



ARC FOUNDATION 2021 NORTH OKANAGAN SHUSWAP SOGI REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Now entering its sixth school year, the BC SOGI Educator Network is connecting District Leads from all 60 public school districts, as well as a growing number of independent and First Nations schools. The global pandemic has affected educators and the education system in many ways, and SOGI 1 2 3 programming has been no exception. Despite a year that has been anything but typical, SOGI 1 2 3 continues to engage educators and partners across the school system.

The SOGI School Lead End of Year Survey was distributed via Survey Monkey in May of 2021. The questions in this evaluation aimed to gather feedback on the delivery of SOGI 1 2 3 in schools and to provide benchmarking data to compare to previous years. The feedback provided can be used to shape and inform district initiatives to support SOGI-inclusive schools, and a team of SOGI School Leads.

The goals of the SOGI School Lead End of Year Survey are to:

1. Provide a snapshot of the current state of SOGI-inclusion in schools in the district,
2. Allow School Leads to inform the planning of district activities by providing the District Lead with information about what could be done differently or what needs to continue,
3. Allow School Leads to inform the planning of provincial activities.

Overall, the feedback about SOGI 1 2 3 in North Okanagan Shuswap and across the province continues to be very positive. In all of BC, most respondents feel that they have the support and resources they need to support SOGI-inclusive education in their schools despite the challenging year where many also said COVID-19 had a negative impact on their ability to support SOGI-inclusive initiatives.

SURVEY RESULTS

The spring survey was completed by 15 respondents in SD83. The breakdown of school representation is:

- ⇒ 8 Leads from elementary schools
- ⇒ 3 Leads from middle schools
- ⇒ 6 Leads from high schools
- ⇒ 4 Leads from alternative, K-12, or other schools

**Responses indicate that some leads fall under more than one category*



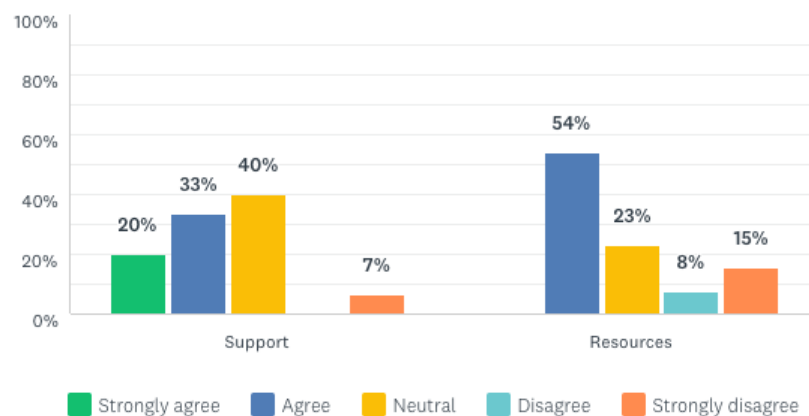
The breakdown of the roles that the Leads hold in their schools is:

1. Teachers (3)
2. Counsellors (4)
3. Librarian (3)
4. Support staff (2)
5. Administrators (3)

Support, Resources, and Information

School Leads were asked a variety of questions about what they have and need to be successful in their role of SOGI Lead. The majority of School Leads agree that, overall, they have the support and resources they need to plan and support SOGI-inclusive initiatives and activities, as per the graph below.

I have the support and resources I need to plan and support SOGI-inclusive education:



The sources of information that the School Leads find the most useful are, in order of most named:

- SOGI District Leads (85%)
- SOGleducation.org website (38%)
- Online resources e.g. websites (not including SOGleducation.org) (31%)
- Other SOGI 1 2 3 offerings: newsletter, webinars, etc. (31%)
- District SOGI Policy (15%)
- Print resources e.g. books (8%)
- Other school staff (8%)

No Leads named other SOGI School Leads or school administrators as useful sources of information.

23% of respondents (3) are satisfied with the professional development they have received, 38% (5) are neutral, 8% (1) are dissatisfied, and 31% (4) indicated that they haven't received any SOGI

professional development. Leads who shared that they did not feel confident talking to their colleagues about SOGI-inclusive education indicated that additional Pro-D would help them to feel more confident. When asked if they are satisfied with the tools and resources that have been offered, 25% (3) strongly agree, 50% (6) agree, and 25% (3) are neutral.

Open ended questions about the priority need for professional development, tools, and resources were also asked. Leads requested guidance about starting and leading a GSA, and more information about SOGI-inclusive terminology. Additional support for elementary school Leads was requested. Some Leads asked for training for administrative staff, or mandatory training for all educators. Leads also expressed the need for more time to connect and learn together, such as with a mentoring group. One stated:

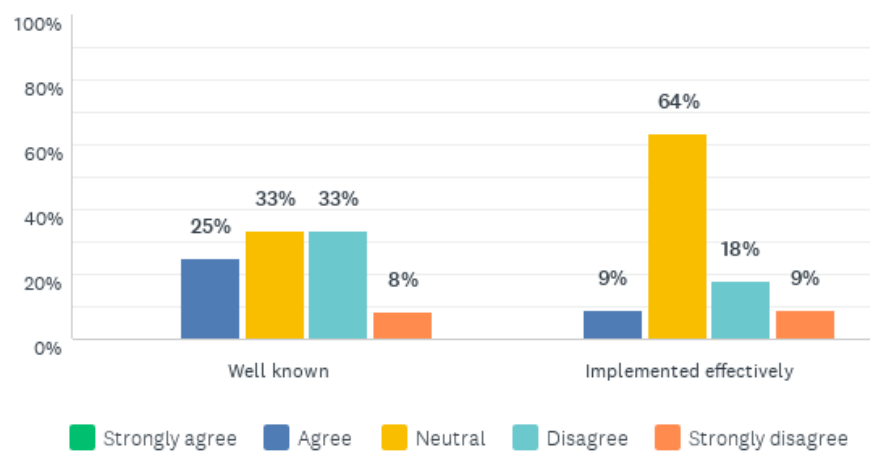
“I simply need to make/find more time for this important topic, but it is one more theme added to the large curricular, district, and school goals & themes. It's extremely challenging to stay knowledgeable in all of these areas.”

In terms of tangible resources, Leads requested SOGI-inclusive books, particularly French and elementary-level books, and approved videos. One Lead specified that they would like “videos by kids for kids.” Leads also asked for merchandise for classrooms such as stickers, and more funding to go towards SOGI initiatives. As one stated:

“Our district lead is wonderful, and I know that she is doing more work than her FTE actually provides the district.”

When asked if the district SOGI policy/procedures are well known, most Leads responded negatively. When asked if the district SOGI policy/procedures are implemented effectively, most Leads responded neutrally, although a large number responded negatively. These are notably lower levels of agreement than the provincial average.

My district's SOGI Policy is generally well known and implemented effectively:





Connecting with Colleagues

SOGI Leads were asked about their perspectives on how other colleagues at their school were faring with SOGI-inclusive education. On average, School Leads believe that 15-40% of educators at their school engage in SOGI-inclusive education or activities.

The majority of Leads share information about SOGI-inclusive education with their colleagues. 25% (3) strongly agree, 50% (6) agree, 17% (2) are neutral, and 8% (1) disagree that they feel confident talking to other staff in their schools and sharing information about SOGI-inclusive education. In the comments, some Leads mentioned that they need more time, resources, and additional professional development to help them feel confident to talk to administrators.

School Leads believe that the following are the top barriers for other educators in addressing SOGI with students:

- Lack of knowledge/understanding in how to integrate SOGI into the curriculum (92%)
- Lack of training and/or resources (50%)
- Lack of confidence (33%)
- Fear of parental opposition (33%)
- Belief that students are too young (33%)
- Fear of community opposition (17%)

No Leads said that religious conviction is a barrier. Competing curricular requirements was also named as a barrier.

Outputs

This year, SOGI Leads were able to undertake the following actions:

- Use SOGI-inclusive language and examples in the classroom
- Discuss SOGI topics with a student
- Participate in a SOGI-specific event or campaign
- Intervene when hearing a homonegative or transnegative comment (e.g. "that's so gay")
- Incorporate SOGI content into a lesson
- Attend training or professional development sessions about SOGI
- Attend GSA or similar meetings/activities
- Intervene when witnessing other homophobic/transphobic harassment

In addition, the following SOGI awareness days were celebrated:

- Pink Shirt Day
- Transgender Day of Remembrance
- No Name Calling Week
- Pride Month



Four of the fifteen schools indicated that they have an active GSA or similar club. Several Leads shared that their schools have never had a GSA. One Lead shared that they are in the process of starting a GSA. Provincially, the majority of middle and secondary schools have a GSA, and a growing number of elementary schools are starting them as well.

KEY THEMES

Pandemic restrictions have been a major barrier across BC, and 50% of North Okanagan Shuswap Leads found that COVID-19 negatively affected their ability to support SOGI-inclusive programming. The majority who added comments said that cohort restrictions created the most challenges. One Lead noted that the overall reduced capacity of staff was a significant barrier.

When asked what is most needed to support 2SLGBTQ+ students, as well as others who may not identify as such but face SOGI-based bullying, Leads answered that SOGI-inclusive education for all students would increase student safety. Leads asserted that more training for all staff is critical to this. Some Leads mentioned the importance of staff intervention in response to negative comments or bullying, increased support for GSAs, and support from the outside community.

Barriers

The barriers that School Leads face in the role are diverse. Respondents were asked to select their major barriers from a list of common barriers taken from previous years' data with an opportunity to elaborate on unique barriers. The most common responses were, in order:

1. Not enough time to do the role (67%)
2. Staff apathy and/or opposition (42%)
3. Not enough resources to share (33%)
4. Parental opposition (25%)
5. Not enough clarity for what the role entails (17%)
6. Not enough personal SOGI knowledge (8%)

8% of respondents said they had no major barriers. No Leads named inadequate support from school or district leadership as a barrier.

Impact

Overall, 33% of Leads feel that they are having a positive impact as a SOGI Lead, which is lower than the 57% of all respondents across BC who agree with this statement. When asked what shows that they are having an impact, Leads shared stories of receiving positive feedback from students, as well as seeing changes in the school culture more generally. Students are speaking up, approaching Leads with concerns, and organizing within their GSA. SOGI-inclusive books and other resources are being accessed, and more SOGI awareness days are being acknowledged or celebrated.



Leads shared favourite stories about the inclusivity of their students, and about the successes of individual students feeling comfortable to be themselves. A few specifically noted the District SOGI Lead as a big success for the year:

“Thank you to Ami Witt for all of the incredible information, Pro D opportunities, encouragement and patience. Her leadership has made and continues to make a huge difference.”

GOING FORWARD

Based on the evaluation process, key areas for ongoing support that can be provided by the District Lead, supported by the SOGI Network and ARC Foundation are:

1. Continue along the positive path of having Leads that feel well-supported and well-connected.
2. Advocate for funding and TTOC coverage to allow Leads to access training or meet to network around SOGI.
3. Work with Leads to encourage all educators to incorporate SOGI-inclusive education, not just those who feel comfortable, in order to better implement district SOGI policies and procedures.

While there is much to celebrate, there is also work still to be done. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to SOGI Inclusive Education, in particular during a year with so much change and uncertainty. ARC Foundation looks forward to our ongoing collaboration.