

# Q&A Gender Identity and Sexual Health in Island Schools for PSB and CSLF Parents

1. I have questions about what my child is being taught. What should I do?
  - a. All [curriculum](#) is provincially approved and available online. The department recently added curricula that are in pilot to its website.
  - b. It is always appropriate to reach out to your child's teacher if you have questions or concerns. They can discuss with you how curriculum is being handled in the classroom.
  
2. Why were the [Guidelines for Respecting, Accommodating and Supporting Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Orientation in our Schools](#) developed?
  - a. There is tremendous diversity in Island schools and it is important that schools are a safe place for all students, including those who may identify as gender diverse.
  - b. The Guidelines provide a framework and process for schools to address the needs of gender diverse students and staff appropriately, respectfully, and consistently across the province.
  - c. The main functions of the guidelines are to:
    - Ensure all students are safe and supported at school.
    - Inform about 2SLGBTQQIA+ students/staff rights under the Human Rights Act and public institution's duty to accommodate on the basis of gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.
    - Provide guidance to respond to incidents of exclusion or discrimination on the basis of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, namely homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia – are distinct from other types of bullying.
    - Align with the duty to accommodate as outlined in the Human Rights Act.
  
3. Are these guidelines the same thing as curriculum?
  - a. No. The Guidelines are not part of the curriculum or classroom materials. They are not meant to encourage or promote exploration of gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.
  - b. The Guidelines are a stand-alone document for use by education authorities to support the existing inclusion and anti-bullying policies to ensure school environments are respectful of and inclusive for students and staff with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
  - c. The Guidelines were adapted from those in place in other jurisdictions in Canada and were already in practice in the majority of Island schools prior to the Minister's Directive being issued. The Guidelines assist in ensuring the consistent implementation across the province.
  
4. How do I know if the curriculum is appropriate?
  - a. Provinces and territories work together to develop curricula that are consistent and reflective of Canadian culture.
  - b. Each curriculum, the outcomes, and teaching and learning resources go through a three to five-year development process. This includes an extensive review of

materials to ensure curriculum and resources are developmentally appropriate. National standards and frameworks are used whenever available.

5. What can I do if I don't approve of the school teaching my child about gender identity and/or sexual health?
  - a. The department respects parents as the primary guide and decision-maker in their children's lives and education.
  - b. If the curriculum does not meet a family's views, parents have kept their child home on occasion.
  
6. What policies do schools follow when deciding to hold diversity or gender-themed assemblies or other events?
  - a. Schools are encouraged to expand upon the formal curriculum with supplementary, informal activities in their schools.
  - b. Assemblies and presentations are valuable means to engage students.
  - c. All supplementary curriculum resources are expected to meet the [Guidelines for the Evaluation and Selection of Learning Resources](#)
  
7. Will I be told about gender identity and sexual health lessons and/or events happening in my child's school?
  - a. It is best practice for teachers to advise parents of topics focusing on gender identity and/or sexual health so that parents can be prepared for conversations at home.
  - b. The department expects that the school will share this information with you prior to the event/lesson.
  
8. Is there an opt-out form I can use if I don't want my child to participate in a certain class or topic?
  - a. There is not an opt-out form. The department respects parents as the primary guide and decision-maker in their children's lives and education. We encourage parents to have conversations with their child's teacher if they are concerned about upcoming curriculum.
  - b. The school is required to teach all the provincially authorized curriculum and isn't in a position to make changes for individual students unless it is for special education programming.
  
9. Will teachers be able to respond to my child's questions and/or comments about sexual orientation and/or gender identity?
  - a. When a student asks a question or makes a comment on sexual orientation and/or gender identity, these incidental conversations are teachable moments. Teachers will respond in a way with which they are comfortable and is developmentally appropriate for the age of the student. The teacher is encouraged to regard these teachable moments as an opportunity to demonstrate value and respect for diversity.
  - b. Teachers are encouraged to take opportunities to talk about kindness and

acceptance, and to teach respect for diversity.

10. Can the school provide a separate activity for my child if I don't want them to participate in a gender identity or sexual health lesson?
  - a. No. Schools do not have the staff to supervise students who are not attending lessons or school events. On these occasions, parents have opted to keep their children at home.
  
11. What if I have concerns about a learning resource being used in school?
  - a. While all of the curriculum resources of the Provincial Program of Studies have been vetted, you can request a review by completing the appropriate review form found in the appendices of the [Evaluation and Selection of Learning Resources: A Guide](#).
  
12. What if I still have questions?
  - b. Parents who have questions about what their child is learning should contact their child's school.
  - c. Questions about the curriculum can be directed to the relevant curriculum leader. A list of contacts can be found [here](#).