

Addressing Concerns Constructively

Speaking Points for Opposition to SOGI-Inclusive Education

OVERVIEW

Opposition to SOGI-inclusive education happens. This document has ideas that anyone can use to help find common ground and bring the discussion back to student safety and well-being. Avoid entering debates about different theories, philosophies and the meanings or merits of scriptural texts.

The purpose of SOGI-inclusive education is to ensure that all students are valued, supported, and respected.

FAITH-BASED AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES

- 2SLGBTQ+ people are from every ethnicity, religion/faith, age, demographic, are found all over the world and throughout history.
- Many religious/faith-based organizations and followers *are* supportive of 2SLGBTQ+ people and many 2SLGBTQ+ people *are* religious / practice faith.
- Almost all faiths and ethno-cultural groups have 2SLGBTQ+ subgroups.
- Individual families will always have a range of values. Schools have a duty to teach the societal value of respect for *all*.

THE NEED AND BENEFITS OF SOGI EDUCATION

Still in Every Class in Every School – 2021 (Canadian)

- Almost two thirds (62%) of 2SLGBTQ+ students reported that they feel unsafe at school.
- Nine out of ten (90%) of trans students identified at least one place at their school that is unsafe for 2SLGBTQ students.
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of all students report hearing expressions such as “that’s so gay” daily or weekly in school.

SARAVYC – 2016 (Canadian)

- In schools with anti-homophobia initiatives, straight youth also reported lower levels of discrimination because people perceived them to be gay or lesbian, and thus lower levels of suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, binge drinking, problem substance abuse.
- Trans youth who had supportive adults inside and outside their family were four times as likely to report good or excellent mental health, and far less likely to have considered suicide

Family Acceptance Project, SFSU (2009)

- Parent attitudes matter. Parental rejection of 2SLGBTQ+ teens can adversely affect their health in many ways including suicide, depression, drug use, unprotected sex, homelessness and juvenile detention. Supportive schools can improve these outcomes.

REMINDERS ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

- Sections 33(1)(d) and 33(2) of the Alberta Education Act requires every school board provide all students and staff with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging; and the board must establish, implement, and maintain a policy to provide such environment.
- Courts have stated that, *"Public schools must be inclusive and secular, and that when religious rights are in opposition, schools should err on the side of inclusion."*
- Courts have stated that, *"School boards must respond effectively to allegations of harassment or bullying based on either "perceived" or "real" characteristics and must provide students with an educational environment that does not expose them to discriminatory harassment"*
- Courts have stated that, *"Tolerance is always age-appropriate, children cannot learn unless they are exposed to views that differ from those they are taught at home."*

QUICK RESPONSES FOR TALKING ABOUT 2SLGBTQ+ -INCLUSION WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS (from the British Columbia Teachers Federation)

"This goes against our rights to teach our children our own set of family values."

- Teachers do not condone children being removed from classes when they teach about Aboriginal people, people of colour, people with disabilities, or gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.
- You can absolutely teach your child your own values at home. Public schools have a duty to teach all students about respecting diversity and valuing all types of people.
- Teachers and principals have a legal obligation to provide for the safety and inclusion of all students in our school.

"It's recruitment or teaching about sex!"

- No one suddenly chooses to become lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans because they heard about the topic in school.
- Anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education does not include discussion about sexual practices.
- Secondary students need accurate information about relationships and safe sex. Lack of information can have significant consequences for youth.

"My child is too young for this topic!"

- Children are already learning homophobic and transphobic slurs during the primary years. Their teacher's job is to make school safe and oppose all name calling.
- All students and families deserve to see themselves represented in curriculum and learning activities. The mandatory provincial curriculum includes diverse family structures.
- Educators are best equipped to determine what is age appropriate for their classrooms and are trained to teach accurate, up-to-date information to every child.