

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI): Information for Parents and Guardians

SEPTEMBER 2024



FAQs for Parents and Guardians

Helpful links

- [SD 38 Policy 106 – District Philosophy](#)
- [SD 38 Policy 106 – Administrative Guidelines](#)
- [SOGI 123 – Parent Guide \(2023\)](#)

What is SOGI?

Throughout the school year, educators are committed to teaching and learning through a lens of equity, diversity and inclusion, all of which are core values of the education system. As a public system, the Richmond School District engages in learning that recognizes, affirms and honours the experiences and contributions of a diverse range of individuals and groups including Indigenous peoples, people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, differently abled people, diverse genders and sexualities, as well as people of varied faith backgrounds.

The acronym 2SLGBTQ+ represents people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities. The letters stand for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer. The plus sign indicates that there are other identities that also fit under this umbrella.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) are protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the BC Human Rights Code, as well as provincial legislation. In 2018, Policy 106 was adopted to uphold the Richmond Board of Education's commitment to ensuring that school cultures are safe, welcoming, inclusive and affirming for all students and members of the district community.

SOGI includes everyone, as all of us have a sexual orientation and gender identity. Dialogue about SOGI focuses on understanding and supporting diversity that exist in schools, the broader community, as well as Canadian society and the world.

What is SOGI-inclusive education?

SOGI-inclusive education is not a separate curriculum; it is a set of tools and resources to support welcoming, inclusive environments for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. SOGI-inclusive education also aims to reduce bullying and discrimination. SOGI-inclusive education is not centred in sexuality. These resources are created and supported by the [BC Ministry of Education and Child Care](#).

To foster understanding and acceptance of all members of the school community — regardless of race, culture, religion, ability, sexual orientation or gender identity — teachers in elementary and secondary schools employ SOGI-inclusive resources that promote empathy, respect, as well as improve the school climate and emotional well-being for all students.

[According to the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care](#), studies show that inclusive classrooms and schools, along with SOGI resources, reduce discrimination, depression, anxiety, substance use, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts for all students.

Is SOGI-inclusive education different from sexual health education?

SOGI-inclusive education is interwoven with many topics on diversity that are regularly discussed in schools, such as when teachers facilitate discussions about race, culture, religion and ability.

SOGI-inclusive education is a distinct and separate topic from sexual health education. Topics related to equity and diversity, including sexual orientation and gender identity, are interwoven through several curriculum areas and may come up in regular classroom discussions with students. Therefore, it is not possible to inform parents or guardians each time SOGI-inclusive content arises at school.

Sexual health education is part of [BC's Physical and Health Education curriculum](#) and focuses on the biological, physiological and reproductive aspects of human sexuality; it is taught separately and follows specific guidelines. Parents or guardians, in consultation with their child's school, may arrange for alternate delivery for certain topics contained in the Physical and Health Education curriculum for kindergarten to Grade 10 students.

Is SOGI-inclusive education appropriate for students?

All students learn about topics such as respect, compassion and diversity, while more complex topics such as discrimination and injustice may be explored in a developmentally and age-appropriate manner. SOGI-inclusive resources assist educators in addressing fundamental human ideals such as diversity, acceptance and a sense of belonging. SOGI-inclusive education is essential for every child to understand the diverse world in which they live.

What if SOGI-inclusive education doesn't align with my family's values – can I remove my child from SOGI-inclusive education?

Individual families will always have a range of opinions on many topics, and it is expected that some parents or guardians may be apprehensive about aspects of the school system that may not align with their family's values. That said, it is the role of public schools to uphold the Human Rights-inspired values of inclusion, dignity and respect for all persons, regardless of real or perceived differences.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are topics that are interwoven through several curriculum areas, school activities, and arise in conversations about students' daily lives. Therefore, it is not possible to inform parents or guardians every time SOGI-related content may arise at school.

The Ministry of Education and Child Care has allowed for some flexibility in the delivery of topics related to reproduction and sexuality in the Physical and Health Education curriculum through the [Alternative Delivery Policy](#). Please contact your child's principal if you'd like to discuss options.

Where can I find more information about SOGI?

The [SOGI 123](#) website has a number of resources including a [parent guide](#).

If I have questions about SOGI in my child's classroom, who can I talk to?

We value and encourage open communication and work hard to ensure parents and caregivers are well-informed and actively engaged in their child's educational journey. If you have any questions about your child's education, please start by talking to your classroom teacher, principal or the district.

Myths and Truths

This guide is intended to support schools in helping parents or guardians and community members understand Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)-inclusive education in Richmond schools.

Why SOGI-inclusive education?

SOGI-inclusive education is about making schools a welcoming place for everyone and accepting everyone for who they are. Everyone has the right to live freely no matter their race, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation. SOGI-inclusive education is about giving teachers the tools and resources to teach kids to treat others with respect. Students do better in school when they feel accepted, and feel like they belong in their school community. When students feel safe, they are more likely to come to school every day, perform better academically, and have a better overall sense of well-being.

Parents or guardians, and members of the community, may have heard some things about SOGI-inclusive education that are not true. Here are some common myths along with the truths.

Myths

SOGI was snuck into the curriculum in the last few years and is being forced on kids.

SOGI-inclusive education encourages and confuses kids into thinking they should change genders.

SOGI-inclusive resources and books contain pornographic and explicit content.

Truths

SOGI-inclusive education is a set of resources that teachers can use when they are teaching students not to bully others for their differences, and to support welcoming, inclusive environments for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It has been used in schools since 2016. SOGI-inclusive resources are one of many tools that teachers use to make classrooms welcoming places that reflect the diversity of BC, including race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. Teachers also have anti-racism resources that they can use as part of those anti-bullying lessons.

SOGI-inclusive education does not encourage any specific identity or orientation over another and is designed to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, or the diversity in their own families. The goal of SOGI-inclusive education is to stop discrimination and bullying by making sure that classroom resources show people from all backgrounds and give teachers opportunities to talk about the experiences and challenges faced by 2SLGBTQ+ people.

There is no pornographic or explicit content in BC's K-12 curriculum. All books in classrooms or libraries are approved by schools to ensure they are all age appropriate. SOGI-inclusive education and resources address numerous topics, including but not limited to different types of families and personal identities, stereotypes, bullying and name-calling.

Myths

SOGI-inclusive education takes away the right for parents or guardians to know what their kids are being taught.

SOGI-inclusive education is the same thing as sexual health education.

Truths

Parents or guardians always have a right to know what their kids are being taught. If they have questions, they should talk to the teacher or school principal directly to learn about what is being taught. SOGI-inclusive education is meant to support parents or guardians' efforts to teach values of tolerance and respect, as well as acceptance of all people. It does not undermine their rights but rather contributes to a greater understanding of diversity and inclusion for all students and families.

Sexual health education is taught separately and follows specific guidelines. The Physical and Health Education curriculum continues to cover puberty, reproductive health, and sexual education, as well as healthy and active living in age-appropriate ways. Parents or guardians always have the option to decide whether their kids take part in these lessons on sexual health education if they are uncomfortable.

SOGI resources are a set of tools that teachers can use to ensure their classrooms are accepting and rooted in respect and belonging.

If you have any questions about your child's education, please talk to their teacher, school principal, or contact the district. We value and encourage open communication and we respect the role parents and guardians have in raising their children, and as active participants in their child's learning.