

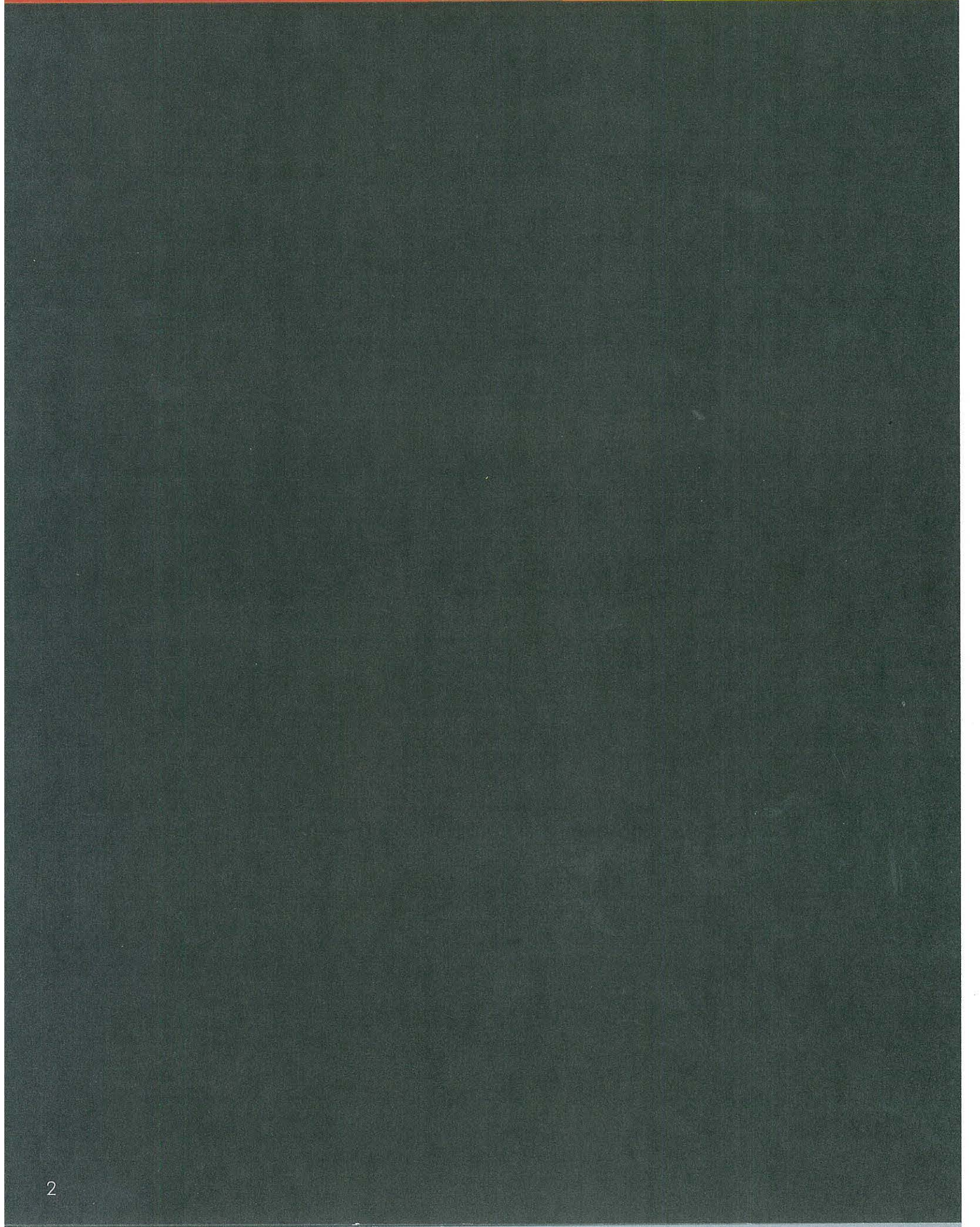
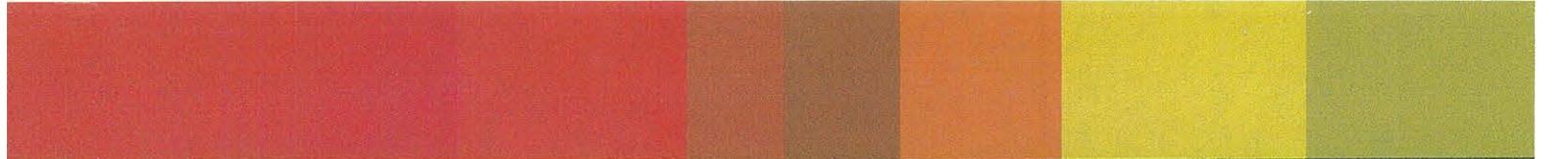
# LEBTQ

Supporting Sexual and Gender Diverse  
Students in the Learning Environment


2012











**The DSBN is committed to student success by working together to inspire, empower, and support all learners to achieve their full potential.**

"In many of our cultures before the arrival of Europeans to North America, "Two-Spirited" referred to an ancient teaching. Our Elders tell us of people who were gifted among all beings because they carried two spirits: that of male and female. It is told that women engaged in tribal warfare and married other women as there were men who married other men. These individuals were looked upon as a third gender in many cases and in almost all cultures they were honoured and revered. Two-Spirited people were often the visionaries, the healers and the medicine people. They were respected as fundamental components of our ancient culture and societies. This is our guiding force as well as our source of strength. This is the ancient heart of Two-Spirited People."

[www.2spirits.com](http://www.2spirits.com)

**We invite you to use this philosophy as a foundation for implementing this resource.**



# Table of Contents

5	Director's Message
6	Diversity
7	The Journey
8	Inclusive Education
9	Myths and Prejudices
10	Gay-Straight Alliances
11	Facts and Statistics
12	Classroom Practice
14	Frequently Asked Questions
15	Days of Significance
16	Glossary and Resources

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*"Every person deserves support, by the people they know or the kindness of strangers."*

- **GSA MEMBER**, DSBN Student



# Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual Transgender Two-spirit Queer Questioning LGBTQ

## Director's Message

As educators, we are lifelong learners who are committed to knowing as much as we can about our craft.

By continually learning about how to educate our students, we understand how pivotal a role we play in the lives of the students we teach, and in turn, discover what students need from us to lead successful and fulfilled lives.

For instance, creating a positive, safe and respectful school and classroom environment can counteract the discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning students who live in a society that often stigmatizes them or fails to validate them.

Whether it is choosing inclusive language when describing relationships, or prominently portraying successful LGBTQ community members as role models, our choices when teaching and interacting with students can show them that they are recognized, respected and valued.

One of the missions of the District School Board of Niagara is to provide a place of learning that respects all students and staff and enables them to learn in a safe, positive and supportive environment. Documents such as "Supporting LGBTQ Students in the Learning Environment" help us to achieve that mission by increasing our awareness and understanding of the issues that LGBTQ students face, and subsequently empower us to break down the barriers that prevent students from the boundless opportunities and respectful treatment they deserve.

We thank you for your ongoing support to ensure all DSBN students learn, grow and achieve success.

Yours sincerely,



Warren Hoshizaki, Director of Education

"GSA helps me feel safe, respected and comfortable with myself and makes me less worried about my problems."

— MCKENZIE, DSBN Student





# Diversity:

The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*

**CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR ALL STUDENTS IS NOT OPTIONAL; IT'S A REQUIREMENT UNDER PPM 119, BILL 157 AND THE ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS CODE.**

Many of the characteristics, attributes and identities that contribute to one's diversity are also protected grounds under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

## Protected Grounds

"Every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities without discrimination because of:

"RACE, ANCESTRY, PLACE OF ORIGIN, COLOUR, ETHNIC ORIGIN, CITIZENSHIP, CREED, SEX, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AGE, MARITAL STATUS, FAMILY STATUS, DISABILITY."

"Sexual orientation" is a personal characteristic that forms part of who you are. It covers the range of human sexuality from gay and lesbian, to bisexual and heterosexual orientations. Sexual orientation is different from gender identity, which is protected under the ground of "sex."

People who are discriminated against or harassed because of gender identity are legally protected under the ground of sex. This includes transsexual, transgender and intersex persons, cross-dressers, and other people whose gender identity or expression is, or is seen to be, different from their birth-identified sex.

Ontario Human Rights Code

"The increased vulnerability associated with LGBTQ youth demands more sensitivity on the part of all educators to provide learning environments where every student feels safe, supported, and can openly express them self."

– **Michael Clark**, DSBN Teacher





# *The Journey...*

- 1969, Canada • Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau amends the Criminal Code to decriminalize homosexuality in Canada.
- 1978, Canada • Canada gets a new Immigration Act. In the Act homosexuals are removed from the list of inadmissible classes.
- 1981, Canada • "Canada's Stonewall" - About 3,000 people marched in Toronto to protest police raids on gay bathhouses, resulting in the arrest of more than 300 men.
- 1988, Canada • Svend Robinson of the NDP is the first Member of Parliament to go public about being gay.
- 1989, Denmark • Denmark is the first country to legally recognize same-sex partnerships.
- 1992, Canada • Gays and lesbians are now allowed to serve in Canada's military.
- 1995, Canada • Ontario becomes the first province to allow same-sex couples to become adoptive parents.
- 1996, Canada • The federal government passes Bill C-33, which adds "sexual orientation" to the Canadian Human Rights Act.
- 2000, Canada • Bill C-23 passed, extending full benefits and obligations to persons in same-sex relationships. One significant exclusion was their right to marry.
- 2002, Canada • Ontario Superior Court Justice Robert McKinnon rules that student Marc Hall has the right to take his boyfriend to his high school prom.
- 2005, Canada • Bill C-38 officially legalizes same-sex marriage in all of Canada. Canada becomes the fourth country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage, after the Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain.
- 2009, Ontario • Ministry of Education releases Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy which includes "gender identity and sexual orientation" as part of the province's official definition of diversity.

Ontario Human Rights Code, [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca)

*"Ontario schools are respected around the world. We are on a positive path to inclusive, caring learning environments where the rich diversity of our students can thrive. We must maintain our focus on keeping our school safe and free from bullying."*

**- Catherine Fife**, President of the  
Ontario Public School Boards' Association





# Inclusive Education:

Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected. *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*

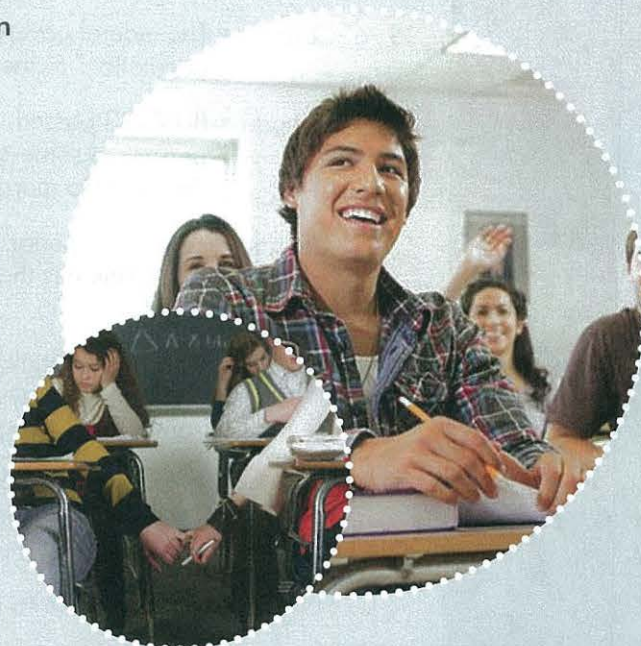
Schools have a responsibility to follow Bill-157: Keeping Our Kids Safe at School policy, as well as the Ontario Human Rights Code, in order to ensure a safe and secure learning environment for all students. At DSBN, our core values of Respect, Relationships, and Responsibility are reflected in our commitment "to inspire, empower, and support all learners to achieve their full potential." Our Human Rights Policy states that "every student and employee has the right to be part of a learning and working environment that is free of discrimination and harassment."

## LEGAL REQUIREMENTS: WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

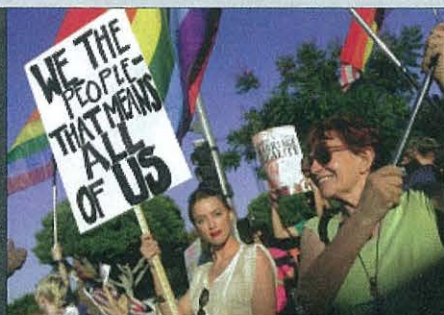
Employees who work directly with students have a responsibility to report allegations of gender-based violence, sexual harassment, inappropriate sexual behaviour, and bullying in a timely, sensitive and supportive manner. According to Bill-157, employees must provide contact information about professional supports, and make this information readily available to students who wish to discuss issues of healthy relationships, gender identity, and sexuality.

**In the classroom, teachers can support inclusive education first by:**

- Respecting diverse perspectives
- Making an effort to identify and remove discriminatory biases
- Removing systemic barriers
- Ensuring schools are inclusive
- Reflecting on the makeup of diverse communities in the school



<[http://bill157.apandrose.com/script/en\\_CA/supportingstudents](http://bill157.apandrose.com/script/en_CA/supportingstudents)>



"I loved being a source of trust for all my friends, and I wished that there were others to help those who didn't get as much support."

– A.C., DSBN Student



# Myths and Prejudices

In order to implement inclusive education, one must dispel myths surrounding it. It is okay to admit you do not know something, as long as you make the effort to learn.

- LGBTQ is **not** something you can catch.
- Students may **not** be LGBTQ themselves, but have family and friends who are.
- Being LGBTQ is **not** a mental health problem.
- “Coming out” is **not** done for attention.
- You do **not** have to be LGBTQ to speak out and advocate for inclusive schools.
- Outward expression is **not** an indication of a LGBTQ youth (e.g. clothing, makeup tone and pitch of voice).
- Educating students about accepting LGBTQ people does **not** lead to the recruitment of students to “become gay” or “make them gay”.
- **All students** can be victims of homophobic/transphobic bullying.

Teachers in the DSBN are “responsible for providing safe and respectful learning environments for all students.” So, what does an inclusive school look like?

## ACTIONS TO TAKE:

1. Post symbols and images of LGBTQ pride
2. Ensure classroom resources reflect the range of LGBTQ communities
3. Eliminate bias and stereotypes related to sexual orientation and gender identity in existing learning materials, programs and practices
4. Include opportunities and be open to the “teachable moment” for discussion of LGBTQ issues
5. Participate in opportunities for staff training in equity issues
6. Address and prohibit homophobic/transphobic comments and language by students in a consistent and assertive manner
7. Be aware of and acknowledge the days of significance to the LGBTQ community

## WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

Posters, flags, stickers, images such as rainbow flag or pink triangle displayed in the room

Books, audio visual, computer, software, etc.

Language in your classroom is inclusive and positive

Include LGBTQ authors in novel studies. Refer to LGBTQ athletes and use “out” celebrities as examples of successful persons

Conferences, seminars and workshops are available in PD place

Ask students “Do you mean gay or do you mean something else?”

Assemblies, announcements, lessons and GSA parties are happening in your schools

*“It also encourages other students to support their LGBTQ peers, and promotes equality for all students.”*

*– C.M.P., DSBN Student*





# Gay-Straight Alliances

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) are created to provide a safe place for students to meet, make friends, and talk about issues and feelings affecting the individual(s).

Such a group can help establish positive student relationships, assist with conflict resolution, and the acceptance of various identities. New legislation supports the formation of GSAs within the school. Most groups try to strike a balance among offering personal support, building awareness, and targeting homophobia and bullying at school. Students identifying as LGBTQ and Allies may join the group.

Here's what students from the District School Board of Niagara have said about the benefits of participating in a school-based GSA:

*"I find the GSA important to me because I personally have issues with my family and coming out, and I thought that maybe meeting up with other LGBTQ teens might help me figure out how to go about telling my dad. It's really helpful to know who I can go to, to get help or support if it's ever needed. Just knowing that you have a group of people to back you up or comfort you is fantastic."*

– M.S

*"If I didn't go to the GSA meetings, I would be a totally different person. I would not talk about my sexual preference and would still be very shy. I have met a lot of amazing people and they got me out of my little shell. This group makes such an impact on your life and it helps you discuss things you wouldn't or can't with other people."*

– MARIAH

*"GSA is important to me and youth in schools because it shows us that we're not alone. GSA gives us support when our family or friends will not. You can talk about your feelings with others that can understand. Especially when you're confused."*

– ALEXIS



*"GSA is important to me because I like being able to support people who don't have support at home or from others."*

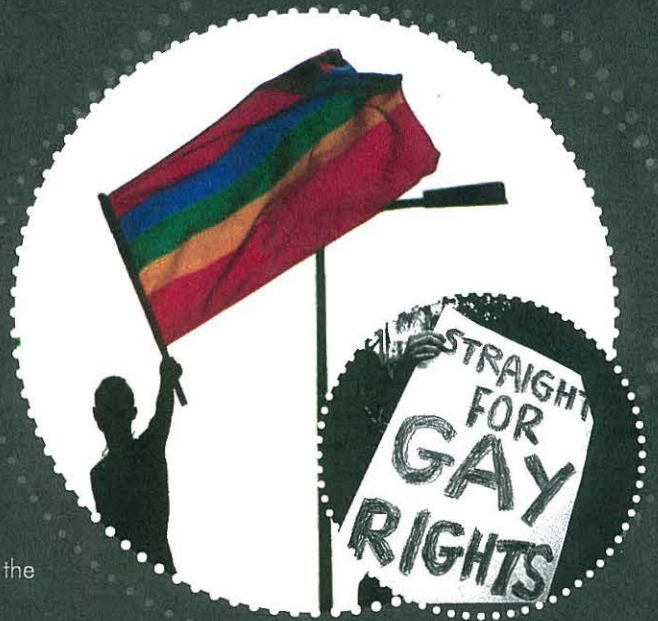
– M.P., DSBN Student



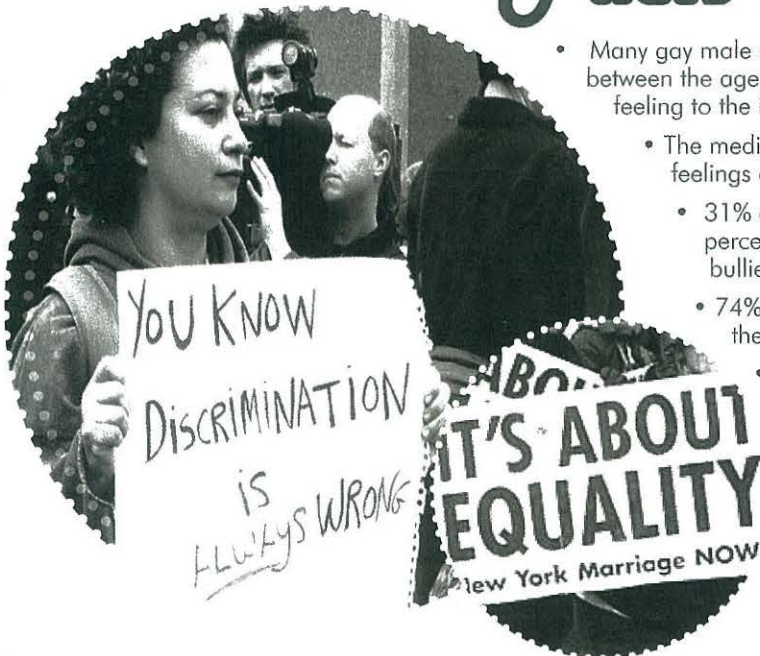
## STARTING A GSA:

1. Discuss starting a GSA with your administrator and collaborate on its purpose and function.
2. Inform staff and counsellors about the group and find supportive co-advisors to work with you.
3. Pick a safe and comfortable location to hold meetings, with privacy and security as priority. Such a setting allows members to establish a strong sense of community and freedom to openly address issues affecting all members.
4. Provide snacks. Everyone loves to gather together with food and beverages as it helps establish a casual, friendly environment.
5. Establish GSA etiquette during the first meeting. Provide tentative schedules and outline objectives for the group. It is important to set guidelines to help clarify the group's purpose, initiatives, and role within the community.

Resources for activities and support materials, visit [Egale.ca](http://Egale.ca) and the [MyGSA](http://MyGSA) website.



## Facts and Statistics



- Many gay male adolescents report being aware of a feeling of "being different" between the ages of 5 and 7. They also report that they did not yet connect this feeling to the issue of sexuality. \*
- The median age at which LGBTQ youth become aware that their feelings of difference are linked to a same sex orientation is 13. \*
- 31% of LGBTQ students are harassed every day. This is twice the percentage of any other marginalized group that is teased and bullied daily. \*\*
- 74% of transgender students reported being verbally harassed about their expression of gender. \*\*\*\*
- 28% of LGBTQ youth drop out of school due to harassment. \*\*
- 64% of LGBTQ students reported feeling unsafe in at least one place at school. e.g. change rooms, hallways, etc. \*\*\*\*
- 42% of LGBTQ youth studied had thoughts of suicide at some time. \*\*\*
- Almost 10% of LGBTQ students reported having heard homophobic comments from teachers daily or weekly. \*\*\*\*
- 70% of Two-Spirit Aboriginal youth attempt suicide. \*\*\*\*\*

\* Just the Facts: On Gay and Lesbian Students and Schools. New York: GLSEN, 2001.

\*\* TEACH: Planned Parenthood of Toronto. <[www.ppt.on.ca/teach.html](http://www.ppt.on.ca/teach.html)>.

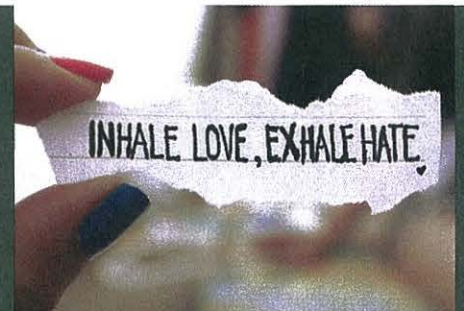
\*\*\* Centre for Suicide Prevention. <[www.suicideinfo.ca](http://www.suicideinfo.ca)>.

\*\*\*\* Taylor et al. (2011). Every class in every school: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. Final report. Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

\*\*\*\*\* Aboriginal Affairs Canada

"This is the only place I like in this school; the only place I feel welcome."

- GSA MEMBER, DSBN Student





# Classroom Practice

To best support all students, teachers can:

- Model appropriate behaviour
- Interrupt slurs and conduct
- Redirect and educate inappropriate comments
- Use teachable moments
- Embed inclusive materials in classroom instruction and curriculum
- Encourage administration to provide support for staff development and school awareness programs, assemblies, and initiatives

## WHERE DO I START?

1. Educate yourself
2. Implement awareness and understanding in day-to-day practice
3. Reflect on practice

## IN OUR SCHOOLS

## IN OUR CLASSROOMS

- Create policies and mechanisms to implement the Equity Strategy
- Provide a mechanism through which students can voice concerns regarding discrimination
- Commit to confronting inappropriate use of common slang terms such as:  
    *"That's so gay"*      *"That's so retarded"*  
    *"What a fag"*      *"She's such a bitch"*
- Start up equity groups, school equity committees, and awareness campaigns
- Create safe spaces for students to network/share ideas/mobilize with other students around the world
- Remove resources that promote stereotyping or discrimination
- Address assumptions that being LGBTQ is a bad thing and reinforce that everyone in the school environment deserves to be respected
- Make available staff training sessions to improve school climate for all sexual orientations and gender identities

- Set an example – be a role model for students and staff (speaking up, taking action)
- Use scenarios, role play, and tableaux, as a way of equipping students to effectively deal with incidents of homophobic/transphobic bullying
- Make your classroom a safe and welcoming space by challenging name calling, making fun of mannerisms, stereotyping, and inappropriate jokes
- Seize a teachable moment to educate students about sexual orientation, gender diversity, prejudice and LGBTQ issues
- Use inclusive language such as "partner" or "couple"
- Use gender neutral language when referring to various occupations. e.g. firefighter, police officer
- Implement the use of "drop box" so students can anonymously report incidents of bullying that occur in your classroom and school
- Provide a location for students to pick up materials and resources which they can take in a discreet manner



*"GSA is a group full of positive energy and people willing to help. Although I'm not gay it's nice to have the option of somewhere to go to show support and be open-minded. It's nice to see people being accepted."*

**- M.C., DSBN Student**





## IN OUR CURRICULUM

- Include histories of marginalized communities in your curriculum
- Include “viewpoint” and “perspective” in curriculum discussions during literacy, social sciences and health
- As part of broadly-based sexual health education, learn how to talk openly about sex, sexuality and sexual orientation, and gender diversity
- Discuss common terms related to sexual orientation and gender identity with a goal of developing understanding and empathy
- Bring the DSBN Equity policy and the Human Rights Code into the classroom curriculum
- Provide resources that include a variety of relationships, families, etc.
- Recognize and discuss the heterosexist messages and images in texts and media
- Provide opportunities for students to play, dress and behave in ways authentic to the individual rather than conforming to stereotypes

## IN OUR DAILY PRACTICE

- Be supportive, approachable, and open-minded with LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ family members
- Advocate for individual students as needed
- Maintain confidentiality when and where professionally appropriate
- Provide resource support to all students
- Provide support for students who want to “come out” to families and friends
- Accept and respect a student in their process of self-identity
- Build relationships with community organizations that serve your students
- Continue to learn about the issues that face the students in your school community
- Hold meetings to educate parents and community about The Equity Strategy, Human Rights Code and The Charter of Rights and Freedoms

*“It is important that all students feel comfortable expressing themselves in their own high school - whether it be through personal appearance or gender-diverse lifestyle choices.”*

**- Kim Palios**  
DSBN Teacher and GSA Teacher Advisor







## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q:** *"What if I think a student in my class might be LGBTQ?"*

**A:** Do not ask a student about their sexual orientation or gender diversity. Be supportive, approachable, and open-minded.

**Q:** *"How do we dispel fear?"*

**A:** Demystify. Inform. Support. The culture of your class room/school will create a comfortable environment for students to be honest about who they are. Refer to "Inclusive Education" on pages 8-9.

**Q:** *"Is it okay to talk about these issues in Elementary schools?"*

**A:** Yes, yes, yes...The DSBN mandates that school staff have the responsibility to promote inclusive classrooms/schools. Even if students this young are not "out" many will have LGBTQ family members, friends or acquaintances.

**Q:** *"How do I support parents of a LGBTQ student?"*

**A:** Provide a confidential, safe space and direct to appropriate resources that may help them to sort out concerns or questions.

**Q:** *"How do I respond to a staff member who displays inappropriate behaviour or comments?"*

**A:** Express your concern. If it continues approach your union representative for clear procedures.

**Q:** *"What if I say something wrong or use an incorrect term?"*

**A:** Refer to the Glossary in this document; however, using the proper terms is less important than making the student feel comfortable, safe and accepted.



*"This initiative is so important to make our schools safe for all children. We want to engage, connect and empower people to make the world a better place."*

**- Kelly McDonnell**  
Student Achievement Leader

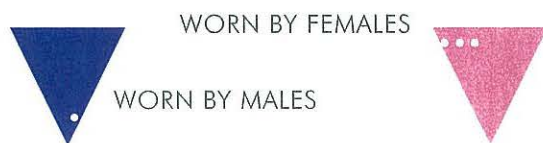
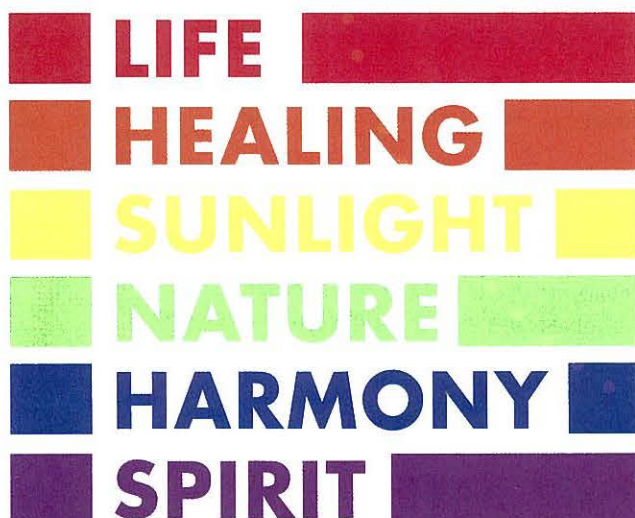


# Days of Significance

For a complete listing of events please visit [Egale.ca](http://Egale.ca) or [MyGSA.ca](http://MyGSA.ca)

APRIL	DAY OF SILENCE Largest organized single student led day against harassment in school. Take a vow of silence.
MAY 17	INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA Rally event to get people to reach out to one another. < <a href="http://www.homophobiaday.org">www.homophobiaday.org</a> >
JUNE	PRIDE EVENTS Recognize the impact that LGBTQ persons have had in the world.
JUNE 28	STONEWALL REBELLION First well known incident where homosexual persons fought back against police brutality, defied government. Start of the gay rights movement.
2ND WEDNESDAY IN APRIL	INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK (Pink Shirt Day) Stand up to bullies in schools. < <a href="http://www.standup.com">www.standup.com</a> >

## Symbols



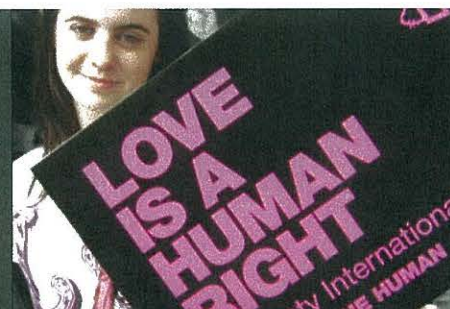
DOUBLE MALE'S SYMBOL  
DOUBLE FEMALE'S SYMBOL



TRANSGENDER/  
TRANSEXUAL SYMBOL

"As a queer parent, I want my children to be safe and respected in their schools. When we recognize, support and celebrate LGBTQ communities we create safety and thereby create a rich ground for learning and flourishing."

- DSBN Parent





# Glossary

**Anti-discrimination and harassment:** includes bullying awareness and prevention programming.

**Bisexual:** refers to an individual with the potential to be emotionally and/or sexually attracted to members of any sex.

**Equity:** refers to the right of the individual to a fair share of the goods and services in society.

**Gay:** refers to an individual who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to a person of the same sex; often interchangeable with the term homosexual.

**Gender Identity:** refers to how we view ourselves as masculine or feminine. For many, gender identity matches their physical body. For some, the way they see themselves as masculine or feminine is different from their physical body.

**Heterosexual:** refers to an individual who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to members of a different/another sex.

**Heterosexism:** the belief in the inherent superiority and "normalcy" of heterosexuality. It is the foundation for homophobia.

**Homosexual:** refers to an individual who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex.

**Intersex:** a medical term for someone who is biologically not clearly male or female; generally more accurate and more acceptable than hermaphrodite.

**Lesbian:** refers to a female who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to the same sex. Lesbian is the preferred term for women.

**LGBTQ:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-Spirited, Queer, and Questioning.

**Queer:** a term used in a number of different ways, i.e. as an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and other non-heterosexual identities. It is also used as a way of reclaiming and co-opting a once negative term; to remove "queer" as a term of abuse. However, not everyone finds the term empowering; some resist it because of its use among homophobic people. Queer is a term that is increasingly gaining acceptance as an academic term.

**Questioning:** refers to a person who is exploring the possibilities of, or who is in the process of figuring out their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Sexual Orientation:** encompasses the range of human sexuality from gay, lesbian, bi-sexual to heterosexual.

**Transgender(ed):** Trans-Identified is a broad term that describes people who feel that their anatomical sex does not match their gender identity, and/or whose appearance and behaviours do not conform to the societal roles expected of their sex.

**Transsexual:** a person who experiences intense personal and emotional discomfort with their assigned birth gender and may undergo treatment (e.g. hormones, and/or surgery) to transition genders.

**Two-Spirit(ed):** refers to a member of the Aboriginal community who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Individual Aboriginal peoples have their own words in their own languages that describe different gender identities and sexual orientations.








"For a long period of time, our people have not been heard. Our voices have been silenced, and we feel it is time that stopped."

– John Cutfeet, *First Nation*





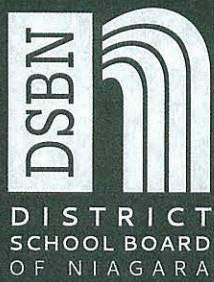
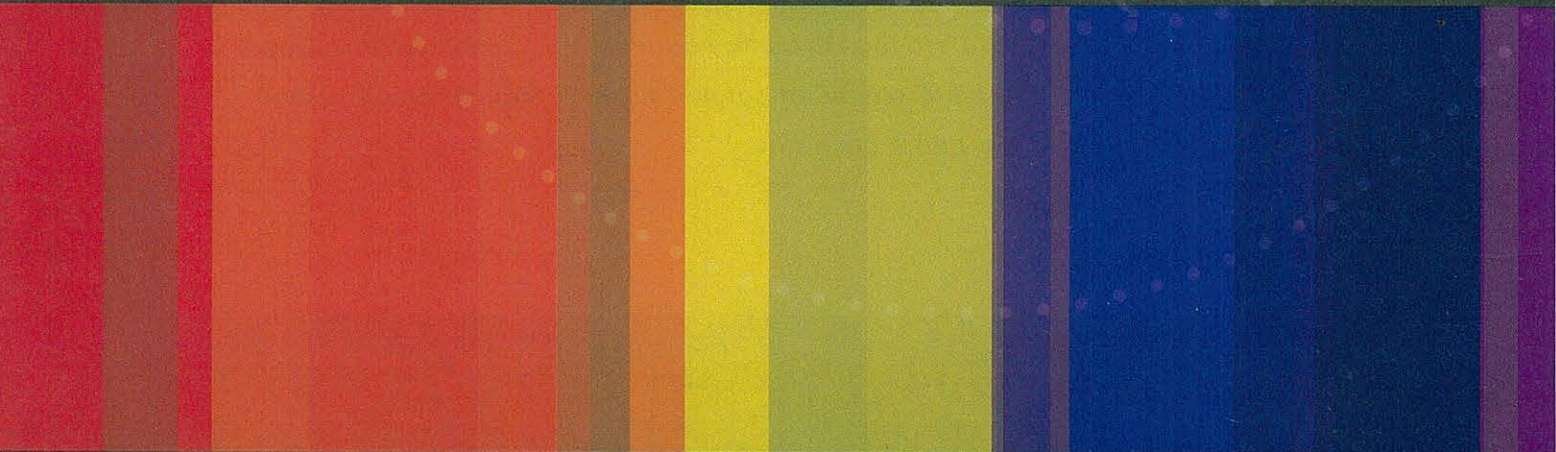
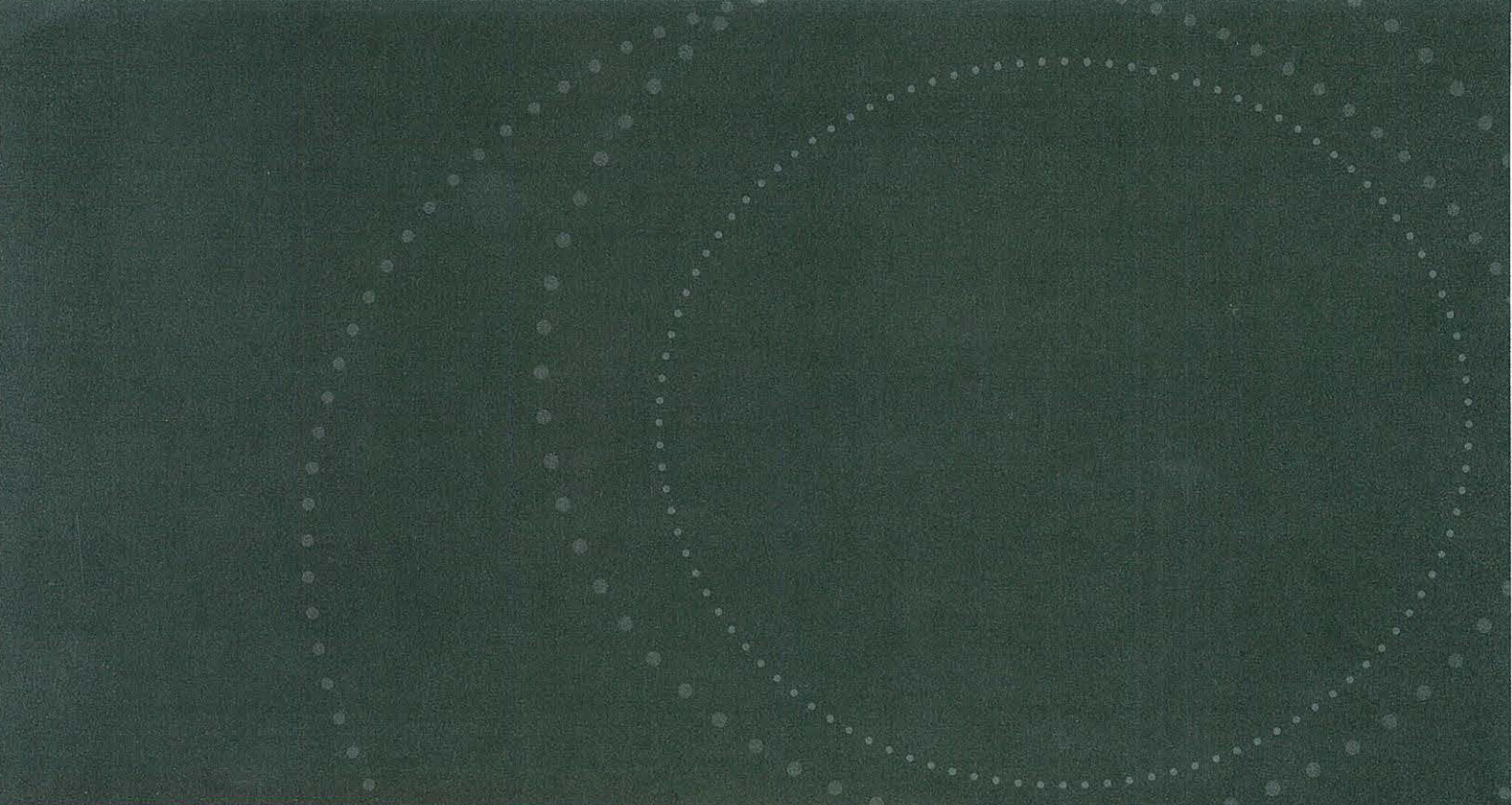


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*The Committee would like to thank you for your care and interest in ensuring that our DSBN schools are places of safety and acceptance for all of our students who enter the doors each day.*

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MIX  
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