



## Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Inclusive Education in BC Frequently Asked Questions from Parents

### What is SOGI?

SOGI—[Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity \(SOGI\)](#)—is a subject or topic and not a list of specific identities. It is an inclusive term that is relevant to all individuals regardless of where they identify on the sexual orientation or gender identity spectrums, as every person has a sexual orientation and every person has a gender identity. It includes but is not limited to identities like heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit and cis-gender (those who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth).

### Why is the inclusion of SOGI important within K-12 education?

[BCCPAC](#) is working with the Ministry of Education and other provincial partner groups to ensure that all BC students have a safe, welcoming and inclusive learning environment.

- 19% of [B.C. high school students](#) identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or not exclusively heterosexual.
- 1% of B.C. high school students identify as transgender and 5% of Aboriginal students identify as Two-Spirit.
- 42% of BC LGBTQ K-12 students report being victims of cyberbullying compared to 14% of non-LGBTQ students.
- In the past 12 months, lesbian, gay and bisexual youth were seven times more likely than heterosexual youth to attempt suicide (28% vs. 4%).

In July 2016, Bill 27- Human Rights Code Amendment Act was passed to include “gender identity or expression” among the protected grounds covered by the BC Human Rights Code. The [B.C. Ministry of Education followed in September](#) with its own directive asking that explicit references to sexual orientation and gender identity be added to the policies and codes of conduct in each school district.

The Ministry of Education has produced a [SOGI Policy Guide](#) that states that "policies and procedures that explicitly reference SOGI have been proven to reduce discrimination, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts for all students."

The Ministry of Education SOGI Policy guide also includes three goals for supporting diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions:

1. **Visibility:** The diversity of sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions are recognized and valued.
2. **Protection:** The dignity of all people across the sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) spectra is intended to be preserved, as well as protected from harm
3. **Inclusion:** Equitable treatment and inclusion are a reality for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions.

## **What is SOGI 1 2 3?**

SOGI 1 2 3 is resources and tools for educators who want to better understand sexual orientation and gender identity. SOGI 1 2 3 provides professional development and [curriculum resources](#) such as ready to use, grade-level appropriate lesson plans, online learning modules and customizable templates and tools that align with BC's new curriculum.

- Professional Development
  - Learn correct terminology
  - How to foster SOGI inclusive environments
  - Learn about SOGI Spectrums: Gender Identity, Gender Expression
  - Videos of life experiences from LGBTQ youth
- Curriculum Resources
  - Provide examples of age-appropriate lesson plans that include SOGI reference

SOGI 1 2 3 equips educators of all backgrounds and experiences with more understanding of an aspect of diversity, sexual orientation and gender identity, so that SOGI topics can be included in classroom lessons and discussions appropriately.

### **Is there a separate SOGI curriculum?**

There is not separate or distinct SOGI program or curriculum. Sexual orientation and gender identity are important topics that are interwoven through several curriculum areas, most notably, physical and health education, language arts, and social studies. How the topics are introduced to students is dependent on the age and stage of their development. These topics may also be discussed as they arise in the daily lives of students.

### **Does the Ministry of Education allow for parents to plan alternative delivery of SOGI information?**

The Ministry of Education allows for alternative-delivery of certain 'sensitive areas' of the curriculum, related to reproduction and sexuality.

Topics that refer to sexual orientation and gender identity diversity will be integrated through several curriculum areas not related to reproduction and sexuality. The [alternative delivery policy](#) will not apply in these instances.

The Physical and Health Education and Planning 10 provincial curricula include topics related to reproduction and sexuality that some students and their parents/guardians may feel more comfortable addressing by means other than instruction by a teacher in a regular classroom setting.

### **Does SOGI 1 2 3 only support LGBTQ students?**

SOGI 1 2 3 provides tools and resources for creating a welcoming, inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Research shows that harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is experienced by approximately equal numbers of students who identify as LGBTQ and not LGBTQ. This is because homophobia and transphobia can be directed at anyone and invariably have a negative effect on school culture, emotional well-being and academic success.

## **How will sexual orientation and gender identity be taught in schools?**

Educators ensure conversations in the classroom reflect the diversity that we see in our school communities.

[B.C.'s new curriculum](#) includes a focus on valuing diversity and respecting differences, and the topics of human rights and responses to discrimination. Topics related to gender and self-identity are included in the curriculum for knowledge, as well as to help students understand and respect diversity, as with the previous curriculum.

According to the Ministry of Education's [curriculum overview](#):

“British Columbia’s schools include young people of varied backgrounds, interests, and abilities. The Kindergarten to grade 12 school system focuses on meeting the needs of all students. When selecting specific topics, activities, and resources to support the implementation of the curriculum, teachers are encouraged to ensure that these choices support inclusion, equity, and accessibility for all students. In particular, teachers should ensure that classroom instruction, assessment, and resources reflect sensitivity to diversity and incorporate positive role portrayals, relevant issues, and themes such as inclusion, respect, and acceptance. This includes diversity in family compositions and gender orientation.”

Existing curriculum subjects such as [physical and health education](#), language arts and [social studies](#) already include ideas, competencies and content that may be appropriate places to include reference to SOGI diversity. For examples of grade specific lessons and topics that could include reference to SOGI diversity see attached ***SOGI and the BC Curriculum*** from SOGI 123.

## **Does SOGI inclusive education give consideration to different cultural beliefs and family values?**

The Ministry of Education works to create safe, welcoming and inclusive learning environments for all BC students.

In the BC Curriculum, “The [positive personal and cultural identity competency](#) involves the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of all the facets that contribute to a healthy sense of oneself. It includes awareness and understanding of one’s family background, heritage(s), language(s), beliefs, and perspectives in a pluralistic society.”

As primary educators, families teach family values and beliefs. The [BC curriculum assists in developing “educated citizens”](#) who are co-operative, principled, and respectful of others regardless of differences.

The ways that teachers may address SOGI in the curriculum are not about students developing a particular set of beliefs around sexual orientation and gender identity. Educators help students deepen the understanding of the diverse society that we live in and how to treat each other with dignity and respect regardless of our differences.

## **Are school aged children too young to be learning about gender?**

When discussing gender, the conversations are largely about what people like to wear, the activities they engage in and how they feel about themselves. Gender is about self-identity. When students learn they are not bound by gender stereotypes, they have an opportunity to explore a greater range of interests, ideas and activities.

## SOGI and the BC Curriculum

SOGI can be incorporated into the K-12 curriculum in an age-appropriate way. These sample entry points highlight the key themes at each grade level. It is important to note that while these lesson plans provide guidance, the classroom experience will be determined by the students participating along with the professional autonomy of the classroom teacher.

### All Grade Levels

- K-12 - Why "That's So Gay" is not Okay

### Elementary

- K/1 Social Studies & Physical and Health Education (PHE) – Family Diversity
- K/1 Social Studies & PHE – Name Calling
- 2/3 English Language Arts & PHE – Gender Identity
- 2/3/4/5 English Language Arts & PHE– Questioning Gender Expectations
- 4/5 Physical and Health Education – Gender Identity, Media and Stereotypes
- 5/6 Social Studies - LGBTQ Human Rights
- 5/6/7 Arts Education & PHE – Gender Stereotypes and Bullying
- 6/7 PHE & English Language Arts – Gender and Appearance in Media

### Secondary

- 8/9 Physical and Health Education – Gender Identity
- 8/9 English Language Arts – Gender Stereotypes in Literature
- 8/9/10 English Language Arts – Social Justice Vocabulary
- 8/9/10/11/12 English Language Arts – Gender in Short Stories and Poetry
- 8/9/10 Physical and Health Education & 10/11/12 Social Studies – Language and Terminology
- 10/11/12 Social Studies / BC First Peoples / Indigenous Studies – Indigenous Perspectives of Gender

For more details regarding the lessons listed above you can look under curriculum and resources at [www.sogieducation.org](http://www.sogieducation.org). SOGI discussions may also be impromptu in nature depending on current events programming, student sharing or issues that present themselves in the classroom.



## List of BCCPAC SOGI Resolutions:

### 2017.2 Advocacy for Single Occupant Inclusive Washrooms

Be it resolved that BCCPAC advocate for at least one single occupant washroom in each school to be designated inclusive for all. Be it further resolved that BCCPAC advocate for additional capital funding to cover the cost of building, or the conversion of an existing bathroom to, at least one single occupant inclusive washroom in schools where they do not exist

### 2017.3 Advocacy for Single Occupant Inclusive Change Rooms

Be it resolved that BCCPAC advocate for at least one single occupant change room or combination change room/washroom in each school to be designated inclusive for all. Be it further resolved that BCCPAC advocate for additional capital funding to cover the cost of building, or the conversion of an existing bathroom to, at least one single occupant inclusive change room or combination change room/washroom situated close to the school gym where they do not exist.

### [1997.8 Promotion of Issues Surrounding Homosexual Youth in BC Schools](#)

That the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training and the BC Teachers' Federation ensure that the issues surrounding gay, bisexual and trans-gendered youth shall be included in the anti-harassment policy rather than be a separate curricular program developed in the BC Public School System.

#### List of SOGI references:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-sogi-in-schools>

[www.sogieducation.org](http://www.sogieducation.org)

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016EDUC0089-001625>

*Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Education in BC, "Our Voice" BCCPAC, Fall 2017 Issue*, Jen Mezei & Matt Carruthers.

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/overview>

[www.sd35.bc.ca/students-parents/bcs-curriculum-redesign/physical-health-education-curriculum-faqs/](http://www.sd35.bc.ca/students-parents/bcs-curriculum-redesign/physical-health-education-curriculum-faqs/)

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/social-studies>

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/physical-health-education>

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies/ppci>

<https://www.sd35.bc.ca/students-parents/bcs-curriculum-redesign/physical-health-education-curriculum-connections-sogi/>

LGBTQ Committee Presentation, [Burnaby DPAC Meeting, 2014-11-24](#)

[www.bccpac.bc.ca](http://www.bccpac.bc.ca)

#### About BCCPAC

The [BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils \(BCCPAC\)](#), a registered non-profit society, represents the parents of 565,000 children attending provincial public schools. Recognized by government and education partners, BCCPAC is the collective voice of parents on educational issues within the public system and is governed by a volunteer board of nine directors elected annually by the membership which consists of District Parent Advisory Councils (DPAC), Parent Advisory Councils (PAC), and parent associate members.

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