



SD83 SOGI GUIDELINES:
**Supporting Students With Diverse Sexual
Orientations, Gender Identities and Expressions**



Table of Contents

Goals and Best Practices	3
Board Policy 121: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	4
School Staff Roles and Responsibilities	6
General Guidelines	7
1. Support the Student’s Process	7
2. Privacy and Confidentiality	8
3. Names and pronouns	9
4. Clothing and appearance	9
5. Activities that Sort Students by Gender	10
6. School field Trips	11
7. Washrooms/Change rooms	12
Checklist for Creating a Supportive School Environment for LGBT2Q+ Students	13
Glossary of Terms	14
Resources	16
References	18

GOALS FOR SOGI INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

1. **Visibility:** The diversity of sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions are recognized and valued.
2. **Protection:** The dignity of all people across the sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) spectra is intended to be preserved, as well as protected from harm.
3. **Inclusion:** Equitable treatment and inclusion are a reality for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions.

BEST PRACTICES:

Policies and procedures that explicitly reference SOGI have been proven to reduce discrimination, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts for all students. The purpose of this document is to share best practices for creating more inclusive environments for all students. These best practices are informed by current research and jurisdictional scans as effective in promoting learning environments that are welcoming and inclusive for all members of the school community.

1. Common Language (Definitions/Terms)
Every party involved will be well-informed and equipped with appropriate and respectful language. Any set of terms should acknowledge that language is ever evolving and that the individual is always the expert on how they may identify and on what language or terms they consider respectful and inclusive of themselves.
2. Safety/Anti-Harassment
Proactive and reactive measures that ensure students and staff are protected from bullying, discrimination, harassment and violence based on their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. For example, explicit Codes of Conduct.
3. Self-Identification
Students have the right to self-identification, which includes the name by which they wish to be addressed and their preferred pronouns that correspond to their gender identity.
4. Confidentiality and Privacy
Students have the right to confidentiality of their official and/or preferred sex, gender, and name. In class: Staff will not expose sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression of students.
5. Dress
Students may express their gender identity or gender expression through what they wear to school. A dress code should be as all inclusive as possible, which may include removing pronouns.
6. Gender Integrated and Inclusive Activities
Schools will focus on integrated and inclusive activities. Where gender segregated activities continue to exist, students will have the option to be included in the group that corresponds to their gender identity or, in the case of gender non-conforming students, the group they would like to participate in.
7. Educator Training
Staff are supported with professional learning opportunities to develop a broader understanding of SOGI and the impact on students. Training should allow staff to appropriately deliver the curriculum, handle discrimination, and support individual needs.

8. Inclusive Learning

Classroom materials and activities contain positive images and accurate information about sexual and/ or gender diversity, SOGI history and culture which reflects accomplishments and contributions of transgender and gender nonconforming people.

9. Facilities

Individuals may choose to use washrooms and change rooms that match their gender identity, including non-gendered single-stall washrooms and change rooms.

10. Inclusive Extra-Curricular Activities

Students will be included and accommodated for in all extra-curricular activities regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, including support to set up a Gay-Straight Alliance.

“With higher levels of discrimination and bullying, and a lower level of family, school and community support, LGBTQ youth face higher risks for significant health challenges, including suicidal thoughts and attempts, and problem substance use. However, when LGBTQ youth experience safe and supportive schools and families, they are much less likely to report these health challenges.”

-Saewyc et. al. (2016)

BOARD 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, 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 those 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. 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. School staff will ensure student safety by maintaining confidentiality and provide support as directed by the student.
4. 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.
5. Where students request and where staff are willing to volunteer their time, "Gender Sexuality Alliance" clubs (GSAs) will be encouraged beginning in grade six. All students will be welcome at these teacher-sponsored clubs.



SCHOOL STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Findings from *Every Class in Every School First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools* (Taylor et al. 2011) indicate that trans and gender non-conforming students do not feel safe and welcome at school:

- 74% of trans students, 55% of sexual minority students, and 26% of non-LGBTQ students reported having been verbally harassed about their gender expression.
- 90% of trans youth hear transphobic comments daily or weekly from other students.

Every person plays an important role and has a responsibility to model respect, understanding, and support for diversity in the working and learning environment.

Schools are responsible for:

Appointing at least one school lead to be a safe contact who can act as a resource for staff and students.

Staff are responsible for:

- Respecting the rights of all students with regards to their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
- Ensuring the safety of all students by making expectations for language and behaviour explicit, and directly addressing discrimination and harassment.
- Educating themselves about gender-inclusive school practices using research-based materials (see resources section of this guide).
- Utilizing classroom curriculum and resources that positively and accurately represent LGBT2Q+, nonconforming people, and improve understanding of diverse gender identities and gender expressions. Heteronormality must be balanced by students seeing their realities reflected in their learning opportunities.



GENERAL GUIDELINES

School District No. 83 (North Okanagan -Shuswap) results of the 2018 B.C. *Adolescent Health Survey* from the McCreary Center Society:

A snapshot of the percentage of students who access school staff for support:

- 55% ask teachers for help;
- 11% ask Indigenous Education Worker for help;
- 28% ask school counsellors for help;
- 25% ask other school staff for help.

1. Support the Student's Process:

LGBT2Q+ students are unique and have varying needs. Requests for support are to be addressed on a case-by-case basis by a School Support Team comprised of a school principal/vice-principal, school counsellor, and/or staff members with whom the student feels comfortable. Supports that work for one student may not work for another and additional accommodations not included in these guidelines may be necessary to address a student's particular concerns. Students who are questioning their gender identity usually approach someone they trust first; they should be referred to a counselor or other appropriate professional if they require additional support.

The School Support Team will:

- Respect the student's right to self-identification with regards to their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression;
- Listen to the needs and concerns of the student in order to identify appropriate supports;

"The most important task for schools is to provide a safe, nurturing, non-violent atmosphere in which to learn, to grow, and to develop for all students, inclusive of all gender identities."

-Public Health Agency of Canada

Confidentiality is a major concern for many youth who may be questioning their sexual orientation, have concerns for their safety, and/or are afraid of their parents'/caregivers' potential reaction to disclosure.

-Public Health Canada



2. Ensure the Student's Privacy and Confidentiality

Students' rights to discuss and express their sexual orientation and gender identity and/or gender expression openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much private information to share will be respected.

Sexual Orientation and Gender identity is personal and confidential information, and it is up to the student to decide when and with whom they will share this information. It is important for school staff to respect the student's right to confidentiality; our primary concern is to ensure student safety, both at school and at home. While it is not the educator's role to inform parents/guardians, students are encouraged to discuss their sexual orientation and gender identity with their parents/guardians if they feel comfortable doing so. Students may also ask for school staff support them in a conversation with their parents/guardians. Please respect the student's privacy by not asking personal questions about their gender identity, sexual orientation, transition, medical care, etc.

Some LGBT2Q+ youth may not be "out" beyond the school community, and may choose to express themselves differently outside of school. When communicating with a parent/guardian, use the student's legal name and gender identity unless you have permission from the student to do otherwise. This includes phone calls, and letters, report cards, and forms sent home.

Class lists: Teachers should ensure class lists are printed with usual first name and with preferred gender (if a gender identification is required).

TOC Notes: Ensure a current class list is provided that includes preferred names and pronouns used by students.

MyEdBC: Ensure school photos are current, especially if the photo does not reflect the student's gender. School clerical staff can assist in changing or removing a student's photo.

Report Cards: Must contain the student's legal name(s) as the report card is a legal document. However, the student's usual name may be used in the comments. It is recommended to use the students legal name with the usual name in brackets (i.e. *Jonathon (Joan) is able to...*).

“Though the language of gender identity is contemporary, people who have challenged the stereotypical categories of gender have existed for much of human history. Gender variant and (transgender) individuals have existed in many cultures.”

Language to describe gender variant identities is continually changing and keeping track can be challenging. Gender variant youth self-identify in many ways and have constructed a language about their identities and experiences that is critical for other individuals to understand and respect. If you are not sure of how an individual self-identifies, don't make assumptions. Let them tell you how they are self-identifying. Admitting you are unaware is much more respectful than assuming and using the wrong language.

-Public Health Canada

3. Use the Student's Name(s) and Pronoun(s)

Trans, non-binary or gender fluid students should be addressed by the names and pronouns they prefer to use.

“Students will have the right to self-identification, which includes the name by which they wish to be addressed and the pronouns that correspond to their gender identity.” (B.C. Ministry of Education, SOGI 123). This includes students who have *not* made official changes to their name and gender identity in MyEdBC and official records.

In your role as school staff:

- Prevent and address discrimination and harassment to ensure a safe and welcoming school climate;
- Model the consistent use of trans, non-binary or gender fluid students' names and pronouns;
- Recognize that it takes courage for a student to request that staff use their pronoun and name, and respond respectfully;
- Ask for explicit permission for whom to share self-identified name and gender. Honour their wishes.
- If you make a mistake, offer a brief apology that does not draw attention to the student, and correct the use of their pronoun and/or name;
- A student's legal name and gender must be used in MyEdBC and at the top of the report card until there is an official name change with legal documentation and parent consent. The preferred name can be used in the body of the report card, if the student is comfortable with this.
- Ask school counsellor(s) to play a key role in supporting students and families compassionately. Working with the student to help them discuss their identity with their family remains important. With student permission, counsellors can continue efforts to engage family because that is the best way to move forward in gender affirmation.
- Encourage all staff to engage in professional development regarding safe and inclusive staff practices (using they/them pronouns for a singular student, reducing or eliminating gender-segregated activities, providing safe washroom/changeroom facilities, etc.

4. Respect the Student’s Right to Express Their Gender Identity Through Clothing and Appearance

Students have the right to dress in a manner consistent with their gender identity or gender expression. This includes students who may dress in a manner that is not consistent with societal expectations of masculinity/femininity. However, students must dress in a manner that complies with [School District No. 83 Dress Code Policy 9010](#).

Gender-Segregated Activities

Schools should reduce or eliminate the practice of segregating students by gender.

5. Reduce or Eliminate Activities That Sort Students by Gender

Schools will reduce or eliminate the practice of segregating students by gender. In situations where students are segregated by gender, trans/non-binary/gender-fluid students will have the option to be included in the group with which they are most comfortable. Gender-inclusive learning environments support gender diversity, and allow all students to participate and express themselves fully.

Examples of gender-inclusive practices include, but are not limited to:

- Using ‘all genders’ groupings and teams;
- Addressing your class and groups of students in non-gendered ways;
- Seating and lining students up randomly, not by gender.
- Giving students the opportunity to play at all centers at the primary level, so that they can dig, build, bake, and explore all activities. In the dress up center, encourage students to pretend to be whomever they want to, irrespective of gender;
- Displaying posters and books, and using curriculum that depicts a range of gender diversity;

When gender-segregated groups are necessary, use inclusive practices:

In rare situations where students must be segregated by gender, students will have the option to be included with the group in which they feel most comfortable.



- Indicate that the group is open to all self-identified girls or boys and that trans/non-binary /gender-fluid students are welcome to choose the group in which they are most comfortable;
- Whenever possible, also offer a group that is for all genders to maximize the participation and inclusion of students. Please refer to **Gender and Sexuality Alliance Manual** at the end of this guide as a resource for creating a GSA club in school.



BC School Sports Handbook 2019-20:

521.2 GENDER IDENTITY - A student-athlete may participate with the opposite sex in a sex-segregated sport on the basis that doing so would be consistent with his/her gender identity if the student-athlete's application under 521.0 is granted.

521.2.1 A student-athlete who does not identify as either binary gender or identifies as, "non-gendered", or "gender neutral", may participate with the sex in which they feel most comfortable.

521.2.2 A student-athlete who identifies as "gender fluid", may participate with the sex they identify with at the time of the season of play if the student-athlete's application under 521.0 is granted. The student athlete may not switch genders within the season of play. If they wish to identify as the opposite gender in a different season of play.

6. School Field Trips

When planning a fieldtrip that requires students to change clothing, whenever possible, choose a location that has a universal change room available for your class to use.

When planning a fieldtrip to venue that does not require changing, call ahead to find out the location of a single-use washroom. As with school sites, students have the right to use the washroom that corresponds to their gender identity but may choose to use a single-use washroom.

When planning an overnight fieldtrip, whenever possible, choose a location that has a single-use washroom, shower and a private sleeping accommodation available for students who would like to access these options. Students have the option of choosing roommates with whom they feel the most comfortable. However, as with all groups, the school staff reserve the right to determine groupings that are workable

6. Washrooms/Changerooms

One of the main areas where gender variant people experience psychological/emotional distress and harassment is in the use of public washrooms.

-Public Health Canada

All students have the right to safe washrooms and change room facilities. Students have the right to use the washroom and change room in which they are most comfortable. Alternative options include, but are not limited to:

- Gender-free single-use washrooms;
- Designating a single-use washroom for use as a change room near P.E. facilities;
- Identifying a private area within the change room such as a bathroom or change room stall with a door available for all students to use.



CHECKLIST FOR CREATING A SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR LGBT2Q+ STUDENTS

- Establish a Student Support Team made up of an administrator, school counsellor and staff members with whom the student feels comfortable. Consult with the SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender identity) District lead if necessary.

- Meet with the student and/or their parent/guardian to discuss:
 - a. Washrooms and change rooms options
 - b. Participation in P.E. class and athletic activities.
 - c. Name and gender identity changes on My ED BC and official records.
 - d. Student confidentiality and privacy.
 - e. The level of information to be shared with staff and students with regards to the student's name and pronoun changes.

- Provide the student with information about your school's GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) or diversity club and community resources.

- With permission from the student and in consultation with their caregiver, inform the student's classroom teachers about the correct name(s) and pronoun(s) to use.

- With permission from the student and in consultation with their caregiver, plan how to inform the student's classmates about the social transition and correct name and pronoun use. Plan classroom workshops, if you feel the class and students in the school would benefit from additional education in this area. If needed, contact the school counselor or SOGI District Lead to organize/support/facilitate classroom workshops.

- Follow up with the student and/or their caregiver to discuss the need for additional supports and to ensure that the plan (if any) is being carried out in a sensitive, supportive manner.

- Follow up with the student's teachers and other support staff members to address any concerns regarding safety and/or full inclusion of the student.

- Continue to include themes related to gender diversity in professional development and classroom presentations/activities.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Ally

Refers to a person who supports and celebrates diversity, interrupts oppressive remarks and actions, and willingly explores these biases within themselves.

Cisgender

Refers to someone who identifies with the same gender they were assigned at birth and is used to call attention to the privilege of people who are not Trans.

Coming out

is the process of becoming aware of one's queer sexual orientation or trans gender identity, accepting it, and telling others about it?

Gender binary:

The view that there are only two, distinct, opposite genders.

Gender expression

Refers to how someone outwardly manifests gender, for example, through clothing, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions.

Gender identity

Refers to a person's internal, deeply felt sense of being either male, female, something other, or in between. Everyone has a gender identity.

Gender expansive

Refers to a person who does not conform to society's expectations of their gender role or gender expression.

Gender queer:

A term that refers to people who identify outside of the male-female binary.

Gender roles:

The socially constructed and culturally specific behaviours such as communication styles, careers, family roles, and more, imposed on people based on their biological sex assigned at birth. It is important to note that gender interpretations and expectations vary widely among cultures and often change over time.

Heteronormative:

Refers to social roles and social structures that reinforce the idea that heterosexuality is the presumed norm and is superior to other sexual orientations.

Heterosexism:

A system of attitudes, bias, and discrimination in favour of opposite-sex sexuality and relationships. This includes the assumption that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual and that heterosexuality is inherently superior to homosexuality and bisexuality.

Homophobia:

Fear or hatred of, aversion to, and discrimination against homosexuals or homosexual behaviour. There are many levels and forms of homophobia, including cultural/institutional homophobia, interpersonal homophobia, and internalized homophobia.

Homosexual:

A person who is mostly attracted to people of their own gender. Because this term has been widely used negatively and/or in a cold and clinical way, most homosexuals prefer the terms "lesbian," "gay" or "queer."

Inclusive language:

The use of gender non-specific language (e.g. “partner” instead of “husband,” or “they” instead of “she”) to avoid assumptions around gender identity and sexual orientation, and to enhance the accessibility of information and services. Educational, social service, and health professionals are especially encouraged to use inclusive language until advised otherwise by the person they are talking to or about.

Intersex:

Intersex people may have external genitalia, which do not closely resemble the medical definition of male or female genitalia, or which have the appearance of both male and female genitalia; the genitalia of one sex and the secondary sex characteristics of another sex; or a chromosomal makeup that is neither XX nor XY but may be a combination of both. “Intersex” has replaced the term “hermaphrodite,” which is widely considered outdated, inaccurate and offensive. An intersex person may or may not identify as part of the trans community.

LGBT2Q+:

Acronym used to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender people, interchangeable with GLBT, LGTB, etc. Additional letters are sometimes added to this acronym, such as LGBTIQQ2S to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Questioning and 2-Spirit folk.

Outing someone:

Outing someone: Accidentally or intentionally publicly revealing another person’s sexual orientation or gender identity without his or her permission. This can cause social, physical, emotional, or economic danger for the person being “outed.” Outing someone can sometimes be done as an act of hate.

Trans-gender:

People who have a gender identity or gender expression that differs from their sex assigned at birth.

Two Spirited:

Some Aboriginal people identify themselves as two-spirit rather than as bisexual, gay, lesbian or transgender. Historically, in many Aboriginal cultures, two-spirit persons were respected leaders and medicine people. Before colonization, two-spirit persons were often accorded special status based upon their unique abilities to understand both male and female perspectives.



RESOURCES

SOGI 1 2 3

SOGI 1 2 3 shares proven SOGI-inclusive tools and resources in the areas of policy and procedures, inclusive environments and curriculum resources

www.sogieducation.org

BC Teachers Federation

The BCTF offers a variety of free workshops to teachers that aim to develop skills to interrupt, address, and challenge homophobia and transphobia within our classrooms and school communities

<https://bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=17988>

Canadian Scholars

Teaching about Gender Diversity: Teacher-Tested Lesson Plans for K-12 Classrooms.

<https://www.canadianscholars.ca/books/teaching-about-gender-diversity>

Education Resource Acquisition Consortium (ERAC)

ERAC provides a range of services including evaluation, licensing and acquisition of print, software, and digital learning resources. ERAC offers a curated catalogue of SOGI resources (see LGBTQ collection)

<http://www.bcerac.ca/index.aspx>

Out in Schools

Out in Schools presentations and Learning Hub provide youth with opportunities not only to learn, but to do. The presentations offer a chance to build participation in and creation of Queer Straight Alliances across the province. The Rise Against Homophobia Video Contest offers youth the chance to make media as a vehicle not only for personal expression, but to shape more inclusive school communities.

<http://outinschools.com/about/>

QMUNITY – BC’s Queer Resource Centre

QMUNITY is a non-profit organization based in Vancouver, BC that works to improve queer and trans lives. They provide a safer space for LGBTQ/2S people and their allies to fully self-express while feeling welcome and included.

<http://qmunity.ca/>

Egale Canada Human Rights Trust

Founded in 1995, Egale Canada Human Rights Trust is Canada’s only national charity promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) human rights through research, education and community engagement

<https://egale.ca/>

A Gender and Sexuality Alliance Manual

This manual was developed to enhance the resources available to LGBT2Q+ youth and supportive adults who are taking on leadership roles to create safer, more inclusive communities for LGBT2Q+ youth.

<http://www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/Documents/Child-youth/So-you-wanna-start-a-gsa.pdf>

MyGSA

MyGSA.ca is Canada's website for safer and inclusive schools for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) community.

<http://mygsa.ca>

Trans Care BC

The Trans Care BC program aims to enhance the coordination of trans health services and supports across the province, bringing gender-affirming care closer to home wherever possible

<http://www.phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/trans-care-bc>

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

The leading national US-based education organization focused on ensuring safe and affirming schools for LGBTQ students.

<http://www.glsen.org/>

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

PFLAG Canada is a national charitable organization, founded by parents who wished to help themselves and their family members understand and accept their non-heterosexual children

<http://pflagcanada.ca/>

Pride Education Network

The Pride Education Network of teachers, administrators, support staff, youth and parents strives to make the B.C. school system more welcoming and equitable for LGBTQ students and staff, and queer families.

<http://pridenet.ca/>

Infants Act

The Infants Act explains the legal position of children under 19 years of age. One of the topics covered in the Infants Act is the health care of children. The Infants Act states that children may consent to a medical treatment on their own as long as the health care provider is sure that the treatment is in the child's best interest, and that the child understands the details of the treatment, including risks and benefits. It is up to the health care provider to assess and ensure the child's understanding of the treatment.

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96223_01

Publications

- *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education*. Sex Information and Education Council of Canada.
- *The Gender Spectrum What Educators Need to Know* (Pridenet.Ca)
- *The Every Teacher Project on LGBTQ Inclusive Education in Canada's K-12 Schools*. Manitoba Teachers' Society.
- *Questions & Answers Gender Identity in Schools*. Public Health Agency of Canada.
- *Questions & Answers Sexual Orientation in Schools*. Public Health agency of Canada.
- *Safe and Caring Schools for Two Spirited Youth A Guide for Teachers and Students*. The Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities, Alberta.

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Parent & Teacher Resource Videos: <http://www.sogieducation.org>

Pride Education Network. (2014). *The Gender Spectrum Guide: What Educators Need to Know.*

http://ljpridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the_gender_spectrum.pdf

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