

## DISTRICT PHILOSOPHY

## Policy 106-G

### Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

**The Richmond School District accepts the responsibility to create safe and caring environments and believes that...**

- the LGBTQ+ community has a right to be recognized and affirmed by school district personnel and to have equal access to services;
- homophobic and gender-based comments, discrimination and bullying undermine the safety of any learning or working environment, and these forms of harassment and discrimination are prohibited under the BC Human Rights Code;
- any language or behaviour that deliberately degrades; denigrates; or incites hatred, prejudice, discrimination, or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identification or expression will not be tolerated, and schools shall include the prohibition of such language and behaviour in their student codes of conduct; and
- all staff have an obligation to intervene in any interaction that involves the use of homophobic or gender-based insults and slurs, and staff will convey to those using such language that such comments are against Board policy and will not be tolerated in the educational community.

**The members of the LGBTQ+ community within the Richmond School District have a right to...**

- be free from harassment, discrimination and violence;
- be treated fairly, equitably and with dignity;
- be able to self-identify and be able to freely express themselves;
- be included, represented and affirmed in a positive and respectful manner;
- have avenues of recourse (without fear of reprisal) available when they are the victims of harassment, discrimination and violence; and
- have their families and communities valued and affirmed.

### Privacy and Confidentiality

All persons have the right to privacy, including the right to have one's assigned gender at birth and gender decisions remain private at school or work. Disclosing information without permission may violate privacy laws, such as the *Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPPA).

The District will ensure that all medical information relating to students and staff is kept confidential in accordance with the applicable district, municipal, provincial and federal laws. Staff will not disclose information that may reveal sexual orientation or gender identity unless legally required to do so or unless permission has been obtained from the student or a parent or adult who has been authorized to give such permission through the use of district information and privacy procedures.

## **Self-Identification**

Every member of our district community has the right to be addressed by the name or pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity. A court-ordered name or gender change is not required, and official records do not need to be changed. The district will develop record-keeping processes to ensure that the preferred name or pronoun is appropriately documented to support this right.

## **Washroom, Locker and Changing Rooms**

All students and staff have the right to safe and private washroom and changing facilities. They have the right to access washrooms and changing facilities that correspond to their gender identity. School staff will work with students and their families to ensure that appropriate washroom and changing facilities are available to all students. Schools will continue to maintain separate washrooms and changing facilities for male and female students. All schools will also designate facilities designed for use by one person at a time as accessible to all persons and will increase the availability of these single-person facilities through renovation and new construction.

## **Physical Education Classes and Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities**

All students have the right to participate in physical education classes and curricular and extra-curricular sports/activities in a manner that respects and embraces their gender identity. Activities will be designed to be as inclusive and gender-neutral as possible. However, if an issue of inclusivity arises, students will be given options for activities they feel comfortable with. Requests may come directly from the student or from a parent or guardian. It is the school administrator's responsibility to make the requested arrangements for these students to participate in school and extra-curricular activities and physical education. All requests, meetings and decisions must be documented and maintained in a confidential file.

## **Other Gender-Based Activities, Rules and Practices**

School and district personnel are required to evaluate all procedures, forms, routines, activities, rules and ceremonies to ensure gender inclusive language and purpose. Newly written guidelines must be communicated to all staff, parents and students. Students have the right to expect that all policies, procedures, programs and communications are appropriate, and respectful, taking into consideration all aspects of their identities. Students will be authorized by the school district to participate in activities consistent with their gender identity.

## **Billeting and Overnight Field Trips**

Every student has the right to feel safe in a billeting or overnight field trip situation. Billeting plans for sports teams and overnight school-based activities must provide for each student accommodations where they feel safe and accepted. The school administrator or teacher in charge of the event will be supported in every effort to make adjustments to support the student. Regarding stays with billet families, there will be a discussion with the student and their parent or guardian about whether the student requires the billet family to be informed of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Wherever appropriate, and in agreement with a member of staff, the student should have the option to billet with a member of staff should this help to further ensure their feelings of safety.

## **Information Privacy**

Protecting the privacy of LGBTQ+ students and members of the district community is the top priority. All medical information is kept strictly confidential. Any violation of the confidentiality of this information contravenes this administrative procedure and the privacy law *Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA)*. All communication with respect to the sexual orientation or gender identity or expression of a student will be considered private and confidential. In accordance with Federal and Provincial legislative privacy requirements, all communications will be guided by what is considered to be in the best interest of the student.

## **Student Counselling and Support**

School District No. 38 (Richmond) is committed to maintaining a safe learning and working environment that actively provides counselling and support to students who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. School counsellors and the Adolescent Support Team are often the first point of contact for students seeking emotional support and will be specifically trained in culturally safe responses to LGBTQ+ issues. School administrators have the primary responsibility of ensuring that all school staff, Parent Advisory Committees and students are familiar with and understand the content of this policy and these procedures. The Board of Education is responsible for ensuring that employees who represent the district in other areas are equally as informed. Students can report incidents of harassment, bullying, intimidation and discrimination through the ERASE Bullying website at <https://www.erasebullying.ca/>. Information regarding the website is available from the school administration.

The District will facilitate efforts to form SOGI clubs or groups whenever students or staff come forward to request this opportunity. Schools shall appoint members of staff as safe contacts for students who identify themselves as part of the LGBTQ+ community. School administrators will inform students and staff about the location and availability of these contacts.

## **Staff Development and Education**

Education is the primary purpose of the district. Educational programs will include curricular topics and learning resources that reaffirm the inclusion of all members of our community, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. In addition, resources and training will be available to staff to help teach and support safe, caring and inclusive values in the district. Schools will conduct annual staff training for all staff members, including teachers, educational assistants, administrators, counsellors, youth and family workers, and other staff as deemed necessary, outlining their responsibilities under the applicable laws, policies and administrative procedures. Information regarding this administrative procedure shall be incorporated into information sessions for new school employees. All staff share the collective responsibility of creating a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment for the LGBTQ+ community.

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## **Educators and school support staff will be expected to...**

- be familiar with and know where to access the SOGI policy and prevention procedures;
- have a general understanding of definitions relating to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression;
- develop appropriate communication strategies to interact with our LGBTQ+ community;
- fully understand the concept of the protection of privacy for students and families;

- be aware of the strategies and procedures for intervening with issues such as bullying, harassment, intimidation and discrimination; and
- model and teach inclusive practices that honour and support all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions.

Educators play an important role in teaching and modelling respect for gender diversity. It is expected that teachers will create classrooms where students can see the commitment to creating a safe, caring, inclusive and discrimination-free environment. Students need to see that all educators are striving to value and support the diversity of gender identity and expression within our schools through the sharing of knowledge in a positive and non-judgemental manner, exemplified by:

- addressing the class in non-gendered ways (using inclusive language);
- seating and lining up students in non-gendered groupings;
- creating mixed-gender groups/teams;
- displaying signs, posters, safe-place stickers and books that depict a range of gender representations;
- acknowledging national and international days and events that raise awareness about gender identity;
- teaching students how to be supportive of each other and modelling appropriate supportive behaviour toward all gender identities; and
- providing balanced health education that is factual and supportive of gender diversity.

### **District SOGI Advisory Committee**

A representative school district stakeholder advisory committee will be established that includes, but is not limited to, adult and student LGBTQ+ representatives. This committee will act in an advisory capacity for the implementation of this policy and its goals and objectives and will develop terms of reference.

### **Employment Equity**

The Board believes in equitable treatment for all individuals regardless of race, colour, ancestry, ethnic origin, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, physical or mental ability, or political beliefs. The letter and spirit of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *B.C. Human Rights Acts* and the Board's *Collective Agreements* shall be carefully observed, enforced and supported so that all members of the educational school community can work together in an atmosphere of respect and acceptance of individual differences.

The Board will ensure the confidentiality of employees who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or transitioning to another gender and will give them the support they require to do their work in a safe and respectful environment.

### **School Community Involvement**

The Board is committed to ongoing, constructive and open dialogue with the LGBTQ+ community.

The Board will support community partnerships that enhance the Board's commitment to the LGBTQ+ community.

The Board will encourage Parent Advisory Councils to acknowledge and support the diversity of our school community. The Board will acknowledge, through communication to students, staff and the community, that some children live in LGBTQ+ families and need to be positively recognized. Parent Advisory Councils and students will be encouraged to engage in dialogue with openly identified LGBTQ+ youth and their organizations.

## **Appropriate Intervention/Responding to Incident**

All members of the School District No. 38 (Richmond) community have the right to expect a respectful and culturally safe environment free of discrimination, harassment and bullying. In 2007, the Ministry of Education mandated that school districts establish procedures that align with the Ministerial Order M276/07. Each school must, in consultation with staff, parents and students, establish its own code of conduct based on the ministerial order and guidelines. Appropriate interventions are included in the Code of Conduct administrative procedures. School district personnel may also refer to the School District No. 38 (Richmond) ERASE Bullying Strategies as guidelines in making intervention decisions.

## **Complaint Process**

The District will take all concerns and complaints seriously. Students and parents should expect that concerns and complaints regarding SOGI discrimination at the school level will be supported by teachers and the school administration. Students are encouraged to share their concerns with teachers, counsellors, principals or vice-principals. Concerns and complaints can also be directly communicated to principals or vice-principals.

Students can also report SOGI discrimination and bullying to the ERASE on-line website at <https://www.erasebullying.ca/>. This information will be used by the school district to take action against the concern.

If an incident occurs at a school site, the complaint will be managed by the school administrator. If a complaint is against an administrator, the complaint should be referred to the Office of the Superintendent.

A thorough investigation will be conducted.

The complaint process shall be communicated to all schools, partner groups, and contracted services. District administration is responsible for ensuring that employees and contract providers are aware of the process.

## **Appeal Process**

The Board of Education recognizes and respects that students and parents or guardians may disagree with decisions made by employers. Section 11 of the *School Act* of British Columbia gives parents or guardians and students (with parental consent) the right to express concerns or appeal certain decisions.

The right of appeal applies to decisions that significantly affect the health, education or welfare of students. Information regarding the Board's appeal procedure and the formal appeal bylaw can be accessed on the district's website. Prior to an appeal, it is expected that school administration, students and parents or guardians will try to resolve concerns at the school level.

## RESOURCES

### **SOGI 1 2 3**

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

<http://www.sogieducation.org>

### **BC Teachers Federation**

The BCTF offers to teachers a variety of free workshops 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 the 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 also to do. The presentations offer a chance to foster 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 also 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, B.C., that works to improve queer and trans lives. The organization provides a safe space for LGBTQ/2S people and their allies to fully self-express while feeling welcome and included.

<http://qmunity.ca/> <https://qmunity.ca/resources/queer-glossary/>

### **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.

<http://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 and support 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)**

GLSEN is a leading 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 or their queer families.

<http://pridenet.ca/>