



May 14, 2018

Dear Parents/Guardians:

This letter is to inform you of the Ministry of Education's Sexual Orientation Gender Identity (SOGI) 123 initiative to recognize, respect and reflect the diversity that exists within our communities. In July of 2016, the BC Human Rights Code was amended to include gender identity in the hopes of providing safe, inclusive, learning environments for all students.

Sexual Orientation Gender Identity (SOGI) is an inclusive term that represents all individuals regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. It includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, heterosexual and cisgender.

Studies show that having SOGI-specific anti-bullying policies improves the school climate for LGBTQ and heterosexual students, reducing discrimination, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts for all students.

The School District has embraced the diversity of our community for years. SOGI 123 fits with district-, school- and student- led initiatives such as Harmony Day, Diversity Clubs and Alliance Clubs. The School District has developed Policy and supported Human Rights.

SOGI 123 is not a course. It is a collection of age-appropriate educational resources provided to teachers to use, when appropriate, within B.C.'s new curriculum.

Links to learn more:

- For more information on the B.C. SOGI Educator Network and SOGI 123:
<https://www.sogieducation.org/>
- For more information on the impact of SOGI-inclusive policies and initiatives on the well-being of LGBTQ students, see the 2016 McCreary UBC study:
<http://news.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/LGBTQ-School-Based-Interventions-for-BC-Report.pdf>
- For more information on SOGI in schools and impacts on students, see the 2011 Egale National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Canadian Schools:
<https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/EgaleFinalReport-web.pdf>

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Central Okanagan Public Schools Policy

Board Policy 452 – *Discrimination Towards and By Students as it Pertains to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*, states that:

1. *The Board prohibits any form of discrimination, intimidation or harassment against any person based on gender or sexual orientation.*
2. *The Board expects members of the school community to welcome, include and support all others regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.*
3. *This policy is intended to address issues where the cause of the conflict or behaviour is based on a personal characteristic that is protected under the BC Human Rights Code. Board Policy 450 – Discrimination Toward and By Students will govern both the application and resolution process.*
4. *The superintendent is responsible for ensuring that the provisions of the Code and this policy are communicated and understood.*

Board Policies that govern discrimination by or against students include:

Policy 401 - *Role of the Student*

Policy 450 and Regulation 450R - *Discrimination Toward and By Students*

Policy 452 - *Discrimination Towards and by Students as it Pertains to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*

If you have any questions, please call your school Principal.

Sincerely,

Moyra Baxter
Board Chairperson

Kevin Kaardal
Superintendent of Schools/CEO

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