and Training

- 7.1.1 The Board will strive to ensure that professional development and training is provided for staff to develop the awareness, knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to:
- 7.1.2 deliver an LGBTTTQ+ inclusive curriculum (including anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education)
- 7.1.3 identify and address homophobic and transphobic discriminatory attitudes and behaviours; and
- 7.1.4 support and advocate for the needs of students whose real or perceived identity is LGBTTTQ+

7.2 Counselling and Student Support

- 7.2.1 The Board will strive to ensure that:
 - counsellors respond competently to the needs of LGBTTTQ+ students as well as to the needs of students with LGBTTTQ+ family members;
 - counsellors and staff are provided with information on support programs or services for students and families;
 - all schools have at least one staff person to be the SOGI School Lead, a school contact who is able to act as a resource person for LGBTTTQ+ students, staff and families. (Note: School administrators will act as the Safe Contact if no one voluntarily steps forward.) School administrators will inform students and other staff about the location and availability of this contact person; and
 - middle schools and secondary schools are supported in establishing and maintaining Gay /Straight Alliance clubs (GSAs).

8 Inclusive Learning

8.1 Whenever possible, learning and curriculum resources regarding SOGI will emphasize universal human themes that acknowledge human diversity as an essential and enriching element of our society.

- 8.1.1 Classroom materials and activities related to SOGI will contain positive images and accurate information about sexual and/ or gender diversity, SOGI history and culture which reflects accomplishments, contributions, and struggles of LGBTTTQ+ people.

9 Facilities

9.1 At least one single, gender neutral washroom stall/change room in each middle school, high school, alternate school, and at the Board Office will be provided.

10 Inclusive Extra-Curricular Activities

- 10.1 Students will be included and accommodated for in all extra-curricular activities regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, including support to set up a Gay-Straight Alliance.
- 10.2 In the case of sex-segregated team sports, students whose gender identity is different than their sex at birth may, on a case-by-case basis, join the sex-segregated team aligned with their gender identity.

¹These practices have been co-developed by the Ministry of Education, ARC Foundations, Out in Schools, BCTF, UBC, and K-12 educators as part of the Ministry of Education SOGI Working Group

Legal References: Section 85 School Act; BC Human Rights Code

SD No. 40 (New Westminster)

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Modification to this document is not permitted without prior written consent from SD No. 40 (New Westminster)