

SEXUAL ORIENTATION/GENDER IDENTITY

POLICY:

TO ENSURE THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY WORK TOGETHER IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF RESPECT AND SAFETY REGARDLESS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION, THE BOARD OF EDUCATION WILL ADOPT APPROPRIATE ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, SUPPORT DIVERSITY, AND ADDRESS DISCRIMINATION.

OBJECTIVES:

The Board of Education has developed this Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) policy for students and employees including those who identify as, or are perceived to be, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-Spirit, Queer (LGBTQ) or those who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- a) Support inclusion of all students and employees in all aspects of school life, irrespective of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.
- b) Improve understanding of the lives of LGBTQ+ people and their positive contributions to society.
- c) Define appropriate terms, behaviours and actions to promote greater awareness of, and responsiveness to, the deleterious effects of homophobia, transphobia, anti-gay harassment and exclusion.
- d) Provide effective procedures to respond to complaints of homophobic, transphobic and heteronormative behaviours including discrimination, harassment and exclusion.
- e) Promote a systemic response through staff and professional development which strives to identify and address educational practices, policies, and procedures that perpetuate homophobia, transphobia and heteronormativity.
- f) Make SOGI resources and support services available and visible for students and staff throughout schools.
- g) Act collectively to reduce homophobia, transphobia and other systemic barriers that are faced by LGBTQ+ students and staff who feel they must hide their true identities.

- h) Commit to ongoing, constructive and open dialogue with communities who identify themselves on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity to increase co-operation and collaboration among home, school, and the community.

Date Adopted: June 2011

Cross References: Policies 5.08, 5.10, 6.31, 6.40, 6.45

Date(s) Revised: June 2017, October 2017, November 2019

REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

POLICY # 5.45.01

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ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS:

EDUCATION

Staff and Professional Development

- a) The district shall provide and promote opportunities for staff to increase their awareness and understanding of the scope and impact of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people.
- b) The district shall provide and promote opportunities for staff to increase their SOGI knowledge in promoting respect for human rights, supporting diversity, and addressing discrimination in schools.

Student Programs

- a) Students are educated in the areas of healthy relationships, diversity and social justice education including harassment and homophobia and transphobia throughout the BC Ministry of Education curriculum. (In the case of potentially sensitive topics in the Health and Career Education curricula, students and their parents /guardians may arrange with the school for alternative instruction outside the classroom as detailed in Board Policy #6.31 Alternate Delivery – Health and Career Education.)
- b) Teachers shall include age appropriate SOGI topics in the curriculum that meet BC Ministry of Education requirements to help students acquire the skills and knowledge to understand the impacts of homophobia, transphobia, and heteronormativity upon society.

Parent Programs

- a) The district and school administration shall work to increase parental awareness of the needs of LGBTQ+ students and families.

Learning Resources, Curriculum Resources and Library Resources

- a) Learning, curriculum and library resources should reflect and value the diversity in the district, so that all students including LGBTQ+ students see themselves and their lives positively reflected in the curricula.
- b) Resources will comply with BC Ministry of Education standards for the specific courses where they are utilized.
- c) In order to reflect the multi-cultural diversity of the district, as many of the above resources as practical should be available in different languages and in formats easily accessible to ELL students and their families.
- d) The learning, curriculum and school library resources shall emphasize universal human themes that acknowledge human diversity as an essential and enriching element of our society.
- e) The learning, curriculum and school library resources shall, when appropriate, provide all students with opportunities to become familiar with diversity.

COUNSELLING AND STUDENT SUPPORT

- a) All counsellors in the district shall be educated in the knowledge and skills required to understand SOGI topics concerning students, staff and families.
- b) Counsellors will be informed and familiar with all policies with respect to human rights, homophobia, transphobia, heteronormativity, hate literature, discrimination and harassment.
- c) Counsellors will be sensitive to LGBTQ+ students as well as students from LGBTQ+ headed families.
- d) Elementary and secondary schools will appoint at least one staff person to be a safe contact for students who identify themselves as LGBTQ+ and those who are questioning. School administrators will inform students and other staff about the location and availability of this contact person.
- e) Where students request and staff are willing to volunteer their time, clubs which respect and celebrate all forms of diversity, such as gender/sexuality alliance (GSA) clubs, will be encouraged for all students.

SAFETY/ANTI-HARRASMENT

- a) Any language or behaviour that deliberately degrades, denigrates, labels, stereotypes, incites hatred, prejudice, discrimination, harassment towards students or employees on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity or expression will not be tolerated.
- b) Schools will be required to specifically include the prohibition of such language and behaviour in their Codes of Conduct.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- a) The district will work to create partnerships that ensure effective participation in the education process by representative organizations and LGBTQ+ communities that are committed to the mission of the Board of Education.
- b) The district will acknowledge through its communication to students, staff, and the community that some children live in LGBTQ+ headed families and need to be positively recognized and included as such at all grade levels.

FACILITIES

- a) The district will, where possible, include gender-neutral washrooms and change rooms in schools. New schools must include gender-neutral washrooms and change rooms and, should that not be possible, an alternative space be designated.
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