

SOGI 123

by
ARC Foundation

Reflecting Back, and Looking Ahead



In July 2016, a change to the BC Human Rights Code to include gender identity and expression as prohibited grounds of discrimination became the catalyst for the BC Ministry of Education and school districts to take action. On September 8, 2016, all BC school districts were advised of the requirement to put in place District and School Codes of Conduct and policy that aligned with the change to the Human Rights Code. At this time, school districts were in various stages of readiness to implement strategies and policy, and needed support, thus garnering momentum for SOGI 123.

In the same year, the BC Ministry of Education, along with a group of provincial education organizations, embarked on a momentous journey that would create meaningful change to improve the lives of students of all sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI) in BC schools. Because of this incredible effort, SOGI-inclusive education is now a powerful initiative helping to make schools in BC – and in regions across Canada – safer and more welcoming for all students and staff.

Today, SOGI-inclusive education faces many challenges, even though sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression are protected by the BC Human Rights Code. There is a great deal of misinformation surrounding topics such as curriculum, teaching resources, and bathrooms. In some provinces, this has led to changes in policy at a provincial level that hinder the ability for some students to show up as their authentic selves at school. All schools should be inclusive places where students feel safe, accepted, respected, and welcome. And while educators have been working for years to build the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to support 2SLGBTQ+ students and families, those staff need the support and allyship of all their colleagues, including those in positions of leadership, to continue to create inclusive learning environments.

Studies have shown that SOGI-inclusive schools have a positive impact on the well-being of *all students*, not only those that identify within the 2SLGBTQ+ community. It is more important now than ever before that there is leadership voice, as well as subject matter expertise, to overcome the inaccurate ways SOGI in schools is currently being portrayed by individuals, in the media, and by some political parties. Most students go through life seeing themselves represented in the world around them. SOGI 123 helps ensure that 2SLGBTQ+ identities are reflected in the school environment, and that students can learn about the diversity of humanity.

In 2023 the BCPVPA, along with several Principal and Vice-Principal groups across BC school districts, took initiative by having SOGI 123 staff present to their members on managing these newly arising concerns. Through this leadership, educators continue to be empowered to remain inclusive, while handling parent and community curiosity with tact and kindness. Through our regular SOGI Educator Network meetings, educators and administrators alike continue to offer support and guidance to one another, and through our presentations, all school staff can deepen their understanding of what it

means to be proudly SOGI-inclusive. Collaboration within this community of educators is paramount to the well-being of staff, who can feel supported and validated in their experiences, and develop new skills to manage SOGI-related inquiries and concerns.

To support the sustainability of this work, ARC Foundation continues to offer development opportunities for educators such as hosting an annual SOGI Educator Summit, facilitating webinars, and working with District SOGI Leads to meet the distinct needs of districts by recommending both more targeted learning sessions, and support for parents' sessions. These are in addition to the collection of online resources available on our website, SOGleducation.org, which includes our SOGI-Inclusive Education Resource Guide, Learning Bursts for Educators, Parents' Guide to SOGI in Schools, and much more.



SOGleducation.org



Resource Guide



Learning Bursts



Parents' Guide

These resources have been created to support you along your journey and are helpful for those who are just getting started, and for those who have been doing this work for many years.

SOGI 123 resources focus on three key areas:

● **SOGI 1: Policies & Procedures**

The key components of effective policies and procedures that explicitly reference SOGI. Strong, actionable policy can make a huge difference in your SOGI-inclusion efforts; it is important that policies are well known so that they can be well implemented.

● **SOGI 2: Inclusive Environments**

Inclusive operations, language, spaces, and practices to help create positive and welcoming environments for all students and staff.

● **SOGI 3: Teaching Resources**

Lesson plans and other resources – created with educators, for educators – in age-appropriate approaches from K-12 that teach diversity and include examples of SOGI topics.

These resources provide opportunities for learning to reflect the diversity in students' lives and society, while also providing a sense of belonging for 2SLGBTQ+ students and staff.

We know that these are the building blocks of strong, SOGI-inclusive schools, and they can be a stepping stone toward combating the targeted attempts at discrediting this important work.

We are excited to share that SOGI 123 has expanded exponentially. While we once facilitated SOGI Educator Networks in BC and Alberta, we now have additional SOGI 123 Leads in Yukon, Saskatchewan, and Atlantic Canada. Having been developed and initially implemented in BC, SOGI 123 and the SOGI Educator Network proved to be a valuable source of resources and support for educators who were committed to creating SOGI-inclusive learning environments for their students. Through our annual survey process, the majority of SOGI Leads consistently report that ARC Foundation staff and [SOGileducation.org](https://www.sogileducation.org) are among their most helpful resources as it pertains to delivering SOGI-inclusive education. It is through the success stories from BC that this model is now being adapted for use in additional provinces and territories. We are very excited about the impact these ARC Foundation leaders can have on SOGI-inclusive education in their regions, and we are eager to share knowledge, expertise, and connection with educators across Canada.

Forward momentum with SOGI-inclusive education in BC continues to be championed by a dedicated group of provincial education partners, known as BC's K-12 SOGI Collaborative. The K-12 SOGI Collaborative includes the:

BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA)
BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF)
BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA)
BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA)
BC Ministry of Education and Child Care
BC Association of School Business Officials (BCASBO)
CUPE BC
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC)
First Nations Schools Association (FNSA)
First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC)
Métis Nation BC (MNBC)
Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA)

as well as ARC Foundation as facilitator. These organizations work together to identify, support, and provide advice on strategic actions that will facilitate SOGI-inclusive education and policies in BC schools.

One of the priorities identified by the K-12 SOGI Collaborative was the need for resources that further explored and empowered the identities of Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ Indigenous peoples. Since 2021, ARC Foundation and a dedicated group of educators and Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer volunteers have been collaborating on ensuring our SOGI-inclusive education lens includes Indigenous wisdom and knowledge. As a result, we have a full-time role dedicated to incorporating Indigenous perspectives into this work, with our SOGI 123 Lead – Indigenous

Dialogues. The hope is to develop more resources for educators on Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer identities, and to decolonize classrooms by incorporating more opportunities to include Indigenous perspectives on everyday things. Part of this work includes a commitment to Youth Voice and Leadership, as we navigate how empowering educators with these resources translates to students' wellness and belonging. Both FNEC and FNSA have offered incredible support for this initiative, providing opportunities to share learning and resources through conference participation and presentation. As we continue this work, we hope to gain more membership in our FNSA SOGI Educator Network, and encourage you to participate in our Indigenous SOGI Dialogue Circles as well.

The Indigenous SOGI Dialogue Circles are a space for Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer and LGBTQ+ Indigenous peoples and their **allies** to safely offer relationality and reflection to one another, work collaboratively toward a vision of SOGI-inclusive education that disrupts colonial constructs of identity, sexuality, and gender, and aims to offer culturally safe resources to schools in a way that weaves together the myriad of Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ experiences throughout. Time spent in circle is split between holding space for Indigenous joy, and offering community and relationality to Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer, and LGBTQ+ Indigenous Educators, as well as completing project-based, resource-focused work on Indigenous SOGI-inclusive education resources.

- Use this QR code to sign up:



- FNSA staff can use this QR code to join the FNSA SOGI Educator Network:



The BCPVPA has been instrumental in helping foster SOGI-inclusive education in BC through the efforts of SOGI 123. BCPVPA's leadership and voice is a big factor in helping create alignment and ensuring 2SLGBTQ+ students can feel safe, welcome, and see themselves – and be seen – in their school community.

For more SOGI 123 information and resources,
please visit SOGIeducation.org or contact us at info@sogieducation.org



ARC Foundation (ARC)

is a charitable organization that builds capacity within the K-12 education system through a collaborative network model to help reduce 2SLGBTQ+ discrimination in schools. SOGI 123 is a set of tools and resources that help create safer and more inclusive schools for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI).

This includes policies and procedures, inclusive environments, and teaching resources that help educators develop inclusive teaching practices.

SOGI Leads

Do you know who the SOGI Lead is in your school or district?

If not, please reach out to us at info@sogieducation.org and allow us to connect you!

Did you know that June is Pride month?

Here are a few ways to incorporate SOGI 123 into your planning:

Talk to your SOGI School Lead! Ask them what they need from you and build a plan together.

Check out our website, SOGIeducation.org for resources – including
Ways to Celebrate Pride.



Small changes can make a big difference. Take a look at our **All-Educators page** for SOGI-inclusion tips to support your journey at any stage!