



Langley Celebrates Diversity

March 2, 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians,

During the past year, the Province of British Columbia and the Ministry of Education have taken major steps to recognize and protect the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, including children and youth. In July 2016, the Provincial Government amended the BC Human Right's Code to now include sexual orientation and gender expression as prohibited grounds of discrimination. Furthermore, Education Minister Mike Bernier announced in September 2016, that explicit references to sexual orientations and gender identities must be included in all public and independent school districts Codes of Conduct throughout the province.

Over the last few years, School District staff have been working with all members of the school community to specifically learn how best to support individuals who identify as LGBTQ+. This acronym represents people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, two-spirit, intersex as well as other sexual orientations and gender expressions. Using data from several provincial sources, it is estimated that between 10-20% of the population identify as not strictly heterosexual or not exclusively male or female in identity or expression.

The Langley School District not only recognizes the importance of every person's right to be included and welcomed, but also recognizes that students and staff who do identify as LGBTQ+, are often the targets of bullying, discrimination and harassment, and this is not acceptable.

As a District, Langley has been actively involved with other partner school districts, the Ministry of Education, the University of British Columbia, and other community-based organizations, to provide education, awareness and support to change practices so that all members of the community feel that they are visible, protected and included.

The following are examples of the work being done in the Langley School District:

- Establishment of the LGBTQ+ Board Committee (Formed 2014)
- Revision of Policy 7200 – Anti-Harassment/Anti-Discrimination (October 2014) that provides explicit LGBTQ+ language and support
- Revision of the School District Code of Conduct (September 2016) that specifically indicates the protection of all individuals
- The Board of Education motion to support and celebrate the diversity of the school community (January 2017)
- Ensuring gender neutral washroom facilities exist in all middle and secondary schools, with elementary schools being completed by the end of 2016-2017
- Providing education and awareness to all staff, administrators, students and parents
- Supporting Gay-Straight Alliance clubs at the school and district level
- Purchasing books and resources for teachers to use that more accurately reflect the diversity within schools and families
- School and district celebrations to support diversity

As you may be aware, the British Columbia Ministry of Education has recently implemented a re-designed curriculum that provides educators the opportunity to teach in a more holistic, inclusive and personalized way. Many areas of the curriculum focus on valuing diversity and respecting differences (most notably, English Language Arts and Social Studies). Using the prescribed provincial curriculum, teachers can more actively discuss topics such as bullying and respecting differences (including cultural as well as sexual and gender minorities). Lessons on family diversity may include same sex families and LGBTQ+ rights. The expectation of this mandated curriculum is that all students in all schools will experience the integration of inclusive education, including gender orientation and expression beginning in Kindergarten.

A further change to the new curriculum includes the reintegration of health into the Physical and Health Education curriculum (P & H E). This change allows teachers to focus on the health of students from a holistic perspective which includes the physical, social and emotional determinants of personal well-being. In previous years, topics such as sexual education, emotional/mental health and personal safety were found in the Health and Career Education Curriculum (HACE). Further information on the P & H E curriculum can be found at: <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum>

In our changing world, it is important that schools and communities reflect and celebrate the diversity found within them. All students and staff have the right to safe and welcoming environments where they can grow, develop and thrive as unique individuals. The Langley School District is proud to be leading such positive and inclusive learning communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gord Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gord" and last name "Stewart" clearly distinguishable.

Gord Stewart
A/Superintendent of Schools