

NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING
INFORMATION SHEET

DATE: May 3, 2023
TO: Education Committee
FROM: Nicole Davey, Director of Instruction
SUBJECT: SOGI

Overview: Connection to Operational Plan

Goal: Safe, Caring and Healthy Learning and Working Environment that is inclusive of diversity of our entire learning community

Objective: Increase the number of students who feel welcomed, safe, connected and have a sense of belonging in their schools

Objective: Increase leadership capacity and excellence

Background: Creating SOGI Inclusive Schools in NLPS

SOGI inclusive policies and procedures have been proven to reduce discrimination, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts for all students. An integral part of the Learning Framework and the NLPS Strategic Plan is to ensure all our schools are safe, inclusive, and honour diversity.

Research shows that when school districts have explicit policies and procedures that protect the rights of LGBTQ+ students, a commitment to creating safe and welcoming environments, and ensuring there are teaching resources where LGBTQ+ students see themselves represented **it saves lives**. NLPS is proud of the work that is happening across the school district to support SOGI inclusive learning environments.

As educators we have a duty to ensure all of our students feel safe and welcomed. This not only aligns with our moral obligations, but also the district and ministry policies that outline our professional responsibilities. It is important to note there is no SOGI curriculum in the BC curriculum; rather, we support SOGI inclusive schools in a variety of ways:

- **BC Curriculum Overview: Valuing Diversity**
Teachers should ensure that classroom instruction, assessment, and resources reflect sensitivity to diversity and incorporate positive role portrayals, relevant issues, and themes such as inclusion, respect, and acceptance. This includes diversity in family composition, gender identity, and sexual orientation.
- **NLPS AP 351: Alternative Delivery of Sensitive Materials**
Parents/Caregivers can request 'alternative delivery' of sensitive materials pertaining the direct instruction of reproduction and sexuality. However, topics that refer to inclusive learning

environments and honouring diversity including, sexual orientation and gender identity will be integrated throughout the curriculum (p. 1).

- NLPS AP 347: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

All persons have the right to privacy which includes, the right to have one's gender identity and/or sex assigned at birth private at school (p. 3). Transgender and non-conforming students have the right to discuss and express their gender identity and expression openly and to decide when and how much private information to share and with who. Those decisions need to be respected by school personnel (p. 1). Every student has the right to be addressed by a name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity. Student does not need to change their official records (p. 3).

Specific Actions and Initiatives in the District:

NLPS has GSA clubs across all secondary schools and a growing number of elementary schools have started Rainbow or Diversity Clubs. Club sponsors are supported by the District SOGI lead in providing resources, materials, and organizing events for LGBTQ+ students. For example, on April 19th the GSA club at Ladysmith Secondary School is hosting a GSA Pride Conference for all LGBTQ+ secondary students. The conference will consist of a keynote from a queer activist, opportunities for students to network, and breakout sessions centered around advocacy, safety, and belonging.

Our Learning Coordinator Team has received a positive response to the Intermediate Book Club, a network of teachers who have access to the latest books for intermediate students that are diverse, inclusive, and touch on present day issues. Several of the books the team has introduced to elementary schools include LGBTQ+ voices that reflect the lived experience of some of our students. They also offer students a window to explore and learn about the diversity that exists in our society. This initiative has sparked a desire for teachers to engage in a diversity book audits in their schools by using NDTA pro-d funds. Their goal with the support of Learning Coordinators, is to eventually see a district wide initiative to formalize a process for a book audit in our libraries to ensure they align with NLPS values of inclusion, diversity and justice, and identify gaps that need to be addressed.

Our Learning Coordinator team has been supporting school leaders and teachers with the implementation of the sexual health curriculum. The best people to teach sexual health are the people students trust and have relationship with; therefore, the goal is to build teacher capacity and confidence addressing the learning standards in Physical and Health Education. Part of this work is communicating with our parent community and Parent Advisory Committees, answering questions and sharing information. We see families as key partners in this work.

Justene Dion-Glowa from SOGI 123 presented to all our school leaders in March to help build capacity around the creation of SOGI inclusive schools. SOGI 123 learning resources have been formally evaluated by the BC Educational Resource Acquisition Consortium as age-appropriate, and aligned with the provincial curriculum and evidence-based educational approaches. Please find attached the key highlights of our March session. The session was well-received and helped surface next steps, such as supporting the creation of gender-neutral bathrooms at all sites, ensuring schools have structures that allows students to use their preferred names and pronouns, and continuing the implementation of books and resources that represent the diversity of our families.