



## Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)

### Myths & Facts

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) is not a separate curriculum. SOGI education encompasses a broad range of topics including identity, and establishing informed, respectful and safe learning environments. Its purpose is to reduce bullying and discrimination. SOGI education is not centred on sexuality.

SOGI resources are one of many tools used by teachers in the school district to promote understanding and acceptance of every member of our community, regardless of race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are protected under the BC Human Rights Code, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and provincial legislation. The Kamloops Thompson School District is committed to ensuring that every classroom in our district is welcoming, and all students feel safe and supported. Our commitment extends to supporting teachers and schools as they integrate age-appropriate references to diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity. This approach is aimed at fostering tolerance, dignity, and respect while working towards a reduction in incidents of violence and discrimination against students and community members who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+.

**There are often misconceptions about what SOGI education is and what it looks like in our schools. Here are some common myths and the corresponding facts about SOGI education:**

**MYTH:** SOGI education promotes a specific sexual orientation or gender identity.

**FACT:** SOGI education does not promote any specific identity or orientation and is designed to create a safe and respectful environment for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It aims to combat discrimination by fostering representation of all types of people within the classroom while utilizing approved resources to enhance awareness of the lived experiences, challenges, discrimination and exclusion faced by 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.

**MYTH:** SOGI resources are inappropriate and contain explicit content.

**FACT:** There is no pornographic or explicit content in any curriculum taught in our schools. SOGI education and resources address topics like diverse identities, family diversity, stereotypes, bullying and name-calling. These resources help teachers ensure everyone feels included when teaching any subject area, including social studies, English and arts education.

**MYTH:** SOGI education violates parents' rights.

**FACT:** SOGI education is meant to complement parents' efforts in teaching essential values of tolerance, respect, and acceptance of all people. It does not undermine parental rights but rather contributes to a greater understanding of diversity for all students and families.



**MYTH:** SOGI education is the same thing as sexual health education.

**FACT:** SOGI is a distinct and separate topic from sexual health education. SOGI education is designed to promote understanding, tolerance, and support for all students, and encompasses a broader range of topics, including identity, respect, and belonging. Sexual health education, on the other hand, is part of BC's Physical and Health Education curriculum and focuses on the biological, physiological, and reproductive aspects of human sexuality. Sexual health education is taught separately and follows specific guidelines. Parents or guardians, in consultation with their school, may arrange for alternative delivery for certain topics contained in the Physical and Health Education curriculum for K-10 students.

**MYTH:** SOGI education is about "recruiting" students to be 2SLGBTQIA+.

**FACT:** This is a baseless myth. SOGI education aims to create understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. It does not seek to recruit or influence students' sexual orientation or gender identity. Teachers deeply respect and value the unique individual identities of students, and work hard to create classroom environments that are safe, respectful and informed.

**MYTH:** SOGI education is inappropriate for students.

**FACT:** All students learn about topics such as respect, compassion, and diversity, while more complex topics such as discrimination and injustice may be explored in a developmentally and age-appropriate manner. SOG resources play a pivotal role in addressing fundamental human ideals such as diversity, acceptance, a sense of belonging and can be essential in creating learning environments where all students feel safe.

**MYTH:** SOGI education is a recent and controversial addition to education.

**FACT:** SOGI education, like the inclusion of diverse cultures and races, has been part of the broader goal for diversity and inclusion in our schools for decades. Although SOGI has gained increased attention recently, it is not a new concept and is supported by many educational organizations, school districts, and child development and health experts. Sexual orientation and gender identity are also protected under the BC Human Rights Code, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and provincial legislation.

**MYTH:** SOGI education is not needed because these issues are not relevant to all students.

**Fact:** These issues are relevant to every student. SOGI education is intended to foster inclusivity and respect, address issues of discrimination and bullying, and build understanding and empathy among all students. Furthermore 2SLGBTQIA+ students are members of our school communities and often face unique challenges related to their identity. Studies show that having inclusive classrooms and SOGI-specific anti-bullying policies improve the school climate, reducing discrimination, depression, anxiety, substance use, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts for ALL students. SOGI resources help ensure schools are welcoming for every person and allow teachers to address important topics in a safe and age-appropriate manner.



## **SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 73** (Kamloops-Thompson)

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**MYTH:** School libraries have books that are not safe for children.

**FACT:** School libraries and learning commons are safe spaces for children and youth. Our school district has a comprehensive policy that guides teacher librarians when selecting books for school libraries. This policy includes specific criteria that both elementary and secondary librarians must consider. This ensures that the books selected are age-appropriate and reflect our diverse community, including 2SLGBTQIA+ students and families.

Within our secondary schools, a wide range of books are available that address diverse and, at times, mature subject matter. School libraries offer a controlled environment where students can explore these topics safely and in a structured manner. Having access to resources that delve into diverse and mature subjects is vital for older students, eliminating reliance on potentially unreliable or harmful internet sources. Moreover, it guarantees that a trusted adult is on hand to provide support if required.

**If you have any questions about your child's education, please talk to your school. We value and encourage open communication with parents and caregivers, and work hard to ensure parents and caregivers are well-informed and actively engaged in their child's educational journey.**