

POLICY 121 SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

The Board of Education of School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap) is committed to establishing and maintaining a safe and positive learning environment for all members of the school community (including students, parents, teachers, support staff, Rightsholders, stakeholders, and anyone involved with the School District) who identify as members of a sexual minority or are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, or who are two-spirit persons. This policy is established with the intent and recognition that public schools need to be safe for everyone as defined in the B.C. Human Rights Code and Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Board recognizes and values the diversity found within the District and acknowledges that individuals who are members of a sexual minority face a unique set of challenges within our schools. Specifically, that any homophobic, transphobic, and gender-based comments, discrimination, and bullying are demeaning to all regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

The District has an obligation to ensure that members of the school community who are 2SLGBTQIA+, and members of diverse family structures are respected, included, and safe in the school communities and related activities. Any form of discrimination, intimidation, or harassment against any person based on gender/gender identity or sexual orientation/perceived sexual orientation is prohibited.

This policy and guidelines apply to the behaviour of all members of the school community including students, parents, teachers, support staff, and anyone involved with the District.

Resolution to complaints to school authorities arising from this policy should be resolved in a respectful and restorative manner, providing education and the opportunity for all impacted to move forward in a positive manner.

Guidelines

1. The District Code of Conduct requires that appropriate behaviours and attitudes should be reflected in classroom instruction and modeled by adults in the school learning and work environments, and that students are expected to exhibit behaviour that enables all to participate effectively in the educational community.
2. Any language or behaviour that deliberately degrades, denigrates, incites hatred, prejudice, discrimination, or harassment towards individuals on the basis of their real or perceived sexual

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orientation or gender identification will not be tolerated. Schools shall include the prohibition of such language and behaviour in their students' codes of conduct.

3. All employees have an obligation to respond to any interaction involving the use of labels and slurs, and behaviours regardless of the speaker's intentions, and to convey that such comments are against Board policy and will not be tolerated in the educational community.
4. The *Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools* mandate of the Province of British Columbia requires that schools strive to "develop positive, welcoming school cultures and are committed to fostering optimal environments for learning". All schools must be consistently active in fostering a positive and welcoming culture and take specific action in order to promote the establishment of this culture for all, including individuals dealing with, or perceived to be dealing with, issues of sexual orientation or gender identity. School staff will ensure student safety by maintaining confidentiality when needed. Families are important supports in the gender/sexual development of adolescents. Schools will work with students to encourage full disclosure to families as the student considers safe and supportive ways to share such concerns with their family.
5. The Board of Education is committed to providing an inclusive environment for students and staff by providing access to educational resources that are respectful of diverse gender identities and gender expressions.
6. Efforts will be made to educate all principals, vice-principals, school, and District counselors employed by the Board in the knowledge and skills required to deal with sexual orientation and gender identity. They shall be informed and be familiar with all policies with respect to the requirements of the federal and provincial human rights provisions and School District policy with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity.
7. It is expected that teachers will create classrooms, and administrators will create schools, where students can see a commitment to creating a safe, caring, and discrimination-free environment.
8. The District will facilitate efforts to form GSA 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 2SLGBTQIA+ community. School administrators will inform students and staff about the location and availability of these contacts.