

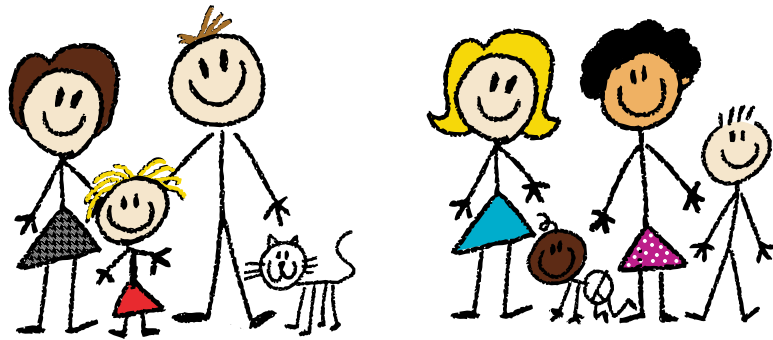


New Brunswick LGBTQ Inclusive Education Resource

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS



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diversity = possibility

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Welcome to the *Information and Resources for Parents and Guardians* section of the New Brunswick LGBTQ Inclusive Education Resource. This section is designed for parents and guardians who identify as LGBTQ as well as for parents and guardians of children who identify as LGBTQ. In this section you will find information about your rights and your children's rights to safety and respect, as well as what this means in an elementary, middle or high school environment.

You will also find information about ways to support your child(ren) in creating an affirming environment through GSA development as well as strategies to address bullying and coming out.

At the end of the section is a list of resources of all kinds to further support you and your child(ren).



INTRODUCTION

All children and youth have a right to a safe and respectful school environment, and inclusive education. Parents and guardians have a right to expect school officials to ensure that their schools are safe and respectful for LGBTQ students and families.



LGBTQ inclusive education acknowledges and includes LGBTQ realities and issues by making room for these within the curriculum in age-appropriate and meaningful ways. It encourages awareness of and discussion about LGBTQ diversity – and by extension creates safer and affirming environments for everyone, but especially students, staff and families who identify as LGBTQ, and their allies.

All children and youth have a right to a safe and respectful school environment, and to see themselves and their lives in the books, examples and other classroom material they learn from every day. There are dedicated teachers in New Brunswick and across the country, who for many years have been working to ensure all students, including LGBTQ students and those with LGBTQ families, have felt safe, acknowledged and respected in their classrooms. This New Brunswick LGBTQ Inclusive Education Resource provides these teachers with the support many have been missing to do this work, and Policy 703 now includes sexual orientation and gender identity ensuring respect for all people. Policy 703 also supports having groups such as GSAs in schools.

The momentum for this resource is the result of the research and advocacy of Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (Egale) which released the first national climate study on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in Canadian schools in 2011. Since 2009 when the preliminary report was released, awareness has grown and Egale has been working to help provinces and territories across the country make their schools more LGBTQ inclusive.

Both of these reports can be accessed at: www.MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp

Despite the work being done and the growing awareness about LGBTQ inclusion, ignorance, disrespect and hatred towards LGBTQ people show up as early as the elementary grades where “gay” is used in a derogatory way, and gender norms are already at play. The assumption that everyone is heterosexual, that everyone’s gender identity and assigned sex match, and the policies and practices that support these assumptions contribute to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia because they teach – often by omission – that LGBTQ individuals and families have less value or don’t exist, and that gender and sex are the same thing. These messages are damaging to society as a whole, but are especially damaging to children of LGBTQ families or children and youth who may themselves identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two Spirit or queer, or who may be gender creative. Negative and inaccurate messages also create unsafe environments for LGBTQ parents/guardians, and make it difficult or impossible for them to advocate for safety and respect on their own behalf, and on behalf of their children.



Heteronormativity: A cultural/societal bias, often implicit, that assumes all people are straight and so privileges heterosexuality and ignores or underrepresents same-gender relationships.

Cisnormativity: A cultural/societal bias, often implicit, that assumes all people are cisgender and so privileges cisgender identities and ignores or underrepresents gender creativity.

Cisgender (adj): Refers to someone whose gender identity corresponds with their birth-assigned sex (e.g., a cisgender male is someone whose gender identity is man and was assigned male sex at birth).

From the moment they enter the school system, children need to see themselves and their realities reflected in their school environment as well as the curriculum. LGBTQ inclusion in the school environment is supported by school and district policy, proper training for staff, and parental/guardian support and involvement, particularly of LGBTQ parents/guardians. The earlier LGBTQ inclusive education begins, the more likely we are to create school environments that are safe and inclusive for all. Children who are introduced to diverse families, and an environment that challenges gender norms and stereotypes early on, learn acceptance and have the opportunity to see and appreciate diversity as part of the human family.



Research shows that LGBTQ children and youth are particularly vulnerable to bullying. Parents and guardians are key partners in ensuring that schools and communities are safe and inclusive regardless of one's sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other aspect of a person's identity. They can help LGBTQ children and youth deal with the challenges that may present themselves, as well as advocating for the creation of more inclusive school environments. By listening, being supportive, and being prepared, ally parents/guardians of LGBTQ children can help to make schools safer. It is important to note that ally students may also need support.

Many middle schools and high schools have LGBTQ support groups or Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) to help create safe and positive learning environments. If you are a parent or guardian of a student who is experiencing discrimination based on real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, it is important to address the situation by working closely with the school. At the elementary level, safety and inclusion relies almost exclusively on curriculum (including staff awareness, language and intervention) which makes the role of allied parents/guardians even more crucial.

There are many excellent online resources and support groups for LGBTQ families, as well as LGBTQ youth and their families. You can find many of them in the part of this section called *Resources* as well as in the *New Brunswick Policies and LGBTQ Resources* section of this New Brunswick LGBTQ Inclusive Education Resource.



Please refer to the *Terms and Concepts* section of this resource for a complete list of terms and their definitions.

New Brunswick has been committed to inclusion for over 25 years. Over time, the definition of inclusion has broadened to include more than students with exceptionalities. This change has paved the way for the creation of this LGBTQ Inclusive Education Resource and for making schools in New Brunswick safer for LGBTQ students, staff and families.

There are a several policies that support inclusion and safer schools. Understanding these policies will help you to foster/support LGBTQ inclusive classrooms and schools. The best way for students to respect human rights and diversity is to learn about diversity as part of their everyday curriculum, thereby supporting open-mindedness. This is a strong argument for laying the foundation for LGBTQ inclusive education in elementary schools, where the fundamentals of social responsibility are taught.

New Brunswick Human Rights Act

Since 1992, the New Brunswick *Human Rights Act* has listed sexual orientation as a prohibited ground for discrimination. Currently, gender identity and intersex have been implicitly covered under the prohibited ground of sex since 2010. Gender identity, gender expression and intersex will be considered when the *Human Rights Act* is next reviewed.

This means that beyond the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's commitment (as outlined below), LGBTQ students, families, and educators are legally entitled to safe and respectful school environments in the province of New Brunswick.

Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools

Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools – the Review of Inclusive Education Programs and Practices in New Brunswick Schools was released in 2012 by the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. This document

makes reference to sexual orientation and gender identity in its recommendations:

- 6.1.3 The department, through the work of provincial curriculum advisory committees, should strengthen and promote diversity as an asset in all schools. This should be expressed in curriculum as well as by providing resources including books and other materials in the library and classrooms that portray a wide array of cultures, family / sexual orientations and people with physical and intellectual disabilities. Strengthening partnerships with families, cultural associations and community organizations should be a priority.
- 6.2 Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students represent a segment of the student population that has traditionally been impacted by equity issues, including harassment, bullying, mental intimidation and on occasion, physical assault. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, districts and schools should ensure policies and practices are in place that enhance understanding and acceptance of these students and should provide these students with equitable proactive support and fair treatment in schools.

Policy 703 – *Positive Learning and Working Environment*

In December 2013, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development updated Policy 703 – *Positive Learning and Working Environment*. This policy requires schools and districts to create such environments by “establishing a process for fostering positive learning and working environments that are inclusive, safe, respect human rights, support diversity and address discrimination regardless of real or perceived race, colour, religion, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, place of origin, language group, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, social condition or political belief or activity.”

Policy 703 outlines the following 5 (of 6) goals:

- 5.1 Good citizenship and civility are modeled and reinforced throughout the school community. Every person is valued and treated with respect.
- 5.2 School personnel and students in the public school system have the right to work and to learn in a safe, orderly, productive, respectful and harassment-free environment.”
- “5.4 Students have a sense of belonging and connection, feel they are supported by school personnel, and have a positive relationship with at least one adult in the school system.
- 5.5 ... Each partner in education through instruction and continued education supports the formation of school-based groups that promote diversity when interest is expressed by a student or staff member (examples include First Nations groups, multicultural groups, religious groups, and sexual minority groups).
- 5.6 All members of the school community learn and work together in an atmosphere of respect and safety, free from homophobia, racism and all other forms of discrimination that could lead to bullying and harassment. Appropriate procedures and strategies are in place to ensure respect for human rights, support diversity, and foster a learning environment that is safe, welcoming, inclusive and affirming for all individuals.

These goals support LGBTQ inclusive education and encourage safer and respectful schools for everyone.

Part II of Policy 703 is Inappropriate Behaviours and Misconduct. Serious misconduct includes bullying, cyberbullying, violence, hate propaganda, harassment and uttering threats (among many other things). Behaviours not tolerated include (among others):

- discrimination on the basis of real or perceived race, colour, religion, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, place of origin, language group, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, social condition or political belief or activity;
- using disrespectful or inappropriate language or gestures;

“Real or perceived” is important because homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying happens to people who are perceived to be LGBTQ as well. Policy 703 explains that these behaviours represent “a challenge to the positive learning and working environment”.

Policy 703 requires school districts and schools to develop written plans for positive learning and working environments. The school’s plan will include (among other things):

- a school statement on respecting human rights and supporting diversity
- expectations, roles and responsibilities for staff, students, parents and volunteers;
- a School Student Code of Conduct that is not inconsistent with the *Provincial Student Code of Conduct...*

As a document that embodies a community vision, parents/guardians’ voices and ideas are part of creating this plan.

For the complete policy: <http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/703A.pdf>

Policy 322

Policy 322 – Inclusive Education states that:

5.1 Inclusive public education:

Is respectful of student and staff diversity in regards to their race, colour, religion, national origin, ancestry, place of origin, age, disability, marital status, real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity, sex, social condition or political belief or activity.

For the complete policy: <http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/322A.pdf>

In addition to Department of Education and Early Childhood Development policies, the school improvement indicators used to measure school success and progress include reference to LGBTQ students and programs. Additionally, many curriculum documents mention respect for equity and diversity in their introductions. To find out more about these, please visit the [Information and Resources for Educators](#) section of this Resource.

New Brunswick Education Act

The New Brunswick *Education Act*, states that

14(1) It is the duty of a pupil to

[...]

(e) contribute to a safe and positive learning environment,

[...]

(g) respect the rights of others, and

(h) comply with all school policies.

27 (1)

Duty of a teacher:

- (a) Implementing the prescribed curriculum
[...]
- (d) Exemplifying and encouraging in each pupil the values of truth, justice compassion and respect for all persons
- (e) Attending to the health and wellbeing of each pupil

28(2)

Duties of a principal:

- [...]
- (c) Ensure that reasonable steps are taken to create and maintain a safe, positive and effective learning environment
[...]
- (e) Encouraging and facilitating the professional development of teachers and other school personnel employed at the school

To read the complete Act: <http://laws.gnb.ca/en/showfulldoc/cs/E-1.12//20140410>

Policy 598-3 – New Brunswick Teachers Association

The New Brunswick Teachers Association (NBTA) policy 598-3 (*Anti-Homophobia, Anti-Transphobia and Anti-Heterosexism*) states that the “NBTA advocates for educational systems that are safe, welcoming, inclusive, and affirming for all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions.”

The NBTA believes:

- 3(c) that LGBTQ students, staff and same-gender parented families have the right to:
 - be free from harassment, discrimination and violence;
 - be treated fairly, equitably and with dignity;
 - self identification and freedom of expression;

- be included and to be represented and affirmed in a positive and respectful manner;
- have avenues of recourse (without fear of reprisal) available to them when they are victims of harassment, discrimination and violence;
- have their cultures and communities valued and affirmed;
- have flexible, gender-neutral school dress codes.

- (d) that efforts must be made to ensure that education prepares young people to develop open, pluralistic and democratic societies, free of discrimination or aggression based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/ expression.
- (4) Anti-homophobia, anti-transphobia and anti-heterosexism education seeks to promote equity through practicing the principles of inclusion, affirming the identity of individuals and groups, seeking the elimination of homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism in all its forms, and initiating comprehensive school programs supporting equity. All students regardless of real or perceived, sexual orientation, gender identity/gender expression, culture, socio-economic status, residence, strengths and challenges have the right to an appropriate education.
- (5) Anti-homophobia, anti-transphobia and anti-heterosexism education is an integral goal of education permeating curriculum, materials, pedagogy, policies, practices and programs.

Although it refers to anti-homophobia, anti-transphobia and anti-heterosexism education, it is clear from the text that the intentions are about LGBTQ inclusive education. To view this policy in its entirety, please see the *New Brunswick Policy and LGBTQ Resources* section of this resource or online at: <http://www.nbta.ca/resources/documents/policy-598.3.pdf>



FACTS AND MYTHS ABOUT LGBTQ INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Adapted from Facts and Myths about Anti-Homophobia Education from PFLAG Canada (http://pflagcanada.ca/pdfs/homophobia-myths_english.pdf)

Inaccurate information can lead to misconceptions that hamper the school's efforts to create safe learning environments for all children and youth. The following facts will help to dispel common myths about LGBTQ people and anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education.

Many people mistakenly assume that LGBTQ inclusive education means “teaching about homosexuality”. This is not the case. LGBTQ inclusive education (also known as anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia and anti-transphobia education) is education that seeks to create safer schools and societies. It does so by promoting respect for all people, and addressing homophobia, biphobia, transphobia as well as the ideas that all people are heterosexual (heteronormativity) or that all people's gender and sex match (cisnormativity) and that being heterosexual and cisgender are the only normal ways to be. Including LGBTQ people, issues and realities into the curriculum helps schools to become safer and more inclusive spaces. Intervening in bullying, speaking out about safer space, and supporting students in their creation of these spaces are also important components.

Myth # 1: LGBTQ inclusive education is about teaching homosexuality in schools and condones the lifestyle.

Fact #1: Firstly, LGBTQ inclusion is not about teaching about homosexuality, it is about the meaningful and relevant inclusion of LGBTQ people, issues and realities into the curriculum. Teachers often teach about unfamiliar topics to help students develop respect for other people and to acknowledge their contributions to society. A teacher's job is to present accurate, age-appropriate information to students. Secondly, lesbian, gay, bisexual, Two-Spirit, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) persons have lives like everyone else. There is no distinct LGBTQ “lifestyle.”

Myth #2: LGBTQ inclusive education involves talking about gay sex.

Fact #2: LGBTQ inclusive education can be done in a variety of ways. Most involve no discussion of sex or sexual practices whatsoever. The only exception may be in the New Brunswick Health Education Curricula, which includes references to sexual health, sexual stereotyping, sexual identity, and sexual orientation. As with any discussions about sex in these contexts, it is important that it be done in age-appropriate ways. Otherwise, teachers may talk about LGBTQ role models in history, or read a story about same gender families. They may also discuss the oppression of LGBTQ people and focus on stopping homophobic name-calling in schools. These are just a few examples of age-appropriate LGBTQ inclusive education.

Myth #3: LGBTQ teachers have a “gay agenda” for public schools by introducing LGBTQ topics.

Fact #3: All teachers, principals and support staff have a legal obligation to respond to all forms of harassment and discrimination in schools. All students (and staff) have the right to attend school in a safe environment. They also expect to see their lives positively reflected in curriculum and classroom activities. Just as anti-racism and multicultural education have been embraced by educators, there is also a growing awareness that anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education needs to be integrated within the curriculum. You do not have to be a person of colour to care about racism. Similarly, you do not have to be LGBTQ to counter homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heteronormativity or cisnormativity. Including LGBTQ issues into the curriculum helps to create a safer and respectful environment for everyone – students, staff and parents/guardians.

Myth #4: Gay-Straight Alliance Clubs (GSAs) in high schools are a way to recruit students and encourage them to experiment with being gay, lesbian or transgender.

Fact #4: No one suddenly chooses to become LGBTQ simply because they heard about the topic in school, from friends, or via social circles. A person's sexual orientation or gender identity is part of their make-up, whether that person identifies as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, Two Spirit, gender creative, or gender queer. There is consensus in the medical and psychiatric world that sexual orientation and gender identities are not chosen (American Psychological Association, World Professional Association for Transgender Health). GSAs help all students to come together in a safer space to talk about issues that are important to them. GSAs help students to learn from one another and empower them to create a positive learning environment for all. Anyone can be the target of hateful slurs, irrespective of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Myth #5: Students will become more sexually active and/or promiscuous if they hear about LGBTQ issues at school.

Fact #5: Hearing about LGBTQ issues does not increase sexual activity or promiscuity. The decision to be sexually active or not has little to do with LGBTQ issues or LGBTQ inclusive education. However, lack of information about safe sex can have dramatic and sometimes tragic consequences for youth. Promiscuity and unsafe sexual behaviours often occur when students do not have access to age-appropriate, accurate information or feel they need to prove their sexuality. By informing youth, we provide them with the means to take care of their sexual health and to create healthy relationships.

Myth #6: LGBTQ issues are not part of the curriculum. Some schools are just making this up.

Fact # 6: The New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development establishes the curriculum. Health Education Curricula includes references to sexual health, sexual stereotyping, sexual identity, and sexual orientation.

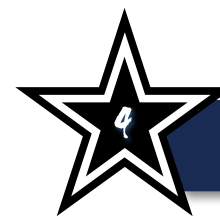
Public schools have an obligation to be inclusive of the diverse communities they serve including LGBTQ students and families.

LGBTQ INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IS . . .

- inclusive of all members of school communities
- respectful of differences and inclusive of diversity
- respectful of the New Brunswick *Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- mindful that harassment and discrimination may be present in any school
- aware that silence around certain topics can encourage harassment and can be a form of discrimination
- optimistic that a better school environment is possible for everyone

LGBTQ INCLUSIVE EDUCATION LOOKS LIKE . . .

- schools where students and educators speak out against injustice and inequity
- schools that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for human diversity, including those with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities
- schools where all members of the school community can be accepted and open about their lives without fear or shame
- classrooms that acknowledge and respect diverse family models
- classrooms that acknowledge and positively represent the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people across the curriculum
- schools where youth can take the lead on concerns that are important to them
- school districts where there is knowledge and expertise available to support schools in this work



MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY

From: *The Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know*. (2011). Pride Education Network, BC. <http://pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the-gender-spectrum.pdf>

Myth: Children and teens are too young to know their gender identity.

Fact: Most people become aware of their gender identity between the ages of 18 months and 3 years. Many youth whose gender identities do not conform to the expectations of their families, peers, and schools are invisible out of fear for their safety.

Myth: Being transgender is just a phase.

Fact: Some children go through phases of gender creativity. The longer a child has identified as cross-gender, the easier it becomes to predict whether it is a phase.

Regardless of the outcome, the self-esteem, mental well-being, and overall health of the child relies heavily on receiving love, support, and compassion from family, community and school.

Myth: Hormone blockers, used to delay puberty in transgender teens, are detrimental to one's health.

Fact: Hormone blockers are a safe way to pause puberty as the transgender teen decides whether to go on cross-hormones. This treatment prevents the (often traumatic) development of secondary sex characteristics that do not match the person's gender identity. It also prevents the need for painful and expensive surgeries to undo these changes later in life. This treatment is widely endorsed by family doctors, endocrinologists, psychologists, and other specialists involved in transgender health programs.



TALKING ABOUT LGBTQ THEMES WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER OR ADMINISTRATOR

Myth: Being transgender is a sexual orientation.

Fact: Sexual orientation and gender identity are different. A person's sexual orientation is related to whether the person is romantically attracted to men, women, or both. Gender identity, on the other hand, is about the person's own internal identification as male, female, or a gender in between male and female. Just like non-transgender people, transgender people can be of any sexual orientation.

Myth: All transgender people will eventually take hormones and get sex reassignment surgery.

Fact: Some transgender people take hormones and/or have surgery. For a number of reasons, many transgender people do not take either of these steps. Some feel comfortable with their bodies the way they are. For others, hormones and surgery are inaccessible because they may be too expensive and/or require parental permission.

An important component of safer spaces and of an LGBTQ inclusive school for trans and gender creative people is challenging the notion that there are only two possible sexes (male/female) and genders (man/woman), that they are opposite, discrete and uniform categories, and that gender is

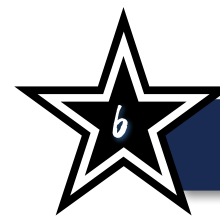
determined by sex. This is known as the sex & gender binary. Challenging this binary is helpful in maintaining safer spaces for people who are trans or gender creative, but also results in safer spaces for all people to express their individuality.



<http://www.pinterest.com/pin/40250990390700650/>

Educators play a significant role in the safe and healthy development of children and youth. In both the classroom and the broader school community it is important that these educators are equipped with the tools and understanding to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all students (including LGBTQ students) that supports their achievement and well-being. Similarly, administrators are responsible for the creation of a positive school environment, which includes LGBTQ inclusive education. With that in mind, here are some tips for discussing LGBTQ inclusion with your child's teacher and administrator.

1. **Talk frequently.** Whenever possible, foster ongoing communication and form a positive relationship with your child's teachers in support of your child's achievement and well-being. This doesn't always have to involve direct discussion of LGBTQ issues, but could include more subtle references to different family compositions, and LGBTQ inclusion in general. Casual references to same-sex partners, gender creative activities, or queer happenings about town, can be great ways to remind teachers about the size and scope of LGBTQ communities outside the school walls.
2. **Do your homework.** Before sitting down in a formal meeting, research school, district and provincial policies as well as the code of conduct, noting whether they contain provisions regarding equity and inclusive education and, more specifically, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. You can find summaries of many of these policies in this section starting on page 9.
3. **Ask yourself, "What do I want out of this?"** Before initiating a conversation with your child's teacher or administrator, determine the desired outcomes. Consider sharing your desired outcomes at the beginning of your conversation. Do you want help with a specific incident, more LGBTQ inclusive resources, a more positive and accepting classroom and school environment or guidance around supporting your child who



WHAT DOES A FAMILY LOOK LIKE?

would like to establish a GSA or student-led safe space group? Consider making a list of desired outcomes to help stay on track.

4. **Be ready to help.** It can be helpful to come prepared with some resources to share. Chances are they're swamped and will appreciate some easily digestible information on LGBTQ inclusion in the classroom. Refer them to the *Information and Resources for Educators* and *Information and Resources for Administrators* sections of this resource (or at www.MyGSA.ca), and consider bringing in some examples of age-appropriate LGBTQ-inclusive stories and/or films.
5. **Take notes and follow up.** Try to keep track of the basics of what was said and when. At least, be sure to note whenever a commitment has been made to do something so that you can follow up later. It can be helpful to schedule subsequent conversations with the teacher to assess progress and changes that you have observed. It can also be helpful to know what you've tried, in case things don't improve over time.
6. **Assess your risks.** Before getting into any conversation with your child's teacher, consider the potential outcomes, risks and consequences of the discussion and whether they are compatible with your family's comfort level. For instance, will you be outing yourself, your partner or your child in such a way as to put them at risk? Could your child face bullying? Do you plan to ask your teacher to keep the content of your discussion confidential, or to help spread the word to other educators?
7. **Seek a support network.** It's important to feel supported in all your dealings with your child's school. If you know of other LGBTQ allies or ally groups in your community (like PFLAG), consider reaching out to them for discussion and support. As well, consider whether or not you'll be scheduling meetings alone, or with a supportive partner or friend.

Despite the fact that many children don't live in a traditional family, our portrayal of family often continues to be nuclear as well as heterosexual. Some of the ways that the theme of family and attraction shows up in elementary school are:

- Students are often asked to draw pictures of their families or to make a family tree.
- Mother's Day and Father's Day crafts and cards are often made.
- Picture books are often about families.
- Valentine's Day cards are often made and even exchanged in class.

Another issue within LGBTQ inclusive education is gender and gender identity. Children who are creative in how they dress, what they like to do, or how they act (gender creative children) can have a very hard time in school if teachers and administrators don't believe in challenging stereotypes and rules about gender. LGBTQ inclusive education includes conversations about people who do not play by the rules of gender (gender creative or genderqueer), and whose bodies may not match their gender identity (transgender). This willingness to challenge gender norms is important not only for children who are trans or gender creative but for students who have transgender parents/guardians.

In a classroom that is not committed to LGBTQ inclusion, these special days can be difficult for LGBTQ students, students with LGBTQ families, or students who are trans or gender creative. Mothers Day can be stressful if your teacher doesn't let you make two cards (for example). On the other hand, in an LGBTQ inclusive school and classroom, the special events listed above are some of the opportunities to help everyone in the school community become more aware and accepting of diversity. Below are a few ideas, resources and books that can help if your child's teacher doesn't know where to start.



TALKING TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH ABOUT HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

- Queering the Family Tree – poster (available in English and French)
<http://www.lgbtqparentingconnection.ca/socialchange/queeringthefamilytree.cfm>
- Celebrating Fabulous Dads – poster
<http://www.lgbtqparentingconnection.ca/socialchange/fabdadsposterproject.cfm>
- I heart my LGBTQ family – cards
<http://www.lgbtqparentingconnection.ca/socialchange/iheartmylgbtqfamily.cfm>
- Happy International Family Visibility Day (May 6) – poster (English and French) and package for teachers
<http://www.lgbtqparentingconnection.ca/socialchange/InternationalFamilyVisibilityDay.cfm>
- Reinvent the family tree exercise
<http://www.lgbtqparentingconnection.ca/socialchange/reinventthefamilytree.cfm>
- Valentine’s Day cards

Age-appropriate discussions on issues such as homophobia, biphobia and transphobia with children and youth can provide them with important tools for understanding and resisting the strong influence these phobias have within school culture and society at large. Children encounter and learn homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia very early in their elementary education, which means it’s important for parents and guardians to address these topics (in age-appropriate ways) from an early age through adolescence. Here are some tips for getting started.

1) Use language your child understands

Concepts like homophobia, transphobia and biphobia refer to complex social phenomena which can be challenging for anyone to fully grasp. This means it’s important to consider age-appropriate ways of addressing these topics in conversation. That said, the basic elements are fairly easily explained. Depending on the age of the child, consider framing these phobias in terms they can relate to, from “meanness” through to “bullying,” from “dislike” through to “phobia”, etc.

2) Be Prepared to Listen

Chances are your child will have already encountered a number of examples of homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic behaviour. If they don’t volunteer their experiences, ask them to try and think of an example from their school, community group, or another activity they may be a part of. In either case, be prepared to spend some time listening. Try your best to weave whatever examples they share throughout your discussions, as this may help to ground some of these concepts in lived experience.



3) Use helpful media

There are a number of books, films and websites in existence that present narratives around LGBTQ identities as well as homophobia, and to a lesser extent, transphobia and biphobia. These can serve as excellent tools for conversation as they provide concrete, shared points of reference for exploration through discussion. Egale's MyGSA.ca has information about the kind of materials available. There are also booklists and information on other media provided by various organizations. The Rainbow Books website may also be helpful (<http://glbtrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/>).

4) Try not to make things overly simple

While speaking age-appropriately is obviously important, it's also important to frame your discussion realistically. While it can be easy to paint the world in black and white, where people who are homophobic, transphobic or biphobic are 'bad' and others the 'good' or innocent victims, the reality of schoolyard bullying is far more complicated. Consider describing homophobia as something that people "do" as opposed to a state of being or personal characteristic.

5) Keep it personal

It can be really useful to personalize this conversation by including a LGBTQ-identified loved one. If no one in the immediate family identifies openly as a member of the LGBTQ spectrum, consider bringing in an extended family member or friend to help bring the conversation to a personal level. This way, children and youth are much more likely to understand the humanity of these arguments, and some of the real-life consequences of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

6) Establish a strong network of support

While it's great to provide children and youth with the tools to challenge homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, it is important not to expect them to stand alone. Firstly, make sure they know that this is not just a one-time talk you're having with them, and that they can come to you, or another designated family member, to discuss these issues in the future. Furthermore, it's worth following up at school to determine where the staff stand on issues of LGBTQ bullying. Look over some of the other sections in this resource regarding ways to approach teachers and administration around these issues. Finally, speaking with other parents and/or guardians in the school community, as well as their children, raises the chances that you won't be the only family on the block challenging these phobias, and working to foster a more inclusive and safer education for all.

To study up on the terms and concepts commonly used to talk about homophobia, transphobia and biphobia, as well as the many LGBTQ communities around the world, take a look at the *Terms and Concepts* section.



CONNECTING WITH LOCAL LGBTQ FAMILIES AND ALLIES

These tips were written with the hope that they will assist you in connecting with a network of supportive LGBTQ families and allies within your local community, offering more opportunities for you and your children, and all students to feel supported both in and out of school. Each of these suggestions involves a variable amount of risk on your part. Navigating those risks is dependent on your unique understanding of local ideas and behaviours related to LGBTQ identities. Be sure to consider and prepare for potential responses to anyone in your family coming out publically, or semi-publically, as LGBTQ or even as an ally. Safety first!

1) Keep your ear to the ground

The first step towards meeting more LGBTQ families and allies is talking to people in your school community. Be aware of both subtle and overt references to LGBTQ family members or partners. Your child may come home talking about how a classmate has two dads, or is challenging gender norms and how their family is supportive. You can be amazed at what you find out by engaging in casual conversation.

2) Connect with school staff

If your family is LGBTQ and had decided to come out at school or you identify as allies, let teachers and administrators know that safety and inclusion of LGBTQ students and families is important to you.

3) Connect with local LGBTQ communities

If you're in a larger city or town and are LGBTQ or have LGBTQ children, there may already be an LGBTQ parents/guardians' group or support group in place. Getting involved in community activities is often a great way to meet and talk

with LGBTQ folks and their families. If you or your family identify as allies, check out local organizations to learn more about what is offered. PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) has chapters in Moncton, Saint John and Sackville. You can find the information for these groups in the [New Brunswick Policies and LGBTQ Resources](#) section.

4) Connect on the web

Check to see if there are any local LGBTQ websites where you might be able to find other local LGBTQ families. The [New Brunswick Policies and LGBTQ Resources](#) section provides a list of local and national organizations which may be helpful. Facebook and Twitter can also serve as excellent resources for reaching out to unknown allies in your community. As with anything on the internet, be safe!

5) Consider starting a group outside of school

Even a handful of organized LGBTQ family members and their allies can make a positive difference at school. Once you've found others interested in working with staff and students to make school safer and more inclusive, why not start a small group? Group efforts can help make school safer, as well as heighten the visibility of LGBTQ inclusivity at school and raise the likelihood of connecting with other LGBTQ families. It can be as casual or as formal as you like.



BEING AN ALLY: HOW TO BE AN ALLIED PARENT/GUARDIAN AT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

Ally: An individual who is supportive of the LGBTQ community. They believe in the dignity and respect of all people, and are willing to stand up in that role.
– From Vancouver District School Board's Policy ACB

“No one in my family is LGBTQ, how can I help?”

“The word “ally” has historically applied to straight allies. But, it’s not just about who you are or who you like, it’s about what you stand for. No matter how you identify, being an ally means honoring the unique experiences of LGBT individuals and championing respect in your own way.”
– Athlete Ally

“Allies are some of the most effective and powerful voices of the LGBT movement. Not only do allies help people in the coming-out process, they also help others understand the importance of equality, fairness, acceptance and mutual respect.”
– www.GLAAD.org

“The power of an ally can never be underestimated – giving voice to those silenced, standing up for others in the face of adversity and reaching out to raise new consciousness.”
– www.CampusPride.org

Parents and guardians of non-LGBTQ children) may not be subject to the same damaging stereotypes often imposed on LGBTQ parents/guardians, or the parents/guardians of LGBTQ children (e.g. myths of recruitment, pedophilia, the “gay agenda”, etc.). This means that they can play a critical role in the creation of safer and more inclusive schools.

While it is important to challenge these stereotypes, it’s also important to understand and make the most of the incredible opportunity allies without LGBTQ children or family members have to advance safer and more inclusive schools. Here are some tips about how people who do not identify as LGBTQ can help make a difference.

1) Talk with your child about LGBTQ inclusion

By far the greatest impact you will have on your child’s school is by teaching your child inclusive beliefs, actions and words. With this in mind, consider the way in which LGBTQ themes are brought up in your household. Do you ever discuss LGBTQ people? Do you have LGBTQ family members? Are they playing a full part in the life of your family? Point out to your children when the media negatively portrays the LGBTQ communities or relies on stereotypes or prejudice as humour. Have you talked about the use of homophobic language common in schoolyard conversation (e.g. “That’s so gay”, “faggot”, “dyke”, “trannie”, etc.)? Do the books you read at home include LGBTQ characters and realities? Make an effort to include **positive comments about LGBTQ individuals in your family conversations**. See the *Role Models* section for some examples of local and national LGBTQ Role models. Being an ally starts at home.

2) Make your home a safe space

It must be stressed that being an ally starts at home. Consider establishing boundaries in your house so that both guests and family members know that homophobia, transphobia and biphobia are not acceptable in your home. Guests and friends should politely be made aware whenever they misstep (we all do!). Safe spaces require maintenance, and so these topics can come up repeatedly, challenging your family to address the many aspects of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia. At the end of the day it’s about being supportive and responding to the behaviours of everyone in the home.

3) Support inclusion at school

Check out the MyGSA.ca School Climate Questions to get a sense of how inclusive your school is regarding LGBTQ topics. Ask yourself questions like “if I or my child were LGBTQ, would this make us feel included?” For instance, does your school allow for same-sex parents/guardians to register as “parents” or ‘guardians”, or must there be a “mother” and “father” on forms? Does the school have gender-neutral washroom facilities available? Are there resources available for transgender youth? Are there LGBTQ-themed books in the library? Are notable LGBTQ figures included in course material? Are LGBTQ identities acknowledged in course material? Is there a gay-straight alliance (GSA) or other student-led safer space group at the school?

4) Keep it up

Being an ally isn't always a clear-cut job. Sometimes it involves significant energy and dedication (like when supporting your child to set up a student-led group like a GSA or advocating for LGBTQ-inclusive policy) but it also includes the equally important small stuff, like daily words of support for LGBTQ families and other allies. One of the most common arguments against LGBTQ inclusion is that “there aren't any LGBTQ students, staff or parents/guardians at our school.” This assumes that LGBTQ people are always out, and obviously so, which isn't always the case. It's always possible that LGBTQ people make use of the facilities, teach at, or attend the school, but simply don't feel comfortable publically acknowledging their identity. Don't be disheartened if you, a non-LGBTQ parent of non-LGBTQ children, appear to be the only one doing this work; no matter who you are the work of an ally needs to be done!

5) Seek out a support network

Before actively taking on the role of an ally, consider establishing a support network. Perhaps there are other allied or LGBTQ families at your school who are interested in helping to make your school safe and more inclusive. Consider speaking with supportive friends, or parents/guardians and/or GSA advisors from other school communities.

SUPPORTING A CHILD WHO WOULD LIKE TO START A GSA OR ANOTHER STUDENT-LED SAFE SPACE GROUP

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), or other student-led safe space groups, can make a big difference in the culture of a school. They can contribute practically by promoting awareness and addressing issues of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia as well as heteronormativity and cis-normativity, while also providing students with a safer and more accepting environment on school grounds. Furthermore, they can work indirectly as an acknowledgement of the administration's, district's, and student body's commitment to LGBTQ inclusive spaces.



Any student, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, is able to start a GSA to contribute to a safer school environment. As a parent or guardian, there are many ways you can help your child and other students at the school who want to establish a GSA or another student-led safe space group. Here are a few tips:

- **Talk with your child**

A GSA, or any student-led safer space group, is primarily a club for students, and so it's important that schools empower students to lead in its creation. Talk with your child and other LGBTQ-friendly parents and/or guardians to get a sense of what the climate is like at school. Has there been a GSA or similar group before? Has anyone ever tried to start one? Would students join if there were one? Is there a group of students ready to start one now?

Your actions don't have to hinge on the answers to these questions, but it's a good idea to establish and maintain a network with supportive students and families from the school. Students can find more information on starting a group in the *GSA Guide* section.

- **Encourage your Ally Children**

If your children are interested in being allies, support their efforts by encouraging them to educate themselves about the issues, talk with friends and family who are LGBTQ, and to think of ways to take action, like starting or supporting a GSA.

- **Talk with school staff**

Try casual conversation with any of your child's teachers who you think might be supportive. Is there or has there ever been a club that addresses LGBTQ themes? Ask yourself, are there any easily identifiable "champions" among the staff; someone who you think might help students set up a GSA or who would make a good staff advisor? Are students aware of this person? Why not help your child to organize a meeting between interested students and this staff member? See Talking About LGBTQ Themes with your Child's Teacher or Administrator on page 23 for further information and suggestions.

- **Reach out locally**

Many New Brunswick schools already have GSAs. Help your child reach out locally to find out if there is another school in the area that has a GSA **or student-led group that includes an LGBTQ focus.** Help organize a meeting between interested students from your child's school community and the staff advisor or school administration and students of the school with an active GSA. Encourage students to take the opportunity to share and discuss strategies, struggles and successes with local GSAs. Pride in Education is a local group that has a yearly GSA conference. Go to www.pienb.com for more information. Egale's *MyGSA.ca* website has a GSA page that lists GSAs from across the country.

- **Inform yourself**

What do you know about your school's stance on LGBTQ inclusion at school? What about LGBTQ-targeted bullying? Is this information available to students in your school community? Consider helping your child research and provide information to the students at their school interested in starting a GSA or student-led safe space group.

Sometimes school officials believe there is no need for a GSA. For the most recent Canadian stats on LGBTQ-targeted bullying and harassment, check out Egale's *Every Class in Every School* report. **For GSA-supportive documents** governing your child's school, consult your school's website and the district's website searching for district policies, codes of conduct and any official documents related to equity, diversity and inclusive education. Examples of inclusive education policies are found in the *GSA Guide* section of this resource.

According to the New Brunswick Wellness Strategy (2009), relatedness (feeling included, supported and encouraged by others) impacts mental fitness. The 2014-2021 Wellness Strategy further links competence, autonomy and relatedness to health.

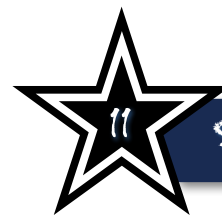
Considerable evidence demonstrates that when our environments provide opportunities for us to satisfy our three basic psychological needs, we are more motivated and engaged, our overall wellness is improved and we are more apt to make healthy lifestyle choices. We have stronger supportive social networks, we are more ready to take advantage of opportunities that arise, and we are able to make positive choices for ourselves and our families. These three basic psychological needs are foundational, regardless of the person.

Relatedness refers to the need for connection to and closeness with family, peers and other significant individuals. Fulfillment of this need is met through interaction with others, membership in groups, and the support and encouragement received from others. Autonomy refers to the need to have a choice, express ideas and opinions (a voice), and have the ability to

make decisions about things that are important to you. When this need is satisfied, in conjunction with other need areas, people tend to make choices that demonstrate respect for themselves and the people around them.

GSAs and LGBTQ inclusive education can play a significant role in promoting a sense of autonomy, relatedness, and school connectedness. GSAs provide the opportunity for membership and interaction as well as the opportunity to share ideas and opinions and make decisions that can help create more positive environments. They can also be a supportive place for students who identify as LGBTQ, as well as promoting a more positive and supportive environment in the school as a whole. LGBTQ inclusive education enables students who identify as LGBTQ or who come from LGBTQ-identified families to see themselves and their realities in the curriculum in positive and affirming ways. LGBTQ inclusive education also helps to create an environment of acceptance and support, which can help connection with peers and teachers.

For more information about the New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey, see: file:///C:/Users/Owner/Downloads/Anglophone_South_School_District.pdf (2012-2013) and specifically pages 26-31. And, <http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/hic-csi/pdf/Wellness-MieuxEtre/NewBrunswickWellnessStrategy2014-2021.pdf> (2014-2012).



SUPPORTING A CHILD WHO IS 'COMING OUT'

- **Be ready to help**

It is possible that staff at the school would like to be supportive, but don't know how. To prepare for this, provide your child or interested students with resources to share with staff about GSAs and student-led safer space groups in schools, like this binder for example, or the suggested resources at the end of this section. You can also find information on Egale's *MyGSA.ca* website.

- **Privacy, confidentiality, and risks**

Before beginning this work, talk with your child and family to get a clear sense of your and their boundaries and expectations. It's important that no one be unintentionally "outed" in the process of creating a GSA or student-led safer space group. In addition, take some time to consider the ways in which your actions might affect your family's interactions with others at the school. Could bullying become an issue, and what's your plan if it does? Bullying could happen from a student to another student or from a parent/guardian or family to another parent/guardian or family. Assess your potential outcomes, including risks, and plan accordingly.

- **Seek a support Network**

It is important to seek out a LGBTQ support network as your child starts to consider establishing a GSA at school. There may be times when such a process has the potential to become stressful, and it's wise to find ways for you and your child to diffuse that stress. Talk about stress with your child, but be conscious of the boundary between helping your child with their stress, and burdening them with your own. Be sure to support yourself by reaching out to friends, allies, other LGBTQ families, and connecting with local LGBTQ organizations. The *New Brunswick Policies and LGBTQ Resources* section provides a list of local and national organizations which may be helpful.

Coming Out

- The process through which LGBTQ people recognize and acknowledge their non-heterosexual orientation or non-cisgender identity and integrate this understanding into their personal and social lives.
- The act of disclosing this orientation or identity to others.

Coming out can be a challenging process at any age. There are particular challenges around coming out for youth. These include the fact that dependence on caregivers for food and shelter may put youth at risk if their families are not supportive, and that they may not be able to change schools if the school is not a welcoming environment. Youth may feel that coming out may exclude them from certain communities that they belong to (religious, clubs, sports teams, etc). In addition, in an already tumultuous time, coming out adds another layer of possible social isolation. Remember that sexual orientation and gender identity are just two of the many identities we have. Youth who are already feeling isolated, bullied or excluded for who they are may find coming out to be too much to consider. It's also quite common for family members to experience a number of challenges when their child or relation first identifies themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Two Spirit, queer, questioning (LGBTQ) or another identity within the spectrum. The following list contains a number of helpful resources to address this issue.

- **When sons and daughters come out** – PFLAG Canada: This guide provides a basic resource for parents/guardians whose child has just come out as LGBT or Q. (www.pflag.ca)
- **Questions & Answers for Parents and Family Members of Gay and Lesbian Youth** – Vancouver School Board: A brief guide exploring some of the basic questions often considered by parents/guardians after their child has come out. See <http://pflagcanada.ca/en/foreign-language-e.html>

- **MyGSA.ca Book section:** Here you'll find extensive listings of resources 'tagged' for parents/guardians with a number focusing on the coming out process.

Seeking Support in your school community

Given that discrimination and violence against LGBTQ individuals are serious problems in Canada and around the world, many parents/guardians of youth who identify as LGBTQ find themselves concerned for the safety and well-being of their children. Part of this concern involves wanting to ensure a safe and inclusive school environment. Parents/guardians can work towards this in several ways:

- **Engage with your child!**

Perhaps the most important thing you can do to ease your child's coming out process is to stay open to communicating with them. They probably won't want to talk about their identity all the time (and neither may you) but it's important that you let them know that your support and love is unwavering and unconditional. Most importantly, encourage your child to come to you whenever they feel unsafe or disrespected – at school, or anywhere else. Actively check in with your child and find out what's going on with them.

- **Engage with the school community**

Collaborate with teachers and administrators at your child's school to ensure a safer and more inclusive school community for everyone. Does your school or school district have an equity officer, or someone in charge of inclusive education? If so, consider also reaching out to this person for further support and resources. Try to make sure there is at least one adult in the school that your child can talk to.

- **Engage with other parents/guardians**

Other parents and/or guardians within the school community can be great allies in helping a parent/guardian come to understand the needs of an LGBTQ child, and in working towards a safe and more inclusive school community. Reach out to other parents/guardians whose children may openly identify as LGBTQ. These parents/guardians may be able to offer you perspectives on their emotional processes and will often be great people to speak to about issues you may not want to discuss with your child. Groups like PFLAG can offer great local support from other parents/guardians in the area. For information about PFLAG chapters in New Brunswick as well as other groups see the *New Brunswick Policies and LGBTQ Resources* section.

- **Engaging with the local LGBTQ communities**

Do some research into local LGBTQ organizations and service providers such as community groups, or healthcare organizations. If you can't find anything specific to parents/guardians of LGBTQ youth, you may still find some organizations that can help address some of your questions and concerns. Volunteering with a local organization, such as a LGBTQ Pride group, can be a great way to indicate your support to your child, as well as allowing you to meet and interact with parents/guardians and members of the LGBTQ community. The *New Brunswick Policies and LGBTQ Resources* section provides a list of local resources.



YOUR TRANS CHILD - WHAT OTHER PARENTS/GUARDIANS WANT YOU TO KNOW

Adapted from Families in TRANSition: A Resource Guide for Parents of Trans Youth created for Central Toronto Youth Services http://www.ctys.org/sites/default/files/familiesintransition-a_resource_guide_for_parents-080608.pdf

*The term *gender independent* has been changed to *gender creative* to remain consistent with the language used in this resource.

Other parents/guardians who have been there really want you to know...

1. **You and your child are not alone**

Although there are no solid statistics, researchers estimate one in 200 people are born feeling that the sex of their body (how it looks on the outside) and gender (how they feel on the inside) are different (Conron et al., 2012).

2. **Being trans is not the same as being gay**

The word “transsexuality” sounds like something related to sexuality, but it’s not. Sexual orientation and sexual identity are terms used to describe who we are attracted to and who we love.

We all also have a gender identity – the inner feeling that we are a man or a woman, that we are masculine or feminine, or perhaps somewhere on a “continuum” between masculine and feminine.

Being transgender or transsexual is about gender identity. For trans people, their bodies do not match their inner experience of gender. See the *Terms & Concepts* section for further definitions.

3. **Parents/Guardians don’t “make” a child trans**

That’s not how it works. Be proud your child is brave and honest enough to embark on this scary and necessary process – and trusts you enough to tell you about it. You have done well. Your relationship with your child has an opportunity to become closer, more trusting and more loving through this process.

4. **Allow your child to set the pace**

Your child likely waited a long time before telling you about this. They may have done so now because the need to live how they truly are has become too difficult to hide. There won’t ever be a “perfect” time for your child to come out publicly. So, as much as possible, let your child set the pace.

5. **Listen to your child**

Trans youth are often afraid too – of rejection or how their lives might change. But they have ideas about what makes them comfortable, how they want to look, and what they want to be called. They may open up to a parent when still deciding things for themselves. Listen to what your child says about their own needs. Be careful not to make assumptions or decisions about who your child will become or what steps they’ll take. There are no rules – every child is different.

6. **Don’t let fear hold you or your child back**

All your child’s dreams are still possible– finishing school, getting a good job, finding someone to love, having a family. Some extra planning or precautions may be necessary, but anything is possible.

You can read about the lived experiences of other trans youth and adults in the *LGBTQ Role Models and Symbols* section.

7. **Your child is taking important steps toward being happier and healthier**

You may not notice it right away, but as time passes you will see your child become happier, more comfortable, more at ease. Life is much more difficult and stressful when pretending to be someone you’re not. The serious distress many trans youth feel about their bodies begins to resolve

itself during transition. It might seem a bit unrealistic right now, but down the road you may even appreciate this experience. You may learn more about your child, about gender, and about the world. You may meet other families struggling with these same issues, and create deep bonds with them. Few things bring us as close as being “outsiders” together. No doubt some of what you learn will anger or sadden you – but some will be illuminating and perhaps even inspiring.

8. Your struggles are different from your child’s struggles, but your struggles are real too

The child you know is still with you, but different. You may need to grieve the loss of a son or daughter before you can truly welcome a new daughter or son into your life. Let yourself do this. It’s also possible your child does not clearly identify as female or male, and that can be confusing and disorienting in its own right. These feelings are natural. Be patient with yourself as you move through them. Your child will be aware this is how you are feeling even though you may seldom say so directly. Pretending otherwise neither helps nor builds trust.

Whatever reassurance you can honestly offer your child will help both of you. “This is a lot for me to take in, but I know we can get through this together. I love you no matter what” might be enough. Try not to overwhelm your child with negative feelings. Whenever you can, share any hurt, fear, or disappointment with other adults - especially those who are going through similar experiences. Reassure your child (and yourself) that you will eventually find your way through to loving your new daughter, son, or gender creative child with all your heart.

9. Know that the world isn’t going to end

Life goes on. What may seem like an end of one kind can also be the beginning of another. You and your child will find that a lot of life continues the same. While some people may be judgmental, you will also find support in unexpected places. There is acceptance in the world that you might not have known about before.

10. You’ll find helpful information and support

There are many wonderful people and sources of information that can support you and your child as you come to understand more about this issue. Hundreds of websites are dedicated to assisting trans youth and adults, and most major cities have groups that meet regularly. Check out the *MyGSA.ca* Resource page for local listings.

References

Conron KJ, Scott G, Stowell GS, Landers SJ. Transgender health in Massachusetts: Results from a household probability sample of adults. *American Journal of Public Health* 2012;102(1):118-122.



SUPPORTING GENDER CREATIVE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

These sections are taken from Rainbow Health Ontario's Fact Sheet: *Supporting Gender Independent Children and their Families*. To access the complete RHO Fact Sheet: http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/admin/contentEngine/contentDocuments/Gender_Independent_Children_final.pdf

** The terms gender independent and gender non-conformity have been changed to gender creative to remain consistent with the language used in this resource — except in the case of direct quotes or research.*

Understanding Gender Creativity in Children

- Gender creative children are very diverse. Some may strongly and consistently identify with a gender role which differs from their natal sex. Others may express a gender identity which blends aspects of multiple genders and is fluid or changing. And others may be comfortable in their assigned sex, but behave in ways which do not conform to social norms, for example preferring clothing and activities typically associated with the other gender.^{3,4}
- Being gender creative is not intended as defiant behaviour on the part of a child nor is it caused by parenting style or experiences of abuse.⁵ Only in very rare circumstances will a child alter their gender expression in response to a traumatic event⁶. In the overwhelmingly majority of situations, gender creative behaviour is simply a natural expression of the diversity of human experience.^{2,5,6,7}
- The meaning attached to gender creativity varies across cultural contexts. Historically, the existence of a social role for Two Spirit people (those seen to possess both a male and female spirit) was documented within over 130 Indigenous nations in North America⁸ and there is much evidence to suggest that Two Spirit children were often regarded as blessings to their families.⁹ Diverse expressions of gender have been and continue to be valued in some cultures, including but not limited to Indigenous people in the South Pacific region,^{10,11} Indonesia,¹² and other areas of Southeast Asia.¹³

- Social expectations shape the interpretation of, and response to, gender creative children. Prior to puberty, the range of behaviour considered socially acceptable for girls tends to be broader and feminine behaviour among boys tends to elicit more concern.² One gender identity clinic reported a referral rate of 6 times higher for feminine boys than masculine girls, even though what was deemed 'cross-gender behaviour' was more common among girls.¹⁴
- Of the research which has sought to establish the prevalence of gender creativity in children, results vary widely since what is considered to be masculine or feminine is generally not objective nor quantifiable. One study found that 2-4% of boys and 5-10% of girls behaved as the "opposite sex" from time to time.¹⁵ Another study found that 22.8% of boys and 38.6% of girls exhibited 10 or more different "gender atypical behaviours".¹⁶
- The societal stigma which accompanies gender creative children may lead some families to require additional services and support. In addition, for some children there are unique medical care considerations. Families often seek support either when the child is first entering school or first entering adolescence.⁷

Gender Creativity in Children and Mental Health

- The World Professional Association for Transgender Health states that gender expression which does not conform to social norms is not, itself, a mental health problem: "Being transgender, transsexual or gender non-conforming is a matter of diversity, not pathology".¹⁷

- Beginning in the 1960's however, children with an atypical gender expression began to be understood through a disease model which framed their behaviours as pathological and in need of correction. In turn, they were subjected to reparative psychological treatments designed to bring their gender expression in line with social norms.^{18,19,20}

Preventing children from growing up to be gay or transgender were the stated goals of many of these treatment programs.

- Since 1980, many gender creative children have been diagnosed with *Gender Identity Disorder in Children*.²¹ This diagnosis is highly controversial and has been criticized for pathologizing sexual and gender diversity²², reinforcing sexist stereotypes²², and casting a broad social problem as an individual pathology.²³ This diagnosis will become *Gender Dysphoria in Children* in the forthcoming fifth version (2013) of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5), a publication by the American Psychiatric Association used to classify mental disorders. Although this diagnosis is controversial, it is also used to provide access to important medical gender transition care for gender creative adolescents.²⁴
- Contemporary approaches to childhood gender creativity are moving away from pathologizing treatments and towards affirmative models in which the focus is not on children's behaviours but on parents/guardians learning to support their child. In the affirmative approach, the goals of intervention with families are to: destigmatize gender creativity; promote the child's pride and self-worth; strengthen the parent-child bond; create opportunities for peer support among families; and offer parents/guardians the advocacy skills needed to create safe spaces for their child in daycares, schools and other social environments.^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29}

- Some clinicians continue to advocate for treatment interventions which attempt to prevent children from growing up to be transgender.^{30,31} Other clinicians have deemed these treatments harmful³² and proposed that therapists advocating these treatments are "to be avoided".² The World Professional Association for Transgender Health states: "Treatment aimed at trying to change a person's gender identity and lived gender expression to become more congruent with sex assigned at birth ... is no longer considered ethical".¹⁷
- Evidence to support an affirming approach is beginning to emerge. A recent study compared mental health in comparable gender creative children across two treatment programs with distinct approaches: one clinic in which gender creativity was treated as a disorder and another in which parents were encouraged to support and affirm their children. The children in the supportive program had substantially fewer behavioural problems, indicating that the approach which parents seek and receive may impact significantly on childhood mental health.³³
- In addition, another study found that gender creative children who are strongly pressured to conform are "prone to anxiety, sadness, social withdrawal, self deprecation, and other signs of internalized distress".³⁴
- Though gender creativity is not itself a mental health problem, stigma, social ostracization, hostility and even violence, all impact on gender creative children's emotional and psychological wellbeing, often manifesting in the form of depression and anxiety.^{4,6}

- Gender creative children have been found to be more likely to acquire post-traumatic stress disorder by early adulthood.³⁵ In older trans youth, studies have found very high rates of suicidality.^{36,37}
- For some gender creative adolescents, the onset of puberty may bring on emotional distress as their bodies develop in a direction they are profoundly uncomfortable with.²⁴ This type of distress is referred to as Gender Dysphoria¹⁷ and can manifest in depression, suicidality and self-harm.²⁴ For these young people, gender transition is an important consideration.

Social Stressors on Gender Creative Children and Their Families

- Gender creative children can face a high level of social rejection from peers³⁸ and this may increase through their years in school.² Parents/Guardians of gender creative children may also face rejection from friends and family members who are intolerant of their decisions regarding their child's gender expression.^{3,4}
- In a survey of Canadian LGBTQ high-school students, 95% of trans youth reported feeling unsafe at school.⁴⁰ Many parents cite bullying and safety in schools as their biggest concern.⁴
- In some cases, child welfare authorities have attempted to apprehend gender creative children out of a misguided belief that parental support for gender diversity constitutes child abuse.⁴¹

- Some parents are intolerant of gender diversity and may contribute to a child's stress with negative attitudes.¹ A recent study found children who were gender creative were more likely than gender typical children to be targeted for abuse and violence from their own family members.⁴²
- Despite these concerns, social rejection and abuse is not inevitable and many resources are being developed to support children within their families,^{4,5,26,27,28} schools^{4,43,44} and social service organizations such as child welfare agencies.²⁹

Transition: Social and Medical Options

- Many gender creative children will not want or need to transition to a new gender role. If provided the space to explore a range of activities and gender identities, many will place themselves comfortably on a spectrum between male and female or will grow to feel comfortable in their assigned gender role.
- For others however, their cross gender identification remains certain and consistent and living in their assigned gender role may be too distressing to be consistent with their healthy growth. It is important for parents/guardians and providers to pay close attention to what young people communicate about their needs, in particular, to signs of distress. If a young person is in distress regarding their gender role, the adults in their life may need to consider, together with the young person, options for social and/or medical transition to improve mental health and reduce self-harm risks.^{3,4}

Social Transition

- Social transition consists of a change in social gender role and may include a change of name, clothing, appearance, and gender pronoun. For example, a male-born child wishing to socially transition would likely begin using the pronoun “she”, change her name, begin to present herself as a girl, attend school as a girl and live her daily life as a girl. Families in this situation may make a variety of decisions regarding privacy and how open they wish to be about the child’s history.⁴ For pre-pubertal children, social transition is the only option as medical intervention is not recommended prior to puberty.⁵⁸
- The decision for a child to socially transition is not a simple one and should be made jointly between the child, the parents/guardians, and supportive professionals if available. Some clinicians recommend encouraging parents/guardians of gender creative children to follow their child’s lead and avoid imposing their own preferences.⁷
- Experienced clinicians have reported that in some children, the need for transition presents itself clearly as there is obvious distress in the original gender role and obvious wellbeing in the new role. In contrast, other children are clearly comfortable with their assigned sex and desire only to express themselves in ways which are considered less common for their gender role. These clinicians state that for children who are in between these two experiences, the path is less clear.^{6,7}
- Social transition in young children is a relatively new practice and long-term research in this area is lacking. Parent and clinician reports indicate that children’s comfort and happiness can improve dramatically with this option.^{3,4,6}

Clinicians have indicated that there may be children who choose to transition back to their original gender role at the onset of puberty.^{7,53} In one study, young people in this position found it difficult to explain this choice to their friends and families.⁵³ Thus, children pursuing social transition should be reassured that they can return to their original gender role at any time and parents/guardians are best advised that another transition may be possible.⁷

- Social transition is becoming more common for pre-pubertal children and those families beginning this process can greatly benefit from peer contact with others and a strong support system to assist them in facing social stigma and advocating for their rights within schools and other institutions.⁷

Information about medical transitioning as well as outcomes, gaps in research and implications for health care providers is available on the RHO fact sheet.

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STRATEGIES FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION OF A TRANS OR GENDER CREATIVE CHILD

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Adapted from the *Canadian Teachers’ Federation document: Supporting Transgender and Transsexual Students in K-12 Schools* (2012). Original title: *Strategies for a Successful Transition of a Transsexual Child*.

Please note that this piece originally used transsexual and transgender. We have chosen to use gender creative in this resource, and therefore have replaced these with trans and gender creative to maintain consistency.

No two children will transition in exactly the same way. The following strategies are designed to provide practical suggestions to help parents/guardians and caregivers support a child through the in-school transition process. Consider how each strategy may be useful in your unique situation. Always keep in mind your child’s immediate health, safety, and educational needs and make adjustments accordingly.

1. A parent/guardian and transitioning child may be flexible. This may be difficult if the child is very young, such as in early elementary. “Most transgender children still live in the shadows, hiding from a world that sees them as freaks of nature. Rejected by their families, many grow up hating their bodies, and fall victim to high rates of depression, drug abuse, violence and suicide” (Goldberg & Adriano, 2008). A plan should be formulated, but preparation should be made to change the plan if circumstances warrant it. This plan may include conversations with the school district, principal, and perhaps select teachers such as the guidance counsellor and/or physical education teacher. Work with your school to identify a list of “safe people” on staff to ensure that your child always has a support person available (Luecke, 2011).
2. Remember, transitioning genders is a public process and one that cannot be hidden. Accordingly, it may be difficult to keep the transition of your child a secret from others. Include this reality in planning for and with you child. Liaise with your school district’s communications department, media, and legal specialists to ensure that your child’s right to confidentiality is respected.

3. As a parent/guardian, you should be cautiously open with others regarding your child's transition. Parents/Guardians should always choose allies carefully. As a parent/guardian, you may need to assist your child in finding their best allies. Your level of assistance may depend greatly upon your child's age.
4. Welcome questions about your child's transition and attempt to be patient with inquiries. Try to avoid angry or hostile responses. Be natural about your child's transition. Be neither apologetic, nor boastful. Remember for many individuals, this will be their first exposure to issues of gender identity. Work with your child on how to answer questions that they may face. However, as Luecke (2011) suggests, "It shouldn't be the transgender child's responsibility to educate others" (p. 137). Encourage your school to provide professional development for staff, workshops for parents/guardians, and lessons for students on gender identity, creativity, and expression.
5. Enlist the support of the district and/or school administration, counsellors, school social worker, and teachers. In some cases, you and your transitioning child may find minimal support. Be prepared to deal with the possibility that there may not be institutional experience or support for you or your transitioning child to rely on. Disclose information on a need-to-know basis with appropriate school personnel only.
6. Underplay rather than overplay the "ordinariness" of your child's transition. Remember, it may be difficult for your child to immediately act "normal" and "appropriate" in their self-identified gender. Voice, intonations, gestures, and actions may be overdone or underdone as your child reflects what they perceive to be within the "normal" gender range. Assist your child on this matter. Encourage them to express gender roles and behaviors that feel comfortable to them within a safe environment such as your home or among close friends.

7. Be aware that some students and parents/guardians may object to your child's transition and continued presence within the school or district. Have a plan to deal with this possible outcome. At times, a great inner strength will be necessary to maintain self-confidence. Assist your child in developing the self-esteem necessary to successfully move through this time of transition while maintaining their educational focus and personal well-being.



"Look for the hidden blessings. The bad stuff is going to be easy to see. It's going to be right in your face. But there are blessings too. Amazing chances to love and to be loved. To see your child blossom. To find out about your own issues and find freedom from the dark places inside that you didn't even know were there. Look for those things".

– Parent, Central Toronto Youth Services, 2008, p. 1

8. Consider scheduling the transition of your child, so they "present" for the first time in their self-identified gender either at the beginning of the school year or during the last week or two of the school year. The latter may facilitate a "smooth" start to the new school year the following September. A third strategy would be to request a placement in a different school or school district.

These suggestions are not hard and fast rules, but guidelines that should be adopted and modified by each particular family. It is also recommended that you work with qualified medical professionals and/or educational specialists who can help you develop a transition strategy to support your child at school.

Resources

Luecke, J.C. (2011). Working with transgender children and their classmates in pre-adolescence: Just be supportive. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 8(2), 116-156.



PROTECTING LGBTQ YOUTH

(Adapted from PREVNET's *Parents of LGBTQ Youth*, <http://www.prevnet.ca/bullying/parents/parents-of-lgbtq-youth>)

All Youth Deserve To Feel Safe.

Questioning or accepting one's sexual orientation or gender identity can be a difficult process for teens, especially when coupled with the other stresses of adolescence. At any given time, approximately 4% of teens identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Two Spirit, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ), and many more are becoming aware of their same-sex attractions or their gender identity. They are more likely to be targeted for bullying, sexual harassment and physical abuse and face a greater risk of social isolation.



Cisnormativity: A cultural/societal bias, often implicit, that assumes all people are cisgender and so privileges cisgender identities and ignores or underrepresents gender variance.

Heteronormativity: A cultural/societal bias, often implicit, that assumes all people are straight and so privileges heterosexuality and ignores or underrepresents same-sex relationships.

The types of bullying experienced by LGBTQ youth (or youth perceived to be LGBT or Q) are often very similar to other types of bullying in adolescence, but students are not as supported due to heteronormativity and cisnormativity as well as homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. The result of these realities is that LGBTQ youth (and youth perceived

to be LGBTQ) are often marginalized and excluded by their peers (as well as adults) and therefore often do not have the supportive networks to help them deal with bullying that other students have. It may also not be clear to whom students can go for support. In addition, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying are often not noticed, not taken seriously, not addressed, or not addressed in the same way as other types of bullying. It is important to note that students who are perceived to be LGBT or Q are also on the receiving end of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.

Types of Bullying Experienced by LGBTQ Youth (or those perceived to be LGBTQ)

- **Physical Bullying:** Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, stealing or damaging property.
- **Sexual harassment and humiliation:** aggressive or insulting language, sexual assault, humiliating comments and actions.
- **Verbal Bullying:** Name-calling ("fag", "dyke", "lezzie", "queer", "freak", "tranny" etc.), mocking or hurtful teasing, humiliating or threatening someone.
- **Social Bullying:** Excluding others from the group, gossiping or spreading rumours, setting others up to look foolish, and damaged friendships.
- **Cyberbullying:** Using email, cell phones, text messages and internet sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships.

Signs of Victimization Among LGBTQ Youth

Because of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia as well as heteronormativity and cisnormativity, LGBTQ youth can often suffer from anxiety and depression or problem behaviours. They can live with the threat of discrimination and violence, and the fear that friends and family will not accept them and/or support their decision to come out. LGBTQ youth may suddenly withdraw from family and friends to avoid discussing their sexual orientation or gender identity. They may act out against parents/guardians or peers to distract from questions about their sexual orientation or gender identity, or in defense against real (or feared) rejection and harassment.

Signs of LGBTQ Youth Victimization

Bruises and scrapes are easy to see. But there are other signs that your child may be being bullied. These may include:

- Change in behaviour, especially in social situations
- Symptoms of depression, anxiety, loneliness, sleeplessness
- Low self-esteem
- Reluctance to go to school / unexplained absence
- Drop in grades / loss of interest or effort
- Avoidance or fear of specific locations such as a neighbourhood store, playground, or school
- Crying before and/or after school or a group sport/recreational event
- Exhibiting symptoms associated with illness without being sick (nausea, weakness, headaches...)
- Suicidal thoughts/comments
- References to running away or quitting school or a team
- Loss of interest in social events that they might have enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained broken personal possessions, loss of money or personal items
- Sudden disinterest in using their computer or cellphone

Signs that your child may be bullying others

It's hard to admit, but sometimes our children bully others. Some signs may include:

- Change in usual behaviour, especially in social situations
- No lasting friendships; difficulty in maintaining friendships
- Symptoms of anger, depression, anxiety, loneliness
- Sense of entitlement; difficulty forgiving others' errors/hurtful actions

- Need for power; need for control over others
- Intolerance of differences
- Inappropriate, hurtful sense of humour
- Constantly hangs out at specific locations such as a neighbourhood store, playground or school for no reason
- Secretive; judgmental of others; blames others
- Thinks about suicide, running away or quitting school
- Loss of interest in social events that they might have enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained personal possessions, money, food
- Sudden, secretive behaviour when using a cellphone or computer
- Communication from the school with concerns about your child's behaviour

For additional information on bullying and bullying prevention. See www.witsprogram.ca www.prevnet.ca

Strategies for Parents/Guardians to Help Youth Deal with LGBTQ Bullying

These strategies are with respect to preventing or reducing bullying as a result of a person's actual (or perceived) sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (remember that straight and cisgender youth are also targets of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia if they are perceived to be LGBTQ).

• Take time to listen

Listen to your child and provide comfort and support. Let your child know that you will help them through difficult times. Whether your child has been bullied, has bullied others, or has witnessed bullying, feelings of

being misunderstood, alone, and helpless are common. Your understanding and attention lets them know that they aren't alone, that you care and that help is available.

- **Lead By Example**

Demonstrate respect and acceptance of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions as well as other diversities such as ethnicity and body size. Do not tolerate homophobic, biphobic or transphobic slang for LGBTQ people (e.g., fag, lezzie, dyke, trannie). Do not brush off homophobic, biphobic or transphobic comments made by others. Point out and challenge heteronormativity and cisnormativity when you see it, including media misrepresentation of people who identify as LGBTQ.

- **Challenge Your Own Assumptions**

Don't automatically assume your child or their friends are heterosexual ("straight") or cisgender as it could inhibit your child from seeking your support. Identify your own misconceptions and stereotypes about LGBTQ issues, and create an environment where diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity are embraced.

- **Encourage Youth to Report**

If your child is being harassed, help them to deal with it. LGBTQ youth are often afraid to come forward for fear of victimization or because they are not "out". Let your child know that you want to hear about every incident of bullying and harassment. All youth have the right to feel safe.

- **Listen Closely; Respond Quickly**

Parental support can be a powerful buffer against the negative effects of victimization. LGBTQ youth may deny bullying because of shame or fear. Parents/Guardians must be aware of the signs of bullying. Treat every incident as important and intervene on your child's behalf.

- **Be Inclusive of All Youth**

Children are influenced by how their parents/guardians act. Create positive connections among all youth by encouraging and

reinforcing respectful and cooperative behaviour whenever you see it. Treat LGBTQ youth as members of your family that you would expect to be respected and nurtured

- **Reduce the Chances for Bullying**

Peer support is very important for your child; seek to surround your adolescent with youth who will stand up for them. Enroll in school, community groups, and organized activities that support creating LGBTQ inclusive and safer spaces. Work with the school to promote an inclusive, respectful and accepting learning environment.

- **Seek outside support**

LGBTQ youth who are bullied often have difficulties with depression and self-esteem. Counsellors can provide support through individual counselling or support groups for LGBTQ adolescents who are having difficulty fitting in, and who may be marginalized or targeted by peers. The *New Brunswick Policies and LGBTQ Resources* section has a list of local resources, including counselling.

- **Publically Support LGBTQ Issues**

Speak up for LGBTQ youth by contacting the people responsible for policy development in school boards and provincial and federal governments. Increase policy makers' sensitivity to the issues faced by these youth. Support policies that recognize the existence of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. Attend a Pride parade if there is one in your area.

- **Educate yourself and get support**

If your child is LGBT or Q, educate yourself about the issues, and find a support group where you can ask questions, get information, meet other parents/guardians of LGBTQ children and youth, and talk about your successes, fears and worries. PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) have chapters in Moncton, Saint John and Sackville. You can find the information for these groups in the *New Brunswick Policies and LGBTQ Resources* section.





SUICIDE AND LGBTQ YOUTH

Adapted from Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, Guide for the Development of an LGBTQ Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy (2012) (<http://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/LGBTQ-YSPS-Conference-Paper.pdf>)

Statistical information also taken from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-624-x/2012001/article/11696-eng.ht>

According to Statistics Canada, suicide is the second leading cause of death among Canadians aged 15-24—only accidents (unintentional injuries) cause more deaths. Every year, an average of 500 Canadian youth die by suicide (Statistics Canada, 2008). However, there is a lack of knowledge about how many of these youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two Spirit or queer, or are struggling with questions about their sexual orientation or gender identity (LGBTQ). What is apparent is that LGBTQ youth experience a high degree of vulnerability to suicidal ideation and behaviour, both in Canada and the United States, particularly in comparison to their non-LGBTQ peers.

Increasingly, studies confirm that suicidal thoughts and actions are more common among LGBTQ youth in comparison to their non-LGBTQ peers. There is substantial data to demonstrate this trend among LGB youth; however, few research studies have focused on the minorities within this minority group, such as trans, Two Spirit, questioning or racialized youth who identify as LGBT or Q (Haas et al., 2010). Some examples follow:

- Bullying can have a long-lasting effect on suicide risk and mental health. The relationship between bullying and suicide is stronger for lesbian, gay and bisexual youth than for their heterosexual peers (Kim & Leventhal, 2008).
- A study in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario revealed that 28% of transgender and Two Spirit people had attempted suicide at least once (Taylor, 2006).
- Over half of LGB students (47% of GB males and 73% of LB females) have thought about suicide (Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006).

- In 2010, 47% of trans youth in Ontario had thought about suicide and 19% had attempted suicide in the preceding year (Scanlon, Travers, Coleman, Bauer, & Boyce, 2010).
- LGBTQ youth are 4 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2009).
- Adolescent youth who have been rejected by their families for being LGB are 8.4 times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009).
- Both victims and perpetrators of bullying are at a higher risk for suicide than their peers. Children who are both victims and perpetrators of bullying are at the highest risk (Kim & Leventhal, 2008; “Suicide and bullying: Issue brief,” 2011).

Schools are a critical source of both risk and protection for LGBTQ youth (Nichols, 1999; Taylor et al., 2011). According to *Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Canadian Schools* (Taylor et al., 2011), LGBTQ youth face greater prejudice and victimization in their schools and a correspondingly lower level of school connectedness than their non-LGBTQ peers:

- 68% of trans students, 55% of LB students and 42% of GB students reported being verbally harassed about their perceived gender identity or sexual orientation.
- 20% of LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted about their perceived gender identity or sexual orientation.
- 49% of trans students, 33% of lesbian students and 40% of gay male students have experienced sexual harassment in school in the last year.
- 64% of LGBTQ students feel unsafe in their schools (compared to 15% of non-LGBTQ students).

- 30% of trans students and 20% of LGB students strongly agreed that they sometimes “feel very depressed” about their school (compared to 6% of non-LGBTQ students).



Safe and caring school strategies that create safe and inclusive schools for LGBTQ students and all other students are an essential aspect of suicide prevention. These include:

- LGBTQ specific training for educators and EST-Guidance Counsellors on cultural competency and suicide prevention.
- Legislation and thoroughly implemented policies regarding safety and inclusivity in schools that address sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Establishment of gay-straight alliances (GSAs), or similar LGBTQ-specific safe space and support groups
- Respectful inclusion of LGBTQ issues, realities and role models in school life, including in the curriculum
- Peer education initiatives that include LGBTQ suicide prevention



RESOURCES

ONLINE/ORGANIZATIONS

Gender Creative Kids / Enfants Transgenres Canada

www.gendercreativekids.ca

GenderCreativeKids.ca provides resources for supporting and affirming gender creative kids within their families, schools and communities. By offering information and opportunities for connection between parents/guardians and caregivers, educators, health and social service providers, researchers, activists, and children and youth across Canada, we hope to contribute towards transforming our world into a safe, affirming, and joyful place for all children.

Transparent Canada

*www.transparentcanada.ca

Transparent is a Canadian group, started by a woman in St. Catherine’s who’s child came out as trans, and aims to provide peer support to and connect other parents/guardians of trans youth. They can be found on line at www.transparentcanada.ca.

Transfamily

*www.transfamily.org

A similar site for parents/guardians in the U.S. using a PFLAG like model.

COLAGE’s Kids of Trans Online Community

This group creates community and a national support network through sharing stories, asking questions, posting resources and relevant media, videos, articles, events and more! The group is through Facebook and is open to anyone who has a trans parent (ages 13+). Our amazing facilitators Amanda Veldorale-Griggin and Monica Cenfield Lenfest, both have trans parents and have been involved with supporting and creating community around the KOT identity for years. The group is “secret” to protect your privacy and is not visible to the larger Facebook community. You can join the group by emailing kidsoftrans@colage.org

COLAGE

COLAGE unites people with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer parents/guardians into a network of peers and supports them as they nurture and empower each other to be skilled, self-confident, and just leaders in our collective communities.

COLAGE is an American organization, however anyone is welcome to join their online communities such as their Family Group by emailing robin@colage.org, or check out their blog: <http://kidsafe.tumblr.com>

Transactive

*www.transactiveonline.org

A Portland Oregon resource for the parents/guardians of trans children and youth - has some useful resources and simple clear language

Transkids Purple Rainbow

*www.transkidspurplerrainbow.com

Parents/guardians of young transchildren looking for images of young and happy trans kids can find them here.

Public Health Agency of Canada

Questions and Answers: Sexual Orientation in Schools
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/rp/so-os/index-eng.php>

Questions and Answers: Gender Identity in Schools
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/rp/gi-is/index-eng.php>

These booklets can also be ordered for free by calling The Publications Department of The Public Health Agency of Canada at 1-866-225-0709 (TTY: 1 800 267-1245).

BOOKS

Brill, Stephanie and Pepper, Rachel. (2008). *The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals*: Cleis Press.

Pepper, Rachel, Ed. (2012). *Transitions of the Heart: Stories of Love, Struggle and Acceptance by Mothers of Transgender and Gender Variant Children*: Cleis Press.

Ehrensaft, Diane. (2011) *Gender Born, Gender Made: The Experiment* Press.

Green, F., & Friedman, M. (2013). *Chasing Rainbows: Exploring Gender Fluid Parenting Practices*. Toronto: New Demeter Press.

ARTICLES

Stocker, David. It's the Small Things That Matter Most. <http://etfvoice.ca/article/its-the-small-things-that-matter-most/>

Pyne, J. (2014). Gender Independent Kids: A paradigm shift in approaches to gender non-conforming children. *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 23(1), 1-8.

HANDBOOKS, GUIDES ETC.

Pamphlet for Parents/Guardians: “Are You Worried About Your Child’s Gender Expression”

Download for free

<http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/searchResults.cfm?mode=3&resourceID=18e3bdac-f24d-4ee7-a570-458f2f9c650f>

Pamphlet for Parents/Guardians: “Transition Options for Gender Independent Children and Adolescents”

Download for free

<http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/searchResults.cfm?mode=3&resourceID=192698e1-9762-e2c1-601d-10c17d024fa2>

Pamphlet for Parents/Guardians: “Advocating for Your Gender Independent Child”

Download for free

<http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/searchResults.cfm?mode=3&resourceID=1952f224-b9fc-2f1d-a51b-4cdda77fbe57>

Kids of Trans Resource Guide

Plenty of transgender people have children, but there are only a few resources available for transgender parents/guardians and their families. This guide is the first of its kind, a resource specifically created for and by people with transgender parents/guardians. You can download the guide at: <http://www.colage.org/resources/kids-of-trans-resource-guide/>

Supportive Families, Healthy Children.

Key information from our research on how families can help support their lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)

children. These family education booklets have been designated as a “Best Practice” resource for suicide prevention for LGBT people by the national Best Practices Registry for Suicide Prevention (USA).

Family Acceptance Project <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/publications>

Impacts of Strong Parental Support for Trans Youth

The aim of this report is to provide preliminary data on the health impacts of parental support for trans (transgender or transsexual) youth aged 16 to 24 in Ontario.

Trans Pulse: <http://transpulseproject.ca/tag/trans-youth/>

***The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals**, by Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper, 2008. Very detailed, calm, reassuring and very helpful.

Extensive and professional, with quotes from many children and families. It can be bought on line from the Gender Spectrum Family website, www.genderspectrum.org.

***Families in TRANSition**, Central Toronto Youth Services created this manual for the parents/guardians of trans youth. It’s available for free download from their website at

http://www.ctys.org/about_CTYS/FamiliesInTransition.htm.

***Our Trans Children (brochure) and Trans Forming Families, Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones** (book) from PFLAG USA are supportive, and answer questions. Tends to focus on teens and older. The brochure can be downloaded for free and copies of the brochure or the book can be ordered from their site <http://community.pflag.org/Page.aspx?pid=413>.

VIDEOS

Reteaching Gender and Sexuality.

Reteaching Gender & Sexuality is a message about queer youth action and resilience. The video was generated to contribute additional queer/trans youth voices to the national conversations about queer/trans youth lives. Reteaching Gender & Sexuality intends to steer the conversation beyond the symptom of bullying, to consider systemic issues and deeper beliefs about gender and sexuality that impact queer youth. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51kQQuVpKxQ>

PUT THIS ON THE {MAP} – DVD & Teachers' Guide

Fed up with a lack of queer visibility, young people in Seattle's eastside suburbs weave together this ground-breaking narrative of shifting identities and a quest for social change. From getting beat-up in a schoolyard to being picked up as a runaway, queer youth exercise courage and resilience daily. PUT THIS ON THE {MAP} is an intimate invitation into stories of social isolation and violence, fearlessness and liberation. Professing expertise over their experiences, queer youth provide a candid evaluation of their schools, families, and communities — moving an audience from self-reflection to action.

<http://putthisonthemap.org>

CONFERENCES FOR FAMILIES

Gender Odyssey Family Conference - August in Seattle - <https://www.genderodysseyfamily.org/>

Gender Spectrum Conference - July in Berkley, California - <http://www.genderspectrum.org/>

Philadelphia Trans Health Conference - June in Philadelphia - <http://www.trans-health.org/content/youth-activities>

RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

*Bending the Mold: An Action Kit for Transgender Youth, a toolkit of resources for transyouth addressing how to make their highschools safer places. Available at <http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/bending-the-mold/order-bending-themold.html>

***Beyond the Binary: A Tool Kit for Gender Identity Activism in Schools**, from the GSA Network, available for download at <http://gsanetwork.org/resources/overview/beyond-binary>

Probably the most accessible, most readable fun toolkit of it's kind!

Let's Get This Straight

Let's Get This Straight reaches out to young people with one or more gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer parents/guardians to provide tools to combat homophobia, take pride in their alternative family structures, and speak out against injustice. This short but thorough book profiles forty-five diverse youth and young adults, all of whom voice their opinions and provide advice for other youth living in LGBTQ households. *Let's Get This Straight* also includes probing questions, fun activities, engaging quizzes, and reflective journal sections for youth to share their feelings and experiences about having a gay parent.

CAMPS FOR YOUTH

The Ten Oaks Project: Camp Ten Oaks and Project Acorn

Based in Ottawa, the Ten Oaks Project is a not-for-profit, charitable organization that engages and connects children and youth from LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two Spirit, queer) communities. The Ten Oaks Project provides a summer camp for kids 8-17 (Camp Ten Oaks), and a leadership retreat for youth 16-24 (Project Acorn. www.tenoaksproject.org)

Camp Aranu'tiq

Camp Aranu'tiq is a weeklong, overnight summer camp in Massachussets for transgender and gender-variant youth ages 8 through 15: <http://www.camparanutiq.org/>

*Resources which have been sourced from the following website: www.juxtaposeconsulting.com where you can find additional helpful information about queer and trans issues.

Thank you also to Jake Pyne for his recommended resources.

**New Brunswick LGBTQ Inclusive
Education Resource is part of
Egale's Safer and Accepting
Schools.**

