# Supporting Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expressions

*"With higher levels of discrimination and bullying, and lower level of family, school, and community support, LGBTQ youth face higher risks for significant health challenges, including suicidal thoughts and attempts, and problem substance use. However, when LGBTQ youth experience safe and supportive schools and families, they are much less likely to report these health challenges.\**"* - Saewyc et al. (2016)

## Goals for SOGI Inclusive Education:

1. **Visibility:** The diversity of sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions are recognized and valued.

2. **Protection:** The dignity of all people across the sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) spectra is intended to be preserved, as well as protected from harm.

3. **Inclusion:** Equitable treatment and inclusion are a reality for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions.

## Best Practices:

Policies and procedures that explicitly reference SOGI have been proven to reduce discrimination, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts for all students. The purpose of this document is to share best practices for creating more inclusive environments for all students. These best practices are informed by current research and jurisdictional scans as effective in promoting learning environments that are welcoming and inclusive for all members of the school community[†].

1. **Common Language (Definitions/Terms) -** Every party involved will be well-informed and equipped with appropriate and respectful language. Any set of terms should acknowledge 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 –** Proactive and reactive measures that ensure students and staff are protected from bullying, discrimination, harassment and violence based on their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. For example, explicit Codes of Conduct.

3. **Self-Identification –** Students have the right to self-identification, which includes the name by which they wish to be addressed and their preferred pronouns that correspond to their gender identity.

4. **Confidentiality and Privacy –** Students have the right to confidentiality of their official and/or preferred sex, gender, and name. In class:  Staff will not expose sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression of students.

5. **Dress –** Students may express their gender identity or gender expression through what they wear to school. A dress code should be as all inclusive as possible, which may include removing pronouns.

6. **Gender Integrated and Inclusive Activities –** Schools will focus on integrated and inclusive activities. Where 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 they would like to participate in.

7. **Educator Training –** Staff are supported with professional learning opportunities to develop a broader understanding of SOGI and the impact on students. Training should allow staff to appropriately deliver the curriculum, handle discrimination, and support individual needs.

8. **Inclusive Learning –** Classroom materials and activities contain positive images and accurate information about sexual and/or gender diversity, SOGI history and culture which reflects accomplishments and contributions of transgender and gender nonconforming people.

9. **Facilities -** Individuals may choose to use washrooms and change rooms that match their gender identity, including non-gendered single-stall washrooms and change rooms.

10. **Inclusive Extra-Curricular Activities –** 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.

\* Saewyc E., Poon C., Kovaleva K., Tourand J., & Smith A. (2016). School-based interventions to reduce health disparities among LGBTQ youth: Considering the evidence.
† These best practices were co-developed by the Ministry of Education, ARC Foundation, Out in Schools, BCTF, University of British Columbia and K-12 educators.

## Examples of School District Policies and Procedures:

Policies and procedures look different in every school district and independent school. There is no 'one size fits all' approach. Here are some school district examples:

**LANGLEY - Inclusive Anti-Harassment Policy -** Langley School District introduced an Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy in 2014 to define inappropriate behaviours and actions in order to prevent discrimination and harassment. The policy explicitly recognizes that students of sexual or gender minorities face a unique set of challenges within schools, which may have profound social consequences.

https://www.sd35.bc.ca/students-parents/langley-school-district-code-of-conduct/
https://district.public.sd35.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/07/Policy-7200.pdf

**VANCOUVER - SOGI Policy -** Vancouver School Board implemented a stand-alone Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity policy in 2004 to address practices specific to sexual orientation and gender identity.

http://www.vsb.bc.ca/district-policy/jgd-district-student-code-conduct-policy
http://www.vsb.bc.ca/district-policy/acb-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identities
http://www.vsb.bc.ca/district-policy/acb-r-1-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identities

**NANAIMO - Inclusion Policy -** Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District passed a new Inclusion Policy in June 2016 that replaces their current Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) and Multicultural and Race Relations (MCRR) policies. The policy is accompanied by enhanced SOGI administrative procedures.

http://www.sd68.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads//Administrative%20Procedures/300/AP-344-Code-of-Conduct.pdf
http://www.sd68.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads//Policy/2.0/2.10-Inclusion-Policy-.pdf
http://www.sd68.bc.ca/edocuments//Administrative_Procedures/300students_1/ap347sexualorie/content.htm

## Resources:

### SOGI 1 2 3

SOGI 1 2 3 shares proven SOGI-inclusive tools and resources in the areas of policy and procedures, inclusive environments and curriculum resources
www.sogieducation.org

### BC Teachers Federation

The BCTF offers a variety of free workshops to teachers that aim to develop skills to interrupt, address, and challenge homophobia and transphobia within our classrooms and school communities
https://bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=17988

### Education Resource Acquisition Consortium (ERAC)

ERAC provides a range of services including evaluation, licensing and acquisition of print, software, and digital learning resources. ERAC offers a curated catalogue of SOGI resources (see LGBTQ collection)
http://www.bcerac.ca/index.aspx

### Out in Schools

Out in Schools presentations and Learning Hub provide youth with opportunities not only to learn, but to do. The presentations offer a chance to build participation in and creation of Queer Straight Alliances across the province. The Rise Against Homophobia Video Contest offers youth the chance to make media as a vehicle not only for personal expression, but to shape more inclusive school communities.
http://outinschools.com/about/

## QMUNITY – BC's Queer Resource Centre

QMUNITY is a non-profit organization based in Vancouver, BC that works to improve queer and trans lives. They provide a safer space for LGBTQ/2S people and their allies to fully self-express while feeling welcome and included.
http://qmunity.ca/

## Egale Canada Human Rights Trust

Founded in 1995, Egale Canada Human Rights Trust is Canada's only national charity promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) human rights through research, education and community engagement
https://egale.ca/

## MyGSA

MyGSA.ca is Canada's website for safer and inclusive schools for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) community.
http://mygsa.ca

## Trans Care BC

The Trans Care BC program aims to enhance the coordination of trans health services and supports across the province, bringing gender-affirming care closer to home wherever possible
http://www.phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/trans-care-bc

## Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

The leading national US-based education organization focused on ensuring safe and affirming schools for LGBTQ students
http://www.glsen.org/

## Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

PFLAG Canada is a national charitable organization, founded by parents who wished to help themselves and their family members understand and accept their non-heterosexual children
http://pflagcanada.ca/

## Pride Education Network

The Pride Education Network of teachers, administrators, support staff, youth and parents strives to make the B.C. school system more welcoming and equitable for LGBTQ students and staff, and queer families
http://pridenet.ca/

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