



The Board of Education of School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)

STAFF REPORT

TO: Board of Education **DATE:** October 17, 2023
FROM: Gillian Dawe-Taylor, Director of Instruction (Diversity & Inclusion)
RE: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)

Timeline

- 1996: The [Canadian Human Rights Act](#) is amended to include sexual orientation and in 2017, gender identity and gender expression are added as protected grounds.
- 2005: Gay marriage is legalized across Canada.
- 2015: SD83 Board of Education adopts [Policy 121 Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#) (last amended in 2019)
- 2016: The [BC Human Rights Code](#) adds Gender Identity and Expression as protected grounds.
- 2016: SOGI 123 is developed by the [ARC Foundation](#) (a not-for-profit organization) in conjunction with the BC Ministry of Education; BC Teachers' Federation; school districts across BC; UBC Faculty of Education; education partners; and various local, national, and international 2SLGBTQ+ community organizations. The SOGI resources aim to reduce homophobia, transphobia and address [alarming statistics](#) regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ BC youth.
- 2017: SD83 creates SOGI District Lead part-time position to assist with SOGI inclusive education. Two teachers have held this position to date.
- 2018: [SD83 SOGI Guidelines](#) are developed (last updated in 2021 as best practice evolves).
- 2020: SD83 establishes a SOGI structure with the goal to have a SOGI School Lead in each school in the district. School Lead training and inservice is required 1-2 times per year.
- 2022: Ministry of Education [releases Minister's K-12 education partners' statement on support for SOGI](#).
- 2022: BC Teacher Librarians' Association releases a [statement of support for SOGI](#).

Current

- Amy Witt is the District SOGI Lead (0.1 = 0.5 day a week), she also has a 0.1 as a sexual health support. These are two separate pieces of her job. She reports directly to Tanya Harrington, District Vice Principal of Student Wellness, who reports to Gillian Dawe-Taylor, Director of Instruction: Diversity and Inclusion department.
- Primary SOGI duties:
 - School Lead training and support;



The Board of Education of School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)

STAFF REPORT

- liaising between ARC and SD83 staff (SLT, PVPs, and teachers);
- resource for SOGI inclusive challenges as they arise;
- supporting establishment and development of Gender Sexuality Alliances (all grades) in district schools; and
- working with other Zone District Leads to help with SOGI Pro-D at the COTA (Central Okanagan Teachers' Association) Zone Conference in February.

Arising Issues

1 Million March for Children

- In September 2023 a group called Family Freedom advocated for a Canada-wide march ([1 Million March for Children](#)) with the intent to eliminate "*Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) curriculum, pronouns, gender ideology and mixed bathrooms in schools.*" They further state that they "*stand united to safeguard the well-being and innocence of our children.*"
- Their website further advocates their intent to:
 - Free our children from the bondage of indoctrination, breaking the system designed to sexualize our children
 - Stop the war on children
 - Stop the sterilization and mutilation of children
 - Stop the exploitation and trafficking of children
 - Protect and preserve the innocence of children
 - Expose SOGI
- This website contains a great deal of misinformation and potentially inflammatory language.
- A September 18th parent/guardian/caregiver letter which included care and concern for families impacted by wildfires, expressed our new values of belonging, respect, reconciliation, empathy, equity and perseverance (arising from the strategic planning process which included the feedback of hundreds of Rightsholders, stakeholder, parents, staff and students), reiterated Policy 121 and our commitment to maintaining safe and positive learning spaces for all, and expresses support for all 2SLGBTQIA+ students, staff and families.
- In essence, ALL are welcome at SD83 and the beliefs of one group cannot interfere with the creation of safe and inclusive school environments which allow for all to be connected, to belong and be welcomed at school. This does not invalidate the rights of a person or group to hold contrasting beliefs, it aims to ensure that we can co-exist with peace and respect as a diverse society made up of so many cultures and worldviews.
- On September 20th a march was held in Salmon Arm and a group of about 100 protestors came to the board office for approximately two (2) hours. Superintendent Donna Kriger stood outside and spoke with protestors for the duration of their time on site, answering questions respectfully.



The Board of Education of School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)

STAFF REPORT

Staff Questions

- Some staff have questions about SOGI that they would like to have answered without fear of being perceived as homophobic. Some of these questions possibly arise from some of the misinformation about SOGI currently being focused upon in media and through this march, while some are no doubt pre-existing.
- The district response is to host a *SOGI Q&A Staff Safe Space Session* where staff are invited to come and ask their questions and to receive accurate answers on October 19th from 4-5:30pm.
- Safe space is negotiated to set the environment for the meeting. Safe space means a respectful, confidential, judgement-free time to ask questions and have them answered, discussed, or further researched. It is about holding what is heard as confidential, and not sharing the experiences/comments of others without their explicit consent outside of that space. It is a commitment that it is okay to show up vulnerable and talk about the stuff we are struggling with and/or not sure or confused about.
- Staff were asked to review policy, [SOGI 123 materials](#) and the [erase \(expect respect & a safe education\) SOGI-specific section](#) of the BC Ministry website prior to the meeting.
- Following this meeting a Q&A communication will be sent to all staff with questions and answers from the session, ensuring no person is identified as asking any particular question. This may be helpful as many staff may have the same questions but not be able to attend and/or not feel able to ask them.
- The Diversity and Inclusion Department would like to offer a workshop on SOGI 123 for trustees should they wish to have one. Please let Superintendent Donna Kriger know if you would like to pursue this.