

DISTRICT PHILOSOPHY**Policy****Policy Statement - Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

The Richmond Board of Education values the diversity present within the Richmond School District. We believe that each individual should feel welcome and included as part of a safe, respectful and caring environment.

We recognize the unique set of challenges experienced by our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Two Spirit, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ+) community and believe that it is our collective responsibility to ensure that every individual is treated with fairness, respect and dignity, and is included fully in the life of the community.

The Richmond School District understands and demonstrates that our district culture is strengthened by the rich contributions made by each member. We believe that learning and working environments that are inclusive of diversity and equitable in relation to that diversity are essential in supporting the highest level of personal and collective growth and achievement.

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DISTRICT PHILOSOPHY**Policy****Management Regulations - Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

The Richmond Board of Education believes that an important role for public education is to prepare young people to work and live in open, supportive and democratic societies that are free of discrimination or violence that is based on sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.

An educational environment that fosters equity and the principles of inclusion, will affirm the identities of individuals and their families, and can support the elimination of homophobia and discrimination within our schools and our communities.

It is the overarching responsibility of the Board of Education to jointly ensure that all staff understand and demonstrate that it is their individual and collective responsibility to identify individual discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. It is expected that all staff will work to eliminate the barriers and inequities to learning for students who identify themselves as LGBTQ+, ensuring that all students are treated with fairness, respect and dignity.

The Board will promote pro-active strategies and guidelines so that all members of this diverse community are welcomed, respected, accepted and supported.

The Board is committed to implementing measures that will:

- Define appropriate expectations, language, behaviours and actions in order to prevent discrimination and harassment.
- Ensure 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.
- Raise awareness and improve understanding of the unique set of challenges experienced by those who identify sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.

Education and Awareness

- The District will work continuously to educate all members of the school community (including students, staff, parents and guardians) to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity and expression and to promote a safe and inclusive environment.
- The District will support schools with SOGI affirming resources that can be infused in all curricula.
- The District will support developmentally appropriate activities and provide resources that promote knowledge and skills that develop respect for all sexual orientations and expressions.
- The District will support schools and staff in the maintenance of library resources that affirm human diversity as a fundamental component in our society, and reflect the diversity within our school communities.

District, School and Staff Responsibilities

- The Board and District will provide opportunities for school communities to increase awareness of the impact of harassment and discrimination.
- The Board and District will provide opportunities for staff to increase their knowledge and skills in promoting respect for human rights, supporting diversity and addressing harassment and discrimination.
- The District will take action when there is evidence of, or an actual complaint, of harassment and/or discrimination.
- The District will distribute guidelines for investigating and addressing incidents of harassment and/or discrimination.
- The District will build greater awareness of, and responsiveness to, the harmful effects of isolation resulting from homophobic and/or transphobic discrimination.
- Schools will inform students, staff and parents on how and when to report incidents of harassment and/or discrimination and where appropriate, intervene.
- Schools will support formal and/or informal Gay/Straight Clubs or Alliance (GSAs) groups.
- Staff and students have an obligation to intervene in any interaction involving the use of harassing, discriminatory or homophobic

statements, comments and behaviours, regardless of the speaker's intentions and to convey that such comments are against policy and will not be tolerated. Education about the harmful impact of such language and behaviour will be emphasized and encouraged, alongside any discipline deemed necessary.

- Staff will support any individual or group of students that request help and support for any issues of harassment or discrimination.
- The District will review and report to the Richmond Board of Education annually regarding the work of district and school staff in support of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy (SOGI).

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DISTRICT PHILOSOPHY**Policy****Administrative Guidelines - Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

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

- The District is responsible for ensuring that school cultures are safe, welcoming, inclusive and affirming for all students.
- The role of educators in the district is critical in creating positive societal change to address difficulties which LGBTQ+ community often face in schools.
- LGBTQ+ community have a right to be recognized and affirmed by school district personnel, and have equal access to services.
- Homophobic and gender-based comments, discrimination and bullying undermine the safety of any learning or working environment. These forms of harassment and discrimination are prohibited under the BC Human Rights Code.
- Any language or behaviour that deliberately degrades, denigrates, incites hatred, prejudice, discrimination, or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identification or expression will not be tolerated. Schools shall include the prohibition of such language and behaviour in their student codes of conduct.
- All staff have an obligation to intervene in any interaction that involves the use of homophobic or transgendered insults and slurs. Staff will convey that such comments are against Board policy and will not be tolerated in the educational community.

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;
- Self-identity and be free to express themselves;
- Be included, to be represented and affirmed in a positive and respectful manner;

- Have avenues of recourse (without fear of reprisal) available to them when they are victims of harassment, discrimination and violence.
- Have their families and communities valued and affirmed.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All persons have the right to privacy. This includes the right to have one's assigned sex at birth (male/female) 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 will be kept confidential in accordance with applicable district, municipal, provincial and federal laws. Staff will not disclose information which may reveal sexual orientation or gender identity unless legally required to do so; or with the permission of the student, parent or adult who has been authorized to do so through the use of a district release of information form.

Self Identification

Every member of our district community has the right to be addressed by a 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. Official records will only be changed upon the receipt of legal documentation.

Washroom, Locker and Change Room

All students and staff have the right to safe and private washroom and changing facilities. They have the right to access washrooms, locker rooms and changing facilities that correspond to their gender identity regardless of their legal sex. The student's self-identification is the sole measure of the student's gender. Schools may maintain separate washrooms, locker rooms or changing facilities for male and female students, provided that students can access them based on their gender identity. Schools will also designate facilities designed for use by one person as accessible to all persons, and to incorporate such single-use facilities into new construction or renovation. Any person who is uncomfortable using a shared facility while attending an off-site school-sponsored co-ed activity will be provided with a safe and private alternative. Students will not be required to use facilities that are inconsistent with their gender identity.

Physical Education Classes, Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities

All students have the right to participate in physical education classes, 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. A request 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/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 inclusive language and purpose. Language used should be as gender-neutral as possible in all cases. 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, competent and respectful, taking into consideration all parts of their identities. Students will be permitted to participate in any such activities or conform to any such rule, policy or practice consistent with their expressed gender identity.

Billeting and Overnight Field Trips

Plans for billeting for sports teams and/or overnight school based activities must provide accommodation for each student in a room where they will feel safe and accepted. The school administrator or teacher in charge of the event will be supported in making every effort to make adjustments to support the student. When staying with a billet family there will be discussion with the student and their parent or guardian whether the student requires the billet family to be informed of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Wherever possible, in a billet situation, a member of staff should be billeted along with the student to further ensure their feelings of safety.

Media and Community Communication

When the school district is communicating to the media or community about issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity and expression, the school or district will designate a single spokesperson as the key contact

person. All other district and school staff will direct community members and the media to the designated spokesperson. Protecting the privacy of transgender students and staff is the top priority. All medical information is kept strictly confidential. Any violation of confidentiality of this information contravenes this administrative procedure and the privacy law *Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPPA).

Student Counselling and Support

School District No. 38 (Richmond) is committed to maintaining a safe learning and working environment which actively provides counselling and support to students who identify themselves on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. 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 for 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 through the school administration.

The District encourages and will facilitate within reason, efforts in the formation of Gay/Straight Clubs or Alliances (GSAs) where students or staff have come forward to request this opportunity. Schools are encouraged to appoint a minimum of two members of staff to be safe contacts for students who identify themselves on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. School administrators will inform students and other staff school leads about the location and availability of this contact person.

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, staff will have resources and training available to help teach and promote the safe, caring and inclusive values of the district. Schools will conduct annual staff training for all staff members outlining their responsibilities under applicable laws, policies and

administrative procedures. This will include teachers, educational assistants, administrators, counsellors and youth and family workers, and other staff as deemed necessary. Information regarding this administrative procedure shall be incorporated into information sessions for new school employees. All staff share the collective responsibility of creating safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments for the LGBTQ+ community.

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 regarding sexual orientation, gender identity and expression;
- Develop appropriate communication strategies to interact with LGBTQ+ community;
- Fully understand the concepts of protection of privacy for students and families;
- Be aware of strategies and procedures for intervening with issues, such as bullying, harassment and intimidation and/or discrimination;
- Model and teach inclusive practices that honour and promote all sexual orientations, gender identities and expression.

Educators have an important role to play in teaching and modelling respect for gender diversity. It is expected that teachers will create classrooms where students can see a commitment to creating a safe, caring, inclusive and discrimination free environment. Students need to see that teachers are striving to change the notions of only two genders exemplified by:

- Addressing the class in non-gender ways (using inclusive language);
- Seating and lining up students in non-gender groupings;
- Creating mixed gender groups/teams;
- Displaying signs, posters, safe place stickers, and books that depict a range of gender presentations;
- Celebrating national and international days and events that raise awareness about gender identity;
- Teaching students how to be allies for each other and modelling appropriate supportive behaviour towards all gender identities;
- Providing balanced health education that is factual and supportive of gender diversity.

The Board will establish an advisory committee which includes both adult and student representatives from the LGBTQ+ community to act in an

advisory capacity regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the district SOGI policy including staff development, in-service, and professional development.

The advisory committee will consider the following recommendations/beliefs.

The goals of ongoing staff development will be to support the LGBTQ+ community in the school district and to promote anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism initiatives. The Board believes that:

- Trustees, management and staff must model respect and affirmation of the LGBTQ+ community in part through participating in in-service workshops on LGBTQ+ issues;
- Trustees, management and staff have the responsibility for the addressing of homophobia and heterosexism in the working and learning environment;
- Teachers must be supported when they include positive images and accurate information about history and culture which reflects the accomplishments and contributions of LGBTQ+ people;
- Trustees, management and staff must facilitate safer school environments for LGBTQ+ community, and those who are perceived to be so, by:
 - acknowledging that an acceptance of diversity is the starting point of respect;
 - treating everyone with respect;
 - using language that affirms all sexuality identities and not using disparaging remarks or language that demeans LGBTQ+ identities and families;
 - challenging staff, students and parents who behave in prejudicial ways towards LGBTQ+ people;
 - encouraging teachers to sponsor and support LGBTQ+ positive initiatives such as Gay/Straight Clubs or Alliances.
 - supporting the rights of LGBTQ+ students to counselling that is supportive and affirming. Under no circumstances will counsellors suggest or promote the use of or the referral to aversion, reparative or conversion therapies.
 - Supporting school or wider district initiatives which support greater inclusivity and affirmation for LGBTQ+ students, staff and families.

Employment Equity

1. 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 may work together in an atmosphere of respect and acceptance of individual differences.
2. 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 would enhance the board's commitment to LGBTQ+ community.

The Board will encourage Parent Advisory Councils to acknowledge and support the diversity of our school community. The Board will acknowledge through the 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 M2276/07. Each school must, in consultation with staff, parents and students establish their 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 a guide 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 school administration. Students are encouraged to share their concerns to a teacher, counsellor or Vice Principals and Principals. Concerns and complaints can also be directly communicated to Vice Principals and Principals.

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

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

A thorough investigation will be conducted.

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

Appeal Process

The Board of Education recognizes and respects the fact that students and/or 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.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Bisexual:

People who have a bisexual orientation can experience sexual and romantic attraction to both their own sex and the opposite sex. It also refers to an individual's sense of personal and social identity based on those attractions and the behaviours expressing them. It is one of the three classifications of sexual orientation, along with a heterosexual and a homosexual orientation.

Discrimination:

The subordination of groups or individuals resulting from a distinction, preference or exclusion based on the grounds of race, religion, colour, ethnicity, place of origin, language, age, disability, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex, or any other difference. It includes harassment, any negative or adverse conduct, comment, gesture or contact, or systemic barrier based on the above grounds. Discriminatory conduct is harmful and can create a working or learning environment that is known, or reasonably should be known, to be offensive.

Educational Community:

Includes all those who work, learn, or attend any School District No. 38 (Richmond) schools, alternative educational settings and facilities, work sites, or any district facility, and includes ancillary sites, events or activities such as school buses, district meeting settings, etc.

Gay:

A person who is emotionally/romantically and physically attracted to persons of the same sex. The term "gay" can refer to both males and females. Gay can be used interchangeably with homosexual. Gay is most often the term preferred by the LGBTQ+ communities when referring to homosexual males.

Gender Identity:

Characteristics linked to an individual's intrinsic sense of self as a man or as a woman, which may not be the same identity as one's biological sex.

Homophobia:

The fear, and/or hatred, and/or repulsion of homosexuality and gender variance in oneself or in others, often exhibited by self-hatred, prejudice, discrimination, bullying or acts of violence. Homophobia is typically directed towards those who are LGBTQ+ or are perceived as such, through gender

cues that are not in accordance with societal norms about masculinity and femininity.

Gender Expansive:

Refers to a person who does not conform to society's expectations of their gender role or gender expression. It is a broad term that includes boys who behave, dress and interact in feminine ways; girls who behave, dress and interact in masculine ways, in addition to trans students.

Gender Expression:

Refers to a way a person expresses one's gender, through dress, grooming habits, choice of name and pronoun, mannerism, activities, etc.

Heterosexism:

The assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior. Heterosexism can exist on a personal, interpersonal, institutional or cultural level.

Intersex:

Individuals who are born as "hermaphrodites" (now an outdated term). Intersex is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. Though "intersex" is referred to as an inborn condition, intersex anatomy doesn't always show up at birth. Sometimes a person isn't found to have intersex anatomy until she or he is the age of puberty, or finds themselves an infertile adult, or dies of old age and is autopsied. Some people live and die with intersex anatomy without anyone (including themselves) ever knowing. A significant issue is the practice of some parents and physicians deciding which sex is desired and then making a decision in favour of "normalising" surgery at or near birth.

Lesbian:

A female who is emotionally/romantically and physically attracted to other females. Lesbian, gay or queer can be used when referring to homosexual.

LGBTQ+, LGBTTTIQQ, LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTTQ or LGBTQQ - and other variations:

Acronym used to refer inclusively to a wide group of individuals and incorporates lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, two-spirit, intersex, queer or questioning persons. For ease of reference in the policy the acronym LGBTQ+ has been adopted, but it is intended to be widely inclusive.

Queer:

A term used derisively to humiliate and demean LGBTQ+ individuals and groups. It is generally not viewed as an appropriate term for use or in a manner directed towards the LGBTQ+ community, because of the potential of its use in a contemptuous manner or with such intent, despite the fact that some students may identify themselves as "queer" in a positive way.

Questioning:

Adults and youth who are not personally certain about their own sexual identity or orientation and may be exploring, publicly or privately, their feelings in this area.

Sexual Orientation:

The emotional/romantic and physical attraction felt by an individual towards members of the same sex, the other sex, or either sex. Sexuality is a private affair; however, expressions or sexuality (such as holding hands with one's romantic partner and putting a picture of her or him on one's desk) are public displays of sexual orientation.

Sexual Orientation Identities:

Lesbian, Gay, Straight, Bisexual and Questioning are ways that people identify themselves insofar as their romantic partnerships and family diversities are concerned.

Transgender:

A person whose gender identity (feeling of being either boy or man, girl or woman) does not match their physical/anatomical sex (male or female) and the gender roles assigned by mainstream society. Some describe it as being born into the wrong body. Increasingly, many transgender people refer to themselves as "trans".

Transsexual:

An individual who presents himself/herself and lives in the gender "opposite" to his/her genetic/physical gender at birth. A transsexual is someone who may feel psychologically like the other sex and has somehow been trapped in the wrong body. Transsexuals may be heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual in their sexual orientation. Some transsexuals may undergo operations and hormone therapy in order to make their body fit what they feel is their true gender. These individuals are sometimes known as female-to-male, FTM, transmen or male-to-female, MTF, transwomen.

Two-Spirit:

This is a term that is used by some indigenous people to describe themselves in a way that reflects their cultural construct of sex/gender/sexuality. Many of the languages of indigenous nations of North America include specific terms for gender and sexually diversity; some indigenous people may use both the general term Two-Spirit and the culturally specific term from their own language to describe themselves.

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RESOURCES

SOGI 1 2 3

SOGI 1 2 3 shares 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 a variety of free workshops to teachers 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 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 to do. The presentations offer a chance to build 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 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. They provide a safer space for LGBTQ/2S people and their allies to fully self-express while feeling welcome and included.
<http://qmunity.ca/>

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 to coordination of trans health and supports 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)

The leading national 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 Gay s(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, and queer families.

<http://pridenet.ca/>