

## Learning about Diversity, including Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

The revised curriculum includes a greater emphasis on meeting the needs of diverse learners and ensuring that a range of perspectives and experiences are reflected throughout the learning expectations, examples and prompts. Inclusion of students of all gender identities and sexual orientations was identified as a gap in the 1998, 1999/2000 curriculum by educators, students and experts. Specifically, in 2015, additional updates have been made to reflect current human rights legislation, particularly in relation to gender identity and gender expression.

There are enhanced opportunities to learn about gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation in all divisions so that all students see themselves reflected in what they are learning at school, supporting the development of positive self-concept and sense of identity. This learning can occur in all grades in a variety of contexts. Explicit references to gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation are included in developmentally appropriate ways in either curriculum expectations or examples or prompts for all divisions.

Information is presented factually in developmentally appropriate ways that is inclusive, respectful and reflective of diversity. In younger grades, students learn about factors that affect well-being, including valuing differences and showing respect. Examples and prompts are included in the curriculum to prompt thinking for educators to consider and recognize different family structures and different needs of students as they plan instruction.

### Focus of Learning

Gr. 1-3	Gr. 4-6	Gr. 7-8	Gr. 9-10	Gr. 11-12
<p>In Grade 1, students are learning to treat others with respect and are learning specifically what this looks like. This could be applied in a variety of contexts, depending on the needs of the students in the class.</p> <p>The prompts guide educators to help students learn to think about their own behaviour as well as their responses to the actions of others.</p> <p>When learning about themselves, others and their families, a variety of types of family structures are included as examples so that all students can see themselves reflected in the learning.</p> <p>In addition to students who may be living in families with two mothers or two fathers, discussion can reflect a wide range of possible family structures including students who may be living in care, living with grandparents or other extended family or living in single-parent families.</p>	<p>As students are learning skills to prevent and respond to bullying, specific reference to homophobic bullying is included to prompt educators to consider this as they plan instruction. Homophobia is not treated as a separate topic but is included as one factor – of many – which could lead to bullying and stigma.</p> <p>Gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation are referenced within a broader context for learning in junior grades, as students are learning skills and strategies for healthy and respectful relationships and for responding to situations involving bullying or harassment.</p> <p>The Safe Schools Action Team (SSAT) made recommendations to that all students will learn about gender stereotypes and homophobia. In response to this and other research, in 2010, the curriculum was strengthened regarding this learning.</p> <p>As students are learning about stereotypes, assumptions and gender roles, detailed teacher prompts are included to assist with guiding instruction by showing multiple examples of application of the learning. These extensive optional supports are included to provide additional background information to support educators with concepts that can be challenging to teach and need to be approached with sensitivity.</p>	<p>As students begin learning about their sexual health, gender identity and sexual orientation is included as one factor to consider as students are learning and making decisions about their health. These concepts are not treated as separate topics but are included to prompt educators to consider the needs of all students as they plan instruction.</p> <p>Gender expression was added to the 2015 curriculum in response to feedback from expert review and alignment with current research. Students specifically indicated that they felt that the curriculum should reflect the diversity of students in schools. They indicated that they wanted their learning to include all sexual orientations and gender identities.</p> <p>More in depth learning about gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation is included in Grades 8, a time of transition and change for students, to support their building understanding of themselves and others. Definitions from the Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health were used as the basis for the development of the prompt and examples. This information is included to provide background information and support for educators and was specifically fact-checked by sexual health experts.</p>	<p>Gr.9 expectations build on the learning in Gr. 8, focusing on both sources of support and continuing to build an understanding about identity.</p> <p>Definitions from the Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health were used as the basis for the development of the prompt and examples. They are slightly expanded from grade 8 to include additional nuances related to the learning in grade 9.</p> <p>Expectations were added and expanded upon from the 1999 curriculum in response to research and consultation in 2007-2010 review which flagged the need to address myths and misconceptions related to sexuality. Feedback also highlighted the need to address heterosexism and misconceptions related to sexuality.</p> <p>Gender identity and gender expression are now included as prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code as a result of Toby’s Act, 2012.</p>	<p>Sexual orientation is included as an example related to learning about stress and mental health because of need highlighted in research.</p> <p>Almost two thirds (64%) of LGBT students and 61% of students with LGBT parents reported that they feel unsafe at school (Every Class in Every School national climate survey 2011, Egale Canada).</p> <p>Suicide rates among LGBT youth are four times higher than among their non LGBT peers (2009 Youth Risk Survey).</p> <p>The need to consider harassment related to gender expression and sexual orientation is supported by research and was highlighted in consultations with youth.</p> <p>Throughout the curriculum prompts are included to support educators in helping students think critically about the media, their communities and their own responses.</p> <p>Changes made to reflect current research and to clearly distinguish between gender and sex.</p>

Students in junior grades continue to learn about healthy relationships and strategies to prevent and respond to bullying., Specific instruction has been included to prevent and respond to incidents (in person or online), related to homophobia or harassment based on gender identity, sexual orientation or gender expression.

Older students build on this learning about the legal, social and emotional consequences of harassment or bullying. In intermediate grades and secondary courses, students deepen their understanding about how diverse gender identities and sexual orientations impact identity and self-concept. In grades 10-12, students explore misconceptions about sexuality, including gender identity and sexual orientation, identify sources of support, and analyse media bias and stereotyping.

Personal and interpersonal skills to recognize and prevent bullying and harassment are included in the curriculum from grades 1-12. Specific reference to bullying and harassment as it relates to gender identity and sexual orientation begins in grade 5.

Throughout the revised Gr. 1-12 curriculum there are comprehensive learning opportunities to learn about gender identity and sexual orientation including:

- self-awareness skills to help students understand themselves; developing self-concept
- relationship and social skills, including how to identify and build healthy relationships
- developing awareness, knowledge, understanding and acceptance of all gender identities and sexual orientations, including supports available to prevent and respond to potential bullying or harassment