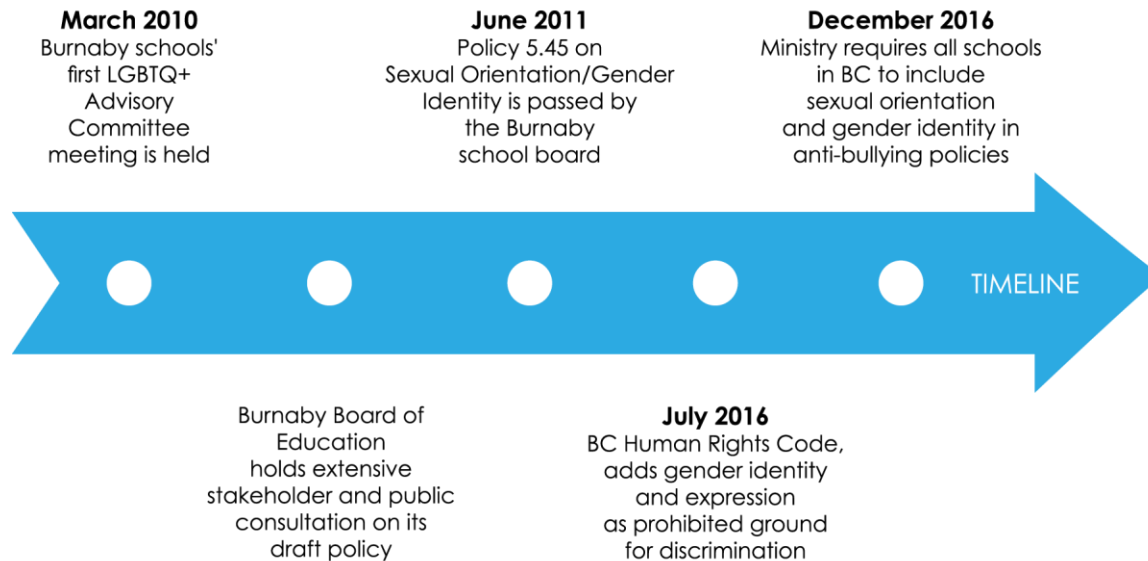


Background: Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity Policy

Timeline



Frequently asked questions

What is SOGI?

- SOGI is an acronym for Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity. Unlike the acronym LGBTQ+, SOGI is not a list of specific identities. It is an inclusive term relevant to all individuals. It includes identities such as heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, cisgender, and more.

Why did the Burnaby School District and Board create a SOGI policy?

- At the time of its creation the District already had policies that addressed discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, or religion (Policies 6.40 and 6.45.) and a District Code of Conduct that addresses behaviour for staff, students, and parents that is posted in every school.
- In line with those policies, the intent of SOGI is to make Burnaby's schools a safe and respectful place for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. The policy strives to:
 - improve awareness and understanding of the lives of LGBTQ+ people;
 - reduce homophobia, transphobia and other barriers;
 - provide effective procedures to respond to SOGI-related discrimination, harassment and exclusion; and

- provide age-appropriate learning opportunities to help students understand the impacts of discrimination.
- In addition to fitting with Burnaby schools' intention of inclusivity, when the Board learned that students and staff were experiencing harassment because of their declared or perceived sexual orientation, they had a legal responsibility to address it.

Why does SOGI matter in schools?

- The Burnaby Board of Education wants all students to flourish.
- According to information provided by the Ministry of Education (November 2017):
 - 19% of B.C. high school students identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or not exclusively heterosexual;
 - 1% of B.C. high school students identify as transgender and 5% of Indigenous students identify as two-Spirit; and
 - Studies show that having SOGI-specific anti-bullying policies improves the school climate for LGBTQ+ *and* heterosexual students, reducing discrimination, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts for all students.
- Research shows that harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is experienced by approximately equal numbers of students who identify as LGBTQ+ and those who don't. Because homophobia and transphobia can be directed at anyone, it often has a negative effect on school culture, emotional well-being, and academic success.

How does SOGI show up in Burnaby's schools?

- The Ministry of Education is responsible for all curriculum in BC. The new curriculum includes a focus on valuing diversity and respecting differences. As with the previous curriculum the goal is to build an understanding of and respect for diversity.
- It is *never* about attempting to have students develop a particular set of beliefs around sexual orientation or gender identity.

What does SOGI look like in the classroom in Burnaby?

- SOGI isn't taught in classrooms as a subject; rather, learning opportunities are woven into the school day, as appropriate. All classroom activities are designed to provide age-appropriate learning opportunities to help students understand the impacts of discrimination and improve awareness and understanding of the lives of LGBTQ+ people. The following are all examples and are not prescribed by the District.
- An example of this for a Kindergarten or Grade 1 Language Arts class is looking at a story about pink. Students might explore how pink is made by combining red and white. The

classroom discussion may include: how colours belong to everyone; wear what makes you comfortable and happy; and, the most important thing is to be kind to others.

- For an older class, such as Grades 4 and 5, for example, students may explore perspectives on Canadian history. They may investigate historical events where groups of people faced discrimination or mistreatment. The treatment of the LGBTQ+ community would be one example among many explorations, such as historical events including the internment of Japanese people and the creation of Residential Schools.
- In secondary schools an example is English Language Arts for Grades 8-12. Students may investigate how authors write from a perspective influenced by who they are and how they see the world. Students might explore a variety of influences such as: family, friends, activities, education, religion, gender and age.

What else is the Burnaby School District doing?

- The District follows curriculum approved by the Ministry at all age levels. Students experience lessons that promote tolerance and understanding of the diverse society that we live in; as well, they learn to treat each other with dignity and respect regardless of our differences.
- The District provides Pro-D opportunities for staff and creates resources to support existing curriculum, such as information for Family Day discussions that includes diverse family structures. The District also continues to host, participate in, and support a number of awareness events.
- In addition, educators may access SOGI 1 2 3: an optional resource with ready-to-use grade appropriate customizable lesson plans. It was created by the ARC Foundation (which supports projects that create awareness of the impact of prejudice) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, BC Teachers' Federation, school districts, and other partners.

Where can I learn more about Burnaby's SOGI Policy?

- The Burnaby School District [policy is available on our website.](#)