

SEXUAL ORIENTATION GENDER IDENTITY (SOGI)

The Board of Education is committed to establishing and maintaining a safe and positive environment for all students, families and employees, including those who self-identify as LGBTQ+, including, but not limited to, those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, intersex, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit or queer, or who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Board also recognizes that students and other school community members of all sexual orientations and gender identities face challenges within our schools and communities. It is with this rationale in mind and with an understanding that each member of the school and district community bears the responsibility for creating a safe, welcoming, inclusive and affirming environment for all individuals that this policy is adopted. This policy is meant to be congruent with the Canadian Human Rights Act, the British Columbia Human Rights Code, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In addition, this policy is supported by the Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools mandate of the British Columbia Ministry of Education.

The Board of Education recognizes and reaffirms its commitment to the anti-discrimination principles and values contained in the B.C. Human Rights Code, the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It also recognizes the need to provide a safe environment, free from harassment and discrimination, while ensuring that all students, employees and families, are treated with respect and dignity while being welcomed and included in all aspects of learning and school life.

DEFINITIONS:

“Asexual” is a person whose interest in others does not include sexuality.

“Bisexual” is a person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to members of both sexes.

“Discrimination” is the act, practice, treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction in favour or against a person based on the group, class or category to which that person belongs rather than on individual merit.

“Gay” is a male who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to other males. The term is sometimes used to refer in general to the LGBTQ+ community, but most often refers just to gay males.

“Gender” is the range of physical, mental and behavioural characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, males and females.

“Gender Identity” is a person’s deeply held sense or psychological knowledge of their own gender, regardless of the gender they were assigned at birth.

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“Gender Non-conforming” refers to people who do not follow other people’s ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the female or male sex they were assigned at birth.

“Homophobia” is negative attitudes, feelings and practices towards people who are, or appear to be, LGBTQ+.

“Intersex” is a person who was born with a combination of male and female sex organs, genitals and/or chromosomes.

“Lesbian” is a female who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to other females.

“LGBTQ+” refers specifically to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual/two-spirit, queer/questioning, but also as a general descriptor for the gay community and for issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation.

“Queer” has a history of being used as a derogatory name for members of the LGBTQ+ community and those whose sexual orientation or gender identity is perceived as such. Many people use this word in a positive way to refer to the LGBTQ+ community. They have reclaimed the term as their own. Not everyone believes this and sensitivity should be used when using or hearing it, as there are still many negative connotations with its use.

“Pronoun” a word that can function by itself as a noun phrase that refers to a person using it. Pronouns can be gender neutral (they/them, ze, zir, zeer/zeer)

“Questioning” refers to people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

“Sex and Gender” are easy to confuse; however, they are two different concepts and terms: sex refers to the biological sex of person. Gender refers to their societal appearance, mannerisms, and roles.

“Sexual identity” is how a person perceives him- or herself. This may or may not agree with societal gender roles or biological sex.

“Sexual orientation” refers to which sex a person is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to.

“Transgender” refers to people whose sexual identity is different from their biological sex. Many transgender people feel they are neither male/boy nor female/girl specifically, and many feel as though their biological sex and their socialized gender do not match. Some transgender people choose to use medical intervention (hormone therapy and/or surgery) to have their outward appearance, more accurately reflect their gender identity. Some change their outward appearance, or gender expression, through clothing, hairstyles and mannerisms, and some do not.

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“Transphobia” is negative attitudes, feelings and practices towards people who are, or appear to be, LGBTQ+.

“Transsexual” describes those individuals who use hormone therapy and/or surgery to alter their biological sex.

“Two-spirit” is an English translation of terms in various languages to describe a concept that appears in Native cultures across North America. Traditionally, the two-spirit person was one who had received a gift from the Creator, that gift being the privilege to house both male and female spirits in their bodies. Being given the gift of two spirits meant that this individual had the ability to see the world from two perspectives at the same time. This greater vision was a gift to be shared with all, and as such, two-spirit people were revered as leaders, mediators, teachers, artists, seers, and spiritual guides. They were treated with the greatest respect, and held important spiritual and ceremonial responsibilities. Nowadays, two-spirit is the term by which many First Nations LGBTQ+ people identify themselves. In a broader sense, two-spirit is the term that can encompass an integration of alternative sexuality and/or alternative gender with Native spirituality.

Specifically:

1. All students, employees, contractors, volunteers, visitors and any other persons who use district facilities are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the district's commitment to non-discrimination, human rights and cross-cultural understanding.
 - 1.1. School and classroom environments, including electronic environments and whenever students are within the jurisdiction of the school district, must be free of homophobic/transphobic language and behaviour.
 - 1.2. It is expected that staff and students, and others when on school district property, will use language and behaviour that does not degrade, label, stereotype or incite hatred, prejudice, discrimination or harassment towards others on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.
 - 1.3. All employees will be sensitive to individual discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards individuals who are, or appear to be, LGBTQ+ to ensure that all students are treated with fairness and respect.
 - 1.4. Allegations of homophobic/transphobic language or behaviour or discrimination will be reported to the teacher or principal, in the case of students, volunteers or parents, and to the immediate supervisor in the case of employees.
 - 1.5. It is expected that complaints of discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression are taken seriously and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policy and procedures.
 - 1.6. Students have the right to confidentiality of their official and/or affirming sex, gender, pronoun and name. Staff will not expose sexual orientation, gender identity, pronoun, and/or gender expression of students without their consent.

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- 1.7. 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. LGBTQ+ students who play high school sports will follow the “Student Athlete Eligibility” process laid out in the BC School Sports (BCSS) handbook.
 - 1.7.1. See section 821 Student Athlete Gender in the current BCSS Handbook.
- 1.8. The district will make available single stall all genders washrooms at all school locations and worksites.
- 1.9. All students who desire increased privacy will be provided with a reasonable alternative washroom and/or changing area. Any alternative arrangements will be provided in a way that protects students’ confidentiality.
- 1.10. All students shall have access to washroom and change facilities that align with their gender identity.
2. The district encourages staff to adapt and include current learning resources and strategies to provide opportunities for all students and staff to develop positive awareness with respect to human rights, anti-discrimination and cultural diversity related to LGBTQ+ students. The district will strive to eliminate the systemic inequities and barriers for members of the school community whose real or perceived identity is LGBTQ+ and demonstrate accountability in leadership so that everyone is treated with fairness and respect.
3. The district will provide opportunities for staff to develop their knowledge, skills, awareness, and behaviours to identify and eliminate homophobic/ transphobic practices and to foster dialogue that creates understanding and respect for diversity.
4. The district will further provide school principals and vice-principals, and other school district staff as required, with training and/or resources so they are informed about human rights, anti-homophobia/anti-transphobia, discrimination, cultural diversity and harassment.
5. The district recognizes students have the right to self-identification which includes the name they wish to be addressed and their affirming pronouns which correspond to their gender identity. Students may express their gender identity or gender expression through what they wear to school. All dress must be in accordance with the criteria identified in section 3.3.4 of the District Code of Student Conduct.

References: Ministerial Order 267/07 – Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct Order