

# How can schools support LGBTQ2+ teachers and students?

Despite recent progress towards supporting LGBTQ2+-inclusive education, ensuring that both teachers and students who identify as sexual and gender minorities (SGMs) experience belonging, safety, and security in their schools and communities remains an ongoing challenge. A national survey of Canadian high school students found that 64% of LGBTQ2+ students reported feeling unsafe at school. Similarly, research has shown that LGBTQ2+ teachers are less likely to come out to their administration and 33% had been warned to not come out at school by family, friends, and other educators.

## HERE'S HOW SCHOOLS CAN TAKE A MORE INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO SUPPORT LGBTQ2+ TEACHERS AND STUDENTS:

<p><b>LGBTQ2+ teachers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Show support:</b> strong support from school leaders can create a more open dialogue and space whereby LGBTQ2+ teachers feel safe to deliver and engage in SGM-inclusive education.</li> <li>• <b>Develop inclusive workplace policies:</b> at the school district level, standalone anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia policies covering SGM staff and students – rather than generic equity policy – should be alongside workplace harassment policies and implemented to protect and support LGBTQ2+ staff.</li> <li>• <b>Create a professional and/or informal network:</b> LGBTQ2+ teachers within the district can form Gender-Sexuality (or Gay-Straight) Alliance (GSA) groups that meet to share their experiences, learn from one another, and develop trusting and supportive professional relationships.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LGBTQ2+ students</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Provide staff professional development:</b> ensure introductory and ongoing training for teachers, principals, and school staff members regarding SGM policies, implementation practices, and any changes to them.</li> <li>• <b>Have designated safe contact teachers:</b> have trained teachers volunteer to be go-to adults for LGBTQ2+ students and those who may be questioning their sexual or gender identities.</li> <li>• <b>Ensure LGBTQ2+ students are treated respectfully and consistently:</b> provide supply/substitute teachers with guidelines and information packages for accommodating these students.</li> <li>• <b>Explore various school district and teacher association websites:</b> find information and learn more about important issues including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ students wanting to come out to their parents and peers;</li> <li>○ mental health concerns;</li> <li>○ washroom accessibility for transgender and other gender minorities;</li> <li>○ accommodating participation in physical education, athletics, field trips, etc.;</li> <li>○ accessing community supports for LGBTQ2+ students (e.g. counselling, connecting to community organizations, events, etc.); and</li> <li>○ accessing crosscultural and Two-Spirit information for LGBTQ2+ and questioning Indigenous students.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Develop/offer resources:</b> help students, staff, and parents better understand when a student is expressing their gender in unique or creative ways, or when students want to form a GSA Alliance (i.e. a student-led organization that provides a safe, inclusive space for students).</li> </ul>

Although many school districts have SGM-specific policies in place, research points to the ongoing need for school districts to invest the time into building a genuinely accepting and accommodating LGBTQ2+-inclusive school culture that supports and promotes the well-being of LGBTQ2+ teachers and students. Taking a LGBTQ2+-inclusive approach to education is a shared responsibility and school leaders, colleagues, and parents all play an important role in understanding how to best support and learn from the experiences and perspectives of LGBTQ2+ teachers and students.

For online resources and references please visit:  
[www.edcan.ca/facts-on-education](http://www.edcan.ca/facts-on-education)

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