

What is the **purpose** of the BC school system?

As articulated in the School Act, the **purpose** of the BC school system is to enable all learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic, and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy. To achieve this **purpose**, the school system must strive to ensure that differences among learners do not impede their participation in school, their mastery of learning outcomes, or their ability to become contributing members of society.

What are the **values** of the BC school system?

The school system is expected to promote **values** expressed in the [Constitution Act](#), the [Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), the [Official Languages Act](#), the [Multiculturalism Act](#), the [BC Human Rights Code](#), the [Employment Equity Act](#) and the [School Act](#), respecting the rights of all individuals in accordance with the law.

Why Sexual Identity and Gender Identity (SOGI)?

In January 2016, a special report was published identifying sexual and gender minority youth as particularly marginalized, vulnerable, and in need of support.

When was SOGI recognized?

In July 2016 the BC Human Rights Code was amended to include gender identity and expression as a protected ground.

How did this impact the BC School System?

In September 2016, the BC Ministry of Education directed all school boards to expressly reference sexual orientation and gender identity in district and school codes of conduct.

Can parents exempt their students from discussions regarding gender identity and expression?

No. Regularly exempting some students from classroom discussions touching on diversity, inclusivity, and acceptance within a public school program designed to promote precisely those **principles** would run a serious risk of endorsing the non-acceptance of students of other family backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender expressions, and gender identities.

That **principle** would be contradicted and undermined if every time certain students' families and/or identities were discussed in class as being healthy and acceptable, they saw some other members of their class leave so that they would not be exposed to such statements of honor and respect.

What is Cognitive Dissonance and why is it important?

Cognitive Dissonance is a state in which there is a difference between your experiences or behaviour and your beliefs about what is true.

The argument based on cognitive dissonance asserts that children should not be exposed to information and ideas their parents disagree with. However, the number of different family models existing in the community means that some children will inevitably come from families that certain parents disapprove of. Giving these children an opportunity to discuss their family models may expose other children to some cognitive dissonance. Such dissonance is neither avoidable nor noxious. Children encounter it every day in the public school system as members of a diverse student body.

In fact, the cognitive dissonance that results from such encounters is simply a part of living in a diverse society. It is also a part of growing up. Through such experiences, children come to realize that not all of their values are shared by others.

Basic Principles

Under the BC Human Rights Code and the Charter, Boards must provide meaningful access to educational programs for all students, including students with diverse gender identities and expression. Students must feel welcomed and included in school, regardless of gender identity or expression.

Schools must respect student's choice of pronouns and preferred names. Where a student does not want parents to know, we will work with the student to determine whether, with appropriate support, disclosure to parents is possible. If communication with parents would compromise the health or welfare of a student, privacy will be respected.