

## SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 51 (BOUNDARY)

### P O L I C Y

SECTION	TITLE	NO. 4110
HEALTH/SAFETY	<u>Respect for Human Diversity:</u> <u>Gender and Sexual Diversity</u>	

**DATE ADOPTED:** June 10, 2014

**DATE AMENDED:** November 11, 2016

**DATE REVIEWED:** March 13, 2018

The Board of Education is committed to establishing and maintaining a safe and positive learning and working environment for the entire school community of students, staff and families. This includes those who identify as, or are perceived to be of a gender or sexual minority (GSM).

Gender or sexual minorities may include, but are not limited to, people who self-identify as gay, lesbian, transgender, two-spirit, intersex, asexual, queer, or who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

Students of gender or sexual minorities experience greater levels of abuse, isolation, and discrimination at school than heterosexual students. Research informs us that GSM policies can help improve the school climate for GSM students and promote and facilitate safe and more accepting schools.

The Board of Education bases its commitment to promote respect for human sexual diversity on the following values and beliefs:

- Sexual orientation and gender identity form significant and integral aspects of the unique development and personality of every person.
- Diversity found within individuals contributes to the strength of the District's culture.
- All persons have the right to function in their various roles in the school community feeling included and valued for who they are, free from discrimination, harassment, intimidation and violence.

The Board of Education is committed to the following objectives:

- Reducing homophobia and transphobia.
- Reducing systemic barriers identified by GSM students, staff and families.
- Providing opportunities for staff development.
- Reviewing and integrating programs and resources in student learning.

## REGULATIONS

Staff development will promote opportunities to increase:

- awareness and understanding of the GSM community;
- skills in promoting respect for human rights and diversity;
- skills to intervene effectively in incidents of discrimination, endangerment, harassment or bullying and provide appropriate student support and referral in a timely manner;
- capacity to act on teachable moments.

Programs, curriculum and resources will be used to:

- educate students in areas of healthy relationships, diversity and social justice;
- educate students on the impact of harassment, homophobia, and transphobia;
- encourage teachers to integrate age-appropriate GSM resources throughout a variety of subject areas, so that individuals who identify as a GSM see themselves and their lives made visible and reflected positively in the curricula.

Safety, Anti-harassment and Privacy

- Homophobic, transphobic and heterosexist behaviours, including discrimination, harassment, exclusion and language that stereotypes will not be tolerated. This applies whether the behaviours and language are based on real or perceived GSM identification.
- Complaints will be dealt with and consequences will be designed to educate.
- All persons have a right to privacy, including the right to keep private one's GSM identity. School personnel will not disclose information that may reveal a staff member's or student's gender identity or sexual orientation to others. This includes disclosure to parents or other school personnel, unless they are legally required to do so (as in the case of risk or self-harm), or unless the person has authorized such disclosure.

Systemic changes will be implemented when possible:

- School forms should reflect inclusive language.
- Processes should be in place for changing gender identity on school records.
- Schools should publicize the location of a gender-neutral, single-stall washroom(s).
- Schools are encouraged to have a staff contact for students experiencing GSM issues.

Review Process

- A process will be put in place to evaluate and assess this policy.

Legislative and Contract Context

- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- B.C. Human Rights Act
- CUPE Collective Agreement
- Boundary District Teachers Association Collective Agreement
- Teacher Regulation Branch
- WorkSafe BC
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Erase Bullying

## **APPENDIX 1 – Research and Rationale**

Research over the last two decades has shown that students of gender or sexual minorities experience greater levels of abuse and discrimination at school than heterosexual students. The following research highlights the importance of policies that promote and facilitate safer and more accepting schools.

### **Verbal, physical and sexual abuse**

Compared to their heterosexual counterparts, GSM students are more likely to:

- Experience verbal, physical and sexual abuse at school and discrimination in the community;
- Report higher levels of emotional stress, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts;
- Feel less safe and connected to family and school.<sup>1</sup>

During 1992-2003 GSM students were twice as likely to report having been verbally or physically abused and 20 times more likely to experience discrimination due to sexual orientation compared to heterosexual students.<sup>1</sup> In addition, GSM students reported that they felt many teachers looked the other way or failed to take action when they heard homophobic and transphobic comments.<sup>2</sup>

### **Harassment experienced by non-GSM students**

Non-GSM students are also affected by discrimination and harassment based on perceived gender identity or sexual orientation. Research shows:

- One in ten non-GSM students had rumours or lies spread about their sexual orientation at school;
- About 50% of non-GSM students have seen homophobic graffiti at school.<sup>2</sup>
- 40% of the non-GSM student population was the target of homophobic slurs.<sup>3</sup>

### **Safer schools policies**

Policies that promote inclusive environments can help improve the school climate for GSM students. Comparing schools with gender and sexual minority policies in place to schools without such policies, it has been found that:

- 80% of GSM students from schools with GSM policies reported never having been physically harassed compared to only 67% of GSM students from schools without GSM policies;
- 46% of GSM students from schools with GSM policies reported never having been verbally harassed due to their sexual orientation versus 40% of GSM students from schools without GSM policies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Saewyc E, Poon C, Wang N, Homma Y, Smith A & the McCreary Centre Society. (2007). *Not Yet Equal: The Health of Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Youth in BC*. Vancouver, BC: McCreary Centre Society.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor C, Peter T, McMinn T, Elliot T, Beldom S, Ferry A, Gross Z, Paquin S & Schachter K. (2011). *Every Class in Every School: The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*. Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

<sup>3</sup> University of Fraser Valley Centre for Safe Schools & Communities. (2007). *Homophobia and Heterosexism Fact Sheet*. Abbotsford, BC.

- GSM policies in places for 3 or more years significantly reduce suicide ideation and suicide attempts among sexual minority students.
- The odds of a sexual minority student attempting suicide are 50-60% lower in schools with GSM policies compared to schools without. For policies that have been in place 3 or more years, the odds of attempting suicide are 70% lower.
- 40% of sexual minority students have suicidal ideations and 25% have attempted suicide. In contrast, 10% of heterosexual students have suicidal ideations and 4% have attempted suicide.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Saewyc EM, Konishi C, Rose HA, Homma Y. School-based strategies to reduce suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and discrimination among sexual minority and heterosexual adolescents in Western Canada. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*. 2014;1:89-112.

## **APPENDIX 2 - Glossary of Terms**

*Please note: these definitions can be imperfect and are evolving.*

**Ally:** an individual who is supportive of the GSM community. An ally believes in the dignity and respect of all people, and is willing to stand up in that role. However, it is the GSM community or individuals who are in the position to decide who is their ally and when. People who wish to be allies need to start by working in solidarity with GSM individuals and community.

**Asexual:** may be considered as another form of sexual orientation. It may include a lack of sexual attraction to anyone or a low or absent interest in sexual activity. It is distinct from celibacy or from someone who abstains from sexual activity as these are usually behaviourally motivated; whereas a sexual orientation is considered more enduring. People who identify as asexual may engage in sexual activity for a variety of reasons.

**Binary:** refers to the western binary gender system of man and woman.

**Bisexual:** generally used to describe people who are romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of more than one sex or gender.

**Cisgender:** a type of gender identity where an individual's self-perception of their gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Cissexism:** refers to the assumption that all people are cisgender and that cisgender identities are superior and more normal than transgender identities.

**Drag:** dressing in the clothing and styles of another gender for entertainment purposes.

**Gay:** a man who is romantically and sexually attracted to other men. It is sometimes used to refer to the general LGBTQ community, but most often refers to just gay men.

**Gender and Sexual Minority (GSM):** may include, but is not limited to people who self-identify as gay, lesbian, transgender, two-spirit, intersex, asexual, queer, or who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Gender Expression:** How one chooses to express their gender identity.

**Gender Identity:** A person's gender identity is the way in which they define and act on their gender.

**Genderism:** refers to the assumption that one's gender identity or gender expression will conform to traditionally held stereotypes associated with one's biological sex.

**Heterosexism:** refers to the assumption that all people are heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior and more desirable than homosexuality.

**Heterosexual:** created around the same time as 'homosexual' to describe individuals who are exclusively sexually attracted to the opposite sex/gender.

**Homophobia:** is the irrational fear and hatred of, aversion to, and discrimination against people based on an actual or assumed sexual orientation.

**Homosexual:** a scientific term invented in the 1800's to refer to individuals who are sexually attracted to their own sex/gender.

**Intersex:** "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." (*Intersex Society of North America*)

**Lesbian:** a woman who is romantically and sexually attracted to other women. This term originates with the female poet Sappho who lived in a community comprised predominantly of women on the Isle of Lesbos in ancient Greece.

**Non-binary:** is a catch-all category for gender identities other than man and woman.

**Queer:** Can refer to people who identify themselves based on sexual orientation or gender identity or who resist these categories as too simplistic. The term queer has a history of being used as a derogatory name for members of the LGBTQ (and Ally) community and those whose sexual orientation is perceived as such.

**Questioning:** People who are in the process of questioning their sexual orientation are often in need of support and understanding during this stage of their identity. They are seeking information and guidance in their self-discovery.

**Sex & Gender:** It is easy to confuse these two concepts and terms; however, they are different. Sex refers to the biological sex of a person. Gender refers to their societal appearance, mannerisms, and roles.

**Sexual Orientation:** is a personal characteristic that covers the range of human sexuality from gay and lesbian, to bisexual, transgender and heterosexual orientations.

**Straight:** a slang word used to refer to the heterosexual members of our community.

**Transgender:** an umbrella term used to refer to people who transcend the traditional concept of gender. Some may feel as though they are neither a man nor a woman specifically, and some may feel as though their assigned sex at birth (male, female, etc.) and their socialized gender (man, woman, etc.) don't match up. Some opt to change/reassign their sex through hormones and/or surgery and some may change their outward appearance, or gender expression, through clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, etc., while some do not.

**Transphobia:** is the irrational fear and hatred of, aversion to, and discrimination against people based on an actual or assumed sexual orientation.

**Transsexual:** used to describe those individuals who use hormone therapy and/or surgery to alter their sex in order to match their gender.

**Two-Spirit:** used by some First Nations to describe people in their culture who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender or who transcend Eurocentric/Colonial ideas of gender and sexuality.

### **APPENDIX 3 – Related District Policies**

SD 51 currently has the following policies which relate to this policy, such as how complaints are made and processed, expectations, progressive discipline and codes of conduct:

- 1120 Concerns and Complaints
- 1160 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy
- 1180 Non Sexist Environment
- 1190 Inclusive Environment
- 1350 Guiding Principles (Mission, Vision, Values)
- 4090 Violence, Intimidation, Harassment, Threats
- 4100 Respectful Workplace
- 5000 District Code of Conduct for Students