

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION/GENDER IDENTITY

The Board believes that all public schools in this district shall be safe for everyone. We recognize and value the diversity found within its school communities and believe that each individual contributes to the strength of the District's culture. The Board also recognizes that students and school community members, including those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit, intersex, queer, or questioning, face a unique set of challenges within our schools and communities. In accordance with this policy, and all relevant laws of more senior governing bodies, the Board:

- prohibits any form of discrimination, intimidation or harassment against any person based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression;
- expects members of the school community to welcome, include and support all others regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression;
- instructs the Superintendent to ensure that all schools in the District put in place procedures and practices that support this Board policy.

The Board will provide an environment for all members of the school community to work and learn, free from fear, discrimination, and harassment, while also promoting proactive strategies and guidelines to ensure that sexual or gender minority students, employees and families are welcomed and included in all aspects of education and school life and are treated with respect and dignity.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- outline appropriate behaviours and actions in order to prevent discrimination and harassment through greater awareness of and responsiveness to their harmful effects;
- ensure that all complaints are taken seriously and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policy and procedures;
- raise awareness and improve understanding of the lives of people who identify themselves on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

By valuing diversity and respecting differences, students and staff act in accordance with Ministry established principles related to diversity.

In this policy, all references to “sexual or gender minority” persons will include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, intersex, queer or questioning persons; persons who are labeled as such, whether they are or not; and persons with immediate family members who are of a sexual or gender minority.

## 1. Board Directives

- 1.1. The Board will ensure that all staff will be able to identify individual discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. The Board will also work to eliminate the systemic inequities and barriers to learning for students who identify themselves on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, and demonstrate accountability for their removal so that all students are treated with fairness and respect.
- 1.2. School based administrators will be informed of and familiar with all Ministry and District policies relating to violence, discrimination and Codes of Conduct and will inform their school communities about these policies.
- 1.3. All staff will be sensitive to sexual or gender minority issues when creating and updating District and School policies, and when formulating disciplinary and corrective actions related to incidents of discrimination, harassment, bullying, or exclusion. Corrective actions include both correcting inappropriate behaviour (remediation) and correcting damage done as a result of inappropriate behaviour (restoration).
- 1.4. The Board will ensure that all teaching and support staff receive necessary in-service training to assist them to acquire knowledge, understandings, skills, attitudes and behaviours related to:
  - 1.4.1. information and issues surrounding sexual and/or gender minorities (which may include students, family members and staff);
  - 1.4.2. the scope and impact of discrimination related to sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression;
  - 1.4.3. incorporating information and issues into curriculum.
- 1.5. It is the responsibility of all administrators, teachers and support staff to work together to build school communities which are positive and welcoming. They will:
  - 1.5.1. foster respect, inclusion, fairness and equity;
  - 1.5.2. set, communicate and establish clear expectations for acceptable conduct;
  - 1.5.3. provide students, through various techniques, information that will lead to greater understanding, acceptance and support for sexual or gender minority students.
- 1.6. Social responsibility, including information, issues and attitudes related to the sexual or gender minority population, is not assigned to a particular grade or subject area; instead, it is a responsibility shared among all staff.
- 1.7. The Board will ensure that age-appropriate resource materials (books, pamphlets, posters, etc.) are available and visible in all schools (for example, in counseling areas, libraries, classrooms). Ministry and/or locally approved resources should be chosen or updated in order to accurately reflect the range of Canada's sexual or gender minority population.
- 1.8. Within each school, staff will take concrete actions to ensure that the school is more welcoming and safe for sexual or gender minority students.

1.9. The Board will direct schools to specifically include the prohibition of fear promoting, harassing or discriminatory language and behaviour in their student codes of conduct. Any language or behaviour that degrades, denigrates, labels, stereotypes, threatens or incites hatred, prejudice, discrimination or harassment towards students, employees, or others on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression will not be tolerated.

## 2. Professional Development and Training

As needed, 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:

- 2.1. deliver an LGBTTTQ+ inclusive curriculum (including anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education);
- 2.2. stay current on acceptable language and terminology;
- 2.3. identify and address homophobic and transphobic discriminatory attitudes and behaviours; and
- 2.4. support and advocate for the needs of staff and/or students whose real or perceived identity is LGBTTTQ+.

## 3. Counselling and Student Support

The Board will ensure that:

- 3.1. counsellors are trained to respond competently to the needs of LGBTTTQ+ students and students with LGBTTTQ+ family members;
- 3.2. counsellors and staff are provided with information, directly from Ministry-supported initiatives or directly from the District, on support programs or services for students and families;
- 3.3. all secondary schools are supported in establishing and maintaining Gay or Queer/Straight Alliance clubs.

## 4. Curriculum Learning Resources

The Board is committed to:

- 4.1. ensuring that staff utilizes language and educational resources and approaches that are inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and respectful of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions;
- 4.2. enabling all LGBTTTQ+ students and families to see themselves and their lives positively reflected in the curriculum, through the provision of curricular and media centre/library resources.

## 5. Communications

The Board will:

- 5.1. when applicable, acknowledge through its communication to students, staff, and the community that some students live in LGBTTTQ+ families and need to be positively recognized and included as such; and

ensure that school forms and communications reflect the diversity of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression of students, staff and parents/guardians.

## 6. Transgendered Students

To support the safety, health, and educational needs of students whose real or perceived identity is transgendered, staff shall adhere to the following practices:

### 6.1. Consultation

- 6.1.1. School staff are encouraged to consult with district staff, to review best practices for supporting transgendered students.

### 6.2. Confidentiality and Privacy

- 6.2.1. A student's transgendered 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.

- 6.2.2. Students' rights 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.

### 6.3. Official Records and Student Information

- 6.3.1. 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 preferred name and/or gender identity will be accommodated.

- 6.3.2. Whenever possible, at the request of a student or of a students' parent(s)/guardian, the student's preferred name and/or gender identity will be included on class lists, timetables, student files, identification cards, etc.

- 6.3.3. Unless the student or the student's parent/guardian has specified otherwise, communications between school and home shall use a student's legal name and the pronoun corresponding to the student's gender assigned at birth.

- 6.3.4. Student preference will take precedence following the ages (12 and older)

## 7. Names and Pronouns

- 7.1. Students will be addressed by the names and pronouns they prefer to use.

## 8. Dress

- 8.1. 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.
- 8.2. Such dress must adhere to school dress code standards.

## 9. Access to Physical Education and Sports

- 9.1. Where possible, students will be permitted to participate in any sex-segregated recreational and competitive athletic activities, in accordance with their gender identity. Due to issues of disclosure and safety, students may also choose to participate in a sex-segregated activity that is not aligned with their gender identity.
- 9.2. Any such participation in competitive BC School Sports competition must adhere to BC School Sport Regulations.
- 9.3. Transgendered students shall be provided the same opportunities to participate in physical education as all other students, shall not be asked or required to have physical education outside of the assigned class time, and shall be permitted to participate in any sex-segregated activities in accordance with their gender identity if they so choose.
- 9.4. In situations where students are segregated by sex, transgendered students will have the option to be included in the group that corresponds to their gender identity.

## 10. Washroom and Change Room Accessibility

- 10.1. The use of washrooms and change rooms by transgendered students shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis with the goals of maximizing the student's social integration, ensuring the student's safety and comfort, minimizing stigmatization and providing equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes and sports.
- 10.2. Transgendered students who desire increased privacy will be provided with a reasonable alternative washroom and/or changing area. Any alternative arrangement will be provided in a way that protects the student's ability to keep their transgendered status confidential.
- 10.3. The decision with regard to washroom and change room use shall be made in consultation with the transgendered student.
- 10.4. The Board will strive to make available single stall gender-neutral washrooms at all school locations and worksites.

## 11. Glossary

- 11.1. **Asexual:** A person who is not sexually attracted to any gender or sex. Asexual people may still be romantically attracted to people of a variety of genders and sexualities and have romantic, non-sexual relationships.

- 11.2. **Bisexual:** A person who is attracted to both women and men.
- 11.3. **Gay:** A person who is attracted to someone of the same sex and/or gender as themselves. This word can be applied to all genders of relationships but has primarily been used in reference to men.
- 11.4. **Gender:** A socially constructed concept of identity based on roles, behaviours, activities, and appearance such as masculine, feminine, androgynous, etc.
- 11.5. **Gender expression:** The ways a person presents their sense of gender to others (for example, through clothes, hairstyle, mannerisms, etc.).
- 11.6. **Gender identity:** A person's internal sense of being a man, a woman, gender queer, etc. This is not the same thing as a person's biological sex and may not be consistent with how they are perceived by others.
- 11.7. **Gender nonconforming:** A term that often refers to children who express gender in ways that differ from societal expectations of the sex and gender assigned to them at birth. For the purposes of this policy and accompanying regulations gender nonconforming children are included under the term trans\*.
- 11.8. **Homophobia:** The fear, ignorance and mistreatment of people who are, or are perceived to be, lesbian, gay or bisexual. This often leads to bias, discrimination, hatred, harassment and violation of the human rights of lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Homophobic bullying can also be targeted against any individual, regardless of perceived sexual orientation.
- 11.9. **Intersex:** Refers to people whose reproductive or sexual anatomy is not easily defined as male or female. There are a variety of ways someone can be intersex, ranging from having ambiguous genitalia to having mixture of XX and XY chromosomes. Intersex individuals have historically been mistreated in North American society (i.e. being forced to have "corrective" genital surgeries as infants). The term Disorders of Sexual Development is being used increasingly amongst medical professionals in reference to intersex conditions, however, this term has not been fully adopted by intersex communities at the time this policy is being written. The word hermaphrodite was historically used to describe intersex individuals; however, this term is considered highly offensive.
- 11.10. **Lesbian:** A woman who is attracted to other women.
- 11.11. **LGBTQTQ+:** An acronym that in this case stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, Two-Spirit, and queer/questioning. There is a wide range of other terms often included in this acronym (often referred to by queer communities as "the alphabet soup") such as asexual, and this acronym tends to vary depending on the source. The plus sign (+) indicates the inclusion of all sexual and gender identities.
- 11.12. **Pan-Sexual:** Is the sexual attraction to a person of any sex or gender.
- 11.13. **Perceived as LGBTQTQ+:** Refers to someone who is treated as if they are LGBTQTQ+ even if they do not identify as such.
- 11.14. **Pronouns:** The words one uses to refer to themselves (e.g. he/him/his; she/her/hers; they/them/theirs; xe, xem, xyr, etc.)

- 11.15. **Queer:** An umbrella term (often used in place of the LBTTQ+ acronym) used to describe individuals who identify as being part of sexual and gender diverse communities (e.g. lesbian, gay, transgender).
- 11.16. **Sex:** A biological classification based on physical attributes such as sex chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive structures, and external genitalia. At birth, it is used to identify individuals as male or female. For those whose sex is not easily categorized as male or female see Intersex.
- 11.17. **Sexual Orientation:** Refers to a person's attraction towards a particular gender or sex. Someone may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, etc. It is important to remember that sexual identity and gender identity are separate.
- 11.18. **Trans\*:** (also Trans, Transgender, Transsexual) An umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what they were assigned at birth. Some trans\* people may choose to medically transition by taking hormones, having surgery. Some trans\* people may choose to socially transition by changing their name, clothing, hair, etc.
- 11.19. **Transphobia:** Fear, ignorance and mistreatment of people who are, or are perceived to be, trans\* or gender nonconforming. This often leads to bias, discrimination, hatred, harassment and violation of the human rights of transgender or gender nonconforming people. Transphobic bullying can also be targeted against any individual, regardless of perceived gender expression.
- 11.20. **Transition:** A term most commonly used to refer to someone transitioning from one gender to another. Transition often consists of a change in style of dress, selection of a new name, and a request that people use the correct pronoun when describing them. Transition may, but does not always, include medical care like hormone therapy, counseling, and/or surgery.
- 11.21. **Two-Spirit:** An Aboriginal term describing the embodiment of both masculine and feminine spirits. This identity is not limited to gender expression or sexuality but encompasses them both while incorporating a spiritual element. It is a standalone identity, not an Aboriginal term for gay or lesbian.

Legal Reference Section 65, School Act  
B.C. Human Rights Code

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