

**A MANUAL TO SUPPORT SEXUAL AND GENDER  
MINORITY YOUTH:  
FOSTERING ACCEPTANCE OF SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY  
WITHIN SCHOOL CULTURE**

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## Abstract

In Western countries, sexual and gender minority (SGM) students have been ostracised and harassed due to heteronormative societal views that suggest individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) are not entitled to the same rights as heterosexual people (Taylor et al., 2011). This lack of recognition, acceptance, and tolerance for this vulnerable population has negative impacts on the mental health of SGM youth and is correlated with increased risk for bullying, suicide, depression, homelessness, and drug use. There has been much research to suggest LGBTQ youth benefit from a supportive and inclusive school climate that validates, respects, and acknowledges the needs of this group (Peter, Taylor, & Campbell, 2016). This project includes literature on how to support SGM youth in school and *A Manual to Support Gender and Sexual Minority Youth* to help teachers, school counsellors, and administrators increase their competence in creating a culture of acceptance and tolerance.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction to Research**

The daily struggle faced by Canadian students of non-dominant sexual orientation is fraught with barriers and challenges stemming from heteronormative societal views (Peter, Taylor, & Campbell, 2016). This population encounters many obstacles in schools, as sexual and gender identity development can be a complex process for any teenager (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014). "The school environment is one of the most important development contexts for children and adolescents, not only for the development of academic and occupational skills but also for the development of the personal and social skills that share the first 20 years of life" (Russell & McGuire, 2008, p. 133). Despite efforts to create inclusive school communities, many non-heterosexual youth are still feeling alone and unsupported leading to negative educational outcomes and reduced psychological well-being (Peter et al., 2016).

In order to support students of non-dominant sexual orientation and differing genders, school staff require inclusive resources and education in the area of gender identity and sexual orientation (Lapointe, 2015; Szalacha, 2003). Creating a culture of acceptance and tolerance within a school takes time and effort, particularly when faced with the challenge of breaking down barriers and stereotypes. Schools of various faiths and ethnicities face the challenge of following a religious doctrine or cultural norms, which may make it even more difficult to foster acceptance of homosexuality (Grace & Wells, 2015).

Therefore, the goal of this project is to create a comprehensive literature review based on current empirical evidence around supporting sexual minority youth in schools, which will inform the development of an appendix manual for schools: A Manual to

Support Gender and Sexual Minority Youth. The practical manual component of this project incorporates resources and strategies to educate staff and students about how to support sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth.

### **Rationale**

As stated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the provincial and territorial human rights code, schools are required to ensure they are fostering an inclusive learning environment where SGM youth feel safe and respected. It is necessary for all staff to embed a feeling of safety in school culture for a positive school climate with tolerance and acceptance toward all minorities, particularly lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009). The list of LGBTQ terms is not exhaustive and the author recognizes that people might identify themselves using other terms not listed.

As an educator, I appreciated the effort schools have made toward adapting their policies and practices in support of SGM students; however, it was evident teachers were ill-equipped to handle situations of gender and sexual orientation discrimination. This may be due to a lack of awareness surrounding the perpetuation of discrimination through derogatory statements such as “that’s so gay.” I was fortunate that my school took steps to educate teachers about SGM students, but this is not the case in all schools. Educator resources with information about this vulnerable population are lacking or unavailable. Many school libraries have not been updated to include inclusive teaching materials to support education of gender and sexual diversity within the classroom. Most teaching resources contain images depicting white heterosexual families instead of displaying the



wonderful cultural diversity that is supported by our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I have witnessed first-hand the bullying and ostracism LGBTQ youth experience by fellow peers. Unfortunately, depression and suicide are sometimes the result of SGM victimization (Peter et al., 2016). Establishing a school culture that values inclusivity requires education and training for all staff members (Lapointe, 2015; Szalacha, 2003). Allies of SGM youth may experience barriers when providing support to vulnerable LGBTQ youth. The three main types of barriers are sociocultural, school-based, and individual factors. Within these types of barriers are elements such as parental support, public policy, cultural norms, administration, staff, school policies, students, school resources, personal experiences, knowledge of issues, negative consequences of advocacy, and personal sexual orientation. These areas will be explored in more depth in the literature review section.

*A Manual to Support Gender and Sexual Minority Youth* can act as a catalyst for school staff to begin understanding the issues surrounding SGM youth and ways to offer support. The information and activities provided will help foster an inclusive learning environment and reduce homophobia in schools. Education and teaching resources are certainly necessary in supporting school staff in understanding the needs of SGM youth. Policy development may be in place or underway in various school boards, but without the information about how to support LGBTQ students, administrators, teachers, and school counsellors may be left feeling ill-prepared.

## Overview of Project

Chapter 2 begins with a review of the literature comparing research studies that explain how to support LGBTQ youth. The main topics include education to foster a supportive school staff, GSA development, implementation of supportive school policies, networking with outside agencies, inclusion of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and the barriers SGM allies face. Following the literature review is the methodology section in Chapter 3, which provides an outline of how the project was completed, what has been created by the author, and the target audience for the document. In the knowledge transfer section, the author explains who benefits from the project and why. Chapter 4 provides a synthesis of the manual outlining the contents, purpose, and benefits of *A Manual to Support Sexual and Gender Minority Youth*. The Summary Discussion in chapter 5 includes a review of the limitations of the project and a personal reflection of the author's learning and professional development through completing this project. Appendix A contains *A Manual to Support Sexual and Gender Minority Youth* with information and activities for use in schools by teachers, school counsellors, and administrators.

## Chapter 2: Body of Review

### The School Context

Sexual minority students face numerous barriers that can have negative long lasting emotional effects such as higher rates of truancy (Birkett et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2014), depression/suicidality (Birkett et al., 2009; Burton, Marshal, Chisolm, Sucato, & Friedman, 2013; Kosciw et al., 2014; Peter et al., 2016), greater levels of minority victimization (Burton et al., 2013), and alcohol/marijuana use (Birkett et al., 2009). Research in countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada has shown that LGBTQ youth experience regular victimization by peers at school which can be damaging to their self-esteem (Guasp, 2012; Kosciw et al., 2014; Radcliffe, Ward, & Scott, 2013; Taylor et al., 2011).

The risk for suicide increases for LGBTQ youth due to social constructs and stigmatization rather than same-sex attraction or behaviour (Zhao, Montaro, Igartua, & Thombs, 2010). The problem of student suicide in schools has prompted action to prevent unnecessary deaths of SGM youth. Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (ECHRT) was founded in 1995 in Canada to end homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia and all forms of oppression to ensure individuals can live freely without hate or discrimination. ECHRT has made a commitment to create an investigative procedure and work with chief medical examiners and coroners across Canada to understand the extent to which youth suicide is a problem (Peter et al., 2016). Efforts by LGBTQ organizations in terms of research and study of SGM students are examined more closely in the following literature review.

**Schools in the United States.** The United States has compiled data from LGBTQ students across the country providing information comparable to Canadian studies. The Gay Lesbian Straight Educational Network (GLSEN) was founded in 1990 to end bullying and discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation. Their *National School Climate Survey* (NSCS, 2013) results reported that approximately 55% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation (Kosciw et al. 2014). Even more alarming is approximately a third of the LGBTQ students missed at least one day of school per month due to feeling unsafe . In fact, almost 75% of sexual minority students heard phrases such as "that's so gay." The emphasis on the word "gay" gives a negative connotation leading to feelings of distress for approximately 90% of those surveyed. Approximately 75% of students reported verbal harassment or threats, because of their sexual orientation. Schools with discriminatory practices or policies affected around 55% of LGBTQ students. For example, students were restricted from forming Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs), students were not allowed to discuss LGBTQ topics in school assignments, and schools prevented same-sex couples from attending dances.

**Schools in Canada.** The USA data can be compared to a comprehensive study titled *The First National Climate Survey* (FNCS, 2011) on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools compiled by Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (ECHRT). The research collected by Taylor et al. (2011) suggested sexual minority students are found in all classes and schools across Canada; further, many students have parents with LGBTQ parents. Results also showed about two-thirds of sexual minority students and 61% of students with LGBTQ parents felt unsafe at school. Change rooms and washrooms reported as the most unsafe gender segregated spaces. Furthermore, one

of the most common forms of intimidation that creates a feeling of not being safe in the school environment is bullying. Verbal harassment regarding perceived gender or sexual orientation is particularly problematic. The FNCS found 68% of trans students, 55% of female sexual minority students, and 42% of male sexual minority students reported victimization. Transgender youth experienced higher rates of victimization even though there were less students who identified as transgender. 90% of transgender youth reported they heard negative comments daily or weekly from other students, and 23% of teachers used transphobic language on a daily or weekly basis. Close to 75% of transgender students experienced verbal harassment and 25% were physically harassed due to gender expression, resulting in 44% of transgender students missing school owing to feeling unsafe. The concerns around transgender youth is clear as the bullying is significantly higher than for heterosexual students and in addition, it is about 15% higher than other sexual minority students.

Similar to the Taylor et al. (2011) study, Peter et al. (2016) found 58.3% of non-LGBTQ youth across Canada found homophobic comments disturbing and also experienced harassment due to their gender identity or sexual orientation. This suggests the potential for successful and impactful LGBTQ-inclusive education as heterosexual students are also negatively impacted by homophobia. Both studies reported about 70% of all students were exposed regularly to comments such as “that’s so gay” and Taylor et al. (2011) found almost half of the students heard expressions like “faggot,” “lezbo,” and “dyke” each day in school. The negative effects of discrimination felt by Canadian students demonstrates the importance of acknowledging the traditional heteronormative culture perpetuated in schools (Peter et al., 2016). The marginalization of SGM youth

impacts both LGBTQ and heterosexual youth, highlighting the need for inclusive education.

### **Necessity for Support of Sexual Minority Youth**

What will it take for school districts to not only develop inclusive school policies, but also to educate their students about gender and sexual diversity? Marginalization of sexual minority youth leads to negative school climate and worsens students' overall school experience (Kosciw et al., 2014; Peter et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2011). This finding is consistent with global research where countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States have all found a positive correlation between inclusive school policy development and a more positive school climate (Guasp, 2012; Kosciw et al., 2014; Radcliffe, Ward, & Scott, 2013). Canada is a heteronormative society and children are raised with the understanding that a family consists of a mother and a father. However no longer is this true of all families, and it is important that children grow to be open-minded about different lifestyles and cultures to avoid heterosexism. Education surrounding positive relationships and human sexuality is provided in regular classrooms across Canada and can help normalize various gender and sexual preferences.

Schools nationwide are required to teach health education with lessons included about sexuality and healthy relationships. Health classes can include information about gender identity to help students value and accept the diversity of their peers. The *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education* (CGSHE, 2008) explains that sexual health programs foster positive sexual health outcomes for all Canadians regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Further, effective sexual health education establishes an open and non-discriminatory dialogue respectful toward individual values

and beliefs. Youth should be provided with affirming and inclusive sex education regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity (CGSHE, 2008). The CGSHE (2008) guidelines state that educators must realize adolescence is a time of growth and development and that sexual behaviour is not necessarily linked with sexual identity. The topic of gender identity does not need to be linked to discussions about sexual acts or behaviours. An understanding of the term LGBTQ means recognizing and accepting individuals for their gender preference not necessarily their sexual preference. Educators might first gain an understanding of various issues in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity to offer inclusive non-judgemental health education (CGSHE, 2008).

### **Current Definitions**

School climate refers to the overall feeling within a school and the quality of education. There is not a universally agreed upon definition for school climate, but it is based upon “patterns of people’s experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures” (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009, p. 182). Numerous studies in this area show that students’ mental and physical health is heavily impacted by school climate (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins- D’Alessandro, 2013). Counsellors and school staff have a significant role to play in helping to establish a protected and inclusive learning environment.

School climate can be impacted by the terms or language used with its environment. For example, sexual and gender minorities (SGM) are often referred to using the term LGBTQ which is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited, and queer identities. These terms are often misunderstood or can inadvertently

be misused as a negative label when referring to SGM youth. Individuals whose sexual orientation or gender identity is in question, may prefer to be asked how they self-identify or what terms they prefer. Some SGM youth may not be ready to self-identify and require no label to be attached. Use of the various expressions demonstrates an appreciation and understanding of the diversity of SGM youth. It is important for school personnel to become familiar with the terminology used to describe SGM youth in order to be inclusive.

To better understand the content of this document, I have included the terminology and definitions that make up the LGBTQ acronym. The author recognizes the acronym LGBTQ may not reflect all the terms SGM individuals utilize to identify themselves. For a comprehensive glossary of terms, please refer to *A Manual to Support Gender and Sexual Minority Youth* contained in Appendix A. The following definitions are taken directly from Advocates for Youth (2008) website:

- **Lesbian:** A woman who feels romantically, emotionally, and sexually attracted to other women; a descriptive and socially acceptable label that homosexual women often prefer, because it offers an identity separate from that of homosexual men; a term originating from Lesbos, an Aegean island and the home of the Greek poet Sappho, a woman who loved women
- **Gay:** Men who feel romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to other men; a term used to proclaim self-acceptance and self-affirmation
- **Bisexuality:** Feeling romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to both males and females; a normal sexual orientation of no known cause; see also *heterosexuality* and *homosexuality*



- **Queer:** Formerly an exclusively derogatory term for all GLBT people; now proudly used by some as an umbrella term for the entire LGBTQ community; also, used by those who see their own gender identity, sexual identity, and/or sexual orientation as not fitting the widely-recognized pattern of straight, gay or lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning
- **Questioning:** Being unsure of one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity; feeling uncomfortable with or unwilling or unable to self-categorize within traditional labels such as gay, straight, male, female, etcetera
- **Transgender:** An umbrella term for all who feel that they are outside the boundaries of biological sex and culturally determined gender expression; may include transsexuals, crossdressers, Two-Spirit people, drag performers, etc, and people who do not identify with their biological sex
- **Two-Spirit:** A term whose definition varies across Native American cultures, but which generally means a person born with one biological sex and fulfilling at least some of the gender roles assigned to both sexes; often considered part male and part female or wholly male and wholly female; often revered as natural peace makers as well as healers and shamans

### **School Supports**

The NSCS (2013) study revealed that a negative school climate directly affects students' mental health and academic success (Kosciw et al. 2014). These findings point to the importance of supporting LGBTQ youth in schools to break down barriers and develop an inclusive school community. School support plays a critical role in fostering an inclusive environment where LGBTQ students feel connected to the school (Diaz,

Kosciw, & Greytak, 2010). Further, schools are a major social site where youth explore relationships and undergo personal development comfortably, connecting more easily than with family or faith groups, and where they can begin to understand their gender identity and sexual orientation (Grace & Wells, 2015).

**Supportive school staff.** To develop an inclusive learning environment, teachers need to be visibly supportive allies toward LGBTQ students maintaining their right to learn in a respectful and secure environment (Cooper, Dollarhide, Radcliff, & Gibbs, 2014; Diaz et al., 2010; Liboro, Travers, & St. John, 2015; Russell & McGuire, 2008). Being an LGBTQ ally means putting an end to derogatory comments such as “that’s so gay” or “you act like a girl” or “homo.” Acting as an advocate requires staff to use inclusive language modelling respect for LGBTQ individuals. Teachers may be unaware of their inherent bias toward SGM perhaps making statements that do not respect the diversity of all students. According to the FNCS study completed by Taylor et al. (2011), teachers were identified as making homophobic, negative gender related, or transphobic comments on a regular basis at school. An increase in the number of educators who support LGBTQ students, could decrease the incidents of victimization and truancy, increase self-esteem, and improve academic achievement (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013). Some teachers are guilty of not stepping in to stop students from making homophobic or transphobic comments (Taylor et al., 2011). When teachers intervene in cases of harassment toward LGBTQ youth, students experience a safer school climate (Russell & McGuire, 2008).

According to *The Every Teacher Project on LGBTQ-inclusive education in Canada’s K-12 schools: Final report* (Taylor et al., 2015) three-quarters of teachers

believe school safety is fostered through inclusive curriculum, clubs, and policy, rather than through regulating behaviour. Visual signs of support for sexual minorities throughout a school can send powerful messages to their community. School staff can foster inclusivity and acceptance by displaying posters or symbols to promote a safe school environment (DePaul, Walsh, & Dam, 2009; Diaz et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2014). Offering opportunities for students to utilize their voices and speak out about LGBTQ issues in groups such as a speech and debate team or a poetry slam team can foster a sense of belonging and pride. Even in the classroom, educators can be more open to discussing current events surrounding SGM issues to help raise awareness about heteronormative societal views.

According to Meyer, Taylor, & Peter, (2015), there is a gap between teachers' support for human rights and SGM inclusive education and the ability to foster this type of learning environment, pointing to the need for professional development and policy reform. Teachers and administrator support is crucial in the development of school inclusion groups to help deal with opposition from parents, teachers, and students who may prefer heterosexist policies and curriculum in schools (Fetner & Elafros, 2015). However, this requires educators to become aware of the problems SGM youth face in schools today. Administrators can encourage school staff to participate in professional development opportunities providing information about the issues LGBTQ students encounter and how to foster a supportive learning community (Cooper et al., 2014; DePaul et al., 2009; Grace & Wells, 2015; Kosciw et al., 2014; Liboro et al., 2015; Szalacha, 2003). Even with the numerous issues faced by students of non-dominant sexual orientation, the good news is that sexual minority youth are 82% more likely than

heterosexual youth to seek mental health support (Williams & Chapman, 2014).

Developing a positive school climate and reducing homophobic bullying are interventions that can improve the mental health of all students (Birkett et al., 2009).

***School counsellor role.*** School counsellors have a responsibility to understand the impact school climate can have on SGM students' school experience (Goodrich & Luke, 2009). A school counsellor's role includes advocating for social change, particularly for SGM youth who are often marginalized in society (Cooper et al., 2014; Goodrich & Luke, 2009; Vargas et al., 2011). There is an ethical obligation for school counsellors to act as change agents and advocates for all cultural minorities. Providing this support can demonstrate to both students and staff the importance of inclusion of SGM. The Canadian Psychological Association (2001) code of ethics requires counsellors to advocate for equality and oppose discrimination of LGBTQ students. Providing effective, open, and affirming counselling requires competence surrounding sexual and gender orientation, as competence, education and training mutually inform each other (Moe, Bacon, & Leggett, 2015). In order to provide affirming counselling, specific training is required regarding transgender issues such as transitioning or gender identity disorder diagnosis (Moe et al., 2015), and counsellors will need to seek outside support in these areas. Students who identify as transgender often require the support of a physician and/or a psychiatrist particularly when prescribed hormone medication and when considering reassignment surgery. A gender identity disorder diagnosis should be made by a specialist in the field and a student identified as such would benefit from support services in the community that specialize in the area.

School counsellors can act as role models and change agents in avenues of social justice and develop allies to rally support for SGM youth (Cooper et al., 2014). Further, professional development as LGBTQ allies is required of school counsellors to support social inclusion and recognize fundamental human rights when supporting SGM youth (Moe et al., 2015). Working with school administration to create school policies to support LGBTQ youth and sharing information with district officials can help develop an inclusive learning community (Goodrich, Harper, Luke, & Singh, 2013). Collaborating with fellow school counsellors can present a united front when communicating with administration and school officials about the issues surrounding SGM students. School counsellors can join committees and curriculum development teams to ensure inclusive language is used across educational documents, curriculum, and instruction (Goodrich et al., 2013). Providing parents with resources including outside agencies for information and further support of SGM youth, is a service school counsellors can fulfill (Goodrich et al., 2013). School counsellors may offer individual or group counselling to SGM students who experience bullying (Vargas et al., 2011). Group counselling could allow for youth to explore their sexuality or gender through discussions with other LGBTQ teens who may be questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity. Further to this, counsellors can support these groups by promoting an inclusive school climate among school staff and administration to garner their endorsement and support (Arora, Kelly, & Goldstein, 2016). Counsellors can utilize the resources in this manual as the first step in understanding some of the challenges SGM students face, as well as becoming familiar with ways to support this vulnerable population.

**Implement protective/supportive policies.** School climate improves when school policies that address homophobic bullying are implemented (Birkett et al., 2009). Policies that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation make a clear statement about acceptance and protect all students (DePaul et al., 2009; Diaz et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2014; Taylor et al., 2011). School boards across Canada have various discipline policies, but some have no specific policy to support LGBTQ students (Callaghan, 2014; Liboro et al., 2015; Peter et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2011). Schools with anti-homophobia policies display significantly less incidents of physical and verbal harassment (Kosciw et al., 2014; Peter et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2011). Teachers who are straight are not as confident in practicing inclusive education as they would be if supported by administration and school policy (Meyer et al., 2015). A comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment policy provides protection for LGBTQ youth which increases self-esteem by affirming a supportive environment (Kosciw et al., 2013). It is also recommended that schools adopt policies related to dress codes and school dances, which do not discriminate against LGBTQ students (Diaz et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2014).

The FNCS (2011) found many students in Canadian schools were unaware of policies surrounding anti-homophobia, suggesting schools need to publicize their inclusive school policy among the student body. School staff must be aware of school policy and ensure they follow through with discipline measures to send a clear message to the student body that bullying of SGM youth will not be tolerated. Students who reported having LGBTQ-inclusive school policies in place in their school felt safer and experienced less verbal attacks with teachers taking more of an active role in stopping harassment (Peter et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2011). School boards have been urged by the

Alberta Provincial Government to ensure they have inclusive education policies supportive of SGM youth. Students display lower incidences of depressive feelings in schools with supportive policies versus students in schools with no such policies in place (Peter et al., 2016). This finding highlights the need for protective and supportive school policies for all minority youth. Teachers working in schools with policies to support inclusive education found the school climate to be safer for LGBTQ students (Taylor et al., 2015).

*Parent attitude toward safe school policies.* Parents may not be aware their child is LGBTQ, since many youth do not feel comfortable coming out. Other parents are aware of their child's SGM status and either support their child or ostracize them for being different. The *Report and Recommendations on Gay-Straight Alliances in Alberta Schools (RRGSAAS, 2015)* state that parental rights are not absolute. Their findings explain that both the United Nations and the Supreme Court of Canada firmly state that the parents' personal interest or authority cannot override the duty to protect minors. Students' pleas for change may be ignored by school officials, but parental voices are often privileged over those of young people being able to vote for community school boards, expressing their opinions locally through the democratic process, and demonstrating their authority over educational policies (Tasker, Peter, & Horn, 2014). Studies have shown parents are in support of creating safe and supportive learning environments due to the influence of research calling for change (Szalacha, 2003). In addition, parents can act as allies with students to establish safer schools for SGM youth by supporting policies to reduce harassment (Tasker et al., 2014).

Unfortunately, the opposite can also occur with parents acting as barriers in establishing inclusive school policies due to fear and hatred (Tasker et al., 2014). School boards may be hesitant to establish secure school policies regarding SGM students due to parent backlash (Meyer, 2008). A study completed by Tasker et al. (2014) found parents were advocates for self-determination when their children voiced concern surrounding harassment and bullying particularly in the development of protective school policies. Issues deemed as having a moral component such as sexual identity can cause tension and debate between parents' rights and youth rights (Levesque, 2000). This demonstrates the important role parents play in being treated as key stakeholders and partners in promoting safer schools for all students (Tasker et al., 2014).

**Forming Gay Straight Alliances.** Even before the inception of Bill 10 in Alberta, many schools have had GSAs to support students of non-dominant sexual groups. "Establishing and supporting GSAs in schools is one critical way to move a project or equity and inclusivity forward in the twenty-first century" (Grace & Wells, 2015, P. 277). GSAs are organized and led by students to create secure, welcoming, and accepting school environments for youth of all gender and sexual identities (DePaul et al., 2009; Taylor et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2015; Fetner & Elafros, 2015; Grace & Wells, 2015; RRGSAAS, 2015; Szalacha, 2003). The *Report and Recommendations on Gay-Straight Alliances in Alberta Schools* (2015) supported the legislation requiring school boards in the province of Alberta to allow GSAs be formed in any school where requested by students. The report went on to recommend the club operate with the support of a teacher or staff member or, when necessary, the Minister can designate another appropriate responsible adult to perform such task. A further recommendation is



the students can collaborate with administration to name the club and utilize the words “gay” or “lesbian”, or any other name that is respectful and appropriate as a title.

*Positive aspects of GSAs.* The presence of a GSA can decrease LGBTQ victimization (Kosciw et al., 2013; Fetner & Elafros, 2015; Marx & Kettrey, 2016) and contribute to a safer school climate (Diaz et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2014). GSAs also provide a safe space for students to share their feelings and educate others about being a sexual minority (Liboro et al., 2015; Szalacha, 2003; Taylor et al., 2011). Students in schools with GSAs have many friends of diverse sexual and gender identity (Fetner & Elafros, 2015). Although many schools actively support inclusive clubs, “there remains a fear that the GSAs will ‘recruit’ young and impressionable teenagers into adopting a lesbian, gay, or bisexual ‘lifestyle’” (Szalacha, 2003, p. 61). Sexual orientation and gender identity are not choices but are intrinsic to individuals, meaning they do not choose to be LGBTQ. Students in schools with no access to a GSA may feel isolated and have trouble finding friends which is compounded by the secrecy of being in the closet (Fetner & Elafros, 2015).

Teachers and school counsellors can mentor GSA student leaders as they form alliances and assess the needs of the school community. School counsellors can take an active role in advocating for, supporting the development of, and being involved in the club’s activities (Arora et al., 2016). GSA involvement promotes social change as counsellors model activism and deconstruct social norms (Grace & Wells, 2015).

According to the ECHRT (2011), over 4000 schools in the United States have GSAs, and 150 LGTBQ-inclusive student groups are registered across Canada through MyGSA.ca. British Columbia had the highest reported number of GSA groups at 40.1%, with Ontario

a close second at 37.1%. This declines in the Prairies with 13.8%, and the lowest numbers are in the North and Atlantic provinces with around 4% of schools having GSA groups.

The FNCS (2011) indicated GSAs helped SGM students to feel comfortable as an open and visible minority, to feel more supported by school administration, and to experience a more accepting school climate that is also less homophobic. However, student experience varies with some schools being open to allowing GSAs, while other students must fight school administration to start a GSA, or with other students having no access to these groups at all (Fetner & Elafros, 2015). Meeting supportive peers who belong to a GSA normalizes being LGBTQ and establishes supportive connections which encourages a sense of belonging.

**Inter-agency networking.** Outside agencies often provide resources and specialized programs to support SGM youth. By challenging discriminatory practices in schools and by working with outside organizations, inclusive learning environments can develop. School counsellors are responsible for collaborating with outside agencies to ensure SGM youth feel secure and supported (Cooper et al., 2014; DePaul et al., 2009). Some school counsellors might feel conflicted about contacting outside agencies, but it is essential to remember the ethical obligation to do what is in the best interest of the students so they receive the best care possible. Community agencies can also provide professional development for teachers about inclusive language and fostering respectful conversations about sexual diversity (DePaul et al., 2009). School counsellors can connect families with LGBTQ youth to supportive organizations and resources (Goodrich et al., 2013). School, families, and out of school programs can work collaboratively to

reach a common goal while supporting SGM youth (Theriault & Witt, 2014). Working as a team one can establish supportive connections for LGBTQ youth and provide necessary outside resources.

***Benefits of outside programs and services.*** SGM youth have unique experiences of marginalization and discrimination and benefit from special programs and services to support long-term health and wellness (Wagaman, 2016). Practitioners in differing fields can communicate acceptable terminology to address SGM, establishing a safe haven for LGBTQ youth (Theriault & Witt, 2014). A study completed by Theriault and Witt (2014) found leisure programs can act as a place of connection for diverse populations as commonalities between heterosexual and non-heterosexual youth, (the struggle to experience a sense of belonging), can provide a common ground for which to develop a relationship. Enabling SGM youth to feel confident in advocating for themselves develops self-esteem and will help encourage further support of sexual and gender minorities. Programs that promote empowerment of LGBTQ youth created through a social justice framework can address societal inequities and increase their overall well-being (Wagaman, 2016). Youth often join programs and groups to connect with other individuals with similar interests, and this affiliation can model tolerance and acceptance of various genders and sexual orientations. Connecting LGBTQ youth to the broader queer community can also promote positive youth development (Theriault & Witt, 2014). SGM youth can begin to feel accepted in the greater community particularly when developing a connection with individuals who have come out.

**LGBTQ inclusive curriculum.** Breaking down societal norms and barriers about LGBTQ individuals, and other minority groups, should begin at an early age. LGBTQ

students in grade seven and eight are experiencing problems with being accepted, and implementing interventions to address attitudes towards sexual minorities could improve the school climate (Birkett et al., 2009). Giving students the opportunity to explore appropriate and current information about LGBTQ people, history, and events through teaching materials and Internet sources can positively affect students' school experiences (Kosciw et al., 2014). Students might find a positive LGBTQ role model or find inspiration in the struggle a fellow SGM individual has faced. Although many schools across Canada have curriculums promoting human rights, in relation to respect and dignity for all groups protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, they often do not include SGM populations (Taylor et al., 2011).

LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum could reduce peer victimization and increase academic achievement by boosting student engagement in schoolwork (Kosciw et al., 2013). Students who feel included and valued will engage more deeply in the learning process. LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum improves school climate (Peter et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2011; Varjas, 2007) and the resilience of students, but does not necessarily reduce harassment in schools (Taylor et al., 2011). Students found their school community to be more supportive of SGM students and peers to be less homophobic when LGBTQ topics were addressed in the curriculum (Peter et al., 2016). In terms of official or hidden curriculum, the personal values and beliefs of teachers have a strong impact on what content they will teach in the classroom (Meyer et al., 2015). An attitude of acceptance is essential so all students learn about diversity and inclusion regardless of sexual or gender orientation (CGSHE, 2008).

Schools across Canada have not encouraged the use of LGBTQ-inclusive resources in schools or included homophobia or transphobia in the curriculum (Taylor et al., 2011). This disappointing fact requires attention by school boards to ensure students are educated in a way that is respectful and supports tolerance of all minority groups. According to Meyer et al. (2015), teachers who have personal experience being a member of a sexual minority group in Canada are only marginally more committed to human rights and social justice in the classroom; most Canadian teachers feel these issues are personally important. Continuing to educate students in a heteronormative fashion will not help change societal views on sexual diversity and gender expression.

***Alberta curriculum.*** In Alberta, from September 2010 until March 2015, section 11.1 of the *Alberta Human Rights Act* prohibited teachers from addressing sexuality or religion in class without parental permission (Taylor et al., 2015). This policy negatively impacted the ability for teachers to include SGM education in the classroom. As of March 2015, new legislation moved the policy to the province's Education Act through Bill 10 where parents can request their child be exempt from education around sexual orientation or religion (Taylor et al., 2015). Teachers have the freedom to provide students with an education that is more inclusive of cultural diversity.

School boards can ensure students identifying as LGBTQ are valued and accepted by examining their sexual health programs (CGSHE, 2008). One study found students to be extremely frustrated with teachers' apathetic attitudes toward inclusive curriculum (Lapointe, 2015). Further, teachers should be encouraged to seek out professional development opportunities to gain a better understanding of sexuality and gender to integrate LGBTQ knowledge and perspectives into their teaching (Lapointe, 2015;

Szalacha, 2003). Educators who have received training in regards to SGM issues expressed higher efficacy in handling anti-LGBTQ incidents (Taylor et al., 2015). Engaging in professional development opportunities to understand the basic aspect of SGM inclusive curriculum help establish secure learning environments with planned lessons and activities instead of simply relying on ‘teachable moments’ or interventions to stop bullying (Meyer et al., 2015).

Exposing young students to resources inclusive of LGBTQ individuals can foster tolerance and understanding so that future generations accept sexual diversity. According to *The Every Teacher Project on LGBTQ-inclusive Education in Canada’s K-12 Schools: Final report* (2015), Alberta is the second lowest province with only 59% of educators including LGBTQ content in their teaching. This content includes using inclusive language and examples, addressing LGBTQ issues in sexual health, family, and healthy relationship teaching, recognizing SGM rights when discussing human rights, challenging homophobia, and evaluating gender conformity. Lapointe (2015) argues that educators can learn from students who run GSAs by integrating their knowledge and insight within the Social Studies curriculum to disrupt heteronormativity and foster social justice. According to Taylor et al. (2015), teachers believe social justice or anti-oppression curriculum, anti-homophobia curriculum, and anti-transphobia curriculum would support the creation of safer schools for SGM youth. This demonstrates the need for inclusive resources to be accessible and available to teachers for use in the classroom.

### **Potential Barriers**

Even with knowledge of effective supports for youth of non-dominant sexual orientation, barriers lie in the way of professionals attempting to raise awareness of the

issues facing LGBTQ students. The three main categories of barriers for individuals supporting LGBTQ youth are sociocultural factors, school-based factors, and individual factors (Meyers, Watson, Varjas, & Graybill, 2010).

**Sociocultural factors.** In terms of sociocultural factors, the three major barriers faced by supporters of SGM youth are parental support, public policy, and cultural norms (Meyers et al., 2010). Parents can be resistant to GSAs and to curriculum centring on sexual identity issues (Meyers et al., 2010). School counsellors have the difficult job of appeasing parents, staff, and students. According to Bemak and Chung (2008), it is easier and less stressful for counsellors to be nice and follow the status quo than it is to act as social justice advocates. Being a change agent can mean going against both societal norms and some school policies that have been in place for decades. Many administrators and school staff are uncomfortable with the use of term “gay” when describing an inclusion group (Fetner & Elafros, 2015). When students form GSAs some school administrators prefer the group create a name without the word “gay” in the title.

**Intersectionality.** People are often discriminated against for multiple factors not just sexual orientation and gender identity. One student was quoted as stating:

I think there’s a lot of work to be done in recognizing that LGBTQ people come from various cultures and communities and breaking those myths and beliefs to allow all people identifying within those communities to be free of prejudice and oppression. (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 20)

“Intersectionality” is the term used to describe multiple categories of identification that combine and allow for further potential for discrimination (Taylor et al., 2011). Being gay and black could lead to different types of sexism, ageism, classism, and homophobia

that would not be experienced by a non-racial gay individual. Some of the categories of identification are “age, class, education, ethnic background, gender expression, gender identity, geographic origin, physical and mental ability, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other factors” (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 20). Collins (2010) explained the difficulty faced by those with multiple identities particularly in relation to sexual orientation and ethnic community, as individuals may have to make the difficult choice to maintain family and cultural ties by hiding their sexual identity.

According to the ECHRT (2011) survey, caucasian youth are far less likely to experience discrimination due to their ethnicity regardless of sexual orientation as compared to aboriginal or colored youth. It is important to note that students like this experience a “double whammy”; being harassed because of their ethnicity and their sexual orientation or gender identity, and are more likely to be physically assaulted due to being Aboriginal or youth of color (Taylor et al., 2011). A study completed by Mueller, James, Abrutyn, & Levin (2015) found White LGBTQ youth experienced a higher rate of bullying compared to White heterosexual peers, and bullying can contribute to suicide.

School staff need to be aware of the multiple cultural identities held by an individual to ensure students’ rights are being honored. It was also found that students of color, regardless of their sexual orientation, are generally not comfortable talking about LGBTQ issues with anyone (Taylor et al., 2011). This fact demonstrates the need for sensitivity on the part of educators and highlights the importance of education to break down barriers. The NSCS (2013) study found students who are multiracial experienced more physical harassment due to sexual orientation and gender identity than Black or Asian students (Kosciw et al., 2014).



Furthermore, youth of color, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, are about 15-20% less likely to know any SGM students and about 10-15% less likely to know supportive teachers or staff of SGM students compared to Caucasian and Aboriginal youth (Taylor et al., 2011). Robinson (2014) believes inclusive curriculum is especially important in Aboriginal schools as suicide and bullying are more prevalent. “Aboriginal antibullying programs must frame sexuality and gender as fluid and as naturally diverse if they are to fulfill their mandate to preserve and transmit Aboriginal culture and tradition” (Robinson, 2014, p. 30). It is essential for educators to remain culturally aware of the multiple identities students may hold. “What is required is a fundamental shift in attitudes and beliefs among Canadians that truly allows individuals to self-identify according to their own personal realities and embraces diversity in a way that no longer requires adherence to an *us* and *them* model (Collins, 2010, p. 253). Collins (2010) compared cultural identity to a kaleidoscope where the various colour combinations create different images just as an individual’s cultural identity shifts and evolves with time and in different contexts. The colors of the rainbow often signify support for SGM individuals, and these colors could be prominent in counsellors’ offices and throughout the school.

The Alberta Teachers’ Association “was the first teachers’ federation in Canada to amend its code of professional conduct to protect students from discrimination on the basis of gender identity” (Callaghan & Mayr, 2015, p. 40). This policy was the first step in encouraging change at the governmental level. In March of 2015, after a year of debate in the legislature, the Alberta government passed Bill 10 allowing schools across the province to have GSAs. However, even with this new Bill, Calgary Bishop Fredrick Henry did not support the creation of bona fide GSAs in Catholic schools (Callaghan &

Mayr, 2015). This continues to be a contentious topic as Catholic faith values are in direct conflict with government policy surrounding sexual minority rights. Kris Wells (2015) recalls his experience growing up queer:

As a queer youth, religion was always something outside my lifeworld. It was just another kind of oppression, an oppression that I avoided. I didn't need religious people telling me that I was deviant, immoral, or disordered. I got enough of those messages in school hallways and in my classes every day. (p. 146)

A means to overcome faith barriers would be for school personnel to critically examine how they can integrate their spiritual beliefs with accepting and supporting a diverse student population. Catholic teachings call for people to love one another and to treat everyone with love and respect. Therefore, educators can foster an inclusive attitude by appreciating each student as an unique individual regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

***Religious perspective.*** A school climate that opposes homosexuality due to religion or societal standards can increase the potential for bullying of SGM youth (Vargas et al., 2011). The church as an institution has been a strong cultural force opposing homosexuality and describing consequences for the lifestyle (Grace & Wells, 2015). Canadian law states that religious freedoms do not trump the right to be educated in an environment free of discrimination in public schools; however, many educators think teachers should not be required to teach contrary to their own religious beliefs (Meyer et al., 2015). Teachers may need to put aside their own personal values and beliefs to ensure they are not teaching in a discriminatory manner.

*Catholic schools in Canada.* The Canadian student survey completed by ECHRT (2011) invited several Catholic school divisions to participate, but the schools were instructed not to take part by their governing Bishops' councils "apparently on the grounds that generic safe schools policies protect all students equally, and that Catholic schools should not be involved in activities that affirm the viability of a 'homosexual lifestyle,' such as filling out a homophobia survey" (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 132). Some Catholic school students participated in the ECHRT (2011) survey independently and expressed their concerns about intolerance for sexual minorities in Catholic schools and bullying due to homophobia which they stated was ignored by school staff.

SGM students in Catholic schools often feel unsupported and ostracized for their gender identity and sexual orientation, and are fearful of negative judgement by others of the same faith. According to Fetner and Elafros (2015), some teachers and administrators are homophobic and are against inclusion groups, like GSAs, due to theological grounds while other school staff do not feel it is appropriate to discuss gender identity and sexuality in school. However, this contradicts the human sexuality curriculum since students are educated that heterosexuality is the norm and LGBTQ topics are marginalized (Fetner & Elafros, 2015).

According to *The Every Teacher Project on LGBTQ-inclusive Education in Canada's K-12 Schools: Final report* (2015), 28% of Catholic school teachers heard colleagues make homo-negative comments like "that's so gay" with even more teachers using phrases like "faggot" or "dyke." However, norms are shifting as 83% of Catholic school educators surveyed support LGBTQ-inclusive education, and 85% believe students should be able to express their gender however they want. The problem may lie

in the training and education of educators in supporting SGM youth. Only 19% of teachers surveyed for *The Every Teacher Project* (2015) participated in LGBTQ-inclusive educational training and only 57% feel comfortable having conversations about SGM issues. The major reasons reported for not practicing LGBTQ-inclusive education was a lack of training and fear of employer, parent, legal, or religious group action. One Catholic school teacher was quoted as stating:

The mere mention of homosexuality is not [permitted]. We aren't even allowed to talk about or teach safe sex. According to the religious doctrine, homosexuality is against God and [is] condemned in the bible. Many teachers totally disagree with this but don't have the courage to expose the Catholic education system for their hypocrisy and judgemental handling of these issues. (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 109)

As little as 3% of Catholic school teachers expressed that their religious beliefs were a barrier to addressing LGBTQ issues (Taylor et al., 2015).

***Stories of success.*** Catholic schools in Alberta can embrace new government and school board inclusive SGM policies. In Ontario, the passing of Bill 13 in 2012 “proved to be an enormous boost to the morale, confidence, and comfort levels of the advocates” whose efforts paid off in establishing strategies and programs used in publicly funded Catholic schools (Liboro et al., 2015, p. 175). They were successful in creating secure spaces for SGM through the establishment of GSAs, fostered a safe school climate through the formation of clubs and LGBTQ school awareness campaigns, involved several levels of the school community by creating multiple programs, and successfully connected LGBTQ youth with positive outside school supports (Liboro et al., 2015).

There were three factors in the study that led to success in Ontario Catholic schools. First, support for sexual minority youth had to remain a priority over the bitter political debate in the school system (Liboro et al., 2015). Second, the Catholic values of kindness and acceptance were embraced as “[w]hat they could not reconcile with their heads they were able to reconcile with their hearts” (Liboro et al., 2015, p. 176). The final factor that acted as a unifying influence was the school board’s recognition that as a publicly funded institution it was not in their best interest to go against social pressure and the Ontario Human Rights Code (Liboro et al., 2015). The success of this small Ontario school board can act as “an exemplar of what other Catholic school boards can hope to emulate with regards to supporting LGBT students in the future” (Liboro et al., 2015, p. 177). This example can provide inspiration for action to educators when pushing for change at the school board level.

**School-based factors.** School-based factors such as administration, staff, school policies, students, and school resources can also be barriers to supporting LGBTQ youth (Meyers et al., 2010; Varjas, 2007). An “unsupportive administration, lack of knowledge of LGBT issues (including sexual orientation and identity development), and possible censure or disaffection from colleagues or administration” (McCabe & Rubinson, 2008, p. 481) are some of the barriers faced by sexual minority allies. School administrators help set the tone for the school and can directly influence school climate through policy development and modeling of inclusive attitudes. In some cases, school officials do not accept that SGM youth exist in their schools, thus meaning harassment of LGBTQ students does not occur (Vargas et al., 2011). A shortage of school resources for educators that support LGBTQ youth can also present a problem when aiming to educate

the school community about equality and acceptance (McCabe & Rubinson, 2008; Meyers et al., 2010; Stone, 2003). The NSCS (2013) survey found “institutionally-driven supports, such as implementing a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy or including LGBT content in the curriculum, may be slower to change than individually-driven supports (e.g., student clubs or supportive educators)” (Kosciw et al., 2014, p. 113).

Some schools do not have comprehensive anti-bullying policies that include SGM youth. Only 10% of students in the NSCS (2013) survey reported that their school included both sexual orientation and gender expression in their school harassment policy. Administrators have the power to establish school policies in support of SGM in turn creating an inclusive learning environment. According to Varjas et al. (2007), some administrators respond to bullying of SGM students by removing the victim from the school, because it might be safer for them. What example is this setting for students who see LGBTQ youth sent away due to bullying? Other administrators believe homosexual identities in adolescents are not possible (Vargas et al., 2011). However, more and more students are “coming out” during adolescence and seeking the support of adult figures.

**Individual factors.** Personal experiences, knowledge of issues, negative consequences of advocacy, and sexual orientation of advisor are all barriers for sexual minority advocates (Meyers et al., 2010). Counsellors can experience the negative consequences of advocating for LGBTQ youth (Meyers et al., 2010) and this can lead to the Nice Counsellor Syndrome where practitioners avoid conflict stemming from social justice issues (Bemak & Chung, 2008). It can be difficult for counsellors to stand up for marginalized populations when it might mean going against school staff with differing

opinions. Some advocates lack knowledge of issues faced by LGBTQ youth thus causing a barrier to providing supports (McCabe, Rubinson, Dragowski, & Elizalde-Utnick, 2013; Meyers et al., 2010). Being unaware of the societal injustices SGM youth regularly battle may hinder the ability for educators to provide much needed support. Advocates of LGBTQ youth can face negative professional repercussions and may worry about job protection (Meyers et al., 2010), even if they are protected by a union.

Supporters of SGM youth who are LGBTQ themselves, found obstacles to advocacy and include possible job loss, fear of students' perceptions of learning from them, parental complaints, and coming to terms with their own internalized homophobia (Meyers et al., 2010; Varjas, 2007). As Taylor et al. (2011) expressed, "One of the challenges facing the adult world, parents, educators, and administrators alike, is discovering how to support young people in finding the courage to move from being distressed and ashamed bystanders to becoming allies who intervene in abusive situations" (p. 137). It can be difficult for advocates to stand up to colleagues or parents who are against homosexuality. Straight teachers may not be aware of the safety issues SGM youth face in school and know how to handle situations of harassment such as negative verbal remarks (Meyer et al., 2015). LGBTQ students can experience ridicule by peers who use hateful phrases to describe their sexual orientation or gender identity, leaving them feeling alone and ostracized.

Clear frameworks and expectations for intervention are needed for school employees as well as stronger leadership from school administration towards eliminating these forms of bias, clear assurances of support for teachers, both LGBQ and straight, who do intervene. (Meyer et al., 2015, p. 229).

## **Summary of Literature**

After analyzing the literature and comparing various studies, it is evident that SGM youth face many challenges in schools. The statistics provided by GLSEN (2013) outline the number of students surveyed who experience negative effects of marginalization in schools in the United States. Canadian research has also been included with information from a survey completed by Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (2011) to highlight the need for education and resources to support sexual and gender minority youth. The studies analyzed through the body of the review all contained information with similar themes or findings. The research methodologies varied with some studies providing a more comprehensive view of findings and conclusions. The limitations of each study were carefully considered when producing the manual to ensure the use of proper research methods.

Based on evidence by the FNCS (2011) and the NSCS (2013), it is evident SGM youth are at risk for long term negative mental health outcomes if specific supports and strategies are not considered for use in schools. The manual is a proponent for change and provides schools with a comprehensive document about how to support LGBTQ youth. Research studies by Peter et al. (2016), Taylor et al. (2011), and Varjas (2007) have noted the benefits of creating inclusive learning environments for students. Educators must be aware of the potential barriers they may face as LGBTQ allies in order to overcome and conquer challenges when supporting SGM students.

## **Importance to Provide Practical Supports for Schools**

A Manual to Support Sexual and Gender Minority Youth found in Appendix A is based on the literature review and provides schools with information to support SGM



students. Careful consideration was taken when selecting resources and activities for the manual as the body of research demonstrated the need to support SGM students. Both the NSCS (2013) and the FNCS (2011) study results found inclusive school policy development can reduce bullying and lead to a more positive school climate. The manual includes a section for school administrators to help establish such policies in schools. Following policy development, schools can begin educating teachers about SGM and this manual provides a stepping stone in the process. Schools staff who are aware of the issues faced by LGBTQ students can begin to model acceptance and respect for all SGM. School personnel are encouraged to read the literature review to gain a solid understanding of the issues faced by SGM youth and the barriers that may lie ahead when becoming an LGBTQ ally.

The body of literature highlighted the need for teaching resources and education. The manual supports this area as it contains a comprehensive listing of current SGM definitions, information about the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as a listing of gender neutral terms. The manual also provides a guideline for how to discuss gender at each grade level and age appropriate discussion topics when teaching about sexual diversity. Educators may not be aware of how to address SGM issues in a sensitive manner and what types of information can be shared in the different grades. The manual offers school staff an outline to help address the needs of LGBTQ students and ways to integrate discussion in the classroom.

Research has proven how effective GSAs can be in supporting SGM students particularly in establishing a safer school climate. Activities for use with GSAs are provided in the manual to help in the development of safe spaces for SGM students and

education of the school population. The literature explained the key role school counsellors can play in fostering a supportive school environment and acting as change agents speaking out against heteronormative attitudes. A section of the manual has been created for school counsellors with information about how to act as advocates toward SGM students to ensure ethical practice. Counsellors are encouraged to seek outside agencies when supporting distressed LGBTQ youth to ensure comprehensive support is provided and the manual contains a description of where to locate these services.

The literature review explored the need for LGBTQ inclusive curriculum and the manual has a listing of ideas to promote diversity that can be integrated within each subject area. The barriers faced by allies can be daunting and the manual acts to bridge the gap between staff, students, and parents in terms of providing education and support for LGBTQ youth. The literature has demonstrated that with knowledge comes a sense of empowerment as educators can become more confident in supporting SGM students. School staff can find a listing of websites, books, and videos in the manual to use in the classroom for further professional development.

### **Summary**

Current literature exploring bullying of SGM youth in schools is plentiful with much of the research highlighting the need to transform school policy to foster a positive school climate. Studies throughout the world have found LGBTQ youth experience bullying and harassment due to heteronormative views (Guasp, 2012; Kosciw et al., 2014; Radcliffe, Ward, & Scott, 2013; Taylor et al., 2011). The abundance of literature calls out for school staff to engage in professional development opportunities to help support SGM students and transform negative views of LGBTQ individuals. In Chapter 3

the methodology contains information about knowledge transfer of information, the methods used to write the project, and the development of the manual. Chapter 4 outlines the synthesis of the manual and includes an overview, purpose, and benefits of the manual. Finally, Chapter 5 contains the summary discussion and personal reflection of the project.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The intent of this project is to provide strategies and resources to address many of the school-based issues faced by LGBTQ students. The project incorporates a synthesis of current empirical literature regarding research that explores the safety and acceptance of sexual minority youth in schools today. Specific strategies for school counsellors' and educators' professional development are included, as well as recommendations for curriculum program development. The comprehensive literature review informs the creation of this manual: *A Manual to Support Gender and Sexual Minority Youth*. As per this final project, the manual project is intended for use by school counsellors and is to be shared with school staff to promote cultural sensitivity toward LGBTQ youth. School counsellors can utilize this manual to bridge the gap between providing support to students and educating the school community toward their own professional development concerning LGBTQ students. Educators can integrate the information and strategies when teaching health and human sexuality sections of the curriculum.

#### **Project Knowledge Transfer**

This literature review and manual project will benefit students, teachers, administrators, school counsellors, and parents of LGBTQ youth in numerous ways such as encouraging conversation about ways to support SGM students. Furthermore, the literature review section of the final project will be a valuable resource for the research, counselling, and private, public, or charter school communities. As a stand alone, the information in the *A Manual to Support Gender and Sexual Minority Youth* allows for professional development of teachers, administrators, and school counsellors. By becoming more knowledgeable about SGM students and the barriers they face, school

staff can become visible allies for this high risk population (Cooper, Dollarhide, Radcliff, & Gibbs, 2014; Diaz et al., 2010; Liboro, Travers, & St. John, 2015; Russell & McGuire, 2008). The manual contains resources to use within the classroom with strategies to support LGBTQ youth. Furthermore, school counsellors have access to a list of out of school agencies that specifically support the SGM youth population. Parents who enquire about supports for the LGBTQ child can be provided with contact information for outside agencies (Goodrich et al., 2013).

Further, administrators can learn about the benefits of creating inclusive school policies to ensure a secure school environment for all students. Studies have demonstrated inclusive school policy development can contribute to a more positive school climate (Guasp, 2012; Kosciw et al., 2014; Radcliffe et al., 2013). Finally, parents can see the benefits of this manual when their LGBTQ child feels empowered and understood within the school. This sense of empowerment will improve the self-esteem of SGM students and foster a positive school experience (Kosciw et al., 2013). Through the combined efforts of the school community, students will become better informed about the issues of discrimination faced by sexual minority peers. The school community can learn to be more compassionate and accepting of SGM youth, further helping to improve school climate.

School boards can benefit from *A Manual to Support Gender and Sexual Minority Youth*, particularly when creating new policies to support SGM students. Further, the manual supports LGBTQ youth which upholds sections of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Altering societal norms and beliefs does not happen over night. The discrimination SGM youth face in schools is psychologically damaging and schools

need to be safe learning environments for all students regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or any minority group status (Peter et al., 2016). This researcher holds the fundamental belief that all people should be respected and treated equally under the law, and the manual promotes this Canadian right. This final project, including the manual, is intended to encourage much needed conversation among educators and school counsellors regarding how to support sexual minority youth.

## **Methods**

The creation of this final project, literature review, and manual was due to the overwhelming need of SGM youth to feel accepted and respected in schools. To begin the process, a thorough examination of literature to explore the issues faced by LGBTQ students was completed. Information was included to outline successful supports for SGM youth in schools. Current empirical articles were collected from the University of Lethbridge data bases, including PsychINFO, Google Scholar, EBSCO, ERIC, OECD, and ProQuest . The database searches focused on the following key terms: *sexual minority youth, LGBTQ, barriers, supports, Canada, Alberta, bullying, strategies, policies, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, school climate, and gender*. Further literature reviews were conducted around current Alberta legislation and government policy through the Alberta Teachers' Association website. Educational resources and information were gathered from the Alberta Teachers' Association library focusing on supports for LGBTQ students. Finally, general internet searches were used to access online materials employed in schools across Canada.

The research studies included in this project were gathered by the author to explore acceptance of LGBTQ youth in schools. After analyzing numerous studies

common themes were found to help support SGM students. It is evident LGBTQ youth benefit from a positive school climate nurtured through staff education, the creation of GSAs, inclusive school policies, SGM supportive curriculum, and inter-agency networking. The barriers allies of LGBTQ youth face were also highlighted to raise awareness about how to navigate roadblocks on the pathway to establishing an inclusive learning environment. The literature review played a key role in the development of the manual, providing the framework from which all the resources were selected. It was important to include information for teachers, school counsellors, and administrators, as they are the stakeholders who can help establish an inclusive learning environment fostering a more positive school climate for SGM students.

The resources in the manual have practical applications for use in schools acting as a starting point for staff to support SGM youth. The information is presented in such a way that sections can be quickly accessed and lengthy reading or study is not required. It was necessary to include some tools that could be easily accessed in the classroom to make LGBTQ youth feel safe and accepted. Terminology is an important starting point when supporting SGM youth so the inclusion of current definitions and gender neutral terms was required. An image of a “genderbread” person was included to illustrate the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity, a topic with which educators may not be familiar. Ways to integrate discussion around diversity at various grade levels and integrate SGM topics within diverse subject areas were necessary to include, to provide ideas for how educators can explore gender and sexuality in the classroom. The manual was created to be used in all school boards across Alberta.

The manual, however, does not contain specific information for parents. Schools can use the manual to become more familiar with how to support SGM students and communicate the importance of inclusion to the greater community. Educators are welcome to utilize the information provided when working with parents. Many of the websites could be offered as a means to search for community support. The manual focused solely on resources for use within the school. There are no assessment tools in the manual to determine the gender identity or sexual orientation of students. Staff must be sensitive to the privacy of LGBTQ students and not make assumptions based on appearance or hearsay.

### **Development of the Manual**

The resource manual creation was focused on raising awareness of issues and possible supports for LGBTQ students. Based on the literature review, the five main areas explored in the manual included education to foster a supportive school staff, GSA development, implementation of supportive school policies, networking with outside agencies, and inclusion of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. The empirical evidence outlined three main types of barriers faced by SGM youth allies. These three types were also included in the manual as follows: sociocultural factors, school-based factors, and individual factors.

The strategies and supplementary materials included in the manual will support the teaching of the health and human sexuality curriculum. Educators will find lessons, classroom strategies, online resources, recommended outside agency list, along with references for classroom resources. Topics included in the manual are current research findings, provincial policies and procedures, LGBTQ terms, gender identity, coming out,



creating a safe space, and breaking down barriers. This manual will be a comprehensive, practical tool for use in schools throughout Alberta.

### **Summary/Conclusion**

This final project and accompanying manual has the potential to stimulate change in schools across Alberta. Raising awareness of the potential barriers and supports for SGM students can help foster a more inclusive learning environment. This project provides information and resources for stakeholders who work with LGBTQ students to support this marginalized group. Bringing these issues to the forefront can prompt action within schools and help establish a more positive school climate.

## **Chapter 4: Synthesis of Manual**

### **Overview of Manual**

*A Manual to Support Sexual and Gender Minority Youth* provides a starting point for schools to foster inclusive learning environments. The resources included in this document could be utilized by teachers to encourage acceptance of SGM, counsellors to support individual or group counselling, and administrators to develop inclusive school policies. Educating staff about the issues faced by SGM, is the first step in altering societal norms and raising awareness about the marginalization of LGBTQ youth. By accessing the information contained in the manual, schools could work toward developing positive attitudes toward SGM students.

The first chapter of the manual includes resources for teachers and information about sexual orientation and gender identity, gender neutral language for use in the classroom, lesson plans containing tools and strategies, suggestions on how to ensure LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, and topics to address when supporting a GSA. The second section is to be used by school counsellors and contains counselling resources and ideas for inter-agency networking. The third chapter is directed toward administrators to help support the implementation of protective and supportive school policies. The final section contains a listing of additional resources such as websites, videos, and books.

### **Purpose of Manual**

This manual creates awareness about the discrimination SGM youth face in schools across North America. The information provided within this document can help teachers, school counsellors, and administrators learn how to support LGBTQ youth. This vulnerable population benefits from a school climate that is accepting and understanding

of SGM rights. By informing school staff about ways to create a positive school climate accepting of LGBTQ individuals, societal norms will eventually begin to shift. There are five goals for creating this manual including: (1) to raise awareness of the issues faced by SGM youth in schools; (2) to encourage school staff to reflect on their own personal biases that may hinder the development of inclusive school policy development; (3) to provide resources that could be used by school counsellors and teachers to support SGM youth; (4) to explore barriers faced by LGBTQ advocates; (5) to contribute to the current resource base of tools to support SGM youth in schools.

### **Benefits of Manual**

The benefits of this manual are applicable to all schools and essential to ensure a quality educational experience for students. First, schools can become safer places for students through the development of inclusive school policy and the use of resources that are sensitive to SGM. Students who may be questioning their sexual or gender identity can access a support network and reduce the potential for depression or suicide. A clear message of no tolerance for LGBTQ bullying supports a positive school climate ensuring students feel secure attending school. This policy will reduce truancy and allow staff to enforce inclusive rules modeling a culture of acceptance and equality.

Second, inclusive education promoted through the manual will help breakdown societal norms surrounding heterosexuality and cisgender attitudes. Teachers can utilize the *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education* (CGSHE, 2008) to promote positive sexual health outcomes for all Canadians including SGM. Educators must keep this in mind when teaching sexual health to ensure they are communicating the importance of valuing and accepting LGBTQ individuals and being mindful of LGBTQ

safe sex practices. Teachers need to understand during adolescence, sexual behaviour is not necessarily linked with sexual identity as this is a time of growth and development for teens (CGSHE, 2008). Ideally, youth should feel free to explore their sexual orientation and gender identity without fear of ridicule. The classroom can be a place for discussion and open communication about SGM issues across various subject disciplines not just a health class. Social studies teachers often have class discussions about current events and focus on human rights both of which can be easily ties to LGBTQ issues. By encouraging an open and welcoming attitude toward SGM issues in the classroom, students will recognize the school climate as more inclusive toward LGBTQ individuals.

Third, teachers, administrators, and school counsellors may not be educated about SGM issues students face in schools. This manual provides a clear rationale about the need to support this vulnerable population, resources that could be used in the classroom, and information about LGBTQ youth in schools today. Teachers may lack training about SGM issues in the classroom not realizing that curriculum is essentially heteronormative, thus perpetuating societal norms. Bringing awareness to educators about changing their past classroom practices and encouraging administrators to be conscious of the needs of SGM students is an aim of the author of this manual. School counsellors have an ethical obligation to support minorities, and providing information about SGM acts as a reminder of how to provide the needed help to this population.

Within the manual are many resources to support teachers, school counsellors, and administrators. A comprehensive listing of definitions has been included to ensure school staff are aware of how to address SGM students. Information from the Alberta Teachers' Association have been included listing topics sorted by grade level to support

discussion of sexual diversity in the classroom. Following this is an explanation of the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity along with a listing of gender neutral terminology. A comprehensive listing of gender identity topics at each grade level and LGBTQ examples of inclusive curriculum for various subject areas can be utilized as a reference tool for teachers. A set of lessons for junior or senior high school teachers is available for use with students in the classroom and a sequence of GSA activities can be used in schools. School counsellors are provided with information about cultural awareness, LGBTQ in elementary, counselling in faith based schools, the role of a school counsellor, parental consent, group counselling to support SGM youth, and inter-agency networking. The manual includes a section to support administrators in the development of school policy with guidelines from the Alberta Government and information from the Alberta Teachers' Association about policy development in faith-based schools.

## Chapter 5: Summary Discussion

### Personal Reflection

During my fifteen years as a teacher, I found more students openly questioning their sexuality and gender identity and turning to teachers or school counsellors for support. These students often expressed feeling singled out for being different and some were hospitalized due to depression surrounding their exploration of their identity. Many school staffs are unaware of ostracism and bullying experienced by SGM students. School counsellors may not have the training or resources to support LGBTQ youth to the best of their ability.

My future role as a school counsellor requires me to be knowledgeable about supporting SGM students. It is essential that I gain an understanding of the challenges faced by LGBTQ youth and the negative psychological effects they may have experienced. I have supported LGBTQ students and witnessed firsthand the personal struggle SGM youth face at school. I have encountered both fellow colleagues who question how to support this population and those who are unwilling to change their personally held negative beliefs and values. Working in a Catholic school has highlighted for me the barriers school staff face when attempting to support SGM students. Conversations with school district personnel about the stance they take in supporting LGBTQ students have fueled my desire to develop a manual for schools. It is my hope the manual will assist in raising awareness and educate staff in order to fully support LGBTQ youth in Catholic schools.

Delving into research studies surrounding LGBTQ youth afforded me with an inside look at the issues faced by many SGM youth in schools. The psychological effects

are staggering and leave lasting negative long-term mental health deficits. My investigation centred around the victimization of SGM youth and highlighted the necessity for LGBTQ resources and supports for schools. By completing a literature analysis, I discovered key themes centred on establishing an inclusive learning community and the common barriers LGBTQ allies face.

Although I have considered various important pieces of information to include in the document, I continued to look at other ideas that surfaced through research. It was my aim to remain open minded to alternate points of view. The process involved in creating this manual required a methodical approach to ensure I produced a comprehensive document useful for schools. Strategies including creating a timeline and goal setting have assisted me in establishing a routine that helped me during the writing process. Checking in with my advisor regularly and collaborating on the approach for the document was essential. Learning continued throughout the research process and I look forward to the potential changes that lie ahead.

It was necessary for me to consider potential risks in the development of this manual. Some school boards may not be prepared to undertake the difficult task of educating their staff members. This is particularly true for schools with religious doctrines or various ethnicities that are cautious about using outside resources, because of the potential conflict with faith or cultural values. This potential barrier was given careful thought and consideration during the creation of this manual.

A limitation to this manual is the ever developing body of research that continues to grow perhaps changing or altering some of the information included in the project. Definitions used in this project may evolve with the creation of new terms for various

SGM. The websites contained in the manual were current at the time of publication but new information can be continually developed and posted online. Moving forward, schools are encouraged to create their own databases of information and establish library collections for professional use.

The intent of this document will act as a catalyst for change within all schools in Alberta. The manual includes data that quantified the number of victimized LGBTQ youth and explained the negative mental health effects reported in Canadian research studies. The literature review highlighted five main areas schools can focus on to support SGM students. First, schools need to educate staff and provide professional development opportunities that explain how to support LGBTQ students. Secondly, the body of research recommended schools create GSAs to educate students and staff about the issues LGBTQ students encounter helping to establish a positive school climate. Another theme found in the literature was for schools to implement protective/supportive policies that are inclusive of LGBTQ youth. Research also pointed to the need for inter-agency networking to support SGM youth. The use of this manual and the literature review may assist inter-agency collaboration, by providing the structure in which to begin the conversations, empirical research, and subsequent strategies. Finally, Peter et al. (2016) and Varjas (2007) explained the importance of LGBTQ-inclusive resources that support the curriculum.

Individuals who support LGBTQ youth often face barriers. The body of literature highlighted three main obstacles sexual minority allies face. The first is sociocultural factors such as a lack of parental support, public policy, and cultural norms. The literature also listed school-based factors such as administration, staff, school policies, students,



and school resources as possible obstacles in supporting SGM youth. Finally, studies have shown individual factors such as personal experiences, knowledge of issues, negative consequences of advocacy, and sexual orientation of advisors could act as barriers when assisting LGBTQ youth.

Providing educators with a comprehensive toolkit, as exemplified by the manual entitled *A Manual to Support Sexual and Gender Minority Youth*, will support recent government initiatives such as the creation of Bill 10. The Alberta School Board Association is working toward creating further policies surrounding support for sexual minority students. This manual, along with other measures taken, is necessary to combat negative attitudes and stereotypes toward SGM students in schools across Alberta.

*“When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.” – Audre Lorde*

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Appendix A:

# A Manual to Support Gender and Sexual Minority Youth



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In partial fulfillment of Master of Counselling Program  
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This poem was written by a former student who had a passion for writing. She has continued to refine her craft by competing in poetry slam competitions. Her words come from the heart and reflect her feelings growing up as a girl who was often mistaken for a boy. She is passionate about LGBTQ rights and grapples with how her faith aligns with her convictions. This is a perfect example of the struggle some youth face as they attempt to understand the world.

**JUDGEMENT GAY**  
**By: Rhaeannon Gerritsen**

Isn't it sad,  
How it's more common to hear people preach hate than love.  
Talking about how the good Lord from above would cast me from heaven,  
Because the way I look makes me a heathen.

***More concerned about who we kiss than the fact that there are kids slitting wrists***

And isn't it sad,  
How mothers and fathers claim, *I don't care as long as it's healthy.*  
How gender doesn't matter,  
Not till 16 years later when **Jason** asked to be called **Jackie**,  
And your whole wide world does a tilt-a-whirl,  
Because now,  
*Now, You're no son of mine.*

As if we can cloak ourselves in the flag of Christianity,  
choosing to ignore the hypocrisy in claiming,  
**Well Only God can judge.**

And isn't it sad,  
How **your God** says Satan will divide and spread hate  
when you stand here  
red faced,  
Screaming that I'm destined for hell.  
As if somehow what lies between my legs and what lays in my heart will  
determine where my soul shall depart.

Now I'm not speaking, screeching  
all Christian/Catholics are preaching Leviticus,  
but quick to dismiss other passages.  
No.

I go church every Sunday, break bread on Monday, say grace.  
 Yet growing up in the church I was never taught to hate.  
 I'm a straight Catholic who's not anti-gay.

So call me crazy, but wasn't what Jesus was teaching was love,  
 No matter if you were the leper or the tax collector.  
 Yet somehow your bumper stickers preaching,  
 telling fags to find Jesus.  
 And I just find that to be a little misleading.

Isn't it sad,  
 how the adulterer is the first to cast the stone.  
 As if we can pick and choose which biblical rules  
 are applicable in today's world.

How people who scream pro life,  
 that same mom, dad, husband, and wife,  
 Will throw their child to the street  
 as soon as they dare to step their feet  
 out of the closet.

And isn't it sad,  
 How your son is afraid to come home and tell you who he really is,  
 Because he knows that if he does,  
 The family that he loves  
 Won't love him back.  
 How he'll be kicked to the curb because he doesn't like girls  
 And his house won't be his home ever again.

So let's get one thing straight.  
 Before you stand behind my God to spread hate,  
 Before you use his name like a bullet and the bible as a gun,  
 Before you spit Leviticus,  
 remember this

The word homosexuality in the bible  
 Didn't exist until 1946.

So tell me,

**What would Jesus do...**

*"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others,  
 you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you"*

Matthew 7:1-5

# A MANUAL TO SUPPORT SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITY YOUTH

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence can be a time of exploration and awareness surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity. Many sexual and gender minority youth face ridicule and are marginalized due to societal heteronormative views. Educators have a responsibility to address these issues and raise awareness surrounding inclusive attitudes toward LGBTQ individuals. Schools can take steps to bring about awareness of the issues SGM youth face in order to reduce the number of LGBTQ youth you do not attend class due to homophobic attitudes of students or teachers. Educating staff and students about the importance of valuing and treating each person equally as stated under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, can bring about a shift in cultural norms. For societal stereotypes to change, schools must set an example and begin to educate students about what it means to be LGBTQ. Heterosexual students can be empowered to support the rights of sexual and gender minority students without feeling shame or worrying that they will face criticism.

**MANUAL FORMAT:** The following four sections provide resources for school counsellors, teachers, and administrators when supporting SGM students. The first section is for teachers and includes information on sexual orientation and gender identity, gender neutral language to use in the classroom, lesson plans with tools/and strategies, ways to integrate LGBTQ inclusive curriculum, and topics to address when forming a GSA. The second section is for use by school counsellors with resources and ideas for inter-agency networking. The third section is geared toward administrators to help support the implementation of

protective and supportive school policy. Additional resources such as websites, videos, and books are listed in the final section. The websites are current at the time of publication but may have changed since. Please search for the authors of the website if the links are no longer active.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** To gain further background information, readers are recommended to review chapters 1-4 of this project. The literature review provides context to the importance of this manual and research surrounding the negative mental health effects experienced by LGBTQ youth who are not supported in school.

**DEFINITIONS:** Sexual and gender minorities (SGM) are often referred to using the term LGBTQ which is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited, and queer identities. These terms are often misunderstood or misused acting as a negative label when referring to SGM youth. When addressing individuals whose sexual orientation or gender identity is in question, it is acceptable to ask how they self-identify or what terms make them feel comfortable. They may not be ready to self-identify and there is no need to attach a label to an individual. The various expressions help us to understand and appreciate the diversity of SGM youth. The list of terms is not exhaustive and the author recognizes that people might identify themselves using other terms not listed. For this reason, an asterisk will be used to denote inclusion of all genders and sexual identities particularly those not listed in the LGBTQ reference.

To better understand the content of this document I have included the definitions of commonly used words when discussing SGM. The terms are provided by Advocates for Youth (2008) which is an organization that views sexuality as healthy and normal treating each individual as unique. The following definitions are quoted from Advocates for Youth (2008) website:



**Ally:** A person (usually a heterosexual individual) or organization that actively helps another with a specific issue; here, one who openly supports and affirms the rights and dignity of GLBTQ people

**Androgyny:** Exhibiting the identity and/or appearance of both male and female, as neither male nor female, or as between male and female; exhibiting behaviors of either or both traditional genders; a descriptive term that many in the GLBTQ community find offensive; see also *third gender* and also *Two-Spirit*

**Bi:** Slang term for people with a bisexual orientation and who self-identify as bisexual

**Bi-phobia:** Fear or intolerance toward bisexuality, either from straight people or institutions or from within the gay and lesbian community

**Bias:** Prejudice, usually favoring one group or state over another; here, favoring one sexual orientation and/or the gender identity other any other

**Biological sex:** The biological state of having: 1) female or male genitalia (vulva, labia, clitoris, and vagina for females; penis and testicles for males); 2) female or male chromosomes (XX for females; XY for males); and 3) female or male hormones (estrogen and progesterone for females; testosterone for males); perhaps one in 2,000 babies is born with the biological characteristics of both sexes or of neither sex entirely (see *intersex*); see also *gender* and *gender identity* which are different than biological sex

**Bisexuality:** Feeling romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to both males and females; a normal sexual orientation of no known cause; see also *heterosexuality* and *homosexuality*

**Bullying:** Physically, mentally, and/or emotionally intimidating and/or harming an individual or members of a group; here, intimidating or harming individuals whose sexual orientation or gender identity is somehow threatening to the bully

**Butch:** Slang term for individuals who exhibit characteristics or behaviors traditionally considered as masculine; sometimes derogatory; also sometimes used by lesbian women or gay men to self-identify with varying notions of gender

**Closeted:** The intentional concealment of an individual's own sexual orientation or gender identity, often due to fear of discrimination and/or violence; see also *in the closet*

**Coming out:** From 'coming out of the closet,' the process of becoming aware of and open about one's sexual orientation or gender identity

**Crossdressers:** Preferred term for people who usually self-identify with their biological sex and gender but who sometimes wear the clothing, jewelry, etc., of the opposite gender to fulfill emotional needs

**Discrimination:** The unjust or prejudicial treatment of an individual or groups of people; here unfair treatment on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity

**Drag queen/drag king:** Someone who dresses and acts like the opposite gender for entertainment purposes; usually does not self-identify as transgender

**Dyke:** A derogatory word for a lesbian and/or for any woman who projects the role, appearance, attitudes, and/or behaviors that a culture traditionally assigns to males; also reclaimed by some to identify with varying notions of gender

**Equality:** The state of being equal in regard to status, rights, opportunities, and treatment

**Equity:** The state of being fair and impartial; here, fairness in opportunities and treatment under the law

**Faggot:** A derogatory word for a gay male and/or for any man who projects the role, appearance, attitudes, and/or behaviors that a culture traditionally assigns to females; also reclaimed by some men to identify with varying notions of gender

**Fairness:** Quality of being fair-minded, impartial, and just

**Female-to-male (FTM):** A person born or assigned at birth as biologically female, who identifies as a male and who takes the sex, gender, and identity of a male through dress, mannerisms, behavior, hormone therapy, and/or surgery

**Femme:** A slang term for an individual who projects a traditionally feminine gender role; sometimes, but not always, derogatory; also used by some to self-identify regarding gender

**Gay:** Men who feel romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to other men; a term used to proclaim self-acceptance and self-affirmation

**Gay-bashing** (sometimes simply 'bashing'): A physical or verbal attack directed at GLBTQ people, motivated by hatred for their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or sexual behavior

**Gay-straight alliance (GSA):** Formal organization of GLBTQ and straight people in support of the dignity and rights of GLBTQ people, usually in the context of and to create change within educational institutions and environments

**Gender:** Social and cultural expression of sex; **not** *biological sex*

**Gender conformity:** Acting within the culturally expected gender role for people of one's biological sex

**Gender dysphoria:** A medical term for unhappiness or discomfort with the gender role assigned by one's culture to one's biological sex; a term disliked by many transgender people as implying that there is something wrong with them; may or may not coincide with *sexual dysphoria*

**Gender expression:** The ways in which an individual communicates gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, and/or the emphasis or de-emphasis of bodily characteristics; *not* an indication of sexual orientation; behaviors and traits used publicly to express gender identity—as masculine or feminine or something else; also called *gender presentation*

**Gender fluidity:** The belief that social constructions of gender identity and gender roles lie along a spectrum and cannot be limited to two genders; a feeling that one's gender varies from societal notions of two genders

**Gender identity:** An individual's innermost sense of self as male or female, as lying somewhere between these two genders, or as lying somewhere outside gender lines altogether

**Gender neutral:** Anything (such as clothing, styles, activities, or spaces) that a society or culture considers appropriate for anyone, irrespective of gender; anything that carries with it no particular gender associations

**Gender presentation:** The ways in which an individual communicates one's own gender identity to others, through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, and/or the emphasis or de-emphasis of bodily characteristics; not an indication of *sexual orientation*; behaviors and traits used publicly to express one's gender—as masculine or feminine or something else; also called *gender expression*

**Gender role:** Culturally or socially determined sets of attitudes and behaviors that are expected of an individual based on her/his biological sex

**Genderqueer** (also gender queer): People who reject the normative societal construct of gender and view their own identity as unrelated to such gender constructs

**Genetic sex:** Defined by the 23rd chromosomal pair, coded XX for female and XY for male, although other chromosomal code sets also exist

**GLBTQ:** standard acronym for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning people; variations exist, such as including an I for *intersex* and a second Q for queer

**Heterophobia:** A fear or distrust of heterosexual people and of anything associated with heterosexuality, often based on negative life experiences

**Heterosexism:** The assumption that everyone is heterosexual (or should be) and that heterosexuality is the only 'normal,' right, and moral way to be and that, therefore, anyone of a different sexual orientation is 'abnormal,' wrong, and immoral

**Heterosexuality:** Feeling romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to the opposite sex; a normal sexual orientation of no known cause; see also *straight*, *bisexuality* and *homosexuality*

**Homophobia:** Fear or intolerance of GLBT people, a feeling that is not limited to particular cultures or to straight people

**Homosexuality:** Feeling romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to members of the same sex; a normal sexual orientation of no known cause; see also *bisexuality* and *heterosexuality* as well as *gay* and *lesbian*

**Identity:** What, how and who one perceives oneself to be; a multi-faceted self-concept that evolves throughout life

**In the closet:** The intentional concealment of an individual's own gender identity or sexual orientation, usually due to fear of discrimination and/or violence; can cause isolation and psychological pain; see also *closeted*

**Intersex:** Having some degree of ambiguity in regard to primary sex characteristics (genitalia) or being born with predominantly male or female genitalia that medical professionals deem to be physiologically 'incorrect,' usually addressed through medically unnecessary surgery during infancy; a condition that may apply to about one in 2,000 infants; sometimes offensively called 'hermaphroditic'

**Intervention:** Action to change a situation for the better; a deliberate, organized effort to improve the circumstances of one or more individuals by altering the environment, policies, and/or circumstances facing or affecting those individuals

**Isolation:** The state of being or feeling alone and apart from, or unable to connect with others; a cause of deep emotional distress for any person

**Justice:** Fair, equal, and reasonable treatment without regard to a person's color, sex, gender, age, health, wealth or poverty, background, race/ethnicity, condition, sexual orientation, or gender identity; fair and equal treatment under the law and in all societal interactions

**Lesbian:** A woman who feels romantically, emotionally, and sexually attracted to other women; a descriptive and socially acceptable label that homosexual women often prefer because it offers an identity separate from that of homosexual men; a term originating from Lesbos, an Aegean island and the home of the Greek poet Sappho, a woman who loved women

**Lifestyle:** The way individuals live their lives, such as an urban or a rural lifestyle, an artistic lifestyle, an entrepreneurial lifestyle, a hedonistic lifestyle; **not** appropriately used to denote sexual orientation (just as there is no heterosexual lifestyle, there is no homosexual or gay lifestyle either); the phrase 'homosexual lifestyle' is often used by anti-gay groups to imply that sexual orientation is a matter of choice rather than of identity

**Male-to-female (MTF):** A person born or assigned at birth as biologically male, who self-identifies as female and who takes the sex, gender, and identity of a female through dress, mannerisms, behaviors, hormone therapy, and/or surgery

**Oppression:** Prolonged cruel or unjust treatment, sometimes unconscious, sometimes covert; constant state of denying to others fair and equal treatment and fair and equal opportunities

**Out:** Openly acknowledging one's sexual orientation or gender identity; may be partial (that is, out to some people and in the closet to others)

**Outed:** When someone else accidentally or deliberately discloses another's sexual orientation or gender identity, usually without permission

**Out of the closet:** The same as being *out*

**Pansexual:** A term of choice for people who do not self-identify as bisexual, finding themselves attracted to people across a spectrum of genders

**Passing:** A term for those who successfully assume a gender role and gender expression different than the one to which they were born or assigned at birth; also may refer to closeted gay, lesbian, or bisexual people passing as straight (please note that in some cultures, passing refers to successfully assuming a different racial/ethnic or cultural identity)

**Power:** Having the ability to do something or to act in a particular way; here, the freedom and ability to acknowledge openly one's sexual orientation or gender identity without fear of oppression, discrimination, injustice, violence, or abuse

**Prejudice:** Bias; an attitude that favors one person or group over another; here, favoring: one sexual orientation and/or gender identity over any other; an attitude that usually leads to discrimination

**Pride:** National, citywide, and neighborhood local events and programs, usually during the month of June (see Stonewall) in celebration of the ongoing fight for equality for GLBTQ people

**Primary sex characteristics:** Physical characteristics present at birth and that are used by those around an infant to determine its biological sex, including penis and scrotum to identify the infant as male or vulva, vagina, clitoris, and labia to identify the infant as female

**Privilege:** Special rights, advantages, or immunity granted to, or assumed by, certain groups and considered by them as their right; for example in the United States, privilege accrues mostly to whites, to heterosexual people, and most of all, to white, heterosexual males.

**Queer:** Formerly an exclusively derogatory term for all GLBT people; now proudly used by some as an umbrella term for the entire GLBTQ community; also used by those who see their own gender identity, sexual identity, and/or sexual orientation as not fitting the widely recognized pattern of straight, gay or lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning

**Questioning:** Being unsure of one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity; feeling uncomfortable with or unwilling or unable to self-categorize within traditional labels such as gay, straight, male, female, etc.

**Respect:** A feeling of regard for the rights, dignity, feelings, wishes, and abilities of others

**Safe space:** A place where anyone can relax and be fully self-expressed, without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, age, or physical or mental ability; a place where the rules

guard each person's self-respect and dignity and strongly encourage everyone to respect others

**Secondary sex characteristics:** Those physical characteristics that are not present at birth and that develop during puberty as a result of hormones released by the gonads and the adrenal gland, including facial and chest hair (males), breasts (females), and pubic hair (everyone)

**Sex** (biological sex): A classification based on reproductive physiology and identified in four main ways, including: 1) primary sex characteristics (vulva, labia, clitoris, and vagina for females; penis and scrotum for males); 2) genetic sex or chromosomes (XX for females; XY for males); 3) gonads (ovaries for females; testes for males); and 4) secondary sex characteristics (see above; a continuum with most individuals concentrated near the ends)

**Sexism:** Discrimination and unfairness based on biological sex or gender and usually perpetrated against females

**Sexual dysphoria:** A medical term for unhappiness or discomfort with the biological sex to which one was born or assigned at birth; describing a disconnect between one's internal sense of gender identity and one's outwardly apparent biologic sex; a term disliked by many transgender people as implying that there is something wrong with them; may or may not coincide with *gender dysphoria*

**Sexual minority:** An umbrella term for people whose sexuality is expressed in less common ways; may include people who self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, Two-Spirit, third gender, and so on

**Sexual orientation:** A *feeling* of attraction to others, based on biological sex and gender expression, over which individuals have no choice and different from sexual *behavior*; romantic, sexual, and emotional attraction to others, categorized by the sex of the person to whom one is attracted—such as: heterosexual (attracted to the opposite sex); homosexual (attracted to the same sex); or bisexual (attracted to individuals irrespective of their sex)



**Sexual prejudice:** Discrimination and unfairness based on biological sex, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity; see also *sexism*

**Sexual reassignment surgery:** Surgical procedures that modify one's primary and/or secondary sex characteristics; formerly called a "sex change operation," a phrase now considered by many to be offensive

**Straight:** Slang term for a person with heterosexual orientation

**Third gender:** A category for those who do not self-identify as either masculine or feminine and who believe that they belong to an alternative gender

**Trannie:** Slang for transgender people; considered offensive by most

**Trans:** Slang for transgender people

**Transgender:** An umbrella term for all who feel that they are outside the boundaries of biological sex and culturally determined gender expression; may include transsexuals, crossdressers, Two-Spirit people, drag performers, etc, and people who do not identify with their biological sex

**Transition:** The period when one is intentionally changing from living as one sex or gender to a different conception of sex or gender; a multi-step, complicated process that may or may not include sexual reassignment surgery and/or hormonal supplements to alter one's body

**Transphobia:** Unreasoning hatred and suspicion or fear of anyone whose gender identity and gender expression does not conform to society's expectations for one of her/his biological sex

**Transsexual:** An individual who does not self-identify with his/her biological sex; one who identifies physically, psychologically, and emotionally as of a different sex from that one was born or assigned at birth; may choose to alter the body to reconcile gender identity and biological sex or physical appearance; may consider one's self as non-operative (meaning does not intend to change the primary sex characteristics); pre-operative (meaning takes hormones to change the body's appearance and may or may not eventually have sexual reassignment surgery); and post-operative (meaning has had sexual reassignment survey)

**Transvestite:** Former term, now considered offensive by many, for people who usually self-identify with their biological sex and gender but who sometimes wear the clothing, jewelry, etc., of the opposite gender to fulfill emotional needs; the preferred term is *crossdresser*

**Two-Spirit:** A term whose definition varies across Native American cultures, but which generally means a person born with one biological sex and fulfilling at least some of the gender roles assigned to both sexes; often considered part male and part female or wholly male and wholly female; often revered as natural peace makers as well as healers and shamans

Advocates for Youth. (2008). *Creating safe space for GLBTQ youth: A toolkit*. Retrieved from <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/publications-a-z/608-creating-safe-space-for-glbq-youth-a-toolkit%23lessonplans>

## INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

**INTRODUCTION:** Supporting SGM students requires school staff to be sensitive to the issues LGBTQ youth face. The literature review provided research outlining the current statistical data from schools in Canada and the United States about daily challenges faced by SGM students. It is evident that students of all sexual orientations and various genders are affected by victimization of LGBTQ peers (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013; Taylor et al., 2011). Creating an inclusive climate that accepts all genders and sexual orientations requires the support of school staff to enforce equality rights for all students. Turning a blind eye to derogatory comments such as, “that’s so gay” perpetuates negative attitudes to SGM.

**ALBERTA TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATION RESOURCES:** The Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) published two teaching resources for use in schools. Each of the resources are geared toward a specific grade level either elementary or secondary education. The PRISM Toolkit for Safe and Caring Discussions About Sexual and Gender Minorities contains information and lesson plans to support diversity education. These resources can be accessed online through the ATA website.

**SGM TOPICS BY GRADE LEVEL:** The *GSA’s and QSA’s in Alberta Schools: A Guide for Teachers* written by the Alberta Teachers’ Association has a recommended list of topics appropriate for discussion at each grade level to support sexual diversity in schools. Please see the following list to guide the integration of sexual diversity topics into teaching practice.

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## Learning About Sexual Diversity at School What Is Age Appropriate?

**IN PRIMARY GRADES, CHILDREN NEED TO LEARN THINGS SUCH AS THESE:**

**P1. There aren't any "girl colours and boy colours" or "girl games and boy games."** Those are stereotypes of what you have to like to be a girl or a boy. It's OK to be different.

**P2. Families come in all different shapes and sizes, including, among many others, two-mommy and two-daddy families,** and families with no kids at all (just grown-ups). Some people are born into their family and some are adopted or fostered or just loved into their family. Sometimes families live together and sometimes they don't. What makes a group of people a family is that they love and take care of one another.

**P3. It is wrong to call people names or put them down ... for any reason, including being gay.** Everybody in our school deserves to be treated with kindness. It's important to stick up for yourself (in ways that don't hurt others). It's important to stick up for your friends. It's also OK to ask adults to help you when people use put-downs. It is not "tattling" when you ask grown-ups to help you be safe. **EDUCATORS: If you hear students use words like *fag* or *dyke*, it's perfectly appropriate to add:** Words like *fag* and *dyke* are mean. The respectful

words are *gay* and *lesbian*. A gay man is someone who loves another man best of all. A lesbian woman is someone who loves another woman best of all. *Heterosexuals* are people whose dearest love is of a different gender—a man who loves a woman or a woman who loves a man. People are *bisexual* or *bi* if they can fall in love with a woman or a man.

**IN INTERMEDIATE GRADES, CHILDREN ALSO NEED TO LEARN THAT:**

**11. A stereotype is a mental picture you have of someone just because they belong to a certain group of people.** For example, you might think that all teenagers like a certain kind of music. That's ridiculous, but it probably isn't hurtful. Still, it's a stereotype. **A prejudice is a negative or hurtful stereotype.** If you believed that all teenagers shoplift, that would be hurtful thinking, so it is a prejudice.

**12. You can't tell if people are gay or lesbian by how they look or talk.** Only some people fit the stereotypes; that's what makes them stereotypes. Some people who *aren't* gay also fit stereotypes about gay people. It's OK to be a gay or lesbian person and fit those stereotypes, but many gay and lesbian people don't.

**13. If you hear somebody put down gay people—or any people—you can tell them you think it's mean** (unfair, unkind) and you can ask them to stop using *gay* as a put-down. If you see somebody getting picked on, you can let them know that you think they deserve to be treated better and, if necessary, you can ask an adult for help. **EDUCATORS: If you hear students use terms like "That's so gay!" it's perfectly appropriate to add:** You don't say things like "That's so gay!" to mean that you don't like something. It's wrong. It shows prejudice and it might hurt people ... maybe somebody whose mom or dad or another family member or friend is gay. We all probably know someone gay, even if we don't realize it.

**14. A lot of people are more masculine or feminine than the media says they're "supposed to" be.** It's perfectly OK—and very common— not to fit those stereotypes. **EDUCATORS: If students ask about transgender people, it's perfectly appropriate to add:** Someone who feels as if their body is the wrong sex might call themselves *transgender*. Or if a boy or man isn't comfortable acting the way people think boys are supposed to act—or a girl or woman isn't comfortable being the way people expect girls to be—they might also call themselves *transgender*. These folks aren't necessarily gay or lesbian. Being gay and lesbian has to do with who you like romantically or sexually, who you get crushes on. Being transgender has to do with how masculine or feminine you feel or act when you're just being yourself.

**15. Most people have 2 sex chromosomes (XX if they're a girl and XY if they're a boy); some don't.** Most girls have certain hormones that come from their ovaries and most boys have other hormones that come from their testicles. Girls also have some male hormones and boys also have some female hormones, just not as much as girls have. But there's a lot of diversity in people's bodies and they aren't all exactly the typical way you see in puberty videos. **EDUCATORS: If students ask about intersex people, it's perfectly appropriate to add:** If a person's body isn't exactly the way doctors expect a boy's body to be or the way they expect a girl's body to be—if their chromosomes or hormones or reproductive system are different—they might be what's called *intersex*.

**IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, YOUNG TEENS ALSO NEED TO LEARN THAT:**

**M1. Gay, lesbian and bi people usually want the same kinds of things in relationships that heterosexual people want.** There's a stereotype that all they want from a partner is sex. Some do, of course, just like some straight people. But some gay, lesbian and bi teens have never had sex (with people of any gender). Your sexual orientation isn't what you do; it's how you feel. And anyone can choose to abstain.

**M2. Gay men and lesbians are usually just as respectful of children and others as heterosexuals are.** There's a stereotype that gay men molest children. That's nonsense. Most child molesters are heterosexual. Another stereotype is that gay people "recruit" or "come on to" heterosexuals. That's ridiculous. A person would just be setting themselves up for rejection if they flirted with someone who clearly wasn't interested.

**M3. We don't know why some people are gay, lesbian or bisexual and others are heterosexual. Or why some of us are transgender and some are cisgender (comfortable within the range of typical gender expression).** It may have something to do with a person's genes or their mom's hormones before they were born and it might be partly developed after birth. But we know it's not whether they got abused or how they feel about their parents that causes a person to be gay or straight. And your parents' sexual orientations and gender identities have nothing to do with yours; if they're gay, that doesn't mean you necessarily will be.

**M4. All people who have sex—no matter what sex or gender or sexual orientation they are—need to know how to make it safer.** Everybody is capable of choosing to abstain and everybody who doesn't abstain can still reduce their risks. Gay and bisexual guys are more likely than average to ever have an HIV-positive partner, and that partner may not know that he's HIV-positive, so they need to be especially careful about prevention. The same is true for people with partners from harder hit parts of the world or who've ever used injection drugs.

**M5. Some lesbian, gay, bi, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) people have made incredible contributions to this world.** They've been scientists, diplomats, athletes, artists, soldiers and human rights activists. Some of the people in your history books were LGBTQ, but you never learned that about them either because of the prejudices of the people who wrote those books or because the person lived at a time when people didn't understand or

talk about sexual diversity. **EDUCATORS: Find out more about LGBTQ role models at** [LGBTHistoryMonth.com](http://LGBTHistoryMonth.com).

**M6. There are LGBTQ people in all walks of life, of every race, rich and poor, old and young, all over the world.** You know some, although you may not realize it if they don't happen to fit stereotypes or act out like the people on daytime talk shows. They're part of our schools, workplaces, families, communities of worship, sports teams, social service clubs etc. They've always been a part of your life.

**IN HIGH SCHOOL, TEENS ALSO NEED TO LEARN THAT:**

**H1. Your *biological sex* is the way your body was made.** Most people's bodies are male or female. Their chromosomes, their brains, their reproductive systems, their skeletons and their hormones are either male or female. But some people's bodies are different from the typical male or female; they're still male or female but they have important differences, too. They might have XXY chromosomes instead of the typical XX of a girl or XY of a boy. Or they might have been born with a reproductive system that looked different from other babies'. They're intersex; a doctor might say they had a "disorder of sexual development" or a DSD. Human sexuality is beautifully complex. Depending upon which sex differences you count, between 1 in 100 and 1 in 2,000 babies is born with a DSD.

**H2. Your *gender identity* is who you feel as if you are on the inside (male, female, both, neither, flexible).** Your *gender expression* has to do with how you act on the outside (how you walk, talk, sit, dress, etc ... whether you're more masculine, feminine, some of both). Some folks call themselves *transgender* or *trans\** because they were born biologically one sex, but emotionally another or because have just never really fit people's stereotypes about how boys or girls are supposed to act. People who identify as the same gender as their biological sex and who live comfortably *within* the range of "typical" for people of their sex



(guys who are reasonably masculine, not necessarily pro athletes, but not especially feminine; girls who are reasonably feminine, not supermodels, but not especially masculine) are *cisgender*.

**H3. Your *sexual orientation* has to do with whom you mostly find sexually and emotionally and romantically attractive (guys, girls or both).**

*Heterosexual* (straight) people like or fall in love mostly with people of a different gender—guys who like girls and vice versa. If a guy likes other guys best, he may call himself *gay*. A girl who gets crushes mostly on other girls may consider herself *lesbian*. Somebody who could fall in love with a girl or a guy is *bisexual* or *bi*. It's not who you have sex with; it's who you think you'll want relationships with.

**H4. Most experts say that you can't change your sexual orientation or gender identity through therapy.** There's no proof that therapy can make a person's sexual feelings or feelings of love disappear or affect whether they feel like a boy or a girl on the inside. And therapy or religious programs that try to change people's gender identity or sexual orientation can be really harmful. Besides, many people wouldn't want to change those things about themselves.

...

**H8. There are laws in the US and in some other countries that discriminate against LGBTQ individuals and families.** According to a June 2009 report by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, homosexuality is a crime in more than 80 countries [though not in the United States]. In some places, that includes consenting sex between adults in the privacy of their own home ... and in some places just attending a same-sex wedding. "In Nigeria, gay men presently face up to 14 years in jail if they live in the Christian areas of the country, and death by stoning in those parts of Nigeria that apply Sharia [Moslem] law. In Uganda in 2002, two lesbian women were arrested after having arranged a private engagement ceremony. They were not engaging in any sexual activity at the time of their arrest" (see [www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/article/pressroom/iglhrscscommentaries/929.html](http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/article/pressroom/iglhrscscommentaries/929.html)).

### **H9. An LGBTQ equality and human rights movement has grown**

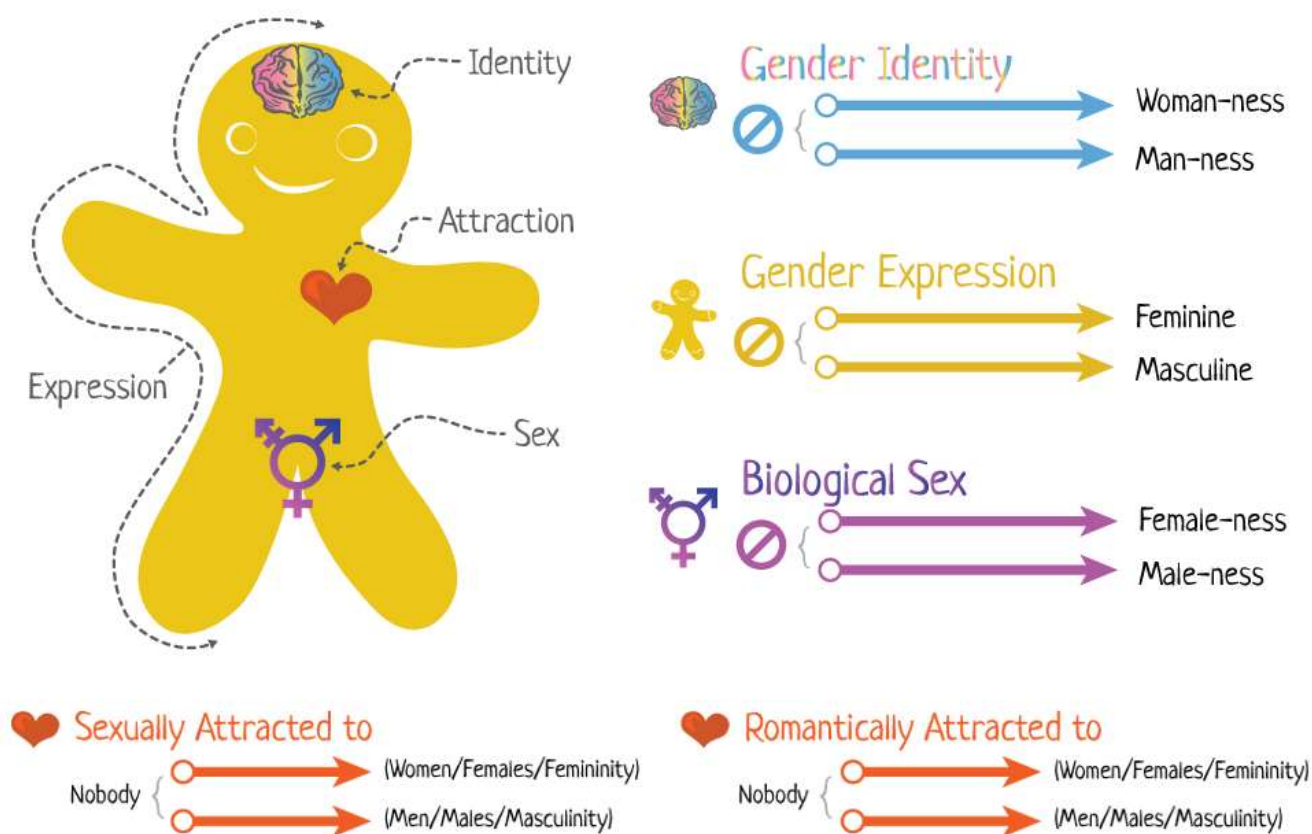
**internationally** since the 1950s. As with most social justice movements, youth have often led the way. See ways youth can work for change:

- American Civil Liberties Union: [www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights](http://www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights)
- Amplify Your Voice: [amplifyyourvoice.org](http://amplifyyourvoice.org)
- Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere: [www.colage.org/programs/youth](http://www.colage.org/programs/youth)
- Gay Straight Alliance Network: [www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)
- International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission: [www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/content/takeaction/index.html](http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/content/takeaction/index.html)
- Lambda Legal: [www.lambdalegal.org/publications/out-safe-respected](http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/out-safe-respected)
- National Gay & Lesbian Taskforce's Creating Change Conference: [www.creatingchange.org](http://www.creatingchange.org)
- Safe Schools Coalition: [www.safeschoolscoalition.org/youth/activists.html](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/youth/activists.html)
- Youth Resource: [www.youthresource.com](http://www.youthresource.com)

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY:** There are many resources available to teachers and school counsellors to utilize in schools to educate students about SGM. Many of these resources contain background information for teachers to gain a better understanding of what is meant by sexual orientation and gender identity. Being able to relate to issues faced by SGM students can allow for a greater connection and support educational advancement (Kosciw et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2011). This awareness can begin with understanding the difference between gender identity and gender expression, as well as biological sex.

Sam Killermann (2016) produced the following genderbread person image to educate people about gender identity and expression, biological sex, and romantic or sexual attraction. Figure 1 is a diagram for educators and students to begin to understand that gender expression (male versus female outward expression), gender identity (self-identification influenced by societal norms), and

biological characteristics (reproductive organs) are not necessarily linked. The following website is a TEDtalk by Killermann (2013) about gender and helps to provide further understanding for educators who may not understand the idea behind gender identity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRcPXtqdKjE>



*Figure 1.* Genderbread person. This figure demonstrates the various ways to understand gender identity and sexual orientation. Copyfree image by Killermann (2016).

**GENDER NEUTRAL LANGUAGE:** Teachers also need to be aware of how to address SGM students. Some students are not cisgender and don't identify with their biological sex. They may be transgender or still questioning their gender identity. In the classroom, inclusivity means ensuring teachers address students utilizing gender neutral pronouns if the individual so desires. The easiest way to do this is to use the term "they" to address both males and females. The use of this word equalizes all individuals and does not separate people into certain

genders when most often it is not relevant. Killermann (2016) created the following website to bring awareness to utilizing the term “they” to change societal norms. <http://iheartsingularthey.com>

Below Table 1 contains a list of gender neutral pronouns that students might identify with. If you are not sure how to address an individual in terms of their gender, it is always best to politely ask. This can save a lot of embarrassment and unintentional hurt toward others.

Table 1.

Gender Neutral Pronouns					
They/Their (Singular)	They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves
Ze/Hir	Ze	Hir	Hir	Hirs	Hirself
Sie/Zir	Sie	Zir	Zir	Zirs	Zirself
Example	They laughed	I called them	Their eyes gleam	That is theirs	Ze likes themselves
Example	Ze laughed	I called hir	Hir eyes gleam	That is hirs	Ze likes hirself

•Ze is pronounced as “zee”  
•Hir is pronounced as “hear”

•Sie is pronounced as “see”  
•Zir rhymes with “hear”

*Note.* Retrieved from Beyond Gender Youth. Copyright 2016 by LGBT Youth Scotland.

**DISCUSSING GENDER BY GRADE LEVEL:** Discussions about gender are important and help students to normalize thoughts about their own gender. Taking a proactive stance when teaching about gender diversity means tailoring the material to the needs of the students. Below is a list of concepts and lessons that can be utilized specific to each grade level. These ideas are taken directly

from *Gender Inclusive Schools Toolkit (2015)* written by Pamela Wool from *Gender Spectrum* whose mission it is to create a gender-inclusive world for all children and youth.

### **Pre-K/Lower Elementary Grades (Pre-K–2)**

#### Overarching concepts:

There are lots of ways to be boys or girls or something else. Isn't it great?!?!?

- Toys are toys, hair is hair, colors are colors, and clothes are clothes
- Sometimes this is confusing. We get messages about some things being for boys and some things being for girls.
- Kids can do or be or like or want anything because they are individuals with hopes and likes and desires. This is not because they are boys or girls.

### **Mid Elementary (2 – 4)**

#### Overarching concepts:

Gender is very complex and not just about bodies. We all have a right to be ourselves.

- Gender includes a relationship between bodies, expression and identity
- Who you are is not about what others tell you, but something you determine for yourself (even when you get messages that say otherwise)
- People deserve to be treated with kindness and respect

### **Upper Elementary (4 – 6)**

#### Overarching Concepts:

Gender Diversity: Binary vs. Multi-dimensional Models of Gender

- Gender in Nature
- Gender in history and across cultures
- Certain types of bodies are thought of as boy and certain types as girl, but that's not true for everyone
- Kids can be boys, girls, both, or neither
- Gender depends on culture and history

## Middle School

### Overarching Concepts:

Social expectations and limitations about gender. What happens to gender non-expansive kids? Roles and responsibilities within a community; being an ally

- Young Adult Literature
- Portrayals of gender in books
- The biology of gender
- What are some of the pressures to conform to gender expectations, at the school and in general? What happens to kids when they don't?
- Have you ever felt like an outsider, either for your own reasons or because you were treated as such?
- What does being an ally look like?

## High School

### Overarching Concepts:

Gender as a social construct

Gender and civil rights issue

- The complexity of gender is seen across virtually every aspect of society
- How have portrayals of gender in the media affected our understandings of gender?
- What are some of the ways gender is understood in different cultures?
- What is the relationship between gender and issues of power in our society?
- Young Adult Literature
- Portrayals of gender in books
- The biology of gender
- Why is it difficult to come up with solid statistics about transgender people?
- How have issues related to gender diversity shown up over the past 5 – 10 years?
- Gender and Sports
- Debates in Psychology: The DSM-5; Raising Gender-expansive Children

**LGBTQ INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM:** Exposing students to gender inclusive curriculum at an early age normalizes the idea that everyone can be accepted regardless of gender. Heterosexual relationships do not need to be the only family system kids are exposed to. Creating a culture of tolerance for SGM means incorporating discussions about gender and sexuality in the classroom. Teachers need to be open to having conversations about LGBTQ issues to bring awareness to heteronormative views within society. The following ideas are taken directly from *Gender Inclusive Schools Toolkit (2015)* written by Pamela Wool from *Gender Spectrum* to begin integrating gender diversity into everyday curriculum.

### **Language Arts/Writing**

**Personal narrative writing prompts:** A time when someone talked about my gender and the things I could or could not do. When someone confused my gender/When I confused someone's gender.

**Persuasive essay writing prompts:** Girls should not be allowed to play on the football team

**Expository writing prompts:** Describe the ways in which portrayals of gender in the media have affected our society's understandings of gender. Describe ways that gender is marketed to kids

**Reading comprehension:** use a short piece like "The Dimensions of Gender\*" and have students answer questions about content

**Responding to literature:** Various young adult reading titles\* raise topics related to gender diversity, roles and stereotypes

**Grammar & Spelling:** Correct any of the mistakes in the following sentence.

Alex and Shannon, were discussing the auditions for the school play when both girls was startled by the loud noise? “The word is ‘Extract.’ Denise was trying to extract the doll from her brother’s firm grip. Extract”

### **Social Studies/History**

Studying Native Americans, include two-spirit individuals.

Historical figures who have challenged traditional notions about gender.

What are some of the ways gender is understood in different cultures?

What is the relationship between gender and issues of power in our society?

### **Science**

**Fact of the day:** did you know there are species of geckos that only have “female” bodies? The Biology of Gender\* Genetics Sexual Health Education

### **Mathematics**

**Sample problems:**

- 12 boys, 10 girls and 2 gender-expansive kids (feel like both or a blend) are in the math club. What is the ratio of boys to girls? Girls to gender-expansive?
- A survey was conducted recently. 373 students identified as male, 396 identified a female, 13 identified as transgender, and 27 identified as other. Graph these results. What percentage of the students identified as male? Female? Transgender? What percentage did not identify as either male or female?

**Data and Statistics:** Why is it difficult to come up with solid statistics about people who don’t identify as male or female?



### **The Arts**

Various projects where students have to portray something using the lens of gender. Allow students to play any part in various theater productions, rather than basing on gender. Discuss how certain dances have “male” and “female” parts. Why might that be challenging for some people? Songs celebrating gender diversity.

### **Foreign language**

If the language is particularly gendered, distinguish between the rules of a language and a non-binary understanding of gender.

### **Advisory, Social-Emotional Curriculum**

My Gender Journey (Materials available from Gender Spectrum)

Guest speakers

School climate surveys about gender inclusiveness

**TOOLS/STRATEGIES:** The following four activities are for teachers to assist in educating students about issues surrounding LGBTQ youth. The activities were created by Natalie Fehres (2015) in partial fulfillment of her Master of Counselling program. Each lesson provides strategies to educate students, staff, and the greater community about creating an inclusive LGBTQ school climate.

**Activity #1:** Sexual and Gender Minorities

**Activity #2:** ThinkB4YouSpeak

**Activity #3:** A Lesson Plan from Creating Safe Space for GLBTQ Youth: A Toolkit

**Activity #4:** Safe and Caring Schools – A Resource for Equity and Inclusion in Manitoba Schools

## TEACHER RESOURCES

### Activity #1

#### **Sexual and Gender Minorities Activity**

<http://teachers.teachingsexualhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/CALM-Sexual-and-Gender-Diversity-Lesson-1-2015.pdf>

Teachers or school counsellors can complete this activity. The total teaching time required is 1 hour 45 min - 2 hours.

**Description:** These outcomes support the multicultural counselling themes of respect for diversity, self-awareness, deconstruction of societal norms, cultural sensitivity, and exploration of negative stereotypes. The activity begins by discussing homophobia and heterosexism along with several terms used to describe various sexual orientations. The next section uses role-play to explore the impact of homophobia and heterosexism in order to develop behaviours that respect sexual diversity. Individuals have the opportunity to explore their personal values surrounding sexual diversity. All parts of the lesson promote discussion of thoughts and behaviours around the various activities and topics.



**Explanation:** This activity states the following learner outcomes:

1. Examine aspects of healthy sexuality and responsible sexual behaviour.
2. Examine a range of behaviours and choices regarding sexual expression.
3. Examine the impact of homophobia and heterosexism.
4. Develop strategies to deconstruct stereotypes.
5. Identify negative behaviours that reinforce homophobia and heterosexism.
6. Develop behaviours that respect sexual diversity.

**Demographics:** This activity is for high school students. School counsellors could use these lessons to promote understanding and empathy of sexual diversity. Adolescents in high schools would benefit from this activity becoming more aware of their own personal views on sexual diversity. By educating youth about homophobia and heterosexism, perhaps bullying of LGBTQ students

would decrease. Promoting a school climate based on respect and acceptance for all individuals will help educators develop a positive classroom atmosphere.

**Activity #2****ThinkB4YouSpeak**

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Guide%20to%20ThinkB4YouSpeak.pdf>

Teachers or school counsellors can conduct this activity. Each lesson takes 40-90 minutes.

**Description:** This educational resource promotes multicultural sensitivity and raises awareness of the negative effects anti-LGBTQ slurs have on individuals. The information provided in this resource supports multicultural counselling highlighting the need for a change in societal views on the use of terms such as "that's so gay." By raising awareness in schools, students will help create positive learning environments. Through these activities, students gain strategies to combat the use of negative LGBTQ slurs understanding the limits to free speech. This resource promotes the development of empathy for all individuals, cultural sensitivity, mindful use of language, respectful attitudes, and awareness of societal acceptance of negative phrases. Educators may pick from the lessons above choosing the ones they feel best meet the goals they wish to achieve.



**Explanation:** The following is an explanation of each lesson:

1. *Where Do I Stand?* - Raise awareness of anti-LGBTQ slurs to encourage youth to reduce the use of hurtful phrases and expressions.
2. *"That's So Gay" on Trial* – Participants examine a fictional court case to debate the issue of a student who was in trouble for using the phrase "that's so gay." This allows youth to reflect on the use of anti-LGBTQ phrases and the legal and ethical limits to free speech.
3. *Impact versus Intention* - This lesson uses a school-based scenario along with reflective writing to emphasize that the typical responses to the use of "that's so gay" do not display empathy and youth may not be aware of the lasting negative impact.

4. *Breaking the Habit* - Participants explore different ways to break bad habits in order to use these strategies to eradicate the use of "that's so gay." A role-play activity allows individuals to share alternative words to use instead of offensive phrases promoting positive language use.

5. *From Bystander to Ally* - By sharing personal experiences of being a bystander, participants will explore ways to become an active ally. Participants will practice various strategies through role-play and examine case studies in order to understand how to be an ally when others experience bullying behaviour.

6. *Planning a School Wide "ThinkB4YouSpeak" Campaign*: After participating in the activities above, a school can launch a campaign to celebrate sexual diversity to promote a safe and caring school environment.

**Demographics:** School counsellors or teachers could use these lessons with students ranging from grades six to twelve. By raising awareness of the negative connotation associated with phrases like "that's so gay," students can begin to use their voice to stand up for each other. These activities can help develop a more positive school climate promoting respect for sexually diverse individuals. This respect can transfer to acceptance and understanding for all individuals encouraging a safer learning environment.

**Activity #3****A Lesson Plan from Creating Safe Space for GLBTQ Youth: A Toolkit**

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/publications-a-z/608-creating-safe-space-for-glbtc-youth-a-toolkit%23lessonplans>

Teachers or school counsellors can conduct this activity. Each lesson takes 40-60 minutes.

**Description:** This resource develops awareness of issues faced by LGBTQ youth, which is a cultural group facing harassment and bullying in schools. The lessons highlight the importance of self-reflection of personal values and potential biases, an understanding of some of the negative issues faced by a non-dominant group, and a demonstration of the hurtful nature of societal slurs. Following the three lessons, students will develop respect and acceptance for LGBTQ youth establishing a safer school environment.



**Explanation:** The following are three lessons from the website above. The webpage lists the titles below. Before beginning the first lesson, it is recommended the facilitator begin with setting some ground rules to ensure a safe learning environment and definitions of key vocabulary related to the content. (Refer to Educator's Guide *ThinkB4YouSpeak*.)

*1. Four Corners: A Values Clarification Exercise*

This interactive exercise allows participants to examine their personal values and beliefs surrounding sexual diversity topics in order to understand other people's views may differ from their own.

*2. Introduction to Sexual Orientation*

Using guided imagery, participants will learn about various issues LGBTQ individuals face and encourage respect and acceptance for sexual diversity.

*3. What Can I Do to Create a Safe Space*

Participants will explore issues surrounding homophobia by participating in role-plays to demonstrate common language used and how to combat the negative behaviour.

**Demographics:** These lessons are for students in grades seven to twelve. School counsellors and educators would be able to utilize these lessons to educate students about sexual diversity in order to foster an inclusive learning environment. Students can become aware of stereotypes surrounding LGBTQ individuals to help overcome negative attitudes and behaviours among peers.

**Activity #4****Safe and Caring Schools – A Resource for Equity and Inclusion in Manitoba Schools**

[http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe\\_schools/mygsa/full\\_doc.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/mygsa/full_doc.pdf)

Teachers, school counsellors, and administrators can use this activity. Each section of the document is informational in nature helping to educate professionals about issues surrounding LGBTQ youth. Professionals may use portions of this document to help foster acceptance and awareness of LGBTQ individuals.

**Description:** This resource is a comprehensive collection of information to educate individuals about LGBTQ youth in schools. The various sections bring to light a variety of informational tools geared toward creating secure, respectful, inclusive, and caring school environments. In addition to this resource kit, the Safe Schools Campaign has also launched a website geared toward safer schools and inclusive education called *MyGSA.ca*. The information provided in the kit is useful for all school personnel to bring about awareness and acceptance for sexual diversity.

**Explanation:** This resource is comprised of the following nine sections:

1. Introduction - What does LGBTQ mean? What is a GSA? What is Intersectionality?
2. GSA Guide
3. Questions & Answers about LGBTQ Human Rights Legislation and Policy in Manitoba
4. Role Models and Symbols
5. Information and Resources for Educators
6. Resources for Guidance Counsellors
7. Information for Administrators & Executive Summary of Eagle's Final Report on the First National School Climate Survey: *Every Class in Every School*
8. Information and Resources for Parents and Guardians
9. Terms and Concepts
10. LGBTQ and LGBTQ-Friendly Organizations, Programs, and Resources: Provincial and National
11. GSA Guide
12. Information and Resources for Educators





**Demographics:** The resource kit provides support to LGBTQ youth, peers, parents, friends, educators, librarians, guidance counsellors, educational support staff, and administrators to create a more inclusive and respectful school community. Schools with students in grade seven to twelve would benefit from having the resource on-hand and administrators can encourage staff members to familiarize themselves with the information contained within. The school counsellor could collaborate with administration to deliver the information to the school community to create a respectful and inclusive learning environment.

### References for Activities

Advocates for Youth. (2008). *Creating safe space for GLBTQ youth: A toolkit*.

Retrieved from

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/publications-a-z/608-creating-safe-space-for-glbtc-youth-a-toolkit%23lessonplans>

Alberta Health Services. (2015). *Sexual and gender minorities*. Retrieved from

<http://teachers.teachingsexualhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/CALM-Sexual-and-Gender-Diversity-Lesson-1-2015.pdf>

Calgary Sexual Health Centre. (2015). *School-based education*. Retrieved from

<http://www.calgarysexualhealth.ca/>

Eagle Canada Human Rights Trust. (2013). *Safe and Caring Schools – A*

*resource for equity and inclusion in Manitoba schools*. Retrieved from

[http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe\\_schools/mygsa/full\\_doc.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/mygsa/full_doc.pdf)

GLSEN, Inc., the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network. (2012).

*ThinkB4YouSpeak guide for educators of grades 6-12*. Retrieved from

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Guide%20to%20ThinkB4YouSpeak.pdf>

**FORMING GAY STRAIGHT ALLIANCES:** GSAs provide a sense of community to students who support SGM. Meeting with peers who share similar values and ideas about establishing an inclusive group can provide camaraderie to LGBTQ youth who may feel misunderstood or alone. This peer group can be an important connection for SGM youth who may feel lost within their school community and would benefit from greater connection with peers and staff. Establishing such a group in a school can lead to greater awareness by the student body about SGM.

Members in alliance groups can act as leaders and change agents advocating for LGBTQ rights in schools. This can be an important social justice piece offering students an avenue to exercise their voices for change. When school staff are approached by a student to establish a GSA the teacher or counsellor may feel ill-equipped to support take on such an endeavor. This resource may provide a starting point with information and resources acting as a first step in professional development to help alleviate feelings of insecurity and ignorance around supporting SGM youth. The following information is provided by Stephanie Martin (2015) who created a portfolio for use in schools to support the development of GSAs. She also created the activities that follow, for use with GSAs.

**Activity #1:** Identity

**Activity #2:** Exploring Language - Alphabet Soup

**Activity #3:** Allies

**Activity #4:** Unpacking Your Privilege

## GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE

### Activity #1: Identity

Sequence: 1 of 4

Time: 2 x 45 mins

#### Objectives:

- Exploration of unique and individual identity.
- Youth will consider how they define their identity and the identity they wish to portray to others.

#### Preparation and Materials:

- Print images of the Genderbread Person (See Appendix) for each youth.
- On day one, pull up the video *The Boy in the Dress* on Youtube ahead of time so it can buffer.
- Bring paper, felt pens, pencil crayons, scrap fabric, glue

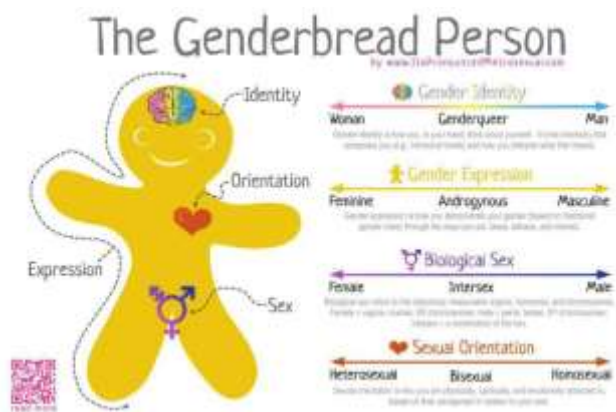
#### Essential Question(s):

*What makes people different from one another? Why is individual identity a good thing?*

#### Procedure:

Day 1 –

- Greet the class and provide a reminder about privacy and informed consent.
- Hand out Genderbread Person graphic sheets to each youth. The Genderbread Person lists four categories that influence identity; gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual identity. These are only four of the many factors.



- As a group, define each of the headings and notice where is heading is connected to on the person. Discuss why each heading is represented by each symbol and place on the body.
- Then point out that each heading falls on a continuum. Why might that be? This conversation will hopefully lead to a discussion of the fluid nature of gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual identity. Greater explanation is provided here:  
<http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2011/11/breaking-through-the-binary-gender-explained-using-continuums/>
- If the group is mature they may also what to view this video, a Ted Talk by the innovator of the Genderbread Person, Sam Killermann.
- Watch the first half of The Boy in the Dress on Youtube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knmljC25K3w>
- At the end of the time allotted take notice of the video time and record it in your notes for the next meeting.

#### Day 2 –

- Greet the class and provide a reminder about privacy and informed consent.
- Watch the second half of the movie.
- When finished the movie encourage a group discussion of the theme, issues, and connections in the film. Consider:
  - What makes people different from one another? Why is it good to be different from one another?
  - How does Dennis feel about crying in the film? Why do you think he feels that way? How do stereotypes shape our perceptions?
  - How do Dennis' feelings change throughout the story?
  - How are individual identities shaped by experiences?
- Dennis loves wearing a dress and Lisa loves sketching dress designs. Throughout the film Dennis develops explores his individuality and identity, which includes how he wants to look on the outside.

- Have the youth design/sketch an outfit that would best represent their unique identity. Using paper, felt pens, pencil crayons, scrap fabric, glue, the youth will create items of clothing that they feel represents their individuality.

### **Wrap Up:**

- The youth can decide whether or not they want to share the clothing they have created with the group and provide an explanation. Sharing should not be mandatory as this activity could be very personal.

### **Additional Support:**

The Boy in a Dress was originally a novel written by David Walliams.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Boy\\_in\\_the\\_Dress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Boy_in_the_Dress)

This activity could also be used in conjunction with the novel.

### **References:**

Breaking through the binary: Gender explained using continuums | It's

Pronounced Metrosexual. (2011). Retrieved from:

<http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2011/11/breaking-through-the-binary-gender-explained-using-continuums/>

PSHE lesson plan: Challenging stereotypes. (2014). Retrieved from:

[http://www.teachprimary.com/learning\\_resources/view/pshe-lesson-plan-challenging-stereotypes](http://www.teachprimary.com/learning_resources/view/pshe-lesson-plan-challenging-stereotypes)

Ted Talks (2013, May 3) Understanding the Complexities of Gender: Sam

Killermann at TEDxUofIChicago (video file). Retrieved from:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRcPXtqdKjE>

The Boy in the Dress. (2015). Retrieved from:

<http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/library/books/theboyinthedress.htm>

The Boy in the Dress Full Movie 2014 latest (2015, January 13). The Boy in the

Dress Full Movie 2014 latest 2015 BBC comedy Drama (video file).

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knmljC25K3w>

## Activity #2: Exploring Language - Alphabet Soup

Sequence: 2 of 4

Time: 45 mins

### Objectives:

- Youth will consider how language influences stereotypes, identity, self-esteem and self-worth.
- Youth will determine words associated with LGBTQ\* culture and categorize them as either positive or negative.



### Preparation:

- Individual letters on coloured construction paper. Three sets. The letters will be used to connect to the beginning words or phrases associated with LGBTQ\* culture. A comprehensive list of words and phrases can be found here: <http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/01/a-comprehensive-list-of-LGBTQ-term-definitions/>
- Poster paper x 3, felt pens

### Essential Questions:

*How do language and labels affect the identity, self-esteem and self-worth of people?*

### Procedure:

- Greet the class and provide a reminder about privacy and informed consent.
- Divide the youth into three groups and provide each group with poster paper, felt pens and a packet of construction paper letters.
- Explain the task: each group has been given a packet of letters. Going through each letter, one by one, they need to brainstorm words and phrases associated with LGBTQ\* culture that begin with the letter.

- Ex. Letter A – what’s an A word? Asexual, Androgynous, Ally. Students should provide both words they feel are helpful and empowering for LGBTQ\* people and words that are harmful.
- They should sort the words and phrases according to whether they feel they are positive words and phrases or negative. On the poster paper they should organize the words accordingly.
- The three groups should come back together and share their posters. Did they all agree on the sorting of the words? Or were there words and phrases that some people felt differently about? Were there words and phrases that could be both positive and negative? Why or how?
- Go over the comprehensive list provided to see if all terms were explored.

### **Wrap Up:**

- Revisit the essential questions.
- Discuss ways to promote the use of positive and inclusive language in communities, schools, with friends, etc. What are the youth’s experiences with non-inclusive language?
- There is the resource NoHomoPhobes - <http://www.nohomophobes.com/#!/today/> I’m unsure about it’s use or effectiveness. It may be triggering to youth. It also projects the negative, rather than the positive, in my opinion. But as a professional, it may be worth checking out.

### **References:**

Comprehensive List of LGBTQ Term Definitions | It's Pronounced Metrosexual. (2013). Retrieved from: <http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/01/a-comprehensive-list-of-LGBTQ-term-definitions/>

Image retrieved from: <http://womenscenter.boisestate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Alphabet-Soup.jpg>

**Activity #3: Allies**

Sequence: 3 of 4

Time: 45 mins

**Objectives:**

- Youth will consider thoughts and actions associated with being an ally.
- Youth gain deeper understanding of situations where it is appropriate and safe to speak out against oppression and when it is best to be a supporter.

**Preparation and Materials:**

- Life size cutout in the shape of a person. Hang it on an easy to access wall.
- Sticky notes.
- Felt pens, crayons, and writing utensils.
- Pull up the video ahead of time.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dg86g-QIM0>
- Print out colour posters for allies. See appendix.

**Essential Questions:***What does it mean to be an ally?***Procedure:**

- Greet the class and provide a reminder about privacy and informed consent.
- Read aloud this quote: “Being an ally requires strategizing, and at times it is more useful to survive events, and help oppressed people get through than to publicly challenge hate” (Reynolds, 2010, p. 15). Discuss with the group the meaning of the quote.
- Watch the following video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dg86g-QIM0>

Activity #1:



- In pairs have the youth brainstorm ways that allies can be allies. They should write their suggestions on individual sticky notes.
- Have the youth separate their suggestions into three categories: Think, Say, and Do. Think, things an ally might think about. Say, things an ally might say to others. Do, actions an ally might take.
- They should then stick the notes to the cut out person. Think notes, on or above the head. Say notes, on the lower head/mouth. Do notes, on the hands, arms, legs or heart.

#### Activity #2

- Have the pairs join up with another pair. The following activity is the creation of Vignettes.
- The youth are provided with a scenario. They should explore different ways an ally might respond. Encourage them to act out positive responses and actions as well as negative.
  - Someone tells an offensive joke. What do you do?
  - A friend uses the term, “that’s so gay” on a regular basis. What do you do?
  - You are unsure what pronoun to use when referring to a friend who identifies as LGBTQ\*. What do you do?
  - Your sister, who is lesbian, is getting married over the weekend. Your teacher asks for your sister’s future husband’s name. What do you do?
  - A friend is hosting a party. He tells you he is not inviting someone because of their sexual orientation or skin colour. What do you do?

#### Wrap Up:

- Finish with the Ellen Page video  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hICEIUATzg>
- Encourage the youth to write a letter to themselves exploring the ways they are allies and what they could do more of.

#### References:

Allyship: First steps. (n.d.). Retrieved from:

<http://transwhat.org/allyship/Chescaleigh>. (2014, November 22).

5 Tips For Being An Ally. Retrieved from:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_dg86g-QIM0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dg86g-QIM0)

Human Rights Campaign (2014, February 14). Ellen Page Joins HRCF's Time to Thrive Conference. Retrieved from:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hICEIUATzg>

PFLAG. (2012). A Guide to Being a Straight Ally. *Straight for Equality*. Retrieved from <http://community.pflag.org/document.doc?id=139>

Reynolds, V. (2010). Fluid and imperfect ally positioning: Some gifts of queer theory. *Context*, 111, 13-17. Retrieved from:

<http://www.vikkireynolds.ca/documents/Reynolds2010FluidandImperfect>

AlliesQueerTheoryContextUK.pdf Image Retrieved from: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/5f/18/70/5f1870a1442528aa385f08543420956a.jpg>

## Activity #4: Unpacking Your Privilege

Sequence: 4 of 4

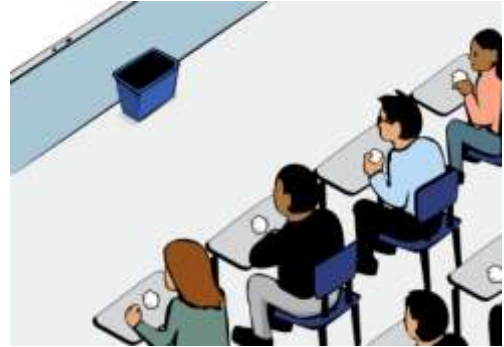
Time: 45 mins

### Objectives:

- Youth will explore what it means to have privilege and

### Preparation and Materials:

- Scrap paper and a recycling bin
- Chairs or desks set in rows
- Pull up video ahead of time, Brown eyes and blue eyes Racism experiment (Children Session) - Jane Elliott, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeK759FF84s>



### Essential Questions:

*What does it mean to be privileged? Is it important to acknowledge one's privilege?*

### Procedure:

- Begin the activity with having the youth sit in rows of chairs all facing the same direction. They each need three sheets of paper, scrap or recycled is ok, on their laps.
- Place a recycling bin at the front of all the rows. Have all youth crumple their sheets of scrap paper into balls. Explain that the goal is to get all three sheets of paper into the recycling bin. They must stay seated.
- Have all youth toss their paper balls into the recycling bin. They will realize that the people sitting in the front row had an advantage. Use this moment as a stepping-stone to talk about privilege.
  - Are there people who are born with greater privilege than others? How and why?
  - Do people with less privilege have to try harder to accomplish goals?
  - Should people with privilege acknowledge their advantages?

- Then have everyone watch Jane Elliot's Blue Eye Experiment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeK759FF84s>
- Jane Elliot's experiment was used to draw attention to racism. Can the youth make connections between the experiment and all discrimination? Discuss.
- Did the youth notice how the language, body position and facial expressions of the children changed throughout the experiment? What did Jane Elliot say about the student's abilities when they were using flash cards? How does oppression and discrimination affect the well being of people?

### **Wrap Up:**

- Hand out the following sheets for personal reflection:

McIntosh's Privileges (Revised by Gallavan)

Part I: Based upon your own personal cultural identity: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Rate each item as: Y for "Yes I can do this (almost) whenever I want and wherever I am, N for "No I cannot (or can rarely) do this whenever I want and wherever I am, or NA if you feel this does not apply to you.
2. Rank each item from 1 (most convenient) to 5 (least convenient). You may use the same ranking for many items. 3. Write any additional comments or thoughts you may have related to this statement.

Cultural Characteristics	Yes/No/NA	Rank 1-5
1. I can live where I want to live. Comments:		
2. I can worship where I want to worship & near where I live. Comments:		
3. I can shop where I will not be followed or harassed & my form of payment is accepted. Comments:		
4. I can find my preferred kinds of food, clothing, hair salons, hair products, music, etc. Comments:		
5. I can find people like me portrayed positively on television, in the movies, in songs, etc. Comments:		
6. I can find posters, toys, dolls, greeting cards, etc., that show people like me. Comments:		
7. I can find people like me portrayed positively in books, etc., about our nation & history. Comments:		
8. I can find people like me in most textbooks & teaching materials. Comments:		
9. I can say what I want about people & be accepted by the people around me. Comments:		
10. I can be with people like me. Comments:		

### McIntosh's Privileges (Revised by Gallavan)

Part II: Based upon a cultural identity other than your own: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Rate each item as: Y for "Yes I can do this (almost) whenever I want and wherever I am, N for "No I cannot (or can rarely) do this whenever I want and wherever I am, or NA if you feel this does not apply to you.

2. Rank each item from 1 (most convenient) to 5 (least convenient). You may use the same ranking for many items. 3. Write any additional comments or thoughts you may have related to this statement.

Cultural Characteristics	Yes/No/NA	Rank 1-5
1. I can live where I want to live. Comments:		
2. I can worship where I want to worship & near where I live. Comments:		
3. I can shop where I will not be followed or harassed & my form of payment is accepted. Comments:		
4. I can find my preferred kinds of food, clothing, hair salons, hair products, music, etc. Comments:		
5. I can find people like me portrayed positively on television, in the movies, in songs, etc. Comments:		
6. I can find posters, toys, dolls, greeting cards, etc., that show people like me. Comments:		
7. I can find people like me portrayed positively in books, etc., about our nation & history. Comments:		
8. I can find people like me in most textbooks & teaching materials. Comments:		
9. I can say what I want about people & be accepted by the people around me. Comments:		
10. I can be with people like me. Comments:		

### References:

Gallavan, N. (2005) Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack Activity. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.rmc.org/allguide/pdfs/mac\\_gallavan\\_act1.pdf](http://www.rmc.org/allguide/pdfs/mac_gallavan_act1.pdf)

- Ludwing Media. (2012, November 19). Brown eyes and blue eyes Racism experiment (Children Session) - Jane Elliott (video file). Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeK759FF84s>
- McIntosh, P. (1989). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. This Teacher Taught His Class A Powerful Lesson About Privilege. (2014). Retrieved from: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/nathanwpyle/this-teacher-taught-his-class-a-powerful-lesson-about-privil#.mkDB1KlnO>

## Information for School Counsellors

**INTRODUCTION:** Supporting SGM students requires school counsellors to have knowledge and understanding of the possible marginalization faced by this vulnerable population. Some of the current issues surrounding counselling of SGM youth are: the need for cultural self-awareness, negative effects of societal discrimination, practicing cultural sensitivity, and advocating for social justice.

**CULTURAL SELF-AWARENESS:** It is essential that counsellors are culturally self-aware of personal biases and assumptions as ethnocentrism can hinder the therapeutic relationship. Arthur and Collins (2010) explained ethnocentrism as the belief that one's culture is superior to that of others and therefore should judge all other cultures. Counselling from this narrow lens is detrimental to the client, as a power-over relationship will hinder counselling outcomes. It is essential that a counsellor remain curious and open to learning about various cultures to avoid oppressive attitudes during therapy. According to Wright (2010), school personnel may hold on to societal stereotypes which is toxic to a school community. Ethnocentrism is a global problem as evidenced by several court cases in Canada, the United States, and Australia, stemming from students in schools who were not accepted by peers or school staff due to their sexual orientation (Meyer & Stader, 2009). Catholic schools in Canada are ethnocentric in their religious views and their hesitation to support GSA groups (Donlevy, Brandon, Gereluk, & Patterson, 2014). Even students and staff may be unintentionally perpetuating society's negative attitudes towards LGBTQ youth using sexual slurs (McCabe, Dragowski, & Rubinson, 2013; Young, 2012). These examples demonstrate how important it is for school counsellors to avoid ethnocentrism embracing the diversity of everyone to remain culturally self-aware.

**DISCRIMINATION:** It is common for non-dominant groups to face prejudice and discrimination within society propelled by the power and privilege of the dominant cultural group (Arthur & Collins, 2010). Discriminative practices negatively affect



students and counsellors may not be aware of the degree of emotional turmoil. Nevertheless, SGM students feel the debilitating emotional and psychological effects caused by the hurt and pain of societal discrimination (Peter et al., 2016). Arthur and Collins (2010) explained how counsellors must help LGBTQ youth learn ways to avoid internalizing negative messages from society and collaborate to create coping mechanisms. Research has shown LGBTQ students have been bullied due to discrimination enduring emotional trauma (McCabe et al., 2013; Mishna, Newman, Solomon, & Daley, 2008; Rayside, 2014; Russell, Ryan, Toomey, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2011; Varjas, Meyers, Kiperman, & Howard, 2013; Watson & Miller, 2012; Young, 2012). Schools have always battled bullying, but more sexually diverse students are standing up for their right to an equal and safe learning environment as evidenced by a rise in court cases against sexual discrimination (Meyer & Stader, 2009). School counsellors have a responsibility to educate the school community around SGM issues to promote awareness and acceptance of all sexually diverse groups.

**CULTURAL SENSITIVITY:** Counsellors can develop cultural sensitivity to understand both their own culture and the culture of students they support. Being aware of the various groups to which an individual belongs can help counsellors gain a deeper understanding of an individual's worldview. This requires counsellors to gain knowledge of various cultures they may encounter to learn about "political, economic, historical, social, and psychological influences on... various groups within society" (Collins & Arthur, 2010, p. 68). It is necessary for counsellors to look past stereotypes or cultural barriers to develop an authentic connection with a student. Schools must work to develop a climate of acceptance and appreciation for various cultural groups. Students in early elementary school learn to accept societal norms such as stereotypical gender roles or heterosexuality (Watson & Miller, 2012). Education about various cultural groups can help school communities develop cultural sensitivity. Not only are LGBTQ youth struggling to be accepted by the school community, but LGBTQ teachers also do not feel supported at work (Wright, 2010). School counsellors must

recognize that various cultural factors can contribute to the emotional distress of youth (Mishna et al., 2008). School administrators are realizing that staff and students need to be educated on cultural sensitivity particularly in light of the issues surrounding acceptance of LGBTQ youth (Meyer, E., & Stader, 2009; McCabe et al., 2013; Young, 2012; Russell et al., 2011; Wright, 2010).

Practicing cultural sensitivity when counselling, will ensure a positive therapeutic relationship allowing the counsellor to gain a deeper understanding of the client.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE:** Finally, counsellors have a professional responsibility to fight for social justice and promote equal treatment of all cultural groups. This requires counsellors to be aware of societal systems or structures that may follow the norm but perhaps need to be challenged or changed. It is our personal view that perpetuates oppression and discrimination and counsellors must be prepared to advocate for marginalized groups so they may reach their full potential.

According to Arthur and Collins (2010), counsellors must "act as change agents and deliberately target areas for improving conditions for their clients" (p. 155). Schools promote social justice encouraging students to create change within their community or the world. School counsellors must also be prepared to challenge societal views surrounding sexual diversity. In Canada, schools are working hard to create policies surrounding LGBTQ youth with minimal support from provincial governments (Rayside, 2014). Youth want educators to stand up for student rights in order to create secure and respectful learning environments (Young, 2012). LGBTQ students are encouraged to speak out against abuse in schools in order to create change (Watson, & Miller, 2012), and several legal cases have been initiated by students who are fighting for justice (Meyer, & Stader, 2009). Even Catholic schools in Canada have suppressed LGBTQ students' fundamental freedoms by not allowing GSA clubs (Donlevy et al., 2014). These examples demonstrate the need for school counsellors to be advocates for change surrounding social justice issues.

**SCHOOL COUNSELLOR RESOURCES:** School counsellors can support SGM students who may be questioning their gender or sexual orientation. Individual counselling is a practical option to provide students support, provided counsellors are aware of the obstacles they may face and the importance of providing a safe space for exploration. It is essential that counsellors bracket their personal views about sexual orientation or gender to ensure youth have the opportunity to discover their own identity feeling accepted and understood along the way.

**RELEVANCE OF LGBTQ IN ELEMENTARY:** Some counsellors may question if SGM issues are relevant in elementary school. However, sexual orientation and gender identity are established in early childhood and young students may require support to navigate identity issues that might arise. These students may feel different and alone due to heteronormative curriculum and feel they are different from their peers. Counsellors need to be prepared to address LGBTQ issues in professional, sensitive, and accurate ways to ensure healthy cognitive and emotional development. According to the *LGBTQ Student: A Guide for School Counsellors* written by The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities elementary school teachers can:

- Use inclusive language and specifically refer to LGBTQ people as a part of their regular classroom or client discussions (Lipkin, 2004),
- Address homophobic language, name calling, and related bullying,
- Hang posters identifying your classroom or school as a safe space for LGBTQ students and families,
- Discuss different aspects of social diversity that may include a respect for difference and nontraditional family structures, and
- Make available age-appropriate resources, such as picture books, to highlight the realities of same-gender parented families in early grades.

**FAITH BASED SCHOOLS:** It is possible for school counsellors to support SGM youth in faith based schools. Sexuality and spirituality can go hand-in-hand with

gender or sexuality issues being addressed in a respectful and inclusive way. Gender identity is not the same as sexuality and counsellors should not assume that students who are exploring these ideas are referring to sexual practice. SGM students who seek support can be communicated to from the perspective of student health, safety, and human rights.

**SCHOOL COUNSELLOR ROLE:** School counsellors can identify themselves as advocates of SGM issues by putting affirming stickers or posters around the school and on their office doors. The following list of recommendation is from *LGBTQ Student: A Guide for School Counsellors* written by The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities.

School counsellors can:

- Become the teacher-advisor for a Gay–Straight Student Alliance (See the ATA guidebook on creating and sustaining GSAs in Alberta schools).
- Recommend purchasing library books with LGBTQ inclusive characters and themes.
- Ensure that your school’s Internet software does not block access to LGBTQ websites and other sources of supportive information. In many cases, especially for rural youth, access to information on the Internet may be an LGBTQ students’ only source of support.
- Develop a listing of LGBTQ youth-supportive community resources that can be displayed in your office or counselling area.
- Encourage the school to book one or more of the ATA’s Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity professional development workshops.
- Make an extra effort to reach out to LGBTQ youth in rural communities who may not have many visible sources of support or signs of acceptance.

Practices that counsellors can avoid, include:

- Attempts to change or “repair” a student’s sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Taking a “love the sinner, hate the sin” approach.
- Unauthorized disclosure of a student’s sexual orientation or gender identity to family, friends and teachers (except in cases of suicide ideation or other harm-inducing behaviours).
- Denial of counselling services or access to community supports.
- Suggesting that sexual orientation or gender identity confusion is simply a phase that a student will grow out of.

Wells, K. & Tsutsumi, M. (2014). *LGBTQ students: A guide for counsellors*. Edmonton, AB: The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities.

**PARENTAL CONSENT:** School counsellors may be concerned about confidentiality and parental consent. It is important to remember parental consent is not required in schools as it is a provision of guidance counselling services. It is always a good idea to keep the parents updated about student issues, but if this means outing the student or placing them at risk then further discussion with the student is required. Disclosure to a parent is a student led process. For more information regarding consent and navigating this delicate area of practice refer to *LGBTQ Student: A Guide for Counsellors* published by Safe and Caring Schools and Communities referenced in the website resource section.

**GROUP COUNSELLING:** Group work may be another method to provide services that encourage belonging and connectedness for youth in schools (Skudrzyk et al., 2009; Steen, Bauman, & Smith, 2007). School counsellors are responsible for many students well-being and some still carry a teaching load. Group counselling allows counsellors to provide support to many students at once. This is a viable option in schools when considering factors such as finances, space, scheduling, and staffing (Rutledge, 2011). It is common for teachers to utilize groupwork in the classroom making this a comfortable arrangement for many students.

**BENEFITS OF GROUP COUNSELLING:** Students with a range of issues facing challenging life situations have found it helpful to be part of group counselling (Steen et al., 2007). Interacting in groups is common in our culture and necessary in daily life (Rutledge, 2011). Groups can even be more beneficial in addressing certain issues as compared to individual counselling (Berg, Landreth, & Fall, 2006; Milsom & Paisley, 2006). The group dynamic allows students to learn from one another, gain immediate feedback, and establish positive relationships, empathy, and empowerment (Berg et al., 2006; Grant Hayes, 2001; Pérusse, Greenough, & Lee, 2009). SGM youth can feel more supported by sharing their stories with like minded peers facing similar issues. This sense of universality can decrease the sense of isolation for group members (Pérusse, et al., 2009). Group counselling for SGM youth supports the development of a positive self-image promoting healthier mental well-being and a sense of connectedness. SGM youth who are supported through group counselling experience lower rates of victimization and experience less suicidality compared to LGBTQ peers who are not offered group support (Goodenow et al., 2006).

**GROUP COUNSELLING RESOURCES:** Offering a group for SGM youth can be intimidating to some counsellors. Some administration may not support a group of this nature for fear of repercussions from the greater community or even teacher backlash. The first step in offering group counselling may require school counsellors to educate their school administration about the need for such a group and ways to educate the greater community about the benefits. This type of group is not to be confused with a GSA. This is a counselling group and thus can only be facilitated by certified counsellors. The Additional Resource section of this manual has websites, videos, and books that could be accessed to support in the development of group activities.

The following charts are provided by Paula Knox and Natalie Fehres (2016) developed as part of a group counselling proposal to fulfill requirements for a

Master of Counselling program. The information provided can be utilized as ideas for how to structure group counselling sessions over an eight week period.

### Group Details

<b>Group Structure:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There will be eight 50 minute sessions.</li> </ul>
<b>Group Format:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Opening:</b> (10 minutes) discussion of prior week and any homework activities.</li> <li>• <b>Introduction of week's topic:</b> (5 minutes)</li> <li>• <b>Member sharing/activity</b> (20 minutes)</li> <li>• <b>Closing:</b> (10 minutes) Summary of group experience and feelings about session.</li> <li>• <b>Group Evaluation</b> (5 minutes)</li> </ul>
<b>Ground Rules</b>	Ground Rules will be created in collaboration with the members and facilitator during the first session. These will include policies on attendance, food and drink, respect for members and confidentiality.
<b>Informed Consent</b>	Informed Consent will be obtained after screening has occurred. The counsellor will meet one on one with the student as well as the parents to discuss purpose and goals of group, member expectations, risks of participation, confidentiality and its limits, commitment to group, and right to withdrawal. Students and parents will sign a copy of the informed consent letter. The counsellor will review informed consent with the group during the first group session.
<b>Evaluation/Feedback</b>	Group evaluations will be completed before the group begins, two weeks after the group has ended, and at the end of the school year. At the end of each session, students will fill out a session rating scale.

## Weekly Topics

<b>Session One: Creating a Safe Space</b>	<p>Discussion of purpose and rationale for group, revisit informed consent, ground rules, introductions, feelings about joining the group and icebreaker activity.</p>
<b>Session Two: Exploring Sexual Identities</b>	<p>Sharing thoughts and motivations about sexual attraction, and meanings and attributions attached to their sexual identity (Yarhouse, &amp; Beckstead, 2011). Bibliotherapy will be utilized to educate members about the different terms used to define various sexual orientations and the stages of coming out.</p>
<b>Session Three: Exploring Stereotypes</b>	<p>Explore family, religious and societal and negative beliefs about sexual identities. Share experiences of marginalization (Yarhouse, &amp; Beckstead, 2011). Explore attitudes in the media by viewing video and magazine advertisements challenging negative societal views. Complete an assessment about negative attitudes in the school.</p>
<b>Session Four: Religion and Sexual Identity</b>	<p>Explore spiritual and religious identity and conflicts related to LGBTQ adolescents (Yarhouse, &amp; Beckstead, 2011). Exploring spiritual connections related to self identity in order to align beliefs with self-acceptance.</p>
<b>Session Five: Coping Strategies</b>	<p>Address internal and external resources to combat losses, fears, interpersonal conflict and discrimination (Yarhouse, &amp; Beckstead, 2011). Visualization of a situation where negative attitudes arise followed by a role play to practice ways to respond with attention to assertive, passive, and aggressive responses. Provide students with a list of outside agencies that offer support.</p>
<b>Session Six: Self Acceptance</b>	<p>Discussions about coming to terms with who they are and stages in coming out process to promote well being (Yarhouse, &amp; Beckstead, 2011). CBT interventions will be used to challenge negative thoughts about themselves and create awareness about how this influences their feelings and behaviours. It will be explained to students that they are not required to come out to the group if they are not ready. The coming out process is a personal journey and is not to be forced upon an individual. The goal of the group is not to tell others how they identify themselves but to feel more comfortable with their own sexuality.</p>



<b>Session Seven: Life Purpose</b>	Define life purpose, uniqueness, values and dreams (Yarhouse, & Beckstead, 2011). Use positive psychology strategy of writing a life story to find meaning and value in the past, present, and future which will contribute to fulfillment.
<b>Session Eight: Closing</b>	Empowerment to move forward through revisiting group topics and discussion of utility. Role play to practice the skills they have learned during group therapy. Evaluation as to the usefulness of the group and ongoing supports that can be supplied from group members and counsellor.

**INTER-AGENCY NETWORKING:** School counsellors can access further support for SGM students by connecting with community resources. There are many agencies who specialize in supporting LGBTQ youth. Counsellors can look online through their local health region, sexual health centre, and community mental health associations to find agencies for student referral. School counsellors can offer an environment respectful to all minorities but may realize the student may require further help outside of their scope of practice. Counsellors have an ethical obligation to ensure the student receives the highest possible standard of care and this may require outside of school support. Each city may have various outside agencies that can help SGM youth. Accessing support through local health agencies, community programs, and sexual health centres may be a few of the service agencies to explore. Below are a few agencies in Calgary that school counsellors can access.

➤ *The Alex Youth Health Centre*

[www.thealex.ca](http://www.thealex.ca)

This youth centre offers counselling and health supports to vulnerable youth.

➤ *Calgary Sexual Health Centre*

<http://www.calgarysexualhealth.ca/programs-workshops/school-based-education/>

The Calgary Sexual Health Centre offers school programs geared toward sexual health education supporting Alberta curriculum outcomes. Discussions revolve around the topics of bullying, homophobia, and sexual diversity in an effort to embrace differences and challenge stereotypes. They help students analyze media messages in advertising, social media, and websites to bring awareness to stereotypical gender roles and diversity. The school programs are inclusive in nature respecting each student for whom they are helping them to recognize how their personal beliefs and values can affect their decision-making. Wiseguyz is another program the centre offers and is geared towards males in grades nine to twelve. This program supports male youth in exploring sexual health issues such as sexually transmitted diseases, homophobia, bullying, negative cultural media messages, and sexual violence. The Calgary Catholic School District does not support the programs offered by the Calgary Sexual Health Centre, but they do have access to resources for school personnel to support healthy sexual health development. The programs are geared towards junior and senior high school students.

## Information for Administrators

**INTRODUCTION:** Creating a school climate that is welcoming and secure for all students is a challenge many administrators face in schools today. Students who feel safe in school often perform better academically and attend classes regularly. SGM students are a vulnerable population experiencing bullying and harassment due to the sexual orientation and gender identity. Policy development can help support LGBTQ youth to ensure they feel valued and recognized putting an end to marginalization within schools.

**IMPLEMENT PROTECTIVE/SUPPORTIVE POLICIES:** Administrators have a difficult job of protecting students in their schools through discipline policies. Bullying is prevalent in all schools and many administration teams develop discipline plans to ensure the safety of the student population. However, it was not until recently that schools became aware of the need to become more inclusive in their policy development to ensure the rights of SGM youth are recognized. Without this recognition, LGBTQ youth may feel unsupported when facing bullying due to their sexuality or gender identity. Many school policies generalize student bullying with no mention of minority rights. It is through education and communication that school policy can be developed to ensure the development of a positive and accepting school climate. This will benefit all students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity because the school will feel safer for all individuals.

**BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES:** The *Guidelines for Best Practices: Creating Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions* written by the Alberta Government identifies the recent legislation surrounding SGM students and policy requirements that administrators must adhere to. The following excerpt is taken directly from the document as a guide for administrators:

In Alberta, provincial legislation, ministerial directives and policies are in place to recognize, support and protect the rights of students, family members and school staff. School authorities are expected to develop policies, regulations and procedures that are consistent with provincial legislation and policies. It is important that these policies, regulations and procedures explicitly address the authority's responsibility as it relates to students and staff who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans<sup>3</sup>, two-spirit, queer, questioning, and/or gender-diverse and reflect the best practices as outlined in these guidelines.

Alberta law protects Albertans from discrimination based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Under the *School Act*, boards have a responsibility to ensure that students and staff are provided with welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that respect diversity and foster a sense of belonging. The act also requires boards to establish, implement and maintain a policy that includes the establishment of a code of conduct for students that addresses bullying behaviour. The code of conduct must be publicly available, reviewed annually, provided to all students and their parents as well as staff, and contain specific elements as outlined in the Act.

The *School Act* requires school authorities to support students to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote positive learning environments. The Act also gives students the right to select a respectful and inclusive name for their organization, including the name Gay-Straight Alliance or Queer-Straight Alliance.

Further, the Act also requires students and their parents to ensure their conduct contributes to learning environments that are welcoming, caring, respectful and safe.

The Inclusive Education Policy, included in the 2015-2016 *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*, also states that school authorities must ensure all children and students have access to meaningful learning experiences that include appropriate instructional supports, regardless of gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation or any other factor.

Alberta Education. (2016). *Guidelines for best practices: Creating learning environments that respect diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions*.

Edmonton, Alberta: The Crown in Right of Alberta.

**FAITH BASED SCHOOL POLICY:** Religious based schools may question how to support SGM students in a way that aligns with faith doctrines. The following is a list of faith-based reasons to support SGM inclusive education from *GSA's and QSA's in Alberta Schools: A Guide for Teachers* written by The Alberta Teachers' Association.

### **10 Faith-Based Reasons to Support LGBTQ Inclusive Education**

- 1) Human dignity is paramount.
- 2) The ideals of compassion, acceptance, peace and love are shared by most religions and peoples throughout the world. Many religions have incredible histories of involvement with social justice and peace movements, activism, and a sense of duty to marginalized peoples.
- 3) Most religions share the belief that one should treat others like one would like others to treat oneself.
- 4) LGBTQ inclusive education does not teach that someone's religious values are wrong.
- 5) LGBTQ inclusive education works toward ensuring that each student has a safe environment in which to learn. Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia foster, condone and willfully ignore violence and hate.
- 6) The impact of disapproval and lack of acceptance opens individuals who identify as LGBTQ to verbal, physical and emotional harassment, which are all forms of violence.

7) Sexual orientation is a prohibited ground of discrimination under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and under provincial and territorial human rights codes. Gender identity is also included as a prohibited ground in some provinces and territories.

8) Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia hurt us all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Often, anyone who is perceived to be LGBTQ is subjected to harassment and victimization. Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia enforce rigid gender roles and norms, deny individual expression, and perpetuate stereotypes, myths and misinformation.

9) LGBTQ inclusive education is not sex education. It is not about discussing or describing explicitly sexual activities. Support groups, such as gay–straight alliances (GSAs) that gather in schools, serve as safe places that allow students to meet and discuss issues relevant to their lives, communities and circumstances.

10) All human beings are valuable members of their communities regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Alberta Teachers' Association. (2010). Sexual orientation and gender identity: Policy brochure [Brochure]. Edmonton, Alberta: Alberta Teacher's Association.

## Additional Resources

Below is a listing of videos, websites, and books that school staff could access to support in the professional development and utilize in schools. The websites are current at time of publication but may have changed so educators are encouraged to use the titles of the document to search for the proper link.

### BOOKS

- *PRISM Toolkit for Safe and Caring Discussion About Sexual and Gender Minorities*

<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/For%20Members/Professional%20Development/Diversity%20and%20Human%20Rights/Resources/Pages/Resources.aspx#prism-secondary-edition-toolkit-for-safe-and-caring-discussions-about-sexual-and-gender-minorities>

The Alberta Teachers' Association created two separate *PRISM Toolkits* for Elementary and one for Secondary educators. The information and lesson plans align with the program of studies for Health and Life Skills and Safe and Caring Schools initiative.

- *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Recommended Fiction and Non-fiction Resources for K-12 Schools.*

<http://www.ismss.ualberta.ca/sites/www.ismss.ualberta.ca/files/SOGIFictionandNonfictionEPSandEPL.pdf>

This document has a listing of books that can be used in the classroom that support gender identity and sexual orientation inclusive school policies.

- *Welcoming Schools*

<http://www.welcomingschools.org/pages/looking-at-gender-identity-with-childrens-books>

This site has a list of picture books for use with students.

- *Flamingo Rampant*

<http://www.flamingorampant.com/>

This website has inclusive books that are racially diverse and contain LGBTQ positive messages to encourage pride in children.

- *Supporting Transgender and Gender Creative Youth: Schools, Families and Communities in Action*

<http://gendercreativekids.ca/resources/supporting-transgender-gender-creative-youth-schools-families-communities-action/>

This book provides research and theory on transgender and gender creative children.

- *American Library Association Rainbow Project*

<http://glbtrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/>

The Rainbow Project is a joint project of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Round Table and the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association. The Rainbow Project presents an annual bibliography of quality books with significant and authentic LGBTQ content, which are recommended for people from birth through eighteen years of age.

- *GSA's and QSA's in Alberta Schools: A Guide for Teachers*

[https://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/PD-80-6\\_GSA-QSAGuide2015\\_Web.pdf](https://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/PD-80-6_GSA-QSAGuide2015_Web.pdf)

This resource provides information for Alberta teachers about how to support LGBTQ youth and draws upon current legislation to help create gay or straight student alliances in schools.

- *Guidelines for Best Practices: Creating Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions*

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/1626737/91383-attachment-1-guidelines-final.pdf>  
<https://education.alberta.ca/media/1626737/91383-attachment-1-guidelines-final.pdf>



This guide can assist schools in supporting students with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.

- Challenging Silence, Challenging Censorship: Inclusive resources, Strategies and Policy Directives for Addressing Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Trans-Identified and Two-Spirited Realities in School and Public Libraries, Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2007.
- Every class in every school: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. Final report. Taylor, C. & Peter, T., with McMinn, T.L., Elliott, T., Beldom, S., Ferry, A., Gross, Z., Paquin, S., & Schachter, K. Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, 2011.
- Gay-Straight Alliances in Alberta Schools: A Guide for Teachers, Kristopher Wells, The Alberta Teacher's Association, 2006.
- Lessons Learned: A Collection of Stories and Articles about Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Issues, Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2005.
- Seeing the Rainbow: Teachers Talk about Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Two-Spirited Realities, Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2002.
- Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools, Asaf Orr, Joel Baum, Gender Spectrum, 2015.
- Supporting Transgender and Transsexual Students in K-12 Schools, Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2012.

## VIDEOS

- *National Film Board of Canada - Sticks and Stones (Celebrating Diversity: Resources for Responding to Homophobia)*

<http://onf-nfb.gc.ca/sg/100090.pdf>

The National Film Board (NFB) of Canada has produced several videos that are suitable for students of various ages ranging from upper elementary to high school. The videos vary in length and content but all support the idea of

exploring diversity in terms of sexuality and relationships. They educate students about homophobia, name calling, families with gay or lesbian parents, gender stereotypes, and inclusive language. Rofes (2005) reviewed the videos writing a detailed evaluation of the NFB resources available that address homophobia, transgender youth, racial and gender identities, and issues faced by rural queer youth. I would recommend educators read the detailed description of each video to help make a selection and personally view the film before presenting it to students to ensure the content is appropriate for the goals of the lesson.

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Films recommended by the *Suicide Prevention Resource Centre*:

- Brandon Teena Story (1998); New Video Group; 88 min.
- Girl Inside (2007); Women Make Movies; 70 min.
- Growing Up Trans; PBS; 84 min.
- Ma Vie en Rose (1997); Columbia TriStar Home Video; 88 min
- No Dumb Questions (2001); Epiphany Productions; 24 min.
- Red Without Blue (2007); Cinema Libre; 77 min.
- She's a Boy I Knew (2007); Media Education Foundation; 70 min.
- Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up (2008); New Day Films; 67 min
- Trans, The Movie (2012); Roseworks and Sex Smart Films; 93 min.
- TransAmerica (2006); Genius Products; 104 min.

## WEBSITES

- *Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism: A K-12 Curriculum Resource Guide*

[https://canadianvalues.ca/ICV/TDSB\\_Equity%20 %20InclusiveCurriculum\\_Seepage%2010%20 .pdf](https://canadianvalues.ca/ICV/TDSB_Equity%20%20InclusiveCurriculum_Seepage%2010%20.pdf)

The Toronto District School Board created a comprehensive document that contains background information, classroom activities from kindergarten to high school level, and a listing of websites, books, and additional resources. \*This resource is highly recommended.\*

- *Camp Fyrefly*

<http://www.fyrefly.ualberta.ca/>

Camp Fyrefly is a Canadian leadership retreat for sexual and gender minority youth.

- *Égale Canada – Equity for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere*

<http://www.egale.ca>

Égale Canada works toward equality, equity, and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, and for their families, across Canada.

- *Gay–Straight Alliance Network*

[www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)

A site that provides resources for student activists to create safer schools.

- *Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)*

<http://www.glsen.org>

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. They have great resources to use in the classroom.

➤ *MyGSA.ca*

<https://egale.ca/portfolio/mygsa/>

MyGSA.ca is Egale Canada's national safer schools and inclusive education Website for LGBTQ youth and educators.

➤ *The Sexualitree*

<http://sexualitree.org/>

This website provides a model to explore how we can understand sexuality in different ways.

➤ *Its Pronounced Metrosexual*

<http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/>

The site advocates for social justice for people to learn more about gender and sexuality. Great Genderbread visual resource for classroom discussion.

➤ *I the Heart Singular They*

<http://iheartsingularthey.com>

This is a quick visual reminder to support the use of the gender neutral term "they" or "them."

➤ *Beyond Gender Youth*

<http://www.beyondgenderyouth.org/faq/gender-neutral-pronouns/>

Beyond Gender provides a chart to show the various gender neutral pronouns.

➤ *Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (ISMSS)*

<http://www.ismss.ualberta.ca/>

The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta focuses on research to help change attitudes toward SGM youth while providing support through camps and other programs.

➤ *The Trevor Project*

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

The Trevor Project is an organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth.

➤ *It Gets Better*

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

It Gets Better is a project created by Dan Savage to inspire hope for young people who are lesbian, gay bisexual or transgender facing harassment.

➤ *The Youth Project*

<http://www.youthproject.ns.ca/>

This is a resource for LGBTQ youth and the public in learning about sexuality and gender issues.

➤ *Alberta Trans*

<http://www.albertatrans.org/index.shtml>

This website offers information and support to transitioning youth.

➤ *Gender Creative Kids*

<http://gendercreativekids.ca/>

Provides resources for supporting and affirming gender creative kids within their families, schools and communities.

➤ *Gender Spectrum*

<https://www.genderspectrum.org/>

This website contains information and resources to support gender diversity in schools.

➤ *Family Acceptance Project*

<http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>

Research and Resources on family acceptance/family rejection and impacts on sexually and gender diverse youth. School counsellors can use this resource to bridge the gap with families.

➤ *I heart my chest: A chest Health Resource for Trans Folks*

[http://qmunity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/I\\_Heart\\_My\\_Chest\\_English\\_version.pdf](http://qmunity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/I_Heart_My_Chest_English_version.pdf)

This resource can provide school counsellors with resources to support trans-students. It contains information about binding, pads and breast forms, hormones, surgery, and nutrition.

➤ *Calgary Trans Resource and Info Guide*

[http://media.wix.com/ugd/bc1b8e\\_e0d73b55e2124ed09967fe0c3797b7d6.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/bc1b8e_e0d73b55e2124ed09967fe0c3797b7d6.pdf)

This guide provides information for trans individuals and accessing support in Calgary and coming out.

➤ *The Gender Book*

<http://www.thegenderbook.com/>

Youth-friendly booklet and online resource on gender identity that can be copied for the classroom.

➤ *Alberta Teachers' Association Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity webpage*

<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/For%20Members/Professional%20Development/Diversity%20and%20Human%20Rights/Sexual%20Orientation/Pages/Index.aspx>

This website provides information about GSAs and counsellor, teacher, and administration information.

➤ *Alterheros (Quebec)*

<http://www.alterheros.com/en>

A bilingual social network site for sexual diversity and great for supporting students.

- *Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)*

<http://www.pflagcanada.ca/en/index.html>

A website for parents and allies of LGBTQ youth to help support families when relationships may experience changes due to “coming out.”

- *The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities*

<http://safeandcaring.ca/>

Safe and Caring Schools and Communities has a vision to support the development of safe, caring inclusive learning environments in all schools across Alberta. There are many useful documents and toolkits that can be used by school counsellors, teachers, and administrators.

- *Calgary Health Region (Alberta Health Services)*

[www.teachingsexualhealth.ca](http://www.teachingsexualhealth.ca)

An innovative website developed by Alberta educators and health professionals to help achieve excellence in teaching sexual health.

- *Sexuality and U*

[www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)

www.sexualityandu.ca is committed to providing credible and up-to-date information and education on sexual health.

- *The Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN)*

<http://sieccan.org/wp/>

This website has resource documents about sexual health education in Canada and sexual orientation in schools.

- *Safe Schools Coalition*

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

An organization based in the United States to provide lesson plans and classroom resources to support the development of an inclusive learning environment.



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