

A National Youth Initiative

PRIDE GUIDE

**BY-YOUTH FOR-YOUTH GUIDE TO TACKLING GENDER-
BASED VIOLENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS**



National GSA Initiative - Pride Guide

PROJECT SUMMARY

Between February and March 2019, high school students from across Canada came together through virtual connections and online classrooms to discuss the significant and timely issues of gender-based violence experienced by youth in the sexual and gender-minority community. Under the guidance of expert mentors from the Canadian Arts, Entertainment, and Academic landscape, we collaborated on a 2-month learning project. We shared ideas, knowledge, and experiences, informed by our schools, cities, communities, provincial, and territorial perspectives. This culminated in a final, national youth leadership retreat focussing on gender-based violence initiatives, helping ourselves and our peers address this issue right now, in our schools. In an effort to capture and capitalize on our shared passion, we co-wrote this guidebook, *Pride Guide: By-Youth For-Youth Guide to Tackling Gender-Based Violence in Our Schools*.

We, the LGBTQ+ youth involved in this project, are representing a crucial voice in the developing national conversation around gender-based violence in our communities. We are speaking out and taking action in the face of transphobia, homophobia, and gender-associated discrimination. We are excited to share our ideas and passion with you. Please read and implement our suggested actions in your own school communities across Canada.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In the spring of 2019, with support from the Public Health Agency of Canada, TakingITGlobal and the Centre for Global Education brought together the Gender and Sexual Alliance (GSA) student groups from 12 high school, from across Canada came together to create a guidebook on how to best address the gender-based violence experienced by LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer and others) youth in this country. Their goal was to develop a by-youth for-youth guide that addressed necessary practices for developing and maintaining GSAs within schools.

With this goal in mind, the Centre for Global Education developed the framework for a national youth dialogue, wherein the coast-to-coast-to-coast schools could discuss the ongoing challenges they face, and strategize around possible solutions. Each week, for a total of eight weeks, youth collectively and collaboratively completed activities on an online classroom platform, communicated through videoconferences, and sought the guidance and mentorship from a series of prominent Canadian LGBTQ+ artists, activists, and academics. This culminated in a national youth leadership retreat, consisting of 30 high school student leaders from across country synthesizing the thoughts and ideas of their peers into a single, guiding document.

The purpose of this manual is to present a collection of by-youth for-youth strategies that address some of the most common challenges in creating GSAs and keeping them strong, inclusive, and task-oriented, specifically in the context of schools. The youth compiled this information with the hope that it will equip people with real-life ideas and experiences that can help them to grow and strengthen their GSAs.

Core components include:

- Defining gender-based violence
- Highlighting the importance of GSAs in schools
- Creating and maintaining successful GSAs
- Respecting identities, individuals, and language
- Designing effective and engaging projects
- Imagining what your schools can undertake right now
- Contextualizing the current Canadian experiences of LGBTQ+ youth

We, the youth involved in this project are excited to share our first-hand knowledge, thoughts, passion, and enthusiasm of community involvement and addressing GBV in our schools with other students from across the country. There was also deep discussion about the systemic changes that needed to occur beyond the development of this guide, and the potential for great youth-led initiatives and dialogues on the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth, in regard to health, wellbeing, and safety. We want to emphasize the needs we see in our schools for additional mental health awareness, sexual health education, and wellness support of their community within schools. In the meantime, please share this document - the voice and calls to action of Canadian youth - through your student and school networks.

All content in this manual, the PRIDE GUIDE, were directly provided by youth. The guidebook was compiled and copy-edited by the Centre for Global Education staff.

DEFINING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

In this guidebook, we are using a specific definition of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), focussing in on GBV as a type of violence that is directed towards an individual based on their sex assigned at birth, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. It is a violence that is not only physical, but can also involve emotional, verbal, mental, financial, and social abuse.

"Educate yourself then educate others – you can't have a good house, without a good foundation!!" Student, Collège Jeanne Sauvé, Winnipeg, MB



Having an established Gender & Sexuality Alliance (GSA, in this guidebook), Queer Straight Alliance (QSA), or Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) allows the school to have a clear LGBTQ+ community and presence. This provides students a safe place to express themselves and ask questions. GSAs are often used as a stepping stone, providing words and a voice, and/or coming out to family. Being around other queer people decreases feelings of isolation. There are real life benefits to GSAs existing. GSAs are able to amplify the voices of individual students, and bring forth concerns to the administration as a collective and not just as individuals. They provide broad experiences; not just the opinions of one individual.

An essential part of a safe school is finding supportive teachers. Teachers are the liaison between students and administration, with the ability to get to know individual students on a deeper level than the assistant principals and principal. A supportive teacher fosters a welcoming classroom space, and opens up discussions outside of the GSA environment. Conversation outside of queer designated spaces is crucial to acceptance and change. Students that don't have a supportive figure like a teacher or staff member to champion them or the cause and walk with the GSA will not be motivated and will not have access to the same resources as those with an involved and impactful leader. This idea of leadership carries over to students as well.

[illegible]

Without these strengths, the queer community will not be successful within schools, and we will not have the ability to thrive. Establishing a GSA, encouraging a supportive staff, and developing determined members and community, will help our school environments become more accepting and loving. The first step to equality is education, and our mission is to educate our schools and peers on how to better serve the wonderful community we call LGBTQ+.

PURPOSE & BENEFITS OF A GSA

"In our school there is a large population that displays homophobic tendencies to counteract this, many of our students - no matter their orientation - remind and/or educate others that the school is a Queer positive place and about the GSA that we have. This reinforces the idea of a unified school and establishes a school-wide support system. We believe that we shouldn't hold resentment toward these individuals because many of the students come from place where being queer is a crime." Student, Queen Elizabeth High School, Edmonton, AB

It is important to have a GSA to empower youth. We are the future. We need and deserve to be seen, heard, and celebrated for living our true, authentic identities. GSAs can work towards making a safer environment for all students to promote mental, physical, and emotional wellness.

"To transgender students, bullying is even more apparent. Youth are often outed and ridiculed by their peers. This bullying is also often looked over by teachers and/or adults in our schools as jokes or ignorance rather than hate. Youth can lead by example and encourage their peers to be accepting and respectful." Student, Collège Jeanne Sauvé, Winnipeg, MB

A GSA provides a sanctuary of youth struggling with questions. They can provide a peer-support network for those who cannot or do not want to seek counseling, and others who are devoted and passionate about social justice issues.

"GSAs are helpful to people discovering their identities." Student, Colonel By, Ottawa, ON

GSAs can also help raise awareness for the problems that matter in your school, your community and this world. Some of our groups have hosted events such as fundraisers, assemblies, and carnivals.

- Having a GSA promotes inclusivity and equality in schools. It also is a safe space for students and encourages them to make new friends with all different grade levels.
- GSAs allow students to interact with people who can perhaps relate to some of the struggles that come with being a teenager.
- GSAs can provide education for the confused/ignorant. Whether that be those who are questioning their sexuality and/or gender, or simply seeking knowledge on queer matters/history.
- GSAs provide a space for youth to seek acceptance and inclusion.



SETTING YOUR GSA UP FOR SUCCESS

When we were discussing the various strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges faced by our GSAs, and considering how to articulate the way in which we all could make our groups stronger, we came to a few important realizations. This was a learning moment for all of us, and revitalized how we want to approach our own groups in our own schools. The key we all identified was passion: Finding passionate youth who truly want to do something to make change in your school. You may have hopes, ideas, wishes or dreams for your school. But you will never see these put into action until you bring together a group of dedicated and driven youth. It is important that we take charge of our own needs and wants within their communities, believe in our voices and experiences, and find advocates and allies in our school administration that will help us channel our passion into change.

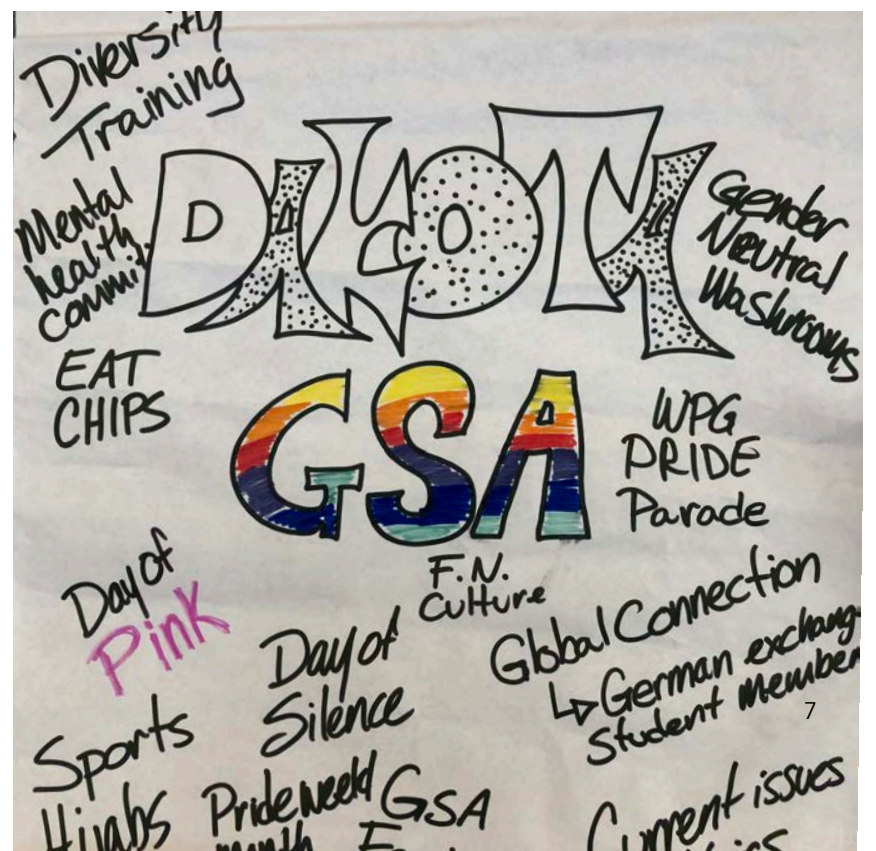
"We're quiet. But we're very passionate and committed. Out of the few teachers I've met, they're supportive of our GSA. We make GSA a safe space for everyone, we have positive relationships with everyone and we are kind and comfortable with each other." Student, Winston Knoll Collegiate, Regina, SK

We also realized that it is vital to meet frequently with your GSA members (once a week seems ideal) to keep conversations going and maintain momentum towards common goals. If there are significant gaps in times, then meetings are spent refocussing or reviewing, instead of remaining focussed on progress and next steps.

Some common issues experienced by Our GSAs & How to Tackle Them:

- Creating your GSA
 - Create a proposal for your principal/teachers to present the idea
 - Talk to other, nearby schools with GSAs to see what they have done so far to get ideas
 - Remind people that anyone can join
 - Find a safe space
 - Identify an interested & trustworthy teacher-sponsor
- Low participation
 - Encourage others to show up and participate
 - People like memes. Use memes and other aspects of pop culture to create interest in your club
 - Talk about past projects - feelings of accomplishment resonate with youth and encourages them to return to help see more changes/progress made

"Lack of participation is a major issue as it makes it difficult to do large-scale projects, while making the youth who do participate feel disappointed and overwhelmed. Additionally, the lack of participation

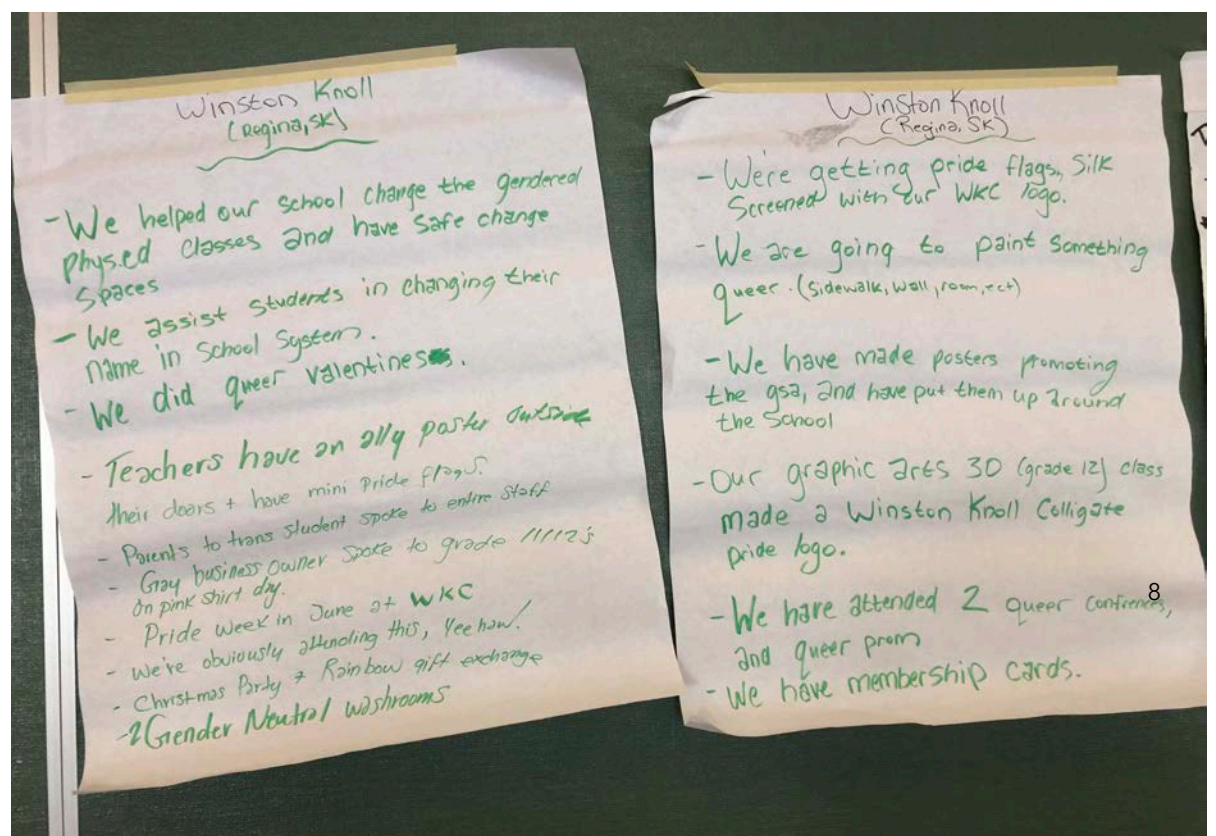


affects the number of members in GSAs, resulting in less change being made, and less knowledge being spread."
Student, Collège Jeanne Sauvé, Winnipeg, MB

As mentioned above, disapproval (real or perceived) from peers and authority figures discourages new members from joining. Thus, in fear of being judged, shamed or bullied, people stay away from the meetings and don't join in our larger events. Encouraging participation among the student body through fun and social activities such as game nights, potlucks, etc., proves effective in some of our schools, and would certainly prove effective elsewhere.



- Not very diverse - Participation and attendance are key to making change. If no-one shows up, no-one listens, and no-one learns to make change. Motivate your peers to be present.
 - Make sure the club is being appropriately advertised as a safe and accessible space for all people
 - When people do show up, try to be inclusive and respect their opinions and level of knowledge about the community - even LGBTQ+ identified people can make mistakes about language, pronouns, and deadnaming. It is important that we support each other on our journey to be inclusive.
 - Ask/ remind/ train teachers or guidance staff members to recommend student to the GSA
 - Friends discussing GSA with their peers can also encourage others to give it a try
 - Members recruiting at local hang outs, for example the local library, recreation centre, or pride centre
 - At the beginning of the year, talk with the returning members about what qualities they're looking for in new members - this can help them live up to welcoming & embracing these qualities
- Message has not been spread outside of the club
 - Organize assemblies - Get people talking about your group, wondering how they can join, seeing the importance of the work you are doing - and that all of this is supported by your teachers and staff
 - Mental health fairs
 - Guest speakers
 - Trans Day of Remembrance ceremonies
 - School announcements
 - Class presentations
 - Posters
 - Advertise safe ways to find out about where and when the group meets
 - Advertise a google classroom to help keep people informed on what's going on if they can't or don't want to attend the meetings
 - Create an atmosphere of respect and inclusion by having



safe space symbols displayed around the school

- Initiate Awareness days/ weeks
- Host lunch booths
- Host recruitment parties
- Have raffles with prizes
- Present health-related skits
- Use social media and post pictures of the GSA in action
- Talk to elementary schools so that when they get to high school, they know about those resources

"In our QSA/GSA clubs, there is a lack of diversity, and an overall lack of participation and advertisement. As a result, many queer youth may not be able to access resources and feel accepted and safe in our school." Student, Queen Elizabeth High School, Edmonton, AB

We can counterbalance this with increased promotion and normal discussion. Although it is necessary to make sure that GSAs are positive places for queer youth, it is equally important to ensure that the GSAs are also safe places for non-queer people and allies.

What made you want to join your GSA:

"It looked fun and awesome"

"We thought it was cool"

"A friend invited me to a meeting"

"My teacher suggested that I join"

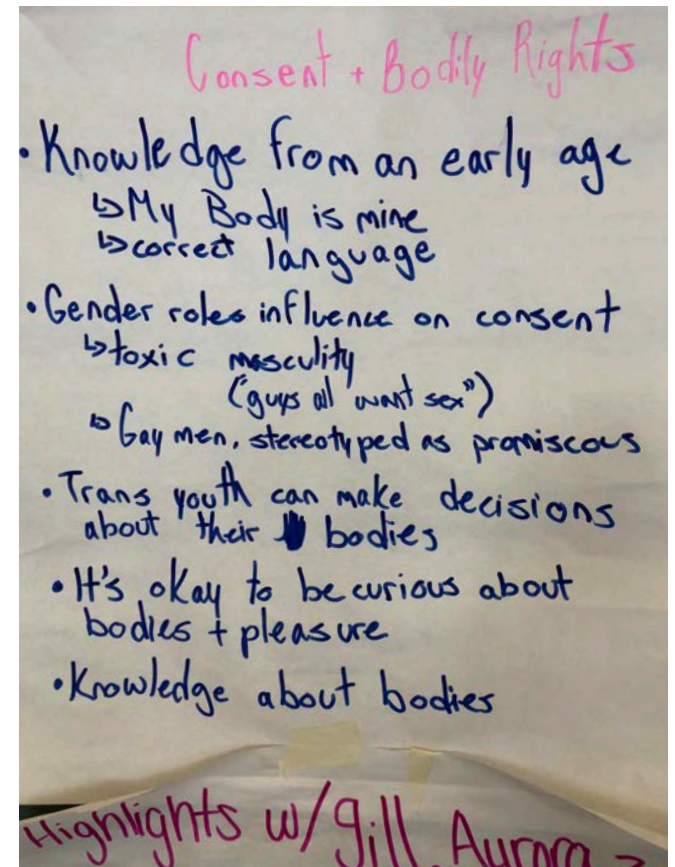
"To be heard"

"To meet new people"

"To make a difference for my friend who was unhappy and being bullied"

"To help my school become more positive"

"I was looking for somewhere to fit in"



Think about why you and your fellow members joined, and then use that information to make posters, instagram posts, or other advertisements of your group.

- Uncommitted members

- Announce that if they come every time for a month they can select what games are played at a regular games night, or they get to decide/lead the ice breaker, or they get to select the snack that is shared/ art project completed/ movie watched (in other words, all are welcome at meetings, but those that attend more regularly are rewarded and have increased incentive to return often)
- Incentives to show up and participate like a passport stamp or small prizes (stickers/candy)

"We do not have enough time to do anything big without losing our train of thought with one lunch hour a week. I think that moving meetings to alternate times, such as after school (or alternating times each week, once at lunch and one after school) would help alleviate this stress. This change might allow for an ease in accessibility for some students who may not be able to attend meetings at specific times during the day." Student, École Sir John Franklin High School, Yellowknife, NWT

- Motivation and cooperation issues

- Motivate others and remind them to participate and come to GSA
- Have fun activities that people want to attend
- Have a healthy balance between work and play (Ex: 20 minutes of hard work, 10 minutes play)
- Discuss goals for the year.
- Talk about potential events and bonding group discussions.

In order to maintain motivation, planning fun activities and reminding members of past success are a few different methods to recruit and motivate youth. Other achievable ways are to make a plan, for example, creating a schedule of planned events. While one message and approach may be appealing to one student, it may not catch the attention of another student who's also a great fit for the GSA. Some GSAs may consider having a recruitment chair or committee to help with the recruitment process.

What keeps you coming to your GSA:

"I'm committed"

"I like to do something that everyone else doesn't do"

"My friends"

"The activities and projects"

"The amazing people, fun discussions, and helping our school "

"The opportunity to listen to others' input and views"

"The GSA is my second family"

"I want students to feel good about their school and know their voices are heard through changes we make"

"I want to leave the school better than when I came"

"Having a safe space"

"It is nice to do productive things with my friends"

Think about what motivates you to return every week, and use that information to help keep people involved!

- Lack of focus

- Create plans beforehand and stay on track
- Have resources available that encourage group discussion and learning
- Make a focal point for each meeting, whether it be playing games or talking about serious subjects
- If you have an active or long-standing group, you might benefit from longer-term planning
 - At the beginning of the year, host a strategic planning retreat or workshop. This gives you an opportunity to reflect on last year's accomplishments and challenges, as well as set a plan for the upcoming year.

- Lack of sharing

- It may just be the pressure of sharing on the spot
- But if it is a culture of poor communication in the group, a lack of discussion while talking about serious issues can be a sign that you do not have a strong bonded feeling in your group. Try some team-building exercises to help build stronger, more trusting relationships - check-ins and ice breakers at the beginning of each meeting help build community
 - Check-in activities can be as simple as everyone sharing their win of their week, or describing their mood by picking out a type of weather.
 - Ice breakers could include using play doh to make a shape of something that describes themselves and sharing it with the group, or picking an object out of a bag and describing why they feel that it is interesting.

"Maybe it's just me that can't talk when you're put on the spot with everyone watching." Student, Collège Jeanne Sauvé, Winnipeg, MB

- Lack of safe spaces

- Use a space that is clearly defined by symbols and the teacher to be a welcoming and judgement-free zone
 - If this isn't possible, look to your community or faith groups to see if a meeting space exists
- Create rules that maintain your space as inclusive and accessible - and enforce them
- Listen to the concerns and requests of your members, a safe space welcomes everyone's opinions, needs, and ideas
- In order to establish a respectful and inclusive space for your GSA, consider working together to develop a ground rules, group norms, and/or expectations
- Some examples of important rules include:
 1. Talk about the idea, not the person
 2. No dead-naming, name-calling, or yelling
 3. What happens at GSA stays at GSA
 4. Be wary of pronoun and other assumptions
 5. Challenge others respectfully



"There should also be a way for students to communicate with others in a safe setting, the students should help to ensure that there are safe places in the school, by reminding others that the school is a place for everyone and anyone to be accepted." Student, Dakota Collegiate, Winnipeg, MB

- Ignorant student body

- Join the student government
- Making sure the way you bring awareness to the issues in your school isn't accusatory or causing others to become defensive

In regard to the inequalities found in the student body, such as lack of representation, there are many ways to help gain acknowledgement. Students may inform and educate their student bodies about LGBTQ+ issues and help raise awareness. Other ways to fix these inequalities are to join or create student bodies. It is also important to ensure that the forms of awareness are not accusatory nor aggressive. When in the process of creating a GSA, as long as students show an interest in the club and can find a supportive teacher, the club should be allowed to proceed.

- Difficulties Choosing Group Focus

- Projects let our groups be creative and are valuable in getting all of us to work together on one task. Some GSAs may use their regular meeting time to discuss ideas as a group. Other GSAs may hold sub-group meetings, with just the interested youth, to plan projects or events.
 - Examples of strategies provided by our groups include:
 - Brainstorm as a group and write ideas on a timeline. Everyone's opinion is valued.
 - Have a group discussion with flip-chart paper
 - Have smaller group discussions and share ideas with the larger group
 - Pair with a partner to share ideas and report out to the larger group
 - Use a T-chart to help organize pros and cons of doing a specific project
 - Use a voting system to ensure everyone has a fair say in the decision making process

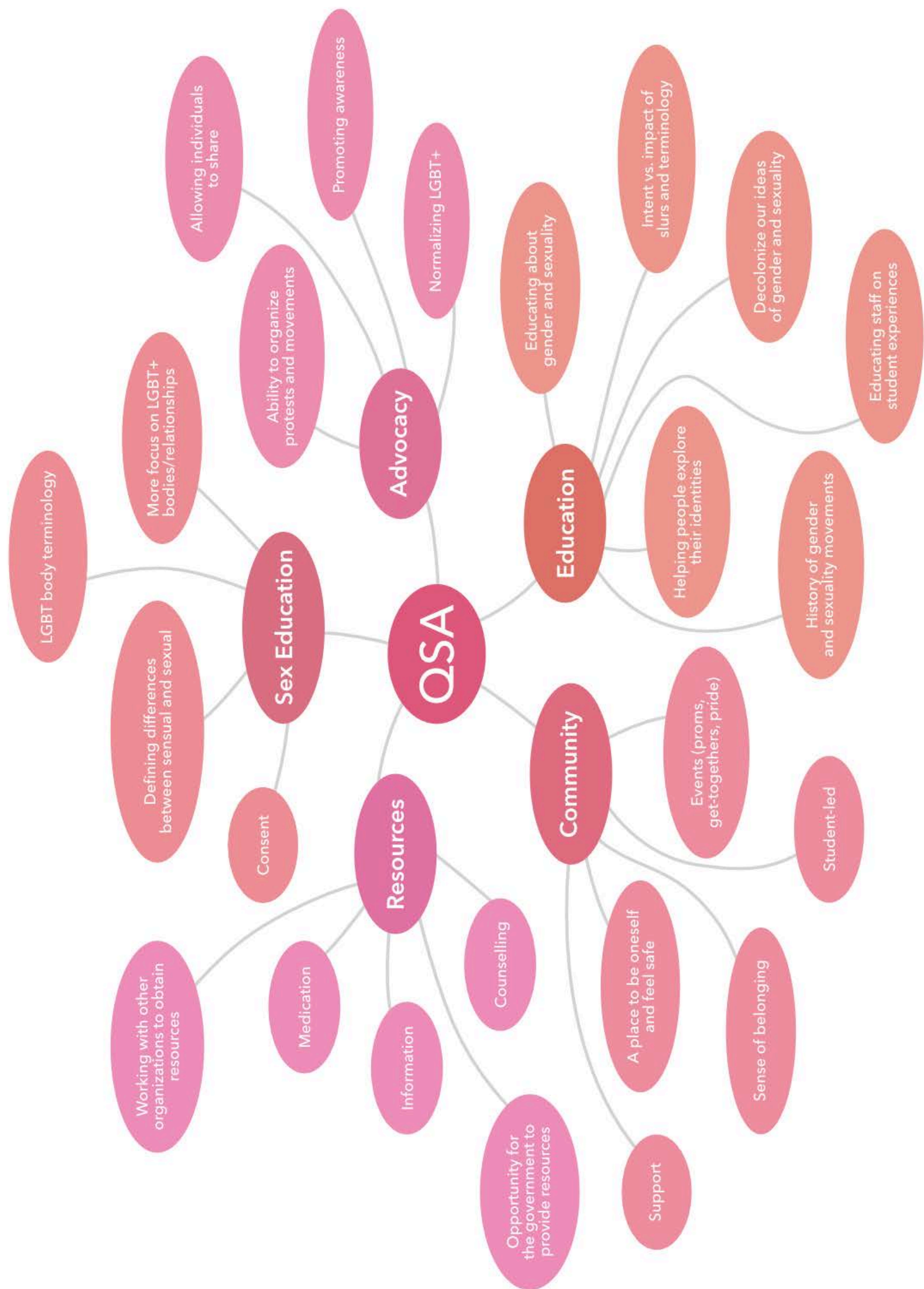
- How to Plan a Project

- Whether you do one, five, or ten projects having your GSA members working together to create, promote and deliver a finished project helps them to feel a sense of belonging, purpose, and accomplishment. It brings excitement to the group.
- Projects are a great way for the GSA to show positive messages about the group to the school, and increase awareness and membership
- Some of our schools found it easiest to follow monthly themes to determine their project.
 - Examples include:
 - September: Back to School/ Welcome/ Recruitment/ Goal Setting
 - October: World Coming Out Day, Bullying Prevention Month
 - November: Trans Day of Remembrance
 - December: World AIDS Day
 - January: International Day of Education
 - February: Pink Shirt Day, Valentine's Day, World Day of Social Justice
 - March: International Transgender Day of Visibility, international Day of Happiness,
 - April: Day of Silence, World Health Day
 - May: International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia, International Day of Light
 - June: Pride Month, World Refugee Day





AREAS YOUR GSA CAN MAKE AN IMPACT



BE THE CHANGE: OUR IDEAS & OPPORTUNITIES

Ideas for Activities, Actions, and Opportunities

- Bake sale
- Carnival
- T-Shirts, buttons, socks, pants and pin
- Assembly
- Present group to entire school
- Fundraisers
- Transgender week of Remembrance
- GSA Conference
- No Name-calling Week
- Anti Bullying Pledge Poster
- Colour run
- GSA Thought of the Day
- Education; Queer sex ed, Acceptance of queer (maybe relate queer discrimination to racial discrimination to gain perspective). e.g. How to Queer 101
- Influential well-known speakers.
- Different names other than "GSA"
- GSA Library
- Book club
- Game Day/Night
- Social Innovation Labs
- Dance (queer) eg. Homo Hop
- GSA Classes
- Free Candy for Valentines Day
- Free Hugs
- Discussions with admin
- Potlucks
- Hosting Coffee House
- Gay Movie Nights
- Art Day
- Queer Valentines
- Changing name in school system
- Christmas Party
- Ally posters
- Rainbow Gift Exchange
- Paint something queer eg. Sidewalk, wall, room
- Posters promoting GSA
- Membership cards
- Day of Silence
- Day of Pink
- Donations/make awareness for organizations helping out the GSA community
- Mental Health Day
- Pride Flag Flown
- Global Connections
- Sticky notes around school
- Diversity Training
- Gender Neutral Bathrooms
- Karaoke Night
- Group Chat
- Queer Comedy Special
- Support Groups
- After school groups
- Drop-in
- GSA News/Newspaper
- Encourage Free Space
- GSA Fashion show
- Guest Speakers in School

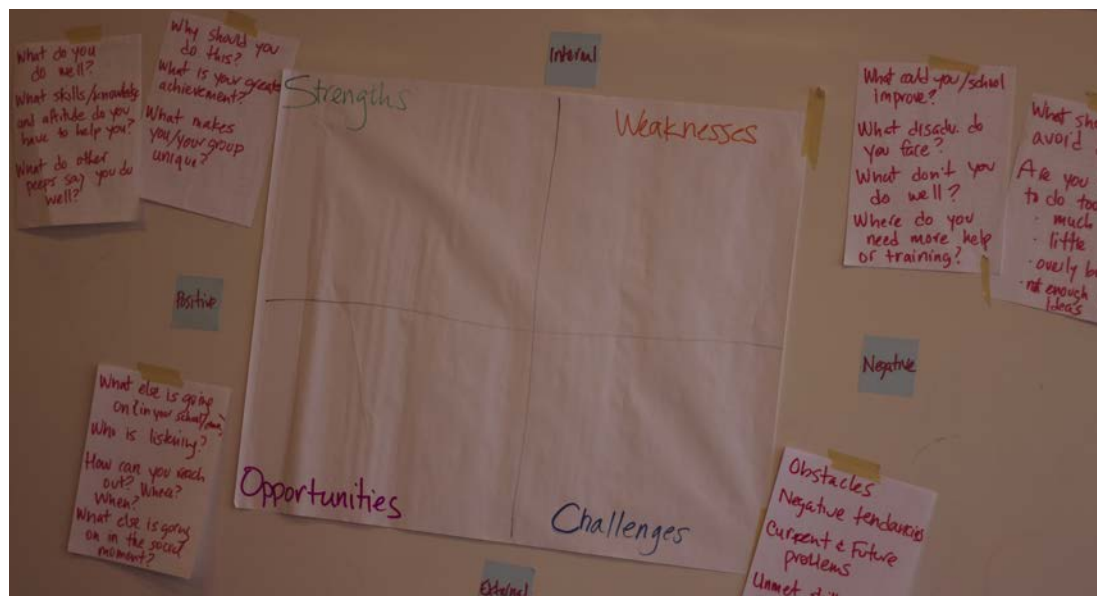


HOW TO WORK WITH PEOPLE IN POWER

Canadian youth are protected under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Canada has ratified this agreement; and it protects and ensures your rights. Article 12, under the UNCRC states: "You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously." This means that it is your right to challenge people in power, and it is your right to be listened to. This article is a tool for anyone that wants to make a change and empowers you to start the conversation with people that can help you achieve your goals and make your school a better place! When thinking or approaching people in power or trying to figure how to do so, it is essential to have clear objectives and a plan to get the desired outcome.

"The reason why it is essential for youth to know this is because youth are the best advocates for youth issues. It is vital for youth to take charge in times when their voices are not being heard. We all have such powerful voices and strong opinions about what we need to do to make this world and our communities a better place for all. So it is essential to use the tools and rights we have to ensure we can make changes for our communities and especially give voices to people who may not have one." - Scott Sharma, Colonel By Secondary School, Ottawa, ON

- Step 1: Understand what outcomes and objectives you want from the interaction or meeting. Identify the right person to have the conversation with to meet these goals.
- Step 2: Reach out to your target audience to invest in your goals and get buy-in.
- Step 3: Prepare for meeting and ensure that you are well researched and have your discussion points.
- Step 4: Ensure that you know what the person you are working with could benefit or have an interest in, in order to get buy-in and engage stakeholders.
- Step 5: Congratulations, you are in the meeting! Take notes and write down everything because you do not want to forget any information.
- Step 6: After the meeting, take time to reflect on the conversation and outcomes. Consider whether the meeting achieved your goals, or whether you need to consider engaging others in the discussion.
- Step 7: Send a thank you note to those you met with. Summarize what was discussed and the next steps. If anyone is responsible for action items include by whom and when they are to be done. Set next meeting time.



*A SWOC analysis, looking at the *Strengths*, *Weaknesses*, *Opportunities*, and *Challenges* facing your GSAs is a great way to capture the current context of your school and group. It allows you to identify goals, and set plans to achieve them.

PRIORITIZING INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Schools should use LGBTQ+ inclusive language to reflect the diversity of orientations, genders, and expressions in the school communities. For example, there are gender-inclusive pronouns beyond “he/she” such as the singular use of “they.” One can use “folks” to address groups of people instead of “ladies and gentlemen.” Students and staff should be aware of the use of non-inclusive language and how it can exclude groups of people (e.g., the use of “you guys”).

Another issue is the use of deadnames with trans people. This can result in outing people when they may not be comfortable with everyone knowing how they identify. It is essential for students to lobby their administration to ensure that people’s preferred names are on attendance sheets, so that there is no accidental deadnaming. Also, someone being misgendered could have the same consequences that deadnaming could cause.

There is a lot of violence and harassment that can be prevented by ensuring people are being gendered correctly. A way to provide this is by simply ensuring that you ask everyone pronouns or presenting your pronouns when you are with someone you do not know. The use of slurs is also prevalent against the LGBTQ+ community. A way to combat this type of behaviour is to contextualize the meaning and the hurt that surrounds the slur that is being used. It helps to start the conversation of why that particular word is so hurtful.

“By making the use of preferred names more common, etc., we can ensure the safety and comfort of everyone at our school, as well as educating staff who are not immediately aware. Legal names should only be shown on formal documents to the administrative staff when necessary. It is never necessary to deadname someone while checking if they are present or handing in homework on time.” Student, Argyll Centre, Edmonton, AB

Subjective	Objective	Possessive adjective	Possessive pronoun	Reflexive
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself
He	Him	His	His	Himself
*They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves

*There are people who choose to use alternate pronouns like xe/xem, zi/zim etc, pronouns used in the trans community instead of “he/she” or “him/her.” These pronouns offer inclusion and accuracy for someone who doesn’t identify by the male/female gender classifications. Make sure to be accepting and accommodating of everyone’s preferred pronouns. Ask how someone wishes to be identified and referred to. It may feel awkward at first, but we already commonly use these. Just think about when you find something in your class... ‘Someone forgot their phone. I wonder who it belongs to. They’re probably freaking out. I’ll take it to the office for them.’

“There is a huge problem with homophobia and gender-based hate within our schools. Although it isn’t always direct, it is ingrained in most of our youth. To elaborate, lots of in-school weeks have gender swap days, which promote binary genders and gender roles. Also, slurs are prevalent in an indirect sense, being used as synonyms for ‘stupid,’ or ‘idiotic’. This ignorance could be a major factor for our lack of members and/or participation. Furthermore, teens are intimidated by the school administrations lack of support/approval so they aren’t participating as much as they could be.” Avery & Frankie, Collège Jeanne-Sauvé, Winnipeg, MB



OUR TRANS MANIFESTO

Here are some things we can all do to help transgender folks feel more comfortable and safe on a daily basis in our schools:

- We have the right to feel safe in our schools.
- What we want is more important than what you think we want.
- What we *actually* say is more important than what you *think* we will say.
- Facilities made to accommodate us should be clean and safe (eg. bathrooms, change rooms).
- Being outed to the wrong people can incite violence against us, please be mindful.
- Bullying directed towards us is rarely recognized. Your own prejudices can affect your (in)actions.
- Consider the difference between *tolerating* transgender students and *supporting* them.
- Be mindful of our family situations, often our parents are not supportive and outing us to our parents is not always safe.
- Respect us!! Respect our pronouns!! Respect our names!!
- Ask us in a way that does not “out” us about our preferred names.
- Feel free to ask questions, politely, in privacy, and with confidentiality.
- These are basic human rights, we are as important as everyone else.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCES ACROSS CANADA

Argyll Centre, Edmonton, AB

We are an online based school that offers different ways to further one's learning, taking into account each student's unique situation and learning style. At Argyll, we are challenged by a potential disconnect from our students, many of whom are long distance learners. However, a large portion of our student body often comes onsite to interact with teachers and staff, and participates in field trips, workshops and optional onsite classes. Being online, we have many opportunities to expand our horizons and make an environment that is as inclusive as possible. Currently, we are looking to create a district wide, online, GSA that will connect students not just from our own school, but from others in the area. We are fortunate to be a part of so many wonderful events, because we have so much to say and add to the conversation. Our voices are impactful and should be listened to.

Central Collegiate Institute, Moose Jaw, SK

We are a school that has students from grades 9 to 12. In our school, we are fortunate enough to have a course; Gender and Sexual Diversity 20 (GSD). It is a course that provides education and a credit in learning about gender and sexuality extending similar to what the school's GSA hopes to provide. The intent is for the students in the course and the GSA to work harmoniously to promote awareness and education in the school and community and provide others with resources.

Collège Jeanne Sauvé, Winnipeg, MB

We are a French immersion school in the South end of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Our GSA has been going strong for the past three years. At CJS, there is a group of devoted students that really prioritize on social justice issues that focus on mental health, feminism, and LGBTQ2* people and more! We have done many things to promote equality within our school community. For example, we have done bake sales to raise money for local LGBTQ2* resource centres. We've done many presentations to staff and future students, and have attended several conferences. Our GSA is always growing with more new members every year. Along with the new members come bigger projects. We are excited to advance even more. - Avery, Skye, Frankie, Mariah, Nina, Grace, & Jenna

Colonel By Secondary School, Ottawa, ON

We are a public high school in the East end of Ottawa. S.A.F.E (Students Advocating For Equality) club has been working within the school since 2006. Our club runs on a drop-in basis, we have 20-30 members. We run several events every school year, including an activism week and transgender day of remembrance. In 2018, we were able to get a gender neutral single stall washroom put in the school. We are currently working towards getting funding for a gender neutral change-room. Our school faces many unique challenges. We have had difficulty motivating members to take action. Many students are afraid of admitting that they are a part of the club. As we have made our school more welcoming, the culture around these issues has also shifted, and we feel as though we have faced less challenges.

Dakota Collegiate, Winnipeg, MB

Is a grade 9-12 high school in Winnipeg Manitoba. Over 1200 students attend the school. The Gender Sexuality



Alliance, on average, has a regular attendance of approximately ten student members and five staff members. The group consists mostly of members of the queer community, as well as various ally supporters. Casual attenders are welcome as there are many initiatives in the school which students participate in. There are both structured and unstructured conversations, often lead by one or more senior student members. Dakota's GSA has been fortunate to have one particular staff member take on a leadership role in the group for over ten years. He has supported the group by providing consistent supervision, enthusiasm, discussion topic ideas, and great snacks to keep attendance strong. Events and opportunities we've provided for students can range from Day of Pink, participating in the pride parade, helping transgender and non-binary youth feel more comfortable at school, having gender neutral bathrooms, and participating in school-based events such as the open house.

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École Sir John Franklin, Yellowknife, NWT

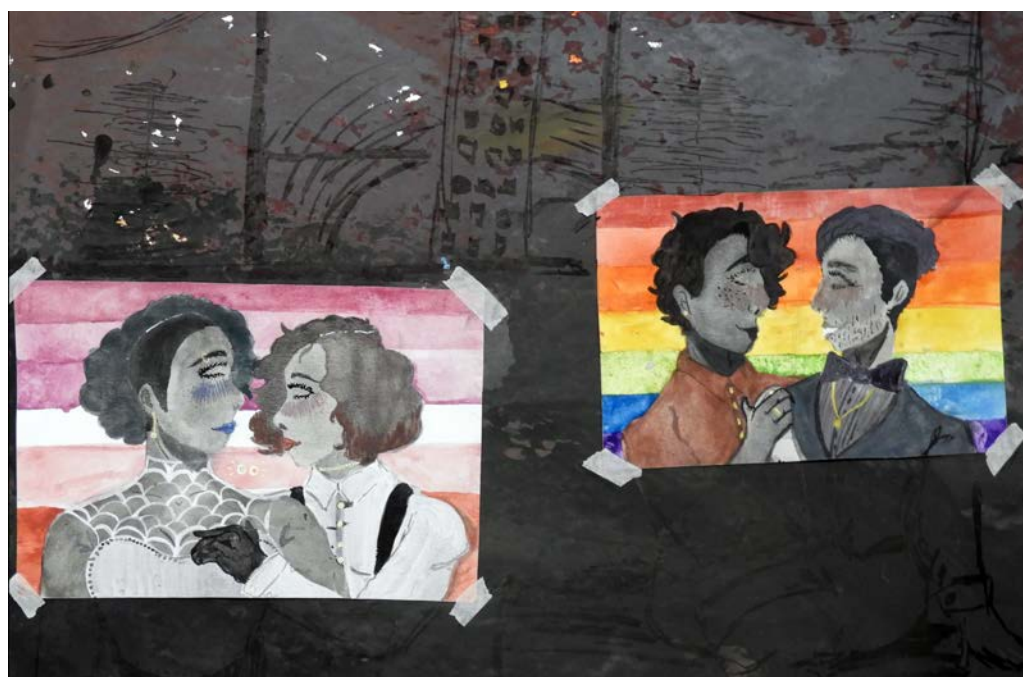
Our GSS (Gender & Sexuality Squad) works within the community to provide safer spaces for queer youth. We live in Yellowknife, NT and there are about 600 students who regularly attend our school. We meet on a regular basis in the school's Health Haven and have presented in front of the school at assemblies to raise awareness of our group. We work with other organizations like M.A.G.M.A. (Magnanimous Advocates Generating Mental Health Awareness) and the Rainbow Coalition of Yellowknife to host events such as a coffee house with an open mic, bowling nights, gender inclusive swimming, a Days of Pink education booth, and other activities that are inclusive and accessible for LGBTQ+ youth. We are working with our administration and school board to create gender-neutral change rooms near the gym. Our group was originally formed in the 2015-16 school year, but only this year (2018-19) have we really been present and visible within the school. We are slowly growing with each meeting.

Queen Elizabeth High School, Edmonton, AB

In Queen Elizabeth we have many refugees that sometimes are not understanding of others. This gives us opportunities to learn about other cultures. As a UNESCO school we have the ability to partake in unique activities such as the global citizenship program, the foreign exchange program and AP programs. Our club is also a safe and welcoming place to everyone who has an interest in joining the community, advocating as a strong ally, or wanting to share their feelings in a confidential and peaceful environment. Our GSA doubles as a way to talk and receive advice; similar to speaking with a counsellor, but student lead. Instead of adults/counsellor leading and/or telling the students what is best for them, it is the students helping each other overcome problems through their own life experiences. Students help each other understand themselves and give their perspectives without the fear of an authority figure. As a club created for teenagers we feel it best to hear from one's peers instead of an adult; who many may feel they are trying to get away from.

Robert Thirsk High School, Calgary, AB

We are a Calgary based school of over 1200 students. On a good day we can get around 20 people to show up to our QSA. We face the challenge of people either not show up because they are scared or they just don't feel comfortable. But we have also done some awesome things since I joined this year. Most impressive being the drag show we put on near the start of the year. The majority of the student body pretty much just ignores us or doesn't even know we are a thing. We are very based around community and most of our members are very close. We want to spread this type of bond to everyone in the school.



Saint John High School, Saint John, New Brunswick

At Saint John High School we value respect and diversity; that's why our GSA was formed in 2017 and strives to make change to our school through activism and understanding. We have hosted spirit events in our school such as rainbow day, and hope to pursue larger events such as fundraising through coffee houses, painting a mural and finally, being the

first to raise the pride flag at Saint John High School. We are lucky to have the support of staff and students alike and hope to break the social barriers which prevent students from expressing who they really are.

Winston Knoll Collegiate, Regina, SK

Our high school is a very diverse place with a variety of different cultures, religions, sexualities, and identities. Our GSA group (established around 2013) is called WKC PRIDE (formerly called WKC SAGA) and we meet every week on Friday lunchtime. During the beginning of the year we had a lot of new grade 9 students joining the group as they came from an elementary school with an active GSA. We as a school are very inclusive and have done a lot for our students. We've already opened up two of our very own gender inclusive washrooms, we've bought flags, and plan to start a gender neutral gym class next year. Our group goes to different events and conferences. We stay very involved with the community and take opportunities thrown at us. We still have a lot to do, but with perseverance and strength we will accomplish making our school safe for all students.



PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

- Argyll Centre, Edmonton, AB
- Central Collegiate Institute, Moose Jaw, SK
- Collège Jeanne Sauvé, Winnipeg, MB
- Colonel By Secondary School, Ottawa, ON
- Dakota Collegiate, Winnipeg, MB
- David Suzuki High School, Brampton, ON
- École Sir John Franklin, Yellowknife, NWT
- Queen Elizabeth High School, Edmonton, Alberta
- Robert Thirsk High School, Calgary, AB
- Sa-Hali Secondary School, Kamloops, BC
- Saint John High School, Saint John, NB
- Winston Knoll Collegiate, Regina, SK



PROJECT PARTNERS

- The Centre for Global Education
- TakingITGlobal Youth Association
- Public Health Agency of Canada



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada



DEFINITIONS

The first step in working within and amongst the sexual and gender-minority communities is understanding the terminology. Adapted and expanded from a glossary published in the Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Policy on Preventing Discrimination Because of Gender Identity and Gender Expression*,¹ the definitions we provide below are not meant to label, or restrict, or limit any individual; but rather, are intended as helpful functional descriptors. These words, like all words, are socially embedded within our culture, space, and time. They are constructed, and (re)developed over time. New language is constantly formed, both to unite community members, as well as define groups by experience, politics, and other memberships. These terms and definitions are not standardized, and may be used differently by different people, and in different regions. Labels and identities should only be self-selected by individuals, not assumed by others. Biology does not imply identity. Nor does behaviour and expression alone constitute identity.

Asexual: Very little to no sexual feelings, attractions, or associations, but can still be attracted romantically.

Biphobia: The aversion to, fear or hatred, or intolerance of bisexual people and communities. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment, and violence toward bisexual people.

Bisexual: Sexually attracted not exclusively to people of one particular gender; attracted to men, women, and non-binary people.

Cisgender and Cisnormativity: The majority of people are “cisgender.” That is, their gender identity is in line with or “matches” the sex they were assigned at birth. The opposite of this definition would be trans, or transgender. Cisnormativity (“cis” meaning “the same as”) refers to the commonplace assumption that all people are cisgender and that everyone accepts this as “the norm.” The term is used to describe prejudice against trans people that is less overt or direct and more widespread or systemic in society, organizations and institutions. This form of systemic prejudice may even be unintentional and unrecognized by the people or organizations responsible.

Deadnaming: Using the pre-transition name (i.e., deadname) for someone, instead of the individual’s current preferred, chosen name. This can be emotionally and psychologically harmful.

Gay and/or Lesbian: Someone that is sexually attracted to people of one’s own gender. Lesbian is an exclusive term for women who are solely attracted to other women. Gay is not exclusively used to describe men who are sexually attracted to man, as it is also a cultural epithet for any LGBTQ+ identified person.

Gender Binary: A social system whereby people are thought to belong to one of two genders: Man or woman. These genders are expected to correspond to birth sex: Male or female. In the gender binary system, there is no room for interpretations, for living between genders, or for crossing the binary. The gender binary system is rigid and restrictive for many people who feel that their natal sex (sex they were labelled with at birth) does not match up with their gender, or that their gender is fluid and not fixed.

¹ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2014). *Policy on Preventing Discrimination Because of Gender Identity and Gender Expression*. Retrieved from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Policy%20on%20preventing%20discrimination%20because%20of%20gender%20identity%20and%20gender%20expression.pdf>

Gender Expression: How a person publicly presents or expresses their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice. A person's chosen name and pronouns are also common ways people express their gender. Others perceive a person's gender through these attributes. All people, regardless of their gender identity, have a gender expression and they may express it in any number of ways. For trans people, their chosen name, preferred pronoun and apparel are common ways they express their gender. People who are trans may also take medically supportive steps to align their body with their gender identity.

Gender Identity: Each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth assigned sex. For most people, their sex and gender identity align. For some, it does not. A person may be assigned male at birth but identify as a woman, or assigned female at birth but identify as a man. Other people may identify outside the categories of woman/man, or may see their gender identity as fluid and moving between different genders at different times in their life.

Gender Non-Conforming: Individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth. They may identify and express themselves as "feminine men" or "masculine women" or as androgynous, outside of the categories "boy/man" and "girl/woman." People who are gender non-conforming may or may not identify as trans.

Gender Norms: The gender binary influences what society considers "normal" or acceptable behaviour, dress, appearances and roles for women and men. Gender norms are a prevailing force in everyday lives. Strength, action, and dominance are stereotypically seen as "masculine" traits; while vulnerability, passivity, and receptiveness are stereotypically seen as "feminine" traits. A woman expressing masculine traits may be stereotyped as overly "aggressive," while a man expressing "feminine" traits may be labeled as "weak." Gender norms can contribute to power imbalances and gender inequality in the home, at work and in communities.

GSA & QSA: Gender & Sexuality Alliance, Gay Straight Alliance, or Queer Straight Alliance.



Homophobia: The aversion to, fear or hatred, or intolerance of gay and lesbian people and communities. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment, and violence toward gay and lesbian people.

Intersectionality: A concept used in critical theories to describe the ways in which oppressive institutions (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, classism, etc.) are interconnected and cannot exist separately from one another.

Intersex: A term used to describe a person born with reproductive systems, chromosomes and/or hormones that are not easily characterized as male or female. This might include a woman with XY chromosomes or a man with ovaries instead of testes. Intersex characteristics occur in one out of every 1,500 births. Typically, intersex people are surgically assigned one sex, male or female, at birth. Some intersex people identify with their assigned sex, while others do not. Some choose to identify as intersex. Intersex people do not typically identify as transgender, and many intersex people do not identify as LGBTQ+ at all.

“Lived” Gender Identity: The gender a person internally feels (“gender identity” along the gender spectrum) and publicly expresses (“gender expression”) in their daily life including at work, while shopping or accessing other services, in their housing environment or in the broader community. This can also be used by trans people to describe their experiences before transitioning.

Misgender: Refer to (someone, especially a transgender person) using a word, a pronoun or form of address, that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.

Non-Binary: An all encompassing category for gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine—identities, which are outside the gender binary.

Pansexual: The sexual, romantic or emotional attraction towards people regardless of their sex or gender identity.

Queer: An umbrella term used to describe people in the LGBTQ+ community broadly. Although it can be seen as a slur by certain people, so be weary of usage.

Sex: The classification of people as male, female, or intersex. Sex is usually assigned at birth and is based on an assessment of a person’s reproductive systems, hormones, chromosomes, and other physical characteristics.

Sex and Gender: Whereas “sex” is a person’s physical characteristics, “gender” is the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity, femininity, and neither. It is the expectations and stereotypes about behaviours, actions, and roles linked to being a “man” or “woman.” Social norms related to gender can vary depending on the culture and can change over time.



Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Sexual orientation describes human sexuality, from gay and lesbian to bisexual and heterosexual orientations. A person’s gender identity is fundamentally different from and not related to their sexual orientation. Because a person identifies as trans does not predict or reveal anything about their sexual orientation. A trans person may identify as gay, lesbian, queer, straight or bisexual, just as people who do not identify as trans.

Slur: An insinuation or allegation about someone that is likely to insult them or damage their reputation. Slurs are used to attack oppressed groups. Being called a slur can be a traumatic experience for some individuals.

Trans or transgender: An umbrella term that describes people with diverse gender identities and gender expressions that do not conform to stereotypical ideas about what it means to be a girl/woman or boy/man in society.

“Trans” can mean transcending beyond, existing between, or crossing over the gender spectrum. It includes, but is not limited to, people who identify as transgender, transsexual, or gender non-conforming (gender variant or gender queer). “Trans” includes people whose gender identity is different from the gender associated with their birth-assigned sex. Trans people may or may not undergo medically supportive treatments, such as hormone therapy and a range of surgical procedures, to align their bodies with their internally felt gender identity.

People who have transitioned from one gender to another may simply identify as female or male. Others may also identify as trans, as a trans woman or a trans man. Some people may identify as trans and not use the labels “female” or “male.” Others may identify as existing between male and female or in different ways beyond the binary of male/female. Often FTM (female-to-male) and MTF (male-to-female) are used in short-form to describe the transition they have undergone.

Trans people may identify their gender in many ways. There is no single or universal experience of what it means to be trans. As a result, different trans people face distinct forms of discrimination in society, and this may relate to whether they identify as male, female, a person with a trans history, a person in the process of transitioning, a trans man, trans woman, transsexual, or gender non-conforming.

Trans man and Trans woman: A person whose sex assigned at birth is “female” and identifies as a man may also identify as a trans man (female-to-male FTM). A person whose sex assigned at birth is “male” and identifies as a woman may also identify as a trans woman (male-to-female MTF).

Transitioning: Refers to a host of processes that some trans people may pursue to affirm their gender identity. This may include changes to their name, sex designation, dress, the use of specific pronouns, and possibly medically supportive treatments such as hormone therapy, gender-confirmation surgeries or other procedures. There is no checklist or average time for a transition process, and no universal goal or endpoint. Each person decides what meets their needs.

Transphobia: The aversion to, fear or hatred or intolerance of trans people and communities. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment and violence toward trans people.

Two-Spirit: A term used by Indigenous people to describe from a cultural perspective people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans or intersex. It is used to capture a concept that exists in many different Indigenous cultures and languages. For some, the term Two-Spirit describes a societal and spiritual role that people played within traditional societies, such as: mediators, keepers of certain ceremonies, transcending accepted roles of men and women, and filling a role as an established middle gender. It is said that some Indigenous cultures had up to 8 different gender designations.

