

## **POLICY 121 SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY**

The Board of Education of School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap) is committed to establishing and maintaining a safe and positive learning environment for all members of the school community (including students, parents, teachers, support staff and anyone involved with the district) who identify as members of a sexual minority or are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, or who are two-spirit persons. This policy is established with the intent and recognition that public schools need to be safe for everyone.

The Board recognizes and values the diversity found within the district and recognizes that individuals who are members of a sexual minority face a unique set of challenges within our schools. Specifically, any homophobic and gender-based comments, discrimination, and bullying are demeaning to all regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Individuals who are dealing with or perceived to be dealing with issues of sexual orientation or gender identity, are frequently targets of discrimination, harassment, physical and sexual violence, and /or social and emotional isolation. Any form of discrimination, intimidation, or harassment against any person based on gender/gender identity or sexual orientation/perceived sexual orientation is prohibited.

This policy and guidelines apply to the behaviour of all members of the school community including students, parents, teachers, support staff and anyone involved with the district.

Resolution to complaints to school authorities arising from this policy should be resolved in a respectful and restorative manner, providing education and the opportunity for all impacted to move forward in a positive manner.

### Guidelines

1. The District Code of Conduct requires that appropriate behaviours and attitudes should be reflected in classroom instruction and modeled by adults in the school learning and work environments, and that students are expected to exhibit behaviour that enables all to participate effectively in the educational community.
2. Any language or behaviour that deliberately degrades, denigrates, incites hatred, prejudice, discrimination, or harassment towards individuals on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identification will not be tolerated. Schools shall include the prohibition of such language and behaviour in their students' codes of conduct.

3. All employees have an obligation to intervene in any interaction involving the use of labels and slurs, and behaviours regardless of the speaker's intentions, and to convey that such comments are against Board policy and will not be tolerated in the educational community.
4. The *Safe, Caring and Orderly* schools mandate of the Province of British Columbia requires that schools strive to "develop positive, welcoming school cultures and are committed to fostering optimal environments for learning". All schools must be consistently active in promoting a positive and welcoming culture and take specific action in order to promote the establishment of this culture for all, and specifically for individuals dealing with or perceived to be dealing with issues of sexual orientation or gender identity.
5. All school and district counselors employed by the Board shall be educated in the knowledge and skills required to deal with sexual orientation and gender identity issues. School and district counselors shall be informed and be familiar with all policies with respect to the requirements of the federal and provincial human rights provisions and school district policy with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity issues.
6. Where students request and where staff are willing to volunteer their time, Gay/Straight Alliance clubs (GSA's) will be encouraged at secondary schools in the district.