

DISTRICT PHILOSOPHY

Policy 106-R

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The Richmond Board of Education believes that an important role of public education is to prepare young people to work and live in an open, supportive and democratic society free of discrimination and violence 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 transphobia within our schools and our communities.

It is the overarching responsibility of the Board of Education to ensure that all staff members 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 as LGBTQ+, ensuring that all students are treated with fairness, respect and dignity.

The Board will promote proactive 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 to prevent discrimination and harassment;
- ensure that complaints of discrimination and 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; and
- raise awareness and improve understanding of the unique set of challenges experienced by those who identify as LGBTQ+.

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 age appropriate, BC Ministry of Education recommended SOGI resources.
- The District will support developmentally appropriate activities and provide resources that enhance knowledge and skills that help develop respect for all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions.
- The District will support schools and staff in the maintenance of library resources that affirm human diversity as a fundamental component of our society and reflect the diversity within our school communities.

- In order to reflect the multi-cultural diversity of the district, as many of the above resources as practical, should be available in different languages and in formats easily accessible to ELL students and their families.
- The district will support teachers in including positive images and accurate information about history and culture that reflects the accomplishments and contributions of LGBTQ+ people.
- Trustees, management and staff must respect and support the district LGBTQ+ community by participating in in-service workshops on LGBTQ+ issues.

District, School and Staff Responsibilities

- Trustees, management and staff will facilitate safer school environments for the LGBTQ+ community and those who are perceived to be a part of it by:
 - acknowledging that an acceptance of diversity is the starting point of respect;
 - using language that affirms all sexual identities and avoiding disparaging remarks or language that demeans LGBTQ+ identities and families;
 - challenging staff, students and parents who behave in disrespectful ways toward LGBTQ+ people;
 - encouraging teachers to sponsor and support LGBTQ+-positive initiatives, such as SOGI clubs or groups;
 - supporting the rights of LGBTQ+ students to access supportive and affirming counselling.
- 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 members to increase their knowledge and skills in promoting respect for human rights, supporting diversity and addressing harassment and discrimination.
- The District will build a greater awareness of and responsiveness to the harmful effects of isolation resulting from harassment and discrimination.
- The District will take action when there is evidence or an actual complaint of harassment or discrimination.
- The District will distribute guidelines for investigating and addressing incidents of harassment or discrimination.
- Schools will inform students, staff and parents on how and when to report incidents of harassment and discrimination and, where appropriate, to intervene.
- Staff will support any individual or group of students who request help and support for any issues involving harassment or discrimination.
- The District will review and report annually to the Richmond Board of Education regarding the work of district and school staff in support of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy (SOGI).