Supporting Transgender and Gender Non-conforming Students in B.C. Elementary Schools

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Abstract

Research has illustrated that transgender and gender non-conforming students are a vulnerable population in our schools (Greytak et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2012; Taylor & Peter, 2011a; Taylor et al., 2016b; Young, 2011). Educators do not always have the knowledge base to feel confident in their ability to support these groups of students (Garcia & Slesaransky-Poe, 2010; Payne & Smith, 2014; Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013). Research has shown there is a need for supportive and gender inclusive policies, professional development and training for staff, and curriculum that is inclusive of the wide variety of gender expressions present in our schools (Taylor & Peter, 2011b; Taylor et al., 2016b; Snapp et al., 2015; Kennedy & Hellen, 2010).

Current resources developed to support transgender students tend to have a primarily high school focus and lack specific information about British Columbia laws, policies, or curriculum (Anti-Defamation League, 2014; Bowers & Lopez, 2012; Maheu, Hillyard, & Jenkins, 2012; Orr & Baum, 2015; Wells, Roberts, & Allan, 2012). The primary purpose of this project is to create a resource manual to help elementary schools in British Columbia support and welcome the transgender and gender non-conforming students who are in schools throughout the province.

Keywords: transgender, gender non-conforming, gender expansive, gender identity, elementary, resource, heteronormativity, social transition
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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my supportive husband, Kenneth, and my two wonderful children, Tyler and Kyle. Thank you for your understanding when I had to spend time on this project instead of spending time with you. Thank you for being my cheerleaders and for keeping me motivated. I love you all.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

My Connection to the Problem

Transgender issues were not something I knew anything about when I started teaching in 1987. Now discussion of transgender issues is part of the mainstream media. Most people will have heard about Caitlyn Jenner (Littleton, 2015) and many Canadians may have heard about Jenna Talakova, the transgender contestant who represented Vancouver in the Miss Universe Canada Pageant (Macinnis, 2013). People may have also read articles about transgender issues in schools such as the bathroom usage debate, changes to district policies, or students campaigning for change (Judd, 2015; Kane, 2015; Meiszner, 2014; Posadzki, 2014; Staley, 2011; Tucker, 2016). While some people’s interest in transgender issues may stem from media accounts such as these, my interest in learning more about the subject was much more personal.

In the fall of 2012, I became the principal of a small K-5 rural elementary school in an isolated school district in British Columbia. This change presented many new challenges but gave me some unique opportunities as well. One of my greatest opportunities as a new administrator was my ability to directly have an impact on and support the unique journey of a wonderful young person at my school.

Living in a small community, I had known Mark\(^1\) most of his life. I had taught kindergarten to Mark’s older brother and was lucky enough to become Mark’s kindergarten teacher too. Mark came to school each day looking like most other five year old boys from his clothing to his short haircut. At centre time, Mark absolutely loved going to the playhouse and the dress up centre. He frequently chose to wear a princess costume with a pair of high heel shoes. As a teacher, I never put gender restrictions on any of my centres, so little girls playing

\(^1\) All names of people and places are fictitious but the events took place as described. My use of names and pronouns reflect the changes in usage over time.
with blocks or trucks and little boys stomping around the room in their high heel shoes was not an uncommon occurrence. What was different about Mark was that it was commonly known that as soon as he got off the school bus, Mark changed into clothes he felt more comfortable in. This often involved putting something on his head to be his ‘long girl hair’ or wearing a skirt.

By Grade 2, Mark usually wore “girl’s shoes” and gradually started wearing clothing more typically worn by girls such as sparkly shirts or leggings. At this time, Mark’s parents started to advocate for him at school. They were accepting of Mark as gender non-conforming and possibly transgender at this age and were very supportive of his choices. The school followed the wishes of both Mark and his parents when it came to how his transition was handled. Mark would decide when he was ready to make changes and the school would support him along the way. I was the principal of the school when Mark asked if she could have female pronouns used on her report card and if she could use the bathroom on the stage rather than the boys’ bathroom.

As she entered Grade 5, Mark asked if we would address her as Mary and allow her to use that name on her assignments and reports. Mary soon let her mother know that she would like to be able to use the girls’ washroom at school. She already used this bathroom when she attended after hours dance lessons. I talked with Mary’s mother about how she would like this change to be handled. She suggested just letting Mary start using the girls’ washroom without making any big announcements to students or parents. Mary’s mother said she would be happy to speak to the class, the staff, or parents if the need arose. I was honestly worried that this would be the change that would catch the attention of parents and that I would be getting phone calls and questions soon after implementing it. Not one student, staff member, or parent approached me at all. This may have been because Mary was well known in our small community and knowing her personally made it easier for people to accept her as female.
**Purpose of the Project**

My experiences with Mary left me with many questions. I wondered if my school’s reaction to Mark becoming Mary was typical of how schools responded. I wondered what more I could have done or should have done to make Mary more confident that the school would support her decisions. I wondered what information and training I could make available to myself and my fellow educators so that we would better understand Mary’s gender identity and the needs of gender non-conforming students in general. I wondered why our school was being reactive to Mary and her needs, almost as if having a transgender student was a problem to be solved rather than just helping her on the basis that all students need school to be a safe and supportive environment. Reflection on my experiences with Mary led me to wonder if I could create a resource for educators that could help them support the individual transgender students who might be attending their schools and also help educators begin to work toward creating school environments that are more welcoming of the wide variety of gender expressions that are present in every school. The intent of this project was to create a resource manual which would include basic information about transgender and gender non-conforming students, as well as an annotated list of other resources I had discovered through my research. These resources would help educators find strategies and lesson ideas for supporting gender creativity and for changing the heteronormative environment of classroom and schools. The manual would provide British Columbia educators with up-to-date information about laws and policies pertaining to gender identity and gender expression. It would also provide schools with an overview of some of the issues teams creating school policies and student transition plans might need to consider.
Justification

When I first started looking deeper into what resources were available to help me learn more about transgender students, I discovered that finding information about students with gender identity issues was much more difficult than finding information about their gay, lesbian, or bisexual peers. Luecke (2011), in her examination of LGBTQ resources, discovered that as compared to literature about working with gay and lesbian youth there was “substantially less writing about gender non-conforming youth outside of the realms of sexual/affectional orientation” (p. 117). Luecke also found that while more literature was becoming available to professionals in the field of mental health, very little information was available to educational professionals about how to support and serve gender non-conforming students. Finding information that specifically addressed elementary age students was even harder still. Rands (2009) suggests that it is even difficult to determine how many transgender people are in the education system as “the high level of societal transphobia ensures that many transgender individuals are not comfortable publicly acknowledging their identity” (p. 421). Resource guides I have found that were created to support transgender students were either American or had a primarily high school focus (Anti-Defamation League, 2014; Bowers & Lopez, 2012; Maheu, Hillyard, & Jenkins, 2012; Orr & Baum, 2015; Wells, Roberts, & Allan, 2012). Also, none of these resources had information specific to British Columbia laws, policies, or curriculum.

The research that has been done clearly showed that transgender students are a vulnerable population in our schools (Greytak et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2012; Taylor & Peter, 2011a; Taylor et al., 2016b; Young, 2011). The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network’s report “Harsh Realities” (Greytak et al., 2009), used data from a climate survey of American students to
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examine the specific experiences of 295 students who identified as transgender. Those students often experienced isolation and victimization at their schools but were also least likely to report these events to school staff. Researchers from Egale Canada Human Rights Trust conducted a climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools (Taylor & Peter, 2011a). This survey found that

“When all identity-related grounds for feeling unsafe are taken into account, including ethnicity and religion, more than three quarters (78%) of trans students indicated feeling unsafe in some way at school. 44% of trans students reported being likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe and 15% reported having skipped more than 10 days because of feeling unsafe at school” (p. 14).

Fortunately, the research also showed that transgender students in supportive school environments are less likely to miss school, report less incidences of victimization, and are more likely to report a greater sense of belonging (Greytak, Moscow, & Boesen, 2013; Greytak et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2012). This indicates to me that we can make a difference to the school experiences of these students if we focus on creating an inclusive school culture.

This topic is important not just for supporting the individual transgender students who may enroll in our schools but for helping schools become more welcoming and supportive places for all students. It is important for all students to see themselves reflected in what they learn at school and for all students to feel safe in their learning environment. This will require a fundamental change to a school culture that currently promotes the idea of a gender binary (Kennedy & Hellen, 2010; Payne & Smith, 2014). Changing school culture will require a commitment to staff development especially in consideration of research findings that both principals and other educators report that they have little knowledge about transgender people
and little access to resources (Schneider & Dimito, 2008; GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008). I am hopeful that the resource guide I am creating will help British Columbian elementary schools with that resource and knowledge gap and will encourage schools to look at ways to become more inclusive to all students.

**Definition of Terms**

This paper uses the plural pronouns “they”, “them” and “their” instead of the singular pronouns “he” or “she”. This conscious decision copies a practice found in much of the literature written about LGBTQ topics in general and about transgender and gender non-conforming issues in particular. The reader should also be aware that this paper uses a hyphen in the phrase “gender non-conforming”. The alternate spelling of the phrase as “gender nonconforming” is only used if it was used in that form in a work that has been directly quoted.

*LGBTQ* has been used as the standard acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning people.

In this paper, the term *transgender (or trans)* has been used as an adjective describing a “person who does not identify either fully or in part with the gender conventionally associated with the sex assigned to them at birth” (Taylor et al., 2016b).

The term *cisgender* has been used as an adjective describing a person whose gender identity matches the social conventions for the sex assigned to them at birth. For example, a cisgender man self identifies as a man and was assigned male sex at birth (Taylor et al., 2016b).

*Gender* has been defined as a system that operates in a social and cultural context to classify people, often based on their assigned sex (Taylor et al., 2016b). Gender is viewed as a continuum rather than a binary made up of only of two categories, “female” or “male” (Slesaransky-Poe, 2013).
Gender is frequently conflated with the term *sex*. In this paper *sex* or *assigned sex* has been defined as the “classification of a person as male, female or intersex based on biological characteristics, including chromosomes, hormones, external genitalia and reproductive organs” (Taylor et al., 2016b). Sex is typically assigned at birth after a visual assessment of external genitalia.

*Sexual orientation* has been defined as a person’s potential for physical, romantic, emotional, intellectual, and/or other forms of attraction to others (Taylor et al., 2016b). Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same and transgender people can be straight, bisexual, lesbian, gay, asexual, etc. just like anyone else (Trans Student Educational Resources, 2016).

In this paper, *gender identity* has been defined as “a person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender” which could include a sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or some other gender (Taylor et al., 2016b). This is not to be confused with *gender expression* which Taylor et al. (2016b) have defined as the “way a person presents and communicates gender” through “clothing, speech, body language, hairstyle, voice, and/or the emphasis or de-emphasis of bodily characteristic or behaviours.” Many transgender people try to make their gender expression (how they appear to others) match their gender identity (who they are) rather than their assigned sex (Trans Student Educational Resources, 2016).

The terms *gender non-conforming* and *gender variant* are used in this paper to describe a person whose gender expression falls outside what is generally thought to be typical for their assigned sex (Orr & Baum, 2015). Ehrensaft (2011) has suggested using the term *gender creative* as an alternative to gender non-conforming and gender variant as the latter two terms seem to imply the person is somehow other than normal. *Gender expansive* is another alternative term.
Transition is the process through which transgender people begin to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than the one typically associated with their assigned sex. Social transition may involve things such as changing names, pronouns, hairstyle and clothing. Medical transition may involve hormone therapy and/or gender affirming surgeries (Orr & Baum, 2015).

This paper has defined heteronormativity as the assumption that heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships are the norm, which legitimizes and privileges heterosexuality and marginalizes other orientations (Rands, 2009). As Ryan (2009) described, heteronormative classroom environments reinforce the notion that children are expected to be heterosexual boys and girls who behave according to culturally accepted gender stereotypes.

Overview

The intended audience for this resource manual is elementary school educators and administrators in British Columbia who would like to learn more about transgender and gender non-conforming children or who are supporting the social transitioning of a transgender student in their school. I spent countless hours trying to find relevant information to help me in supporting Mary’s social transition during her time in my school. My hope is that by putting much of the basic information and many of the links to more specific information into one resource guide, educators will be saved valuable time spent trying to find this information for themselves. Chapter One explains my connection to this topic and illustrates the need for a resource guide specifically designed for British Columbia elementary schools. In Chapter Two, I review the literature in five different areas relevant to my overall topic: transgender child development, the school experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming students, educator beliefs and misconceptions, transgender rights in Canada and British Columbia, and
ways schools can support transgender students. This is followed by Chapter Three which connects what I learned from the literature to my rationale for the creation and organization of my resource manual. Chapter Four summarizes my work on the manual, what I learned from this experience, and my unanswered questions. Chapter Four also includes my recommendations for how the resource manual might be used as well as a description of the limitations of this resource. Finally, the resource manual itself has been included as Appendix A and has been presented in the same format as the version being made available to schools.
Introduction

This chapter is an examination of research conducted on the topics of transgender and gender non-conforming youth and their experiences in school. It also examines what the research has to say about what educators believe about transgender and gender non-conforming students as well as systemic responses to these students as reflected in laws, policies, professional development, and inclusive curricula. The chapter is organized into the following sections: transgender child development, the school experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming students, educator beliefs and misconceptions, transgender rights in Canada and British Columbia, and ways schools can support transgender students.

Transgender Child Development

Ehrensaft (2011) described gender as having three components: genetic gender, the chromosomes you are born with (XX, XY, or other); your physical gender, the sexual characteristics you are born with; and your brain gender, the signals your brain sends along gender lines. For most children, all three of these match. However, in about 1% of the population, they do not (Ehrensaft, 2011). The chromosomes or body parts you are born with are not a guarantee that you will feel that you are that gender inside or that you have to act out that gender in any particular way (Ryan, Patraw, & Bednar, 2013).

As Brill and Pepper (2008) pointed out, gender is not something most people in our society have thought about as the dominant cultural acknowledgement of two genders, male and female, has not presented any problems for them. Culturally created gender roles have given our society a structure based on commonly understood ways of behaving with each other (Brill & Pepper, 2008). Most of us have been taught that gender only has two options, but many, if not the
majority of us, are in reality a blend as is frequently demonstrated by our clothing style or activity choice (Brill & Pepper, 2008). Brill and Pepper (2008) made the comparison to our understanding of the world’s population being made up of an ever larger percentage of multi-ethnic people rather than people of distinct races. Children with gender non-conforming interests or behaviours are not “an alternate or pathogenic form of masculinity or femininity, but rather a healthy expression of a gender continuum” (Garcia & Slesaransky-Poe, 2010, p. 244).

Gender identity as defined by Brill and Pepper (2008) is “your personal sense of self and where you fit on the continuum of male to female” as well as “who you know yourself to be” (p. 14). Your gender identity, along with your gender expression and your sexual orientation, are all important pieces in your overall core identity development (Brill & Pepper, 2008). For most people, all three of these distinct pieces align with each other and our cultural system of gender roles and expectations as based on that alignment. Ehrensaft (2011) explained the difference between a person’s assigned gender and their affirmed gender by stating that your assigned gender is given to you by someone else but your affirmed gender can only be given to you by you.

A child’s perception of gender can change over time and is shaped by factors such as ethnicity, religion, class, and culture (Brill & Pepper, 2008). Slesaransky-Poe (2013) defined gender expression as how we communicate our gender identity to other people through things such as our mannerisms, hairstyles, clothes, body language.

By the age of two or three, a child is beginning to build an internal sense of gender and starting to look for indications of how that gender is expected to act (Brill & Pepper, 2008). Using cues from the world around them, children learn that things such as toys or clothing can be associated with either boys or girls and, by age three, most children show a preference for items
usually associated with their assigned gender (Brill & Pepper, 2008). Brill and Pepper (2008) explain that at this age children identify people as being male or female based on features they can see such as the length of their hair. Some children already sense “a keen difference between what they are told they are and what they know about their own gender identity” (Brill & Pepper, 2008, p. 62). In Vanderburgh’s 2009 work (as cited in Luecke, 2011), “he found 60.4% of male-affirmed clients knew that they were boys by the preschool years, as did 52.7% of female-affirmed clients” (p. 118).

By the age of three or four, some transgender children begin to express this sense of feeling different to the people around them (Boskey, 2014; Brill & Pepper, 2008). Cross-gender behaviour can be observed in areas such as fantasy play, playmate choice, games, and clothing (Boskey, 2014, Brill & Pepper, 2008; Saeger, 2006). Clothing choices are often the first way that children reflect their inner sense of gender (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Saeger, 2006). Dr. Norman Spack (as cited in Brill & Pepper, 2008) describes several reliable ways children, who cannot yet fully explain themselves in words, may display their true gender self: bathroom behaviour such as a boy who pees sitting down; an aversion to wearing a swimsuit typically worn by children of the same assigned sex; choice of underwear; and choice of toys. Parents may believe that these signs are just their child pretending or a phase (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Saeger, 2006). Not all exploration or gender variant behaviour means that a child is definitely a transgender individual (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Ehrensaft, 2011). Parents often feel discomfort with not knowing if their child is gender fluid, is experimenting with gender, or is a transgender individual (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Ehrensaft, 2011). In both The Transgender Child by Brill and Pepper (2008) and Gender Born, Gender Made by Ehrensaft (2011), parents are advised to follow the lead of their child, to let them explore, and to listen carefully to what their child is
telling them about who they really are as they grow and develop. Vanderburgh (2009) stated that “[o]ne of the hallmarks of any form of gender identification is its stability over time and across situations” (p. 144). Brill and Pepper (2008) explained that the ages of three and four are also the ages when all children are learning about societal expectations of how gender is expressed from media, interactions with others, and family beliefs. Stereotypical behaviour begins to emerge. This is also the age when gender segregation begins to emerge with boys more often choosing to play with only boys and girls more often choosing to spend time with other girls (Brill & Pepper, 2008).

Children from the ages of four to six strongly connect gender with certain behaviours and believe behaviours apply to only one gender or the other such as the example given by Brill and Pepper (2008) of the four year old child who affirms all doctors are men even if their own mother is a doctor. Children in this age range can still believe they can grow up to be a man, or a woman, or a princess (Brill & Pepper, 2008). Many transgender children have shown a consistent pattern of behaviour by this age and it “becomes glaringly apparent that this is not a stage” (Brill & Pepper, 2008, p. 63). Ehrensaft (2011) cited the work of Mildred Brown, a specialist who works with transgender adults, who found that 85% of her patients recognized their transgender identity by the time they entered school.

Children from the ages of five to eight start to express a more consistent and stable gender identity (Brill & Pepper, 2008). Brill and Pepper (2008) noted that gender non-conforming or transgender children may feel that they have to restrict how they express themselves at places like school if they get the feeling from others that how they are expressing themselves is wrong which can result in behavioural issues.
The second period a transgender identity can typically emerge is between the ages of nine and fourteen, just before or at the early stages of puberty (Brill & Pepper, 2008). Grossman and D’augelli (2006) conducted focus groups with transgender youth, ages 15-21. In contrast to Mildred Brown’s findings that 85% of her adult patients recognized their transgender identity by the time they entered school (as cited in Ehrensaft, 2011), the focus group youth reported that they were an average of 10.4 years old when they first realized that their gender identity did not match their assigned gender. They were an average age of 13.5 when they first realized other people characterized them as transgender people. Around the average age of fourteen, most of these youth first identified themselves as transgender and also disclosed their affirmed gender to someone else. Some children who have been gender variant their entire lives reject this type of behaviour and may start to act more stereotypically male or female (Brill & Pepper, 2008). As children who are gender non-conforming or who have a transgender identity start to go through the physical and hormonal changes of early puberty, the sense that they do not belong in the body they were born with can intensify and, as noted by Brill and Pepper (2008), this may be the time they try to communicate this sense of self to their families. Brill and Pepper (2008) cautioned that some transgender children may be susceptible to self-harm, self-neglect, and/or depression if they are not ready for the body changes that come with puberty.

Gender identity formation “does not end at a point in time” but is a fluid progression that “might extend over the course of childhood and into adulthood” (Ehrensaft, 2011, p. 37). According to Brill and Pepper (2008), adolescence to early adulthood is the third most common time for a person to realize that they have a transgender identity. Rankin and Beemyn (2012) collected data from 400 interviews and 3,500 surveys of gender non-conforming and transgender people and reported that 97% of the respondents realized by the end of their teenage years that
they were different from others of their assigned gender. Brill and Pepper (2010) described this realization as resulting from the person’s growing fear that “they are going through the ‘wrong’ puberty” (p.66). Luecke (2011) explained that a common stressful experience for transgender children is when growth and puberty are being discussed in class as part of a health unit. Ehrensaft (2011) noted that the “physical changes that accompany adolescence can truly be a day of reckoning, especially for a child whose assigned gender is completely mismatched to his or her affirmed gender” (p. 138).

Even though gender identity is usually fixed for life, “depending on their environment, some children may choose not to express their true gender identity until a later time” (Brill & Pepper, 2008, p. 64). Parents may have the greatest influence on whether or not a young child externalizes their gender identification (Brill & Pepper, 2008). According to Brill and Pepper (2008), while parents cannot change a child’s gender identity by disapproving of it, they can cause a child to hide their gender identity to avoid that disapproval. Garcia and Slesaransky-Poe (2010) noted that as children get older, the less likely it is that society will be accepting of gender non-conforming behaviours and interests and that children are very much aware of this reality. A child can take on what Ehrensaft (2011) has called a false gender self by behaving in ways they feel the world expects them to behave. This adaptive behaviour can take place with any child, such as when a girl pretends not to be good at math (Ehrensaft, 2011). Ehrensaft (2011) further explained that a false gender self can be used as a strategy to protect a child when they are in an unaccepting environment. An example would be a child who wears clothing that matches their affirmed gender identity in a supportive home setting but who dresses in clothing that matches their assigned gender identity while attending school or church. What is most
important, according to Ehrensaft (2011), is that a transgender child has control over when and where to let their true gender self-emerge.

This section examined how transgender children develop as they grow up. The next section will examine what school is like for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals.

School Experiences of Transgender and Gender Non-conforming Students

This section will look at what the literature has to say about the experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming students at school. Grossman and D’augelli (2006) found that transgender youth involved in their focus group discussions reported that most people at school responded negatively to any gender non-conforming behaviour and that going to school was a particularly traumatic experience for all of them. When students feel unwelcome and unsafe at school, it is difficult for them to learn and or feel good about themselves (Brill & Pepper, 2008). School experiences are even more important to consider when, as Brill and Pepper (2008) reminded readers, students spend more time with the people at school than they do with their parents and families. While non-LGBTQ students might choose to attend a school because it is close to home, has high academic standards, or offers a variety of extra-curricular activities, many LGBTQ students choose what schools to attend based on whether they feel accepted and safe (McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, & Russell, 2010). Transgender students may also find themselves facing other challenges such as having to explain to school staff and others what being transgender or gender non-conforming is actually all about or having to be their own advocate in the absence of other allies (Greytak, Kosciw, Diaz, & Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), 2009).

Transgender children and youth have been reported to be invisible in schools (Grossman & D’augelli, 2006; Kennedy & Hellen, 2010; Wells, Roberts, & Allan, 2012). Kennedy and Hellen
(2010) found that survey participants consistently responded that they felt a need to conceal their gender identities once they became aware that they were different and that their differences were not socially acceptable. Two-thirds of the participants surveyed by Kennedy and Hellen (2010) did not tell anyone about their transgender identity until they were more than eighteen years old even if they were aware of that identity as a child. Survey participants reported being afraid of what would happen if they shared their gender identities and Kennedy and Hellen (2010) found that transgender children were likely to assume that “what is unacceptable to some is unacceptable to all” (p. 31). Even young children have been shown to be knowledgeable about gender stereotypes and to harass peers whose behaviour does not match these stereotypes (Ryan et al., 2013). Kennedy and Hellen (2010) also found that survey participants first became aware of vocabulary related to being transgender at an average age of 15.4 years, which was an average of 7.5 years after they reported being aware that they were transgender or gender non-conforming. Before they know transgender-related words, transgender children often believe they are the only ones in the world experiencing feelings of being different, contributing to their need to be secretive and hide what they feel (Kennedy & Hellen, 2010). What Kennedy and Hellen called being non-apparent, Ehrensaft (2011) called displaying a false gender self. Kennedy and Hellen agreed that not all transgender and/or gender non-conforming children were aware that they were hiding.

Greytak et al. (2009) reported that some transgender students hide their gender identity out of fear of being harassed and that the more their gender identity was known to the school population, the more likely transgender students were to report incidences of victimization. Kennedy and Hellen (2010) reported that 18% of primary students who were assigned female at birth and only 2% of children assigned male at birth were allowed to express their gender
identities at school “largely or as much as they wanted” (p. 36). Kennedy and Hellen commented that schools fail to support children by “tacitly permitting, ignoring, or indeed participating in bullying which forces them to conceal or suppress those identities (p. 40). Ryan, Patraw, and Bednar (2013) shared the story of a boy named Isaac who enjoyed wearing pink shoes and purple nail polish, even though he did not self-identify as a girl. Isaac removed his nail polish and wore blue shoes to school on his first day of kindergarten indicating that he believed that you have to behave a certain way at school and that his stereotypically feminine behaviour would not be accepted by his teachers or peers. Kennedy and Hellen (2010) also found that some children who are aware of gender expectations try to conform to these expectations by participating in intensely masculine or feminine activities. An example would be a female-affirmed male playing sports such as football or rugby in an attempt to hide their own gender expression.

Taylor and Peter (2011b) analyzed the results of a climate survey of 3700 Canadian high school students, 25% of whom were from British Columbia and 3% of whom identified as transgender students. The results showed that LGBTQ respondents reported higher levels of harassment than heterosexual cisgender students. Transgender respondents reported the highest levels of harassment (Taylor and Peter, 2011b). The rest of this section will look at various types of victimization transgender students face at school as well as their impressions about safety, inclusion, and support.

**Overall safety in school and educational outcomes.** Burdge, Snapp, Laub, Russell, and Moody (2013) found that the members of their youth focus groups described their schools as being mostly safe in spite of the fact that they also reported verbal harassment of LGBTQ students was common. Burdge et al. (2013) posited that this might be because the youth judged
schools as safe if physical violence was uncommon or because verbal harassment was so much a part of their everyday experience that they viewed such behaviour as normal. Only 53% of the teachers surveyed in the “Every Teacher Project” (Taylor et al., 2016a) agreed with the statement that a transgender student would feel safe in their school. The majority of transgender youth in other studies reported that they did not feel safe at school because of their expression of gender (Greytak et al., 2009; Sausa, 2005; Taylor & Peter, 2011a). Two locations that are usually gender segregated, washrooms and Physical Education change rooms, were the locations most often viewed as unsafe by LGBTQ students (Burdge et al., 2013; McGuire et al., 2010; Sausa, 2005; Young, 2011).

Transgender students who did not feel safe at school, often used fear of harassment as a reason for skipping classes or missing days of school (Greytak et al., 2009; Taylor & Peter, 2011a). The transgender youth who participated in the “First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools” (Taylor and Peter, 2011a) cited feeling unsafe as the reason for missing school 44% of the time and 15% of respondents said feeling unsafe was why they had missed at least ten days of school. Greytak et al. (2009) found that transgender students who reported higher harassment levels also cited lack of safety as the reason for missing school when compared to transgender students who reported harassment less often. Transgender students harassed more frequently “had significantly lower grades than those less often harassed” and were less likely to say that they were going to “pursue further education” (Greytak et al., 2009, p. 25).

Palmer, Kosciw, and Bartkiewicz (2012) used the findings from the 2011 National School Climate Survey to more closely examine the experiences of 8,158 rural students, 185 of whom identified as transgender. They found that “higher rates of victimization were associated with
lower grades, lower educational aspirations, and greater absenteeism due to safety concerns for LGBT students across locales” (p. 14). Palmer et al., (2012) noted that rural LGBT students who experienced physical assault frequently or often based on gender expression or sexual orientation were significantly less likely to attend college than those who were less severely victimized.

Schneider and Dimito (2008) found in their survey that 23% of educators were aware of one or more instances when students had dropped out of school because of anti-LGBTQ harassment and 30% knew of students who had switched schools for the same reason. The focus group participants studied by McGuire et al. (2010) discussed feeling safer in schools that accepted LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth such as alternate or charter schools. The thirty LGBTQ youth Young (2011) asked about what they would want to tell educators shared that they want the adults at their schools to stand up for them and protect them. Knowing that there was an adult at their school who would keep them safe kept some of these thirty youth from dropping out of school. “Students learn more, make better grades, and have enhanced emotional well-being when the adults in their schools stand up for their rights to learn free of verbal and physical harassment” (Young, 2011, p. 14).

**Verbal harassment.** Taylor and Peter (2011b) found that the “use of homophobic and transphobic language is widespread across every region” of Canada (p. 305). However, Peter, Taylor, and Chamberland (2015) found that British Columbia invariably had less reported homophobic language usage than the other Canadian provinces and territories. This difference could be partly due to differences in provincial or territorial legislation or from differences in policies created at the district level. Peter et al. (2015) also noted that most of the B.C. participants in the two surveys went to school in the Vancouver School District which has a comprehensive anti-homophobia policy.
Several studies stated that more than 70% of the transgender participants had reported being verbally harassed because of how they expressed their gender (Greytak et al., 2009; McGuire et al., 2010; Taylor & Peter, 2011a; Taylor & Peter 2011b). “Homophobic remarks were commonly heard in school by transgender students” (Greytak et al., 2009, p. 10) including demeaning remarks such as ‘dyke’ or ‘faggot’ and language using ‘gay’ in a negative fashion such as ‘that’s so gay’. A total of 85% of the transgender students surveyed by Greytak et al. (2009) were bothered when they heard the word gay used in negative way.

Peter et al. (2015) noted that LGBTQ students are hearing “terms that signify a core aspect of their identities used as insults. . . . Usages such as ‘that’s so gay’ to mean ‘that’s so stupid’ pejorative [LGBTQ] identities and, by implication, valorize heterosexual ones” (p. 199). No matter what meaning is intended, when biased language is constantly used at school, the school community gets the message that LGBTQ students are not supported and that message can result in more incidences of bullying and harassment (Peter et al., 2015). Anderson (2014) explained that one way to distinguish between homophobic or transphobic expression and bullying is to ask if a specific individual is the target. A bully’s target might be LGBTQ or simply be perceived to be LGBTQ, but in either case the bully is trying to harm a particular person (Anderson, 2014). Most of the teachers in Preston’s 2016 study thought that the remarks they were hearing were not necessarily connected to the target’s actual or perceived sexual or gender identity but were instead attempts to police each other’s behaviour and masculinity.

Transgender and gender non-conforming students not only heard homophobic and transphobic comments from other students, they also reported hearing them from adults at their school (Greytak et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2012; Sausa, 2005; Taylor & Peter, 2011a). Transgender and gender non-conforming students also heard school staff remark that they were
not acting feminine or masculine enough (Greytak et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2012; Sausa, 2005; Taylor & Peter, 2011a). When the adults in the school are the ones doing the harassing, they are modeling that harassment is acceptable and are telling students that little will be done to stop harassment by other students as well (McGuire, et al., 2010).

**Physical harassment and assault.** Schneider and Dimito (2008) found in their survey that 26% of educators were aware of one or more instances when students were assaulted by other students because they were LGBTQ or believed to be LGBTQ and 59% were aware of one or more instances of bullying. Physical harassment, including being pushed or shoved, was reported by 53% of transgender students in the climate survey of Greytak et al. (2009) and 83% of the youth interviewed by Sausa (2005). Taylor and Peter reported that 25% of the transgender youth completing their Canadian climate survey reported being physically harassed (2011a). Physical assault, including being kicked, punched, or hurt with a weapon, was reported by 44% of transgender students in the climate survey of Greytak et al. (2009), with 26% of respondents saying it was due to their expression of gender. Greytak et al. (2009) also found that survey participants were less likely to report physical assault than to report verbal or physical harassment.

**Other types of harassment.** Sexual harassment has also frequently been reported by transgender students (Greytak et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2012; Taylor & Peter, 2011a). The work of Greytak et al. (2009) and Palmer et al. (2012) found that many transgender students reported that they were subjected to cyberbullying or had had peers exclude them or spread rumours or lies about them. Another form of harassment transgender students reported was having belongings damaged or stolen by other students (Greytak et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2012; Taylor & Peter, 2011a). The teachers surveyed by Schneider and Dimito (2008) reported another
form of harassment: seeing anti-LGBTQ graffiti on school property. Transgender students were also found to be the most likely students in a school to be harassed about their religion, disability, race, or ethnicity suggesting that peers found it easy to target students who were already being harassed because of their gender and gender expression (Greytak et al., 2009). McGuire et al. (2010) found that transgender youth who “conform to their new gender and remain closed about their identification” experience less harassment than transgender youth who do not conform (p. 1176).

Some of the participants in the focus group studies of McGuire et al. (2010) felt that aggression was an acceptable response to harassment when adults failed to intervene. Others stated that elements of social capital such as a student’s economic status or a student’s ability to use humour could have an effect on whether or not a student was harassed even if they were a gender variant person. Taylor and Peter (2011b) reported that LGBTQ students tried to limit the amount of time they spent in the common areas of the schools as a way of avoiding harassment.

**School engagement.** Research has shown that “students who feel more connected to their school perform better academically” (Palmer et al., 2012, p. 17). One way of judging how much a transgender student feels like they belong at their school is how comfortable they are with sharing their gender identity with others (Greytak et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2012). Palmer et al. (2012) found that LGBTQ students were less likely to be out to staff than to fellow students and that about one-third of LGBTQ students had not shared their sexual or gender identity with even one staff member. Greytak et al. (2009) reported that transgender students had a lower sense of school connection than non-transgender, lesbian, gay, or bisexual students. “Even when transgender students feel safe from physical harm in school, they may not be comfortable disclosing their gender identity and/or sexual orientation which may prevent them from
participating in school activities as fully as their peers” (Greytak et al., 2009, p. 30). Greytak et al. also found that transgender students who had shared their gender identity with most or all of their peers reported feeling more connected to their school than transgender students who had only shared with a few people.

Another way to determine how connected transgender students feel to their school is how comfortable they are with bringing up transgender issues with staff or in class. Palmer et al. (2012) found that “students who talked with teachers, principals, vice-principals, counselors, nurses, librarians, and gym teachers at least once in the past year reported a much greater sense of belonging than students who did not” (p. 20). Greytak et al. (2009) reported that even though 43% of transgender respondents stated they were not comfortable bringing up LGBTQ issues in class, 76% of them had brought up these issues at least once in the past twelve months. In addition, transgender students brought up LGBTQ issues more often than their cisgender, lesbian, gay or bisexual peers. Greytak et al. postulated that this may be because transgender students frequently have to explain what being transgender means and advocate for their own needs. Teachers and school counselors were more likely to have transgender students raise LGBTQ issues with them than principals or other staff (Greytak et al., 2009). Greytak et al. also found that frequently talking to teachers about LGBTQ issues correlated with higher scores on indicators of school belonging scale for transgender students. Rural transgender students were less likely to feel a sense of belonging at school than their urban and suburban counterparts. Palmer et al. (2012) thought this might be because rural schools have less resources or because there may be less community support in rural settings. McGuire et al. (2010) found that the youth in their focus groups were optimistic about the positive impact teachers could have on school climate if they would intervene more.
Resources and supports. Sausa’s study (2005) reported a lack of resources for transgender youth, including a lack of library books, a lack of inclusive messages in curriculum and policies, and a lack of supportive staff and school groups. The survey results analyzed by Greytak et al. (2009) showed that 46% of respondents could not find information about LGBTQ history or people in their school library and that only 31% were able to use the school internet to access this information. Only 16% of survey respondents reported that LGBTQ-related topics were included in readings or textbooks. LGBTQ-inclusive curricula was available to only 12.7% of the 409 transgender youth surveyed and only 19.2% stated that their schools had an extensive policy against harassment and bullying (Greytak et al., 2009). When Palmer et al. (2012) looked at the survey results of rural LGBTQ students, 87% of them could not find textbooks or readings that included LGBTQ content. They also found that only 5% of rural LGBTQ students reported that their school policy specifically mentioned sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

A frequent theme discovered by Sausa (2005) in her analysis of the interviews of transgender youth was that the adults in their schools did not support or advocate for them. Some of the evidence the transgender youth gave Sausa (2005) of this lack of support was breaches of confidentiality, refusal to use their preferred names or pronouns, applications that only had two given sexes or genders to choose from, and refusal to change names and/or gender identification on school identification and records. Sausa’s respondents also shared personal stories about adults blaming transgender youth for getting verbally and/or physically harassed, and about being “misdiagnosed with learning disabilities or labelled ‘problems’” (2005, p. 23).

Only 46% of transgender students surveyed by Greytak et al. (2009) actually reported incidences of harassment or assault to any of the adults at school. Only 33% of those who did
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report to staff believed that the incident was addressed effectively (Greytak et al., 2009). Many researchers have found that, according to students, educators and other school staff did not often intervene when hearing transphobic remarks or negative comments made about gender expression (Greytak et al., 2009; McGuire et al., 2010; Palmer et al., 2012; Preston, 2016; Taylor et al., 2016b). Preston (2016) found that teachers “dismissed the bullying they did witness as both ‘immature’ and as baseless because they viewed victims as either ‘flaunting it’ and therefore deserving of bullying, or as straight and therefore viewed bullying as having no significant impact on the victim” (p.31). In the “Every Teacher Project” survey of Canadian teachers, 50% of teachers said that they personally did a good job of addressing transphobic harassment but were less likely to believe the same thing about others in their schools (Taylor et al., 2016b). These teachers said that school administration did a good job of dealing with transphobic harassment 35% of the time, while colleagues only did a good job 26% of the time. Students were rated as lowest by teachers who believed students only intervened effectively 18% of the time (Taylor et al., 2016b). The ways in which the adults at a school choose to respond to biased language or other forms of harassment has an impact on school climate: silence tells others that a school accepts that type of behaviour while intervention signals that that type of behaviour will not be condoned (Palmer et al., 2012; Taylor and Peter, 2011b). Students who attended schools that actively dealt with harassment felt safer and more connected to the school staff (McGuire et al., 2010).

A study by Greytak et al. (2013) looking at the availability and impact of LGBT resources for transgender students found that 92.2% of the transgender students surveyed could name at least one teacher who was supportive of LGBTQ students. Palmer et al. (2012) found very similar results in their survey as 94% of rural LGBT students, 95% of suburban students, and
96% of urban students knew at least one staff member who was supportive. Districts often have specialists for youth with special physical or learning needs but such district level support is often unavailable to transgender youth or is not on the radar of transgender youth (McGuire et al., 2010).

LGBTQ students in rural areas found it hard to find peers who were going through the same experiences that they were (Palmer et al., 2012). Although most students knew at least one LGBT peer whether they attended rural, suburban or urban schools, “rural students knew substantially fewer, even after accounting for the small size of schools” (Palmer et al., 2012, p. 25).

Only 27% of the rural LGBTQ students studied by Palmer et al. (2012) and 44% of the transgender students surveyed by Greytak et al. (2009) stated that there was a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) at their school. Greytak et al. (2009) stated that survey results showed 68% of transgender students at schools with GSAs attended often or frequently and that transgender students attended more often than cisgender, gay, lesbian, or bisexual students. LGBTQ students in rural settings were more likely to attend a GSA than suburban or urban LGBTQ students perhaps because only 30% of rural LGBTQ students lived in communities that offered any programs for LGBTQ youth (Palmer et al., 2012).

Family can be another resource for students who are harassed or assaulted in school as family members may be able to advocate for students with school personnel (Greytak et al., 2009). Greytak et al. found that only 51% of transgender students told a family member when they were harassed or assaulted at school. For those who had reported incidents to a family member, 61% said a family member had brought up the issue with the school at least some of the time. Transgender students were no different than non-transgender students in how often they
told family members about incidents or in how often family members addressed the incidents with school staff (Greytak et al., 2009).

Youth in the schools with supportive teachers, Gay Straight Alliances, and/or LGBTQ-inclusive curricula, missed fewer days of school and reported less victimization incidences than youth in schools lacking those resources. The next section will explore some of the beliefs and misconceptions educators have about transgender students. It will also look at what the literature has to say about why schools and educators might not address LGBTQ issues.

**Educator Beliefs and Misconceptions**

**Beliefs.** Learning about and being asked to teach students who may exhibit a variety of alternative gender expressions can make educators who believe in the concept of a gender binary feel anxious (Garcia & Slesaransky-Poe, 2010; Payne & Smith, 2014; Slesaransky-Poe, Ruzzi, Dimedio, & Stanley, 2013). Payne & Smith (2014) interviewed educators with experience working with transgender students to learn more about how they responded to learning that a transgender student would be enrolling in their elementary schools. Fear was a common first response as a transgender child’s presence challenged the educators’ understanding of sexuality and gender and was viewed as a threat to the safety and order of the school (Payne & Smith, 2014).

A Canadian national study, known as the “Every Teacher Project”, surveyed K-12 educators during the 2012-2013 school year to learn more about their views about LGBTQ-inclusive education (Taylor et al., 2016b). This report on the “Every Teacher Project” focused on the online survey responses of 3319 educators, 1725 of whom completed additional questions included on a longer survey, and did not include information collected from focus groups as a
part of the project. A follow-up report on the focus group phase has not been released yet (Taylor et al., 2016b).

The “Every Teacher Project” found that there were “often gaps between what teachers believe about LGBTQ-inclusive education, how they perceive school climate for LGBTQ students, and whether they practice LGBTQ-inclusive education” (Taylor et al., 2016a, p. 113). The first gap identified was that many teachers who believe that their schools are safe also report their belief that LGBTQ students would not feel safe in those same schools. While 97% of the surveyed educators believed their school was safe, that percentage dropped when those same educators were asked about specific groups of students. When asked specifically about transgender students, only 53% of all educators surveyed believed their school would be safe. When the responses of British Columbia educators were examined, 52% of that subgroup thought that their schools would be safe for transgender students. Gender expression also influenced perception as 74% of respondents believed that girls who act masculine would be safe and that only 62% of boys who act feminine would be safe at their schools. LGBTQ respondents (82.8%) were more likely to strongly agree that “students should be allowed to express gender any way they like” (p. 124) than heterosexual cisgender respondents (64.8%).

The second gap identified was that while 96% of teachers agreed with the statement “LGBTQ rights are human rights”, “roughly one in six teachers is neutral or opposed to LGBTQ-inclusive education” (p. 129).

The third gap identified was that 17.7% of respondents who thought that “LGBTQ rights are human rights” also agreed with the statement that “teachers should be able to opt out of LGBTQ-inclusive education for religious reasons” (Taylor et al., 2016a, p. 129). Taylor et al. (2016a) interpreted this to mean that some teachers might believe religious rights take
precedence over other human rights in spite of the fact that Supreme Court cases such as *R v. Mills* (1999) ruled that “no Charter right is absolute” (p. 129). Taylor et al. (2016a) reminded readers that many religious conservative educators have found a way to reconcile their personal beliefs with their responsibilities to ensure that all students, including LGBTQ students, feel safe and included at school. Only 2% of those surveyed by Taylor et al. (2016a) stated that their religious convictions were preventing them from including LGBTQ issues in their classrooms.

The fourth gap was that only one-third of respondents who thought that “LGBTQ rights are human rights” also agreed with the statement that they had discussed LGBTQ rights with students. The silence of educators on LGBTQ rights is significant, according to Taylor et al. (2016a), because it happens in the same schools that promote inclusiveness and celebrate diversity for groups such as disabled students and students of different ethnicities, races, or religions. The 2011 work of Taylor and Peter (as cited in Taylor et al., 2016a) reported that many LGBTQ students felt angry or disappointed that the same educators who discussed “generic human rights in the formal curriculum of the classroom [did] nothing to counteract violations of LGBTQ students’ human rights in the informal curriculum of the hallways” (p. 130).

The fifth gap was that respondents were less likely to practice LGBTQ-inclusive education than to approve of it. In general, the lower the grade level taught, the less likely educators were to agree that they practiced LGBTQ-inclusive education. Cisgender heterosexual educators were less likely to have practiced LGBTQ-inclusive education than LGBTQ educators. Survey participants described the forms of LGBTQ-education they practiced as follows: 51.1% “challenged homophobia”, 46.9% “used inclusive language and examples”, 18.3% “challenged
transphobia”, 16.3% “[critiqued] heterosexual privilege”, and 9.3% “[brought] in guest speakers” (p. 125).

The sixth gap reported by Taylor et al. (2016a) was that even though most respondents approved of LGBTQ-inclusive education, many believed that they would not be supported in practicing it. When respondents were asked what groups or organizations would be expected to support them, 77.5% believed their teacher organization would be supportive. This number compares to numbers of 67.6% for colleagues, 65.8% for school administration, and 63.5% for current legislation. Only 58.4% of respondents believed that students would be supportive.

Schneider and Dimito (2008) reported that 60% of the educators in their study felt somewhat or very much confident that administration would not give them trouble if they included LGBTQ content in curricula.

Bower and Klecka in their 2009 study of social norms held by teachers also reported that elements of these norms often seemed to contradict each other. One norm identified by Bower and Klecka was that educators “do not contradict personal, moral, or religious beliefs of families” (p. 367). The participants in their focus groups expressed concerns about offending parents if they included LGBTQ content in their classes. Their statements did not consider the heteronormative environment of most classrooms or that some parents would not be happy if LGBTQ content was excluded from curricula. Honouring the beliefs of some families meant that others families’ beliefs were ignored. A second norm, that teachers “provide physical and emotional safety for their students” (p. 368), was identified through frequent comments about the need to stop teasing and bullying. The third norm identified was that teachers “draw on knowledge of students to plan instruction” (p. 369). Some of the focus group participants did not want to know very much about students’ home situations while other felt that knowing about
family backgrounds could help educators to stop bullying or teasing. The fourth norm identified was that teachers “prioritize student learning above all else” (p. 368). Most participants equated student learning with learning academic content rather than learning about things such as family diversity or respect for differences. Bower and Klecka concluded that there was no way that all of these norms could be followed especially when they considered the increasing diversity of student backgrounds present in today’s schools. They also concluded that the decisions made by the educators in this study consistently reinforced LGBTQ identities as either invisible or as abnormal in comparison to the identities of heterosexual individuals.

School principals were surveyed by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) to gather information on their point of view about school safety, bullying, and harassment (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008). Only 42% of the participants in this survey felt that transgender students would feel very safe in their school. When asked to identify reasons why students were often or very often harassed or bullied, 19% of the principals said body size or the way students look, 6% said how masculine or feminine they are, and 3% said either being or having people think they were bisexual or homosexual (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008). Verbal harassment was common in both elementary and high schools with 79% of elementary principals in the GLSEN survey reporting they had heard homophobic remarks and 86% of elementary principals reporting they had heard expressions such as ‘that’s so gay’. Most principals believed very few incidences of harassment were actually reported to them (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008). While most of the principals who took part in this survey reported that their school or district had a safe school or anti-bullying policy, only 11% of elementary school principals said their school was making an effort to actually create a safe
environment for LGBT students. Only 39% of all principals taking part in this GLSEN survey reported that their school’s policy mentioned gender expression or gender identification.

**Inhibiting Factors.** Taylor et al. (2016a) asked the educators who took part in their survey what factors would stop them from addressing LGBTQ topics. Almost one third of respondents (31%) stated that nothing prevented them from doing so, while another 19% stated that this was “not an issue at my school” (Taylor et al., 2016b, p. 100). A further 3% believed “it was not part of [their] job” and 3% stated they had “more important things to think about” (p. 100).

Schneider and Dimito (2008) surveyed 132 Ontario teachers and school administrators and also asked them why educators might not become involved in LGBT issues at school. The majority of respondents (56%) raised the concern that parents would protest. A survey of school principals had similar results as only 51% of the respondents believed that families in their school would be very or extremely supportive of efforts to address school safety issues for LGBT students (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008). In “The Every Teacher Project” survey, 16% said fear of parent opposition was an inhibiting factor (Taylor et al., 2016b). Flores (2014) also identified fear of parent reaction as the most common concern raised by teachers attending his presentation about possibly including LGBTQ themes in their elementary classrooms. When Flores, an educator in the Los Angeles Unified School District, used LGBTQ children’s literature and themes in classrooms, he found it was uncommon for parents to complain. Other teachers Flores (2010) mentioned had had some problems including a few who were verbally abused. The reasons harassed teachers gave for continuing with the implementation of LGBTQ themes were that they had the support of “the principal and district policy and it was the fair thing to do” (Flores, 2014, p. 115).
The “Every Teacher Project” survey conducted by Taylor et al. (2016b) reported that 19% of educators who included LGBTQ-inclusive themes in their teaching had received complaints. Of the group that received complaints, 53% said the complaints were made by parents. Only 14% of heterosexual cisgender educators in the “Every Teacher Project” reported having received complaints as compared to 28% of LGBTQ teachers. When the responses of transgender educators were separated out, 42% of transgender educators had reported that they had received complaints. Teachers from schools with transphobic harassment policies were less likely to report having received complaints (18%) than teachers from schools without policies (27%). The “Every Teacher Project” survey noted that teachers who had received complaints found their principals to be very supportive. Overall, 72% of respondents stated that their principal had been supportive. Both respondents from schools with transphobic harassment policies and respondents from religious schools reported that 84% of their principals were supportive (Taylor et al., 2016b).

Inadequate training and/or resources was the reason given by most (33%) of “Every Teacher Project” respondents asked why they might not address LGBTQ topics (Taylor et al., 2016b). When asked about training opportunities in their schools and districts, 13% of “Every Teacher Project” respondents had no idea if any were offered. Compulsory training had been provided to 9% of the educators who knew about training opportunities while 32% had been offered optional training. More than half of the respondents (58%) stated that no training had been made available to them (Taylor et al., 2016b). In this same study, 21% of respondents did not know if their district had a support person who they could consult about LGBTQ issues. Of the teachers who knew their districts had such a specialist, less than half had ever contacted them. The majority of “Every Teacher Project” respondents (61%) were aware that training was
available from their teacher association. While “72% of early years educators were aware of web-based resources” only 32% had actually used them (Taylor et al., 2016b, p. 147). Most respondents who knew about both LGBTQ educator networks and about other teachers who had training stated they would be more comfortable consulting other teachers. Almost half (46%) of the 132 Ontario educators surveyed by Schneider and Dimito (2008) stated that they needed to learn more about effective strategies for dealing with LGBTQ issues. A majority of these same educators (60%) stated they had “not had sufficient professional development opportunities regarding LGBT issues” (p. 62) and 82% of them stated that these issues had little to no presence in their teacher training (Schneider & Dimito, 2008). Slesaransky-Poe et al. (2013) reported that both the school guidance counselor and the school principal involved in creating a welcoming environment for a transgender child initially felt unprepared to handle the situation. The guidance counselor cited her lack of strategies and experience with similar situations while the principal wondered if she had enough knowledge about gender identity to give support to her staff, the student, and the family.

School-based reasons were cited by 31% of “Every Teacher Project” respondents to explain what would prevent them from being more LGBTQ-inclusive (Taylor et al., 2016b). These reasons included fear of being harassed by students, cited by 4% of respondents, and fear of embarrassing LGBTQ students, cited by 10% of respondents. Another 20% of respondents believed their students were too young to learn about LGBTQ issues. Some educators worried that the children they teach are too young to understand gender or know their gender identity (Maheu, et al., 2012; Smith & Payne, 2016; Swartz, 2003). Dykstra (2005) argued that this belief is false stating that “Trans kids and kids from trans families attend preschool and kindergarten, and they need educational settings that reflect and affirm their lived experience” (p.
Three or four year old children have shown their sense of gender identity does not match the gender they were assigned (Boenke, 1999, as cited by Dykstra, 2005) and the World Health Organization (1989, as cited by Dykstra, 2005) has reported that gender variance “is usually first observed when an individual is between ages two and four” (p. 8). More than 80% of the transgender adults surveyed by Kennedy and Hellen (2010) reported that they knew they were transgender before they left primary school. Ehrensaft (2011) wrote that not only will children “tell you who they are” if you listen closely “but their little friends will have a lot easier time hearing it than do we programmed and confused adults” (p. 84). Swartz (2003) concluded that young children understand the words used in transphobic or homophobic name-calling, and that much of this knowledge comes from movies and television. The topics of gender non-conformity and gender identification should not be left out of elementary classrooms, as developmentally, children have had an awareness of both since they were preschool-aged (Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013). Slesaransky-Poe et al. (2013), who were involved in preparing an elementary school to welcome a gender non-conforming child to Kindergarten, suggested that teachers of all grades have age-appropriate discussions emphasizing “that we all have similarities and differences in how we express our gender and that this gender expression may go against traditional gender roles and expectations” (p. 35).

Burdge et al., (2013) reported that some of the teachers involved in their case study schools were worried about having to deal with anti-LGBTQ comments by students if they implemented LGBTQ inclusive lessons. Snapp et al. (2015) reported that the schools that had successfully supported the social transition of a gender non-conforming child had experienced little or no opposition from other students.
**Myths and Misconceptions.** One of the common myths educators hold is that there are no transgender children in their schools (Maheu et al., 2012). This myth is more prevalent in elementary schools with educators who believe their students are too young to know their gender identities (Maheu et al., 2012; Smith & Payne, 2016; Swartz, 2003). Teachers may have transgender students at their schools but not know it yet as some gender variant children hide their inner gender identity from others (Maheu et al., 2012; Wells et al., 2012). Maheu et al. (2012) reported that the number of children who are expressing gender variance at an early age is increasing and that “20% of gender variant children will become transgendered adults” and “1 in 500 is transgender” (p. 13). This does not take into account students who may have friends or family members who are transgender (Maheu et al., 2012).

One misconception many people have is the idea that being transgender is a choice (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Maheu et al., 2012). Having a transgender identity is not a choice, according to Maheu et al. (2012), as there is evidence it cannot be changed by therapy.

“No one chooses to be transgender. It is not cool. It is not easy. It has no allure. Children and teens alike do not try it on for size like a pair of shoes. Being transgender is one of the most difficult things to be because it is not understood and the binary gender system is so pervasive” (Brill & Pepper, 2008, p. 22).

As Boskey (2014) wrote, when there are numerous indications that many in society, and perhaps even family members, are unsupportive or transphobic, a person can only maintain a transgender identity if they have strong, persistent feelings.

Many people feel that gender non-conforming behaviour by children is just a phase (Maheu et al., 2012). People behave in gender variant ways at different times in their life but this does not always mean they are transgender people (Maheu et al., 2012). Maheu et al. (2012)
stated that a transgender person has had feelings of being different that have usually remained present since an early age.

Maheu et al. (2012) shared another myth: that all transgender people want to have surgery to make their bodies match their affirmed genders. Some transgender people do not alter their bodies at all while others may make changes using hormones or surgeries (Maheu et al., 2012).

Some educators believe that one role of a teacher is to protect childhood innocence (Smith & Payne, 2016). This adult mindset about childhood discounts that elementary school children are aware of sexuality and that gender and sexual socialization takes place at school (Smith & Payne, 2016). Ryan (2016) conducted ethnographic research in primary classrooms and observed that when the children were engaged in play, in conversations with each other, and in reading or creative writing activities, they were creating and sharing their understandings about sex and sexuality. Ryan (2016) presented evidence that classrooms are heteronormative environments where students “learn from each other that people are - and should be - straight, with those who do not conform positioned as somehow ‘other’” (p. 78). Examples that Ryan (2016) observed included children writing romantic stories that always involved heterosexual couples; children pretending to be ‘moms’ and ‘dads’ during dramatic play; and children talking about the animals pictured in non-fiction books as if they had roles in a heteronormative family (an animal parent was always a mom and two older animals pictured with babies were always a mom and a dad). The students observed also invented games and stories “that included disapproval of same-sex couplings” and references to homosexuality “created distress, derision, or even disgust” but also resulted in “laughter and peer admiration” (p. 81). Ryan (2016) concluded that the question to ask is not “if sexuality is a part of elementary schools” but “how it is present: where, in what ways, with what effects and for whose benefit?” (p.79).
Another common misconception is that transgender or gender non-conforming children are gay or lesbian (Garcia & Slesaransky-Poe, 2010; Maheu et al., 2012). Smith & Payne (2016) found that some of the teachers who had just completed their workshop on gender were worried about the fact that they were not allowed to tell boys in their classes or parents that female- affirmed transgender students were “really” boys. Sexual orientation and gender identity are two entirely different concepts that are often confused (Anti-Defamation League, 2014; Brill & Pepper, 2008; Ehrensaft, 2011; Orr & Baum, 2015). As Ehrensaft (2011) stated in her book, Gender Born, Gender Made, “Our sexual identity has to do with who we get into bed with; our gender identity has to do with who we get into bed as (p. 14). Transgender people can be straight, gay, bisexual, or any other sexual orientation (Maheu et al., 2012).

As shown in this section, some educators expressed concern that attempts to make their classrooms and curricula more LGBTQ-inclusive might not be supported by internal sources such as colleagues and administration and/or external sources such as parents or community groups. The next section will look at how various laws and court cases have impacted the rights of transgender students in Canada and British Columbia. Knowledge of these rights can help educators explain to others that supporting transgender students is not just a personal position but a professional obligation.

Transgender Rights in Canada and British Columbia

**Canadian Law.** Equality rights are covered under Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) which states “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability” (para. 1). In 1995, the Supreme Court of Canada made a ruling in the case of *Egan v. Canada* that
“sexual orientation was an analogous ground for protection from discrimination” (Egan v. Canada, 1995, as cited in Anderson, 2014). The Canadian Charter (1982) applies to all publicly funded institutions, including public schools, and is one of the legal documents provincial and district education systems reference when developing safe school policy statements (Taylor & Peter, 2011b).

The Canadian Human Rights Act (RSC 1985) originally included both sex and sexual orientation as forms of discrimination that are prohibited (s.3, 1). A ruling by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in the case of Kavanagh v. Canada (2001) concluded that discrimination on the basis of ‘transsexualism’ can be considered discrimination on the basis of disability or sex (Kavanagh v. Canada, 2001, as cited in Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, 2013). On May 17, 2016, the Liberal government introduced Bill C-16 which would amend the Canadian Human Rights Act (RSC 1985) and the Criminal Code (RSC 1985) by adding the words “gender identity or expression” to the list of grounds for discrimination (Bill C-16, 2016). Bill C-16 became law after receiving Royal Assent on June 19, 2017 (SC 2017, c. 13). The path to having gender identity and expression explicitly included in the Canadian Human Rights Act (RSC 1985) and the Criminal Code (RSC 1985) was not an easy one.

The introduction of Bill C-16 was the seventh time such a bill had been proposed at the federal level but was the first time the party in power has been the one to introduce it (Pearson, 2016). The first two times a Private Member’s Bill asking for an update to the wording was introduced by Bill Siskay, a NDP MP from British Columbia. In each case, the bill was never debated and died on the floor of the House of Commons when an election was called. In 2009, Siskay’s bill was passed in the House of Commons but died in the Senate when an election was called (Pearson, 2016).
After Siskay retired, NDP MP Randall Garrison introduced *Bill C-279* (2011) on September 21, 2011. *Bill C-279* had its Third Reading and was passed by MPs on March 20, 2013 (Hager, 2015). Hager (2015) reported that the Senate committee that studied the bill voted to approve the bill with several amendments including an amendment by Conservative Senator Don Plett to prevent transgender people from using single-sex washrooms. Mr. Plett stated “the amendment would protect the ‘most vulnerable women’ by barring ‘biological males’ from entering female facilities like bathrooms, change rooms, prisons, and crisis centres - where seeing a man could be traumatic” (Hager, 2015). Hager (2015) reported that the amendments passed in the Senate but did not get the further approval of the House of Commons due to the October 2015 election.

When Parliament returned, Garrison introduced *Bill C-204* in December 2015 in spite of knowing that the Liberal Government intended to introduce its own version of a transgender rights bill (Pearson, 2016). Garrison was asked to stand beside Justice Minister Wilson-Reybould when she announced *Bill C-16* (2016) and when he spoke, Garrison challenged the government to ensure that this attempt gets through the Senate (Pearson, 2016). *Bill C-16* (2016) went through committee hearings in both the House and Senate but no amendments were made to the original bill.

Once Royal Assent was given on June 19, 2017, the *Canadian Human Rights Act (RSC 1985)* was amended to add gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination. The *Criminal Code (RSC 1985)* was amended to ensure that gender identity and gender expression are explicitly protected from hate propaganda and to ensure that courts consider evidence of hate, bias, or prejudice based on a victim’s gender identity or gender expression as an aggravating circumstance when passing a sentence.
**British Columbia Law.** In Canada, since education and “school boards are a provincial responsibility, it currently falls to the human rights legislation of every province to deal with gender discrimination as it would impact school districts” (Bowers & Lopez, 2012, p. 14). Prior to July 2016, British Columbia did not have explicit recognition of gender identity or gender expression as part of the provincial *Human Rights Code* (RSBC 1996). Opposition New Democrat Spencer Chandra Herbert had previously put forward transgender rights bills on four occasions including his most recent attempt on April 27, 2016 (Meissner, 2016). The ruling Liberal government never supported any of Chandra Herbert’s bills providing reasons such as Attorney General Suzanne Anton’s statement that “Transgender people are absolutely protected under our own human rights code” (Meissner, 2016). This position abruptly changed on July 25, 2016 when the Liberal government introduced *Bill 27 - 2016: Human Rights Code Amendment Act* during the summer session of parliament. The suggested amendment was to add the words “gender identity or expression” to all sections of the *Human Rights Code* (RSBC 1996) that list provisions for prohibited discrimination (*Bill 27, 2016*). The bill went through First, Second, and Third readings and was passed unanimously, with one Liberal member abstaining from the vote, on July 25, 2016 (Shaw, 2016). Royal Assent was given on July 28, 2016 (*Bill 27, 2016*). With this legislation, British Columbia joined eight other Canadian provinces and one territory in explicitly protecting transgender rights (Taylor et al., 2016a). Less than a year later, all of Canada’s provinces and territories had legislation in place explicitly protecting transgender rights, “concluding with the passage of Bill 5 in the Yukon on June 13, 2017” (Amnesty International, 2017).

**British Columbia Education Policies.** Following the July 2016 changes adding gender identity and gender expression to the British Columbia Human Rights Code, Education Minister
Mike Bernier announced on September 8, 2016 that “explicit references to sexual orientation and gender identity are being added to the policies that school districts and independent schools are required to have in place” (Government of British Columbia, 2016). Any school districts or independent schools that did not already have such explicit language in their anti-bullying policies were directed to do so by the end of 2016.

There have been several influential legal cases that have impacted the evolution of British Columbia LGBTQ education and policies. *Ross v. New Brunswick School District No. 15* (1996) established the concept of a “poisoned” learning environment (Anderson, 2014). Justice La Forest (*Ross v. NBSD No. 15*, 1996) described the appeal as follows:

> This appeal concerns the obligation imposed upon a public school board pursuant to provincial human rights legislation to provide discrimination-free educational services. It further involves the fundamental freedom of an individual teacher to publicly express his views and to exercise his religious beliefs during his off-duty time. (para. 1)

In its ruling on *Ross v. NBSD No. 15* (1996), the Supreme Court of Canada found that anti-Semitic comments Mr. Ross had made while off-duty and outside of school “impaired the education environment generally in creating a ‘poisoned’ environment characterized by a lack of equality and tolerance” (para. 49). The Supreme Court also agreed with statements made by the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission that “a school board has a duty to maintain a positive school environment for all persons served by it” and that it is “not sufficient for a school board to take a passive role” (*Ross v. NBSD No. 15*, 1996, para. 50). The effect of this ruling on school boards is that they could be found liable if they do not adequately respond to actions such as transphobic or homophobic expression by a teacher or if they are found to have ignored
actions that could jeopardize a safe-learning environment for LGBTQ students such as harassment or bullying (Anderson, 2014).

*Kempling v. the British Columbia College of Teachers* (2005) is another case that looked at the conduct of a teacher while off duty and outside of school. Kempling’s teaching certificate had been suspended as he had been found guilty of conduct unbecoming a teacher for publishing homophobic materials (Anderson, 2014). The British Columbia Court of Appeal stated that where a ‘poisoned’ environment “is traceable to the off-duty conduct of a teacher that is likely to produce a corresponding loss of confidence in the teacher and the system as a whole, then the off-duty conduct of the teacher is relevant” (*Kempling v. the British Columbia College of Teachers*, 2005 as cited in Anderson, 2014). Anderson (2014) noted that the rulings in both *Ross* and *Kempling* found that, for teachers, it is not as relevant whether behaviour takes place when they are on- or off-duty because of the position they hold in the community.

*Vriend v. Alberta* (1998) confirmed equality rights for lesbian and gay Canadians when the Supreme Court ruled in favour of Vriend’s legal challenge to have sexual orientation become part of the *Alberta Individual Rights Protection Act*. Vriend was dismissed by Kings College in Edmonton when he confirmed to them that he was homosexual and then was told by the Alberta Human Rights Commission that he could not file a complaint under the *Individual’s Rights Protection Act* (IRPA), because it did not include sexual orientation as a protected ground (*Vriend v. Alberta*, 1998). The case of *Vriend v. Alberta* (1998) ended up in front of the Supreme Court of Canada which ruled that the exclusion of sexual orientation from the *IRPA* was a violation of *Section 15* of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Justice Iacobucci stated that “reading sexual orientation into the impugned provisions of the *IRPA* is the most
appropriate way of remediying this underinclusive legislation” (Vriend v. Alberta, 1998, para. 179).

Another precedent setting case involved Marc Hall, a gay student who was told he could not bring his boyfriend to his Roman Catholic High School prom (Anderson, 2014). Justice MacKinnon found that Hall’s request for an injunction was reasonable and that not being allowed to attend prom would result in irreparable harm to Mr. Hall (Anderson, 2014). Anderson (2014) summarized the impact of this case as helping to “recognize the heteronormative nature of the education system” and as setting “an important precedent regarding what types of policies would no longer be tolerated” (p. 221).

Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36 (2002) was an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada stemming from a Surrey School Board resolution to not approve Chamberlain’s request to use three books which had same-sex parents as characters in his Kindergarten-Grade One classroom. The three books in question were Asha’s Mums (Elwin & Paulse, 1990), Belinda’s Bouquet (Newman, 1991), and One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads (Valentine, 2004). The Board believed that the books were not age-appropriate and expressed concerns that parents might not agree with the ideas their children were being exposed to (Anderson, 2014). The Board’s decision was supported by parents who believed that same-sex parenting was a moral issue that should be dealt with at home rather than at school (Collins, 2006). Opponents believed that the ruling contradicted both Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) which states that every individual “has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination” and Section 76 of the British Columbia School Act (1996), which requires public schools to “be conducted on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles” (Collins, 2006). In 1998, the B.C. Supreme Court ordered the
Board to reconsider its decision on the three books as Justice Saunders found that trustees did not approve the books “in response to religiously motivated complaints” and that freedom of religion as described in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) “included freedom from religion for non-believers and dissenters” (Collins, 2006, p. 350). Collins (2006) noted that the B.C. Court of Appeal overturned this ruling emphasizing parental rights to participate in their children’s education and that parents who wanted to provide input could not be treated differently based on whether they held religious or secular views.

An appeal was then launched to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court Order asked the Surrey School Board to reconsider the question of whether the three books should be approved “according to the criteria laid out in the Board’s own regulation, the curriculum guidelines and the broad principles of tolerance and non-sectarianism underlying the School Act” (Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36, 2002, para. 74). The Chief Justice explained the ruling stating:

The belief that others are entitled to equal respect depends, not on the belief that their values are right, but on the belief that they have a claim to equal respect regardless of whether they are right. Learning about tolerance is therefore learning that other people’s entitlement to respect from us does not depend on whether their views accord with our own. Children cannot learn this unless they are exposed to views that differ from those they are taught at home (Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36, 2002, para. 66).

The majority 7-2 ruling in Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36 (2002) also stated that the only other message to be found in these books was a message of tolerance and that that message was appropriate for all ages. The Supreme Court also found that the British Columbia curriculum found the subject matter of these books to be appropriate as K-1 students are
expected to discuss all types of families including ones with same-sex parents (*Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36*, 2002). The Supreme Court supported the School Board’s right to reject supplementary materials as long as it “does so on valid grounds, such as excessive level of difficulty, discriminatory content, inaccuracy, ineffectiveness, or availability of other materials to achieve the same goals (*Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36*, 2002, para. 70). In June of 2003, the Surrey School Board professed its commitment to tolerance but still would not approve the three books in question but provided new reasons for rejecting each book: *Asha’s Mum’s* had poor grammar; *Belinda’s Bouquet* included an inappropriate discussion of dieting; and *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dad* promoted racism (Anderson, 2014). The concerns of those critical of the decision were mitigated when two weeks later the Surrey School Board approved two other books including families with same-sex parents.

On June 19, 1996, Azmi Jubran filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission alleging that the North Vancouver School District “discriminated against him on the basis of sexual orientation” (*School District No. 44 (North Vancouver) v. Jubran*, 2005, para. 9). The Human Rights Tribunal reported that during high school Jubran had endured homophobic insults and physical assaults including being punched, kicked and spit on. Jubran had also told the students he was not homosexual and asked them to stop. “The School Board did not dispute that Mr. Jubran was verbally and physically abused” (*School District No. 44 (North Vancouver) v. Jubran*, 2005, para. 10). Several students testified that the use of words such as “gay” and “faggot” were words of insult not meant to imply that Jubran was homosexual (*School District No. 44 (North Vancouver) v. Jubran*, 2005). The Tribunal ruled that Jubran was discriminated against based on sexual orientation and that it did not matter that Jubran did not identify as homosexual nor that other students may or may not have believed he was homosexual. The
Tribunal also ruled that even though the school had dealt with the specific incidents of harassment involving Jubran, it had not done enough to make the school environment free of homophobic harassment.

The case was reviewed by the Supreme Court of British Columbia and the chambers judge ruled that the school board was not liable for failing to curb the actions of the students as the wording of Section 8 of the Human Rights Code did not apply to Jubran since neither he nor his harassers believed Jubran was homosexual (School District No. 44 (North Vancouver) v. Jubran, 2005). The British Columbia Court of Appeal set aside the ruling of the chambers judge and restored the order of the Tribunal (Jubran, 2005). It was judged that the focus on the language of Section 8 was too narrow of an interpretation and that the impact of the harassment on Jubran needed to be taken into account. The School Board was deemed liable for the conduct of students and the Tribunal’s views were that there was a lack of resources and training and a lack of consultation with experts in the area of discrimination (Jubran, 2005). The response of the British Columbia Liberal government was the regulation of schools through mandatory Codes of Conduct (McGregor, 2008).

Two cases that had an impact on the inclusion of LGBTQ topics in B.C. curricula were Corren and Corren v. BC (Ministry of Education) (2005) and Corren v. Abbotsford School Board (2010). Murray and Peter Corren launched their initial human rights complaint in 1997 against the BC Ministry of Education alleging discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, contrary to Section 8 of the BC Human Rights Code (Corren and Corren v. BC (Ministry of Education), 2005). Specifically, the Correns’ complaint claimed the 1997 Social Studies 8 to 10 Integrated Resource Package (the “IRP”) and Appendix C to the IRP were discriminatory (Corren and Corren, 2005). Appendix C states that education should be “relevant, equitable,
and accessible to all learners” and lists areas of “cross-curricular interest”, which guided the development of the IRP including “aboriginal studies”, “gender equity” and “special needs” (Corren and Corren, 2005, para. 2). In Corren and Corren (2005), the Correns claimed that since the interests of some marginalized groups were included, but LGBT interests were not, that the Ministry of Education was being discriminatory. McGregor (2008) stated that the case was set to be heard in July of 2006 after years of amendments to the original complaint and disputes over the scope of the complaint. However, just before the Human Rights Tribunal hearing was to take place, the Provincial Government announced it had negotiated a settlement with the Correns (McGregor, 2008). The Ministry of Education agreed to create the Social Justice 12 curriculum and the Correns were given the right to advise the Ministry on changes to curriculum documents to ensure that references to sexual orientation and gender expression were included (McGregor, 2008). According to McGregor (2008), the Ministry also had to change its policy of allowing parents to remove their children from classrooms when ‘controversial’ topics such as homosexuality or gender identity were being discussed. This Alternative Delivery Policy would no longer be used when presenting issues of gender identity or homosexuality meaning that teachers would no longer have to seek parental consent to have students take part in class discussions (McGregor, 2008).

In August 2007, the draft Social Justice 12 Integrated Resource Package (IRP) was released and the Ministry of Education asked for input and feedback (Corren v. Abbotsford School Board, 2010). The Abbotsford School Board, which had received several complaints from parents and community members about teaching homosexuality and the changes to the Alternate Delivery Policy, submitted its comments and concerns to the Ministry (Corren, 2010). The Board’s main concerns were “the complex and challenging course material, and the need to
ensure that teachers were qualified in terms of the requisite legal knowledge and the skills to present the material in a manner sensitive to the beliefs of all students” (Corren, 2010, para. 11). When the Board did not get a response from the Ministry, they decided they would need to review the final IRP before making a decision about whether District schools would be allowed to offer the course (Corren, 2010). The final IRP was issued in August of 2008 but as District planning and school course selection had already occurred in the Spring, there was no time for the document to be approved by the Board prior to the 2008-2009 school year (Corren, 2010). One school, W.J. Mouat Secondary School, mistakenly offered the Social Justice 12 course and had more than 90 students registered to take it (Corren, 2010). When the District learned about the course offering in July 2008, the course was withdrawn and students were told they could take a replacement course, “Global Studies and Active Citizenship” (Corren, 2010).

Murray and Peter Corren, “on behalf of the students and parents of the Abbotsford School District generally, and in particular gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered students and parents”, filed a complaint with the Human Rights Tribunal stating that removing the Social Justice 12 course amounted to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (Corren, 2010, para. 1). The Correns expressed their belief that the Board’s decision was made at least in part because of parental complaints and that the alternative course being offered, “Global Studies and Active Citizenship”, resembled the Social Justice 12 course in many ways but had “removed all content relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, homophobia and heterosexism” (Corren, 2012, para. 17). After the Abbotsford School Board offered the Social Justice course in the 2009-2010 school year, the initial complaint was amended to focus on the issue that the Abbotsford School Board continued to insist on informed parental consent for all students wishing to take the course (Corren, 2010). In Corren (2010), the Human Rights Tribunal denied
the Abotsford School Board’s request to have the complaint dismissed but asked the Correns to submit an amended complaint as the group they filed on behalf of was deemed to be too broad. Before that submission could take place, the Abotsford School Board asked the Supreme Court of British Columbia to conduct a judicial review of the case. The Board believed the case should not go forward when it was unclear who exactly the Correns represented (Board of Education of School District No. 34 (Abbotsford) v. Corren, 2011). This request was denied, with Justice Smith stating it was premature and the Human Rights Tribunal needed to make a final ruling on the case currently in front of it (Abbotsford v. Corren, 2011).

Improvements for transgender students attending Catholic schools in Vancouver were made after the family of Tracey Wilson, a female-affirmed transgender student attending a Vancouver Catholic School, filed a complaint with the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal after her school denied Tracey’s requests to be treated like a girl (The Canadian Press, 2014). The case was dropped when the Catholic Independent Schools of the Vancouver Archdiocese (CISVA) approved a new elementary gender policy (CISVA, 2014). The CISVA policy never uses the word ‘transgender’ but instead uses the terms ‘gender dysphoria’ and ‘gender expression’. Page 2 of the policy states the CISVA belief that “humans are not free to choose or change their sexual identity” but that a “student can engage in a variety of gender nonconforming behaviours without definitively altering his or her gender to that of the opposite sex” (p. 3). The policy further states that Catholic schools will not support any forms of gender transitioning as that is against the teachings of the Church. Parents who feel that their child needs some form of adaptation based on gender expression or gender dysphoria, need to submit a written request to the school (CISVA, 2014). A team consisting of the family, the pastor, medical professionals, educators, and the student, when deemed appropriate, will develop a plan to meet that particular
student’s needs such as wanting educators to use a different name or different pronouns (CISVA, 2014). The policy states that any student who wants increased privacy can be given access to a private washroom or changing area and that unless a school has safety concerns physical education classes and intramural should not be separated by sex. A school will provide an alternate uniform that has been agreed to by both the parents and the school administration when a parent submits a written request (CISVA, 2014). According to the Wilson family’s lawyer, this was probably the first time such a policy was created by any Catholic school board in North America (The Canadian Press, 2014).

This section looked at how Canadian and British Columbia laws and court cases have affected transgender rights and have also resulted in changes to how such students are considered by the British Columbia education system. Changes to the British Columbia Human Rights Code and to the policies of school districts across the province have made it clear that the rights of transgender and gender non-conforming students need to be met. The final section of this literature review will look at what the research has to say about ways schools can better support transgender and gender non-conforming students through effective policies, curriculum, and staff development.

**Ways Schools Can Support Transgender Students**

**Policies.** The policies of a school or district can be an indication of what each values, both by what issues are addressed and by which issues have been excluded (Flores, 2014; Greytak et al., 2013). In spite of the fact that most principals thought that LGBTQ students “would feel less safe than others at their school”, GLSEN and Harris Interactive (2008) found that few policies “specifically address bullying and harassment that focuses on students’ sexual orientation or gender identity or expression” (p. 7). Similarly, when Greytak et al. (2009) looked
at survey responses of transgender students, they found that only 12% attended schools with a policy specifically referring to gender expression or gender identity. Almost half of the respondents (46%) stated either that they did not know if their school had a policy or that they knew for sure that their school did not.

Taylor and Peter (2011a, 2011b) argued against the view that safe school policies do not need to specifically mention gender expression and gender identity in order to protect all students as long as policies stress acceptance of diversity. Taylor & Peter (2011b) found that most of their survey respondents still reported harassment and exclusion and that most schools across Canada were changing their policies to be more all-inclusive.

Greytak et al. (2013) posited that when policies pointedly protect gender expression and gender identity, they serve notice that transgender and gender non-conforming youth are valued. This was found to connect to increased feelings of safety and inclusion (Anderson, 2014; Schneider & Dimito, 2008; Taylor & Peter, 2011a) which resulted in fewer missed days of school due to safety concerns (Greytak et al., 2013). This was true even if the policy did not always make a significant impact on the amount of harassment that occurred (Greytak et al., 2013). The Canadian investigation of Taylor and Peter (2011a) likewise found that safe school policies that do not include explicit protection of gender identity and gender expression are not effective in bettering school climate.

Teacher perceptions of transgender student safety were investigated by Taylor et al. (2016a) by analyzing responses from the “The Every Teacher Project” survey. Only 53% of educators responded in the affirmative when asked “Would a transgender student feel safe in your school?” (p. 123). A total of 22.3% of teachers “from schools with a policy addressing transphobic bullying, gender identity and expression” stated that their school was “very safe” for
transgender students. A further 40.7% of teachers from this same category stated that their school was “somewhat safe” for transgender students. Teachers working at schools without such a policy perceived their schools as being less safe as only 13.5% stated that transgender students would be “very safe” (29.1% “somewhat safe”) (Taylor et al., 2016a, p. 124).

As part of the Palmer et al. (2012) report on the experiences of LGBT students in rural settings, students were asked about their experiences with discriminatory policies and practices. Of those who answered the survey question, 4.7% identified the unwillingness of staff to use preferred gender pronouns and only being allowed into bathrooms and locker rooms matching their legal sex as two policies or practices that specifically affected transgender students. Some students had experienced a violation of privacy when their school revealed their transgender identity to their families. Other discriminatory policies and practices reported included dress codes reinforcing gender boundaries and gender based segregation of school activities. Payne and Smith (2014) encouraged schools to “become critically aware of the ways that their curricula, policies, and practices are dependent on the gender binary — and how this kind of dependence creates fear of anyone who falls outside normative ‘boyness’ or ‘girlness’” (p. 416).

As discussed in the previous section, all British Columbia school districts and independent schools were expected to add explicit references to sexual orientation and gender identity to their anti-bullying policies by the end of 2016 (Government of British Columbia, 2016). Evolving government policies affecting change for LGBTQ students have emphasized legal obligations, safety, accountability, and diversity.

After analyzing British Columbia government policy documents and curriculum guides, McGregor (2008) argued that policy actions taken by the British Columbia government were largely made in response to demands of the BC courts and of advocacy groups. The work of
advocacy groups such as the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation and the Gay and Lesbian Educators of B.C. emphasized ways that teachers could take action in their schools to change heteronormative school culture in spite of perceived inaction on the part of government or school boards (McGregor, 2008). These advocacy groups also hoped to encourage government and school boards to change their policies in order to create more inclusive schools. In spite of the efforts of advocacy groups, McGregor’s 2008 analysis found that “the eventual policy trigger for systemic action in schools appears to have been a result of legal challenges, where the interventions of the courts and other tribunals essentially forced educational decision makers into developing policies and practices that address the rights of gay/lesbian/bi/transgendered/queer (LGBTTIQQ) youth” (p. 5).

An example of such a legal challenge would be the case of Corren and Corren v. BC (Ministry of Education) (2005) which resulted in a change to the Ministry’s Alternative Delivery Policy. This change meant that parents could no longer remove their children from classrooms when issues of gender identity and homosexuality were being discussed. When opposition concerns to the policy amendments were raised, the government spokesperson was the Attorney General of the Province, Wally Oppell, rather than the Minister of Education (McGregor, 2008). McGregor suggests that this choice of spokesperson was meant to “symbolically link the new policy directions with compliance with the law” (2008, p.21).

The case of School District No. 44 (North Vancouver) v. Jubran (2005), discussed in greater detail in the previous section, led the British Columbia to create a policy to regulate schools through mandatory Codes of Conduct (McGregor, 2008). This process began when Minister of Education, Christy Clark, appointed a Safe Schools Task Force to “consult with students, parents and educators on best practices, available resources and consistent approaches
to increase student safety (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2002). *Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools: A Guide* describes how task force chair Lorne Mayencourt met with students, parents, and educators from across B.C. to discuss ways that violence, bullying, and harassment in schools could be dealt with (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008a).

In June 2003, the Safe Schools Task Force issued its report “Facing Our Fears - Accepting Responsibility” (Safe Schools Task Force, 2003). The “Facing Our Fears” report recommended that Boards of Education should review their anti-bullying policies and make changes if necessary (2003). The report recommended that policies should include expectations of student and staff behaviour. It was also recommended that the Ministry of Education give districts a framework to help them make sure that anti-bullying policies and procedures were in keeping with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *B.C. Human Rights Code*. The task force also recommended that Boards of Education establish methods for investigating and informing the public about acts of bullying. Public reports were expected to include information about the number and types of violent incidents reported and about the way each incident was dealt with (Safe Schools Task Force, 2003).

The task force report disappointed activists such as Steve LeBel from B.C.’s Gay and Lesbian Educators (GALE) as none of the recommendations mentioned homophobia at all (Perelle, 2003). LeBel expressed his concern that leaving districts to amend their own policies, without providing them with strict guidelines for how to specifically address homophobic bullying, could result in some districts not acknowledging the problem. Mayencourt responded to this criticism by reminding people that the task force’s first recommendation states that bullying policies “must be consistent with the B.C. Human Rights Code and the Canadian
Charter of Rights” (Perelle, 2003). Mayencourt further stated that he believed that the report “does deal with homophobia, as it does with all the other isms” (Perelle, 2003).

The Ministry of Education responded to these recommendations by developing the “Safe, Caring, and Orderly Schools Strategy” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008a, p.3). This strategy had three main parts: improving access to school safety resources; creating “Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools: A Guide”; and emphasizing accountability by asking schools to publicly report how many violent incidents had taken place, the nature of each incident, and how each had been dealt with (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008a). The Ministry’s Safe and Caring School Communities Policy, which first came into effect in 2004, emphasized the creation of “safe and inclusive learning environments” and the development of “prevention and intervention strategies for addressing worrisome behaviours including threats or risks of violence” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017a, para. 1).

In 2004, the government revised a policy document called Diversity in BC Schools: A Framework (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017b). This document stated that students are expected to “develop a sense of social responsibility, and a tolerance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others” (p. 17). The section on policies and procedures encouraged schools and boards of education to review policies to see if they meet the goal of making school communities safe, inclusive and welcoming while also addressing diversity and human rights (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017b). Accountability was again addressed as schools and boards of education were encouraged to put clear expectations in place so that all school community members would know what behaviour was appropriate and the consequences of behaving inappropriately.
Over the years, legislation made changes and adjustments to the Ministry of Education’s *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017a). In 2006, the *Safe Schools Act* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006) was passed prohibiting bullying and harassment in schools on the basis of race, gender and sexual orientation.

In 2007, Honourable Shirley Bond presented *Bill 22-2007: Education Statutes Amendment Act* to the legislature. This bill added a subsection to Section 85 of the *School Act* making it compulsory for all boards of education to put in place codes of conduct (Bond, 2007). D. Cubberly moved the following amendment to this section: “4 (c) a board’s codes of conduct must explicitly protect students from homophobic bullying” (Cubberly, 2007, p. 8017). This motion was defeated by a vote of 31(Yeas) to 43 (Nays) (Hansard, 2007, p. 8020). D. Cubberly then moved a different amendment to this same section: “4(c) a board’s codes of conduct must be consistent with the principles of the B.C. Human Rights Code” (Cubberly, 2007, p. 8020). Honourable Shirley Bond spoke against the motion stating that the current amendment was a “major step for school districts across the province” and that discussions about implementation and about whether or not the Human Rights Code should be included would be part of the next step (Bond, 2007, p. 8020). The motion was defeated by a vote of 32(Yeas) to 40 (Nays) (Hansard, 2007, p. 8020-8021).

Following more consultation, *Ministerial Order (M 276/07): Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct* came into effect on October 17, 2007. This Ministerial Order stated that Boards must “establish one or more codes of conduct for schools within their school district and ensure that the schools within their school district implement the codes” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007a, p.1). *Ministerial Order (M 276/07)* also stated that codes of
conduct had to include statements addressing the prohibited grounds for discrimination listed in the provincial *Human Rights Code* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007a).

The Ministry of Education created a facilitators’ guide entitled “Developing and Reviewing Codes of Conduct: A Companion to Provincial Codes of Conduct Order and Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools: A Guide” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007b). The guide was meant to help guide boards of education as they worked to make sure that codes of conduct in their schools met the provincial standards and complied with the *School Act* and the *Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct Order* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007). Then in November of 2008, “Safe, Caring, and Orderly Schools: A Guide” was updated to include provincial standards for codes of conduct in addition to describing the characteristics of a safe, caring, and orderly school (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008a).

Even with these new standards, districts did not have to explicitly protect LGBTQ students from bullying in their policy statements. In a B.C. legislature debate on November 23, 2011, S. Chandra Herbert challenged B.C. premier Christy Clark to commit to explicitly protect lesbian, gay, bi, and trans students pointing out that at that time only 25% of districts had any policies in place to specifically protect those students (Chandra Herbert, 2011). The premier’s response was to acknowledge that students get bullied for all kinds of reasons and to declare that her “government is going to make sure we do more to make sure that every child, as much as possible, is protected from bullying in their school. No matter what the cause or reason of that bullying, it is unacceptable” (Clark, 2011).

On May 7, 2012, S. Chandra Herbert once again raised the issue of homophobic and transphobic bullying asking if the Minister of Education, Honourable George Abbott could talk about how many districts explicitly referenced homophobia in their codes of conduct (Chandra
Herbert, 2012). The Minister of Education replied that all 60 school districts have codes of conduct and that seventeen of those districts have specifically included homophobia in their policies (Abbott, 2012). He also reminded Chandra Herbert that it was up to the discretion of each board of education whether to include an explicit reference to homophobia or not as there is not any legal obligation to do so. When asked by Chandra Herbert to say more about plans to fight bullying, Minister Abbott said that he believed an anti-homophobia component was going to be included as part of a five-year training plan for school staffs focused on threat assessment and anti-bullying (Abbott, 2012).

In June of 2012, Premier Christy Clark introduced the ERASE (Expect Respect and A Safe Education) bullying strategy with the aim of working together with community partners to provide children with “an education free from discrimination, bullying, harassment, intimidation and violence” (Office of the Premier, 2012). Some features of the ERASE bullying ten-point strategy included threat assessment training, the establishment of safe school coordinators in every district, and the creation of an online reporting tool for students to anonymously report incidents of bullying at their schools (Office of the Premier, 2012). According to the backgrounder provided by the Office of the Premier (2012), the fourth point of the ERASE strategy was to strengthen codes of conduct for schools by using the following language in keeping with the Human Rights Act: “The prohibition of discrimination on the basis of an individual’s or a group’s race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex or sexual orientation, or age.” No explicit reference to gender identity was included as gender identity was not included in the Human Rights Act at that time.
Even with this stronger language included in the codes of conduct of every school in the province of British Columbia, Spencer Chandra Herbert still questioned whether lesbian, gay, bi or transgender students would feel safe and supported in every school. On April 14, 2015, Chandra Herbert asked Minister of Education, Peter Fassbender, if students at publicly funded private or independent schools would be allowed to create a GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) group to help increase their feelings of safety (Chandra Herbert, 2015). Fassbender’s response was to state that the government’s ERASE strategy and the human rights code made it very clear that any kind of discrimination or bullying was not tolerable. He added that the government did not force or inhibit schools from doing whatever they feel is acceptable for their particular community (Fassbender, 2015).

As mentioned in the earlier section on British Columbia law, Spencer Chandra Herbert had put forward transgender rights bills on four separate occasions and none of those bills had ever gained the support of the ruling Liberal government (Meissner, 2016). When the government decided to introduce its own version of a transgender human rights bill, the legislation passed unanimously, with one abstention, after being pushed through the house in a single day (Shaw, 2016). After the changes to the British Columbia Human Rights Code became law, the Ministry of Education directed all schools and school districts to ensure that explicit references to sexual orientation and gender identity were included in their anti-bullying policies by the end of 2016.

Explicitly including gender identity in district and school policy statements can be viewed as a starting point rather than an ending. Grace and Wells (2006) stated that “there remains a significant distance between educational policy development and its full implementation in school life” (p. 55). Greytak et al. (2013) found that school and district policies focus largely on “reporting practices, investigative processes, and disciplinary sanctions” (p. 57). While this
focus may give those being bullied or harassed a means of appealing for support and provide clear consequences for anyone doing the bullying or harassing, it may not do much to actually stop the acts of bullying or harassment from occurring in the first place (Greytak et al., 2013). Schools can continue to be reactive rather than proactive when addressing the safety needs of LGBTQ students (Payne & Smith, 2012). This effectively allows schools and districts to pay little or no attention to the heteronormative culture of schools that can marginalize LGBTQ students while privileging their cisgender peers. Payne and Smith (2012) further posited that “we do not know how to effectively use these policies to shift cultural norms in a way that will open up opportunities for LGBTQ children to be full participants in their school environments” (p. 192). Among the suggestions made by the transgender youth in the focus groups studied by McGuire et al. (2010) was to include “transgender youth in school climate policy making bodies” as a way of improving the “status of individual students as they move through schools” (p. 37). Smith and Payne (2016) found that policies that include gender identity and/or expression are commonly carried out in ways that support individual transgender student needs. This may not lead to supporting many other students in schools today who are in other places along the continuum of gender nonconformity or gender fluidity.

Grace and Wells (2006) identified a need for educational policies that “support cultural education about sex, sexual, and gender differences for all educational interest groups” (p. 56). This education can take the form of both changes to school curriculum to make it more inclusive and staff development to help school staffs become more knowledgeable about policies and about the need for systemic change.

Along with policy changes, there also came changes to how LGBTQ students were represented in the curriculum in this province. The next section will look at what research has to
say about inclusive curriculum and at how the curriculum in British Columbia has evolved to reflect changes in legislation and policies.

**Curriculum.** So why does LGBTQ-inclusive curricula matter? This was the question looked at by Snapp, McGuire, Sinclair, Gabrion, and Russell (2015) when they surveyed 1232 LGBTQ and straight students from 154 different California middle and high schools. The survey administered by Snapp et al. (2015) asked students about their experiences with bullying and harassment, their exposure to LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, and their feelings of safety at school. When the survey results of individual students at schools with LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum were examined, bullying was reported more frequently and more students indicated their school was unsafe. Increased awareness might have caused bystanders to report bullying more often. However, at the school level, reports of bullying were found to decrease and feelings of school safety improved. Stated another way, when comparing individuals to others in their school, bullying was not seen to decrease but LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was seen to reduce bullying when schools were compared to other schools. Snapp et al. (2015) interpreted this finding to mean that the positive impact on school climate might “outweigh any negative association found in the variability of individual students” (p. 592).

Burdge et al. (2013) asked youth focus groups about their experiences with LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and their perceptions of the impact of such curriculum. The students reported that after LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was implemented at their schools, they felt safer as they heard less anti-LGBTQ slurs and experienced less LGBTQ-related physical harassment. The students also perceived that there was a positive impact on achievement and on their dreams for the future. Their rationale for improved achievement was that when curriculum made connections to their life experiences, students were more engaged and developed a better
understanding of the subject matter. When shown successful LGBTQ individuals in a wide range of professions and historical examples of the achievements of LGBTQ individuals, students felt more positive about their own future aspirations. Many of the focus group participants shared that LGBTQ-lessons were not common in their schools and were frequently limited to isolated lessons in subjects such as history or English. Such lessons were often due to the efforts of individual teachers rather than a school-wide initiative to include LGBTQ topics.

The Toronto District School Board policy guidelines for transgender and gender non-conforming students directed staff to include positive transgender material in all subjects (Bowers, Hayes, Jeffers, Davila, & Wallace, 2013). The rationale included in the section of the guidelines addressing curriculum integration was presented as follows:

“The lack of any positive acknowledgment of transgender issues or transgender history makes it difficult for transgender, gender nonconforming, or questioning young people to feel that they have a place in the world. Unless it is corrected, the omission of transgender and gender non-conforming people from the curriculum creates a misconception among many students that transgender people do not exist or are an object of scorn” (Bowers et al., 2013, p. 8).

All staff was also directed to challenge gender stereotypes (Bowers et al., 2013).

This directive is important in light of the research findings of Banse et al. (2010) which showed that young children’s knowledge of stereotypes increased as they got older and heard more messages about what behaviour was seen to be ‘appropriate’ for boys or for girls. Banse et al. (2010) also reported that children’s ability to critically think about and challenge these gender stereotypes also increased with age and concluded that, by teaching gender diversity, educators could help children question stereotypical messages heard in the world around them. Brill and
Pepper (2008) stated that children between the ages of four and six are capable of adapting their ideas about tolerance of gender differences if they presented with enough examples of gender variance through stories, books, or repeated interactions with real people. Dykstra (2005) also promoted the use of videos and books portraying gender as non-binary and gender non-conforming individuals in a positive way. Lessons using active learning techniques have been shown to be effective in teaching children how to challenge others’ teasing or harassing remarks about peers who are expressing gender variance (Lamb, Bigler, Liben, & Green, 2009). Children who learned about and then practiced challenging the sexist remarks of peers were observed to actually apply what they had learned in real situations and did so more frequently than children who were only told about how other children had handled such situations.

Kennedy and Hellen (2010) suggested that, at the very least, schools should “introduce children to the concept of transgender people, so that transgender children are able to feel they are not so alone and that their gender identity is as valid as any other” (p. 41). This introduction would not only help children accept transgender classmates but could help them be more accepting of transgender people in society in general. Swartz (2003) stated that LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum should not just teach tolerance but should help students learn about the complexity and humanity of all people. All people have friends and families and attend school or have jobs. Swartz (2003) suggested that

“examining children’s conceptions of sexuality and gender, aiding children’s realization of the power of language and of the hurt that language can cause through name-calling and hate speech, and engaging children’s sense of justice, are vital to school curriculum that will work toward a more just and equitable society, thereby meeting the educational needs of all children” (p. 63).
Whereas Toronto teachers were clearly directed to use trans-inclusive content, the curriculum in British Columbia does not mandate specific content. Frohard-Dourlent (2016) conducted detailed qualitative interviews of staff in British Columbia schools and reported that individual teachers determined how much LGBTQ-inclusive content was incorporated into the various subjects being taught. The teachers interviewed often identified bullying as the main concern for transgender and gender non-conforming students and spent time addressing that issue rather than issues of gender stereotypes or gender conformity. Educators surveyed by Taylor et al. (2016b) also indicated that teachers had the biggest influence on what was taught as 59% of them stated that teachers showed leadership in LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. Only 17% believed that the Ministry of Education showed leadership in this area and only 18% believed that their local school board trustees showed leadership.

Taylor and Peter (2011b) conducted a survey to learn more about Canadian high school student experiences with transphobia and homophobia including interventions such as the inclusion of LGBTQ content in classes. Out of the 3,607 respondents, 42.8% indicated that they had not had LGBTQ content in any of their classes. Only 32.7% of respondents had experienced LBGTQ content in one class while 13.8% had LGBTQ content in two classes. Of the students who reported LGBTQ content was included in at least one of their classes, 20% stated that the topic was presented negatively. Greytak et al. (2009) reported similar results for American students as only 11% of the transgender youth surveyed said they had experienced curricula that included positive portrayals of LGBT people or events.

Ryan et al. (2013) looked more specifically at the inclusion of information about gender non-conforming and transgender people in curricula and how cisgender children react to being taught such curricula. Their study took place at a K-8 school with multi-age classrooms where
students might spend up to three years with the same teacher. This allowed teachers to present information in increasingly complex ways to the same group of students over time. The first phase of these lessons asked grade three students to think about how rules shape behaviour and eventually to discuss how gender expectations are created by society. While students did not have an understanding of all of the vocabulary used to discuss gender non-conformity, it was clear they knew about its existence. The second phase of lessons looked at themes such as oppression and exclusion using materials that helped students identify unjust treatment in their immediate surroundings. The now grade four students worked with grade two buddies to create a book about how to respond to bullying and eventually examined several texts to identify types of bullying or oppression they contained and what gender stereotypes were being used. The goal was for students to make connections with their own experiences in order to better understand all types of bullying, including bullying connected to gender norms. The third phase began with a reminder to the students that they were mature enough to handle discussions on challenging topics and that a wide range of opinions could be accepted. Following a lesson about compassion, students compared and contrasted characters from several books in order learn the difference between being a transgender person and being gender non-conforming. Students were given an opportunity to learn deeply by having the topic revisited over time building layers of complexity and understanding. Ryan et al. (2013) reported that their study results showed that “students learned to question restrictive social systems, think more inclusively about gender expression and identity, and apply this knowledge to other experiences” (p.83).

Smith and Payne (2016) looked at how educators responded after learning about how transgender and gender non-conforming students are marginalized by the heteronormativity of the current curriculum and school culture. Most of the teachers remained mainly concerned with
procedural issues such as bathrooms and pronoun use that emphasize how the child is going to fit into the current system rather than on how their teaching and changes to curriculum could help change ideas about the gender binary. Student policing of behaviour that differs from the stereotypical gender binary behaviour expectations was stated to be one of the main causes of bullying (Smith & Payne, 2016). “Elementary school is, therefore, a critical phase for teaching about gender and sexual diversity and for raising both adult and student awareness of how heteronormativity regulates the identity expressions of all students” (Smith & Payne, 2016, p. 37).

Burdge et al. (2013) compared four different schools that were trying to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. There were several factors suggested for why one school was more successful with its implementation efforts than the other three. The curriculum included both anti-bias and subject-specific lessons. By integrating LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into both humanities and health, rather than just a single subject area, more students were exposed to the curriculum than at the other three schools. The most successful school was also the only one where teachers stated that support for implementation efforts was school wide and included a great deal of support from students, teachers and administration. Burdge et al. (2013) also reported that when students participated in lessons that did not connect to curriculum, rather than lessons integrated into classes, support for LGBTQ issues and individuals only increased during those stand-alone lessons. In comparison, when “lessons were integrated into history, humanities or health class, students reported as increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in the specific subjects in which the curriculum was incorporated (Burdge et al., 2016, p. 26).

Educators surveyed by Schneider and Dinito (2008) indicated that “taking action when student safety or human rights are an issue was viewed as less risky than providing educational
opportunities to students proactively” (p. 66). Schneider and Dimito (2008) suggested resistance to LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum might be lessened if the curriculum was represented as a way to make schools safer and to protect the human rights of all staff and students. Boskey (2014) suggested adapting current curricula examining issues of race or gender privilege so that the issue of heteronormativity can be examined as well.

**A Closer Look at British Columbia Curriculum.** Rulings in the courts, changes to legislation, and educator advocates have all had a role to play in the evolution of more inclusive B.C. curriculum. As described in greater detail in the earlier section on “Transgender Rights in Canada and British Columbia”, the case of Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36 (2002) supported Chamberlain’s choice to include children’s books about same-sex couples in his classroom. The messages of tolerance provided by these books were deemed to outweigh parent concerns about materials conflicting with individual family values and beliefs (Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36, 2002).

The case of Corren and Corren v. BC (Ministry of Education) (2005) led to the creation of the Social Justice 12 curriculum as part of a negotiated settlement. Some parents were concerned about elements of this new curriculum especially a unit called “Examining LGBT Issues” included in the Social Justice 12 Teacher Guide: Instruction and Assessment Support (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008b). Activities in this unit were based on lessons from the Gay and Lesbian Educators of B.C. (GALE) handbook Challenging Homophobia in Schools (GALE, 2004). GALE had sent this handbook to every school in British Columbia as a resource but these lessons were now being formally included in an accredited course, albeit an elective one. Lessons in this unit include topics such as privilege, oppression, stereotyping, and LGBT rights (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008b).
Opposition came from evangelical and Catholic parent groups, as well as from some parents representing the Hindu, Sikh and Chinese Canadian communities (McDonald, 2010). In addition to objecting to the Social Justice 12 elective course, some parent and religious groups also wanted to block the Ministry of Education’s document *Making Space, Giving Voice: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice Throughout the K-12 Curriculum* (2007d). Sean Murphy, in his article “The Corren Agreement” (2008) written for the Catholic Civil Rights League, stated that while the Social Justice elective “will affect only a small number of Grade 12 students,” *Making Space, Giving Voice* “is aimed at all students in public schools” (p. 6). Murphy also took issue with the six week period provided for public consultation on *Making Space, Giving Voice* commenting that the “short deadline … appears to be an attempt to sharply curtail opportunities for serious and searching criticism of an experiment in social engineering that is to be conducted upon children without the consent of their parents” (Murphy, 2008, p. 6).

Organizations such as the Catholic Civil Rights League, Take Back Our Schools, and the Canadian Alliance for Social Justice and Family Values Association (CASJAFVA) objected to the involvement of the Correns in the revision of both curriculum and delivery guidelines (Coggins, 2007; Murphy, 2008; McDonald, 2010). The CASJAFVA argued that since “no parents’ groups or religious organizations” were given the same opportunity to provide input as “the Correns and a variety of civil liberties” groups during the development of the Social Justice 12 course, the process was unfair (Coggins, 2007, pp. 1-2). The Catholic Civil Rights League also protested against changes the Ministry of Education made to the directions given to those reviewing Integrated Resource Packages as a result of the Corren agreement. Going forward, all new curriculum was expected to incorporate portrayals of people across the complete continuum of sexual orientation and gender identity (Murphy, 2008).
On October 28, 2011, Education Minister George Abbott introduced BC’s Education Plan which included curriculum changes such as focusing on big ideas and key competencies while continuing to give priority to core basic skills (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2011). In September 2015, schools in British Columbia began a three-year process of transitioning away from Integrated Resource Packages towards use of a new curriculum (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017). Each area of learning has several “Big Ideas” and a set of “Learning Standards” comprised of content and curricular competencies (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016a). The new curriculum became mandatory for students in Kindergarten to Grade 9 in September of 2016 and will be mandatory for students in Grade 10 to Grade 12 in the fall of 2018 (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017).

Social Justice 12 is currently in draft form (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016b). LGBTQ issues are explicitly mentioned as part of a list of social justice issues such as race, poverty, and status of women that students are expected to know the connections among and between (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016b). Sample topics such as “privilege and power”, “human rights codes”, and “activism, advocacy, and ally-building” are suggested as ways to develop “Big Ideas” such as “Social justice initiatives can transform individuals and systems” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016b).

Gender identity is not explicitly mentioned in the Kindergarten to Grade 7 curriculum (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016a). LGBTQ rights are mentioned as a possible Social Studies topic in Grade 5 to help students learn about “human rights and responses to discrimination in Canadian society” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016c, p. 26). The K-7 curriculum has other places where topics such as gender identity or LGBTQ issues could be included, especially in social studies and physical and health education. The idea that
individuals and/or communities can be diverse is mentioned as part of the “Big Ideas” listed in the social studies curriculum for grades K-3 (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016c). In Kindergarten, students are expected to know “ways in which individuals and families differ and are the same” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016c, p. 1) while Grade 1 students are expected to explore “different perspectives on people, places, issues, or events in their lives” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016c, p. 5). Another point of entry for discussion of LGBTQ issues, or more specifically gender identity, could be in Grade 6 in connection to the following “Big Idea”: “Media sources can both positively and negatively affect our understanding of important events and issues” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016c, p.29).

The learning standards for Physical and Health Education state that students in Grades 2-4 should know about “factors that influence self-identity” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016d, pp. 9, 14, 19). Students in Grade 4 start to learn “strategies for responding to bullying, discrimination, and violence” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016d, p. 19). This is an important topic for transgender and gender non-conforming students as many people at school respond negatively to any gender non-conforming behaviour (Grossman & D’augelli, 2006). Transgender respondents to Taylor and Peter’s climate survey reported the highest levels of harassment among those surveyed (2011b).

Grade 4 is also the grade when students start learning about the “physical, emotional, and social changes that occur during puberty” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016d, p. 19). As previously mentioned in this paper’s section on transgender child development, an important understanding for teachers to have is that some transgender children may be susceptible to self-harm, self-neglect, and/or depression if they are not ready for the body
changes that come with puberty (Brill & Pepper, 2008). In Grade 6, students learn about “influences on individual identity, including sexual identity, gender, values, and beliefs” (emphasis in original), (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016d, p. 19).

Beginning in the fall of 2016, nine B.C. school districts started taking part in the ARC Foundation BC SOGI Educator Network pilot (SOGI 1 2 3, 2017a). SOGI is an acronym for sexual orientation and gender identity used because it is believed to be inclusive of people who identify as being at various places along gender identity and sexual orientation spectrums (SOGI 1 2 3, 2017b). The school districts involved in the pilot are Langley, Burnaby, Delta, Kamloops/Thompson, Nanaimo-Ladysmith, North Vancouver, Sea to Sky, Vancouver, and West Vancouver (SOGI 1 2 3, 2017a). Participating districts are being asked to pilot two roles: a SOGI school lead and a district SOGI coordinator. The educators in these roles are expected to raise awareness of SOGI “by developing and implementing SOGI-inclusive practices and initiatives” (SOGI 1 2 3, 2017a). Information about SOGI-inclusive policies and procedures, SOGI-inclusive learning environments, and curriculum resources have been provided to the pilot districts but are also available to all B.C. educators at the SOGI 3 website (SOGI 1 2 3, 2017b). The section on curriculum resources includes age-appropriate lesson plans for elementary and secondary schools. The elementary resources include eight detailed lesson plans that are directly connected to requirements of the new BC curriculum for grades K-7 as well as other information that teachers at all grade levels can use (SOGI 1 2 3, 2017c). At the K/1 level, lessons about family diversity and name calling address curriculum competencies in Social Studies and Physical and Health Education. A grade 2/3 lesson about gender identity addresses curriculum competencies in English Language Arts and Physical and Health Education, as does a lesson titled “Questioning Gender Expectations” aimed at students in grades 2 to 5. A grade 4/5 lesson
titled “Gender Identity, Media, and Stereotypes” also addresses curriculum in Physical and Health Education. Grade 5/6 Social Studies competencies are addressed by a lesson titled “LGBTQ Human Rights”. A lesson titled “Gender Stereotypes and Bullying” addresses some of the curriculum competencies found in Arts Education and Physical and Health Education for grades 4 - 7. The eighth lesson called “Why “That’s So Gay” is not Okay” is a K-12 lesson previously available from the BCTF.

The SOGI 3 website also includes a professional development section with a collection of five-minute videos designed to prompt discussion at a staff meeting or for use as a tool for personal learning (SOGI 1 2 3, 2017d). One of these short sessions focuses on curriculum resources. The professional development section also includes 40-minute learning modules comprised of a facilitator’s guide, a PowerPoint with speaker’s notes, a video, and activities with handouts. Modules include an introductory module designed to help educators better understand SOGI and the inclusive vocabulary associated with it, a module on inclusive environments, a module on SOGI leadership, and a module on curriculum resources. The curriculum resources module discusses why an inclusive curriculum environment is important as well as ways to integrate SOGI into all curriculum areas. Participants learn about how to integrate SOGI content into lessons and where entry points exist in the new curriculum. Content about SOGI “grows in complexity as students age” and is included at all grade levels. Participants are also introduced to SOGI resources including the lesson plans found at the SOGI 1 2 3 website (SOGI 1 2 3, 2017d).

Just as the introduction of the Social Justice 12 curriculum raised concerns for some parents, opposition to SOGI inclusive education has also appeared in at least some of the districts involved in the B.C. SOGI Educator Network pilot. Two groups, “Culture Guard” and “Parents
United Canada”, developed a pamphlet outlining their concerns with SOGI and the lesson plans created by SOGI 1 2 3 (Culture Guard, 2017). In the pamphlet, SOGI is referred to as “fascist brainwashing” and as a “sectarian political agenda that uses coercive psychological techniques to sexualize children, and to alter a child’s natural giftings and characteristics inherited with their DNA” (Culture Guard, 2017). Objections to the lesson plans include that they “strategically attack a child’s innate sense of self”, “[deconstruct] healthy and safe family structures”, and force students to “‘celebrate’ and ‘affirm’ the mental health delusions suffered by .03% of the population” (Culture Guard, 2017). The pamphlet does not include any mention of, or links to, research that supports these views.

In March 2017, the Langley school district sent home a letter describing how discrimination against members of the LGBTQ community is prohibited, the importance of inclusion, and listed examples of ways the district was supporting diversity, inclusion and awareness (Langley Schools, 2017). At the May 30, 2017 Board of Education meeting, a group of about 90 parents shared their concerns about the district’s support for SOGI inclusion (Tamminga, 2017). Monique Tamminga’s June 1, 2017 article in the Langley Times described how some parents expressed concerns about the lack of consultation while others were worried that SOGI education did not agree with their family values. Susan Hitchman, a parent with five children in Langley public schools and a representative of the group “Growing Healthy Families”, voiced her opinion that people choose to become LGBTQ and her fear that SOGI education harms children by creating gender dysphoria (Tamminga, 2017).

SOGI opponents had asked to be put on agenda for the September 26, 2017 Langley Board of Education meeting but withdrew from the meeting (Colpitts, 2017). Prior to the meeting, there was a rally of about 150 people who came out to support the school district’s
position on SOGI. Many of these supporters made presentations to the Board of Education after the rally. Stacey Wakelin, a founding member of “Langley Parents for Inclusivity”, read a few letters including one from a transgender student who felt afraid at school and who avoided social media after a bully had posted a picture portraying the student with a noose around their neck (Colpitts, 2017).

SOGI is now included in policy statements at the government, district and school level. The new BC curriculum includes a variety of entry points for the inclusion of LGBTQ topics and resources. The final section of this literature review will look at another way schools can support transgender students — by ensuring that all educators and school staff have access to quality professional development and training.

**Professional development.** Professional development and staff training are important pieces for schools to include when planning ways to help gender variant students feel safer and more included. Training staff about how the needs of transgender students may differ and/or be similar to the needs of other students may increase the number of advocates available to students (Greytak et al., 2009). More advocates may mean it is more likely that someone will intervene in instances of verbal or physical harassment (Greytak et al., 2009).

The “Every Teacher Project” results (Taylor et al., 2016a) showed that teachers from every grade level were much more likely to approve of LGBTQ-inclusive education than to actually practice it. This led Taylor et al. (2016a) to recommend that more teacher education and training be provided in order to provide teachers with more information about the purposes of LGBTQ-inclusive education and what this education model actually consists of. Taylor et al. (2016a) recommended that professional development should also explain the impact LGBTQ-inclusive education has on marginalized students and help teachers learn to adapt practices they may
already use to support other marginalized groups. The data collected in the “Every Teacher Project” showed that “Policy is perceived as more effectively implemented in schools where it has been backed up by thorough staff training” (Taylor et al., 2016b, p.135). While many of the “Every Teacher Project” respondents were already implementing LGBTQ-inclusive education, many more stated that even though they thought implementing LGBTQ-inclusive education was important, they did not have the knowledge needed to be able to do so (Taylor et al., 2016b). Schneider and Dimito (2008) found that the educators in their study were mainly interested in learning about strategies and most believed they already knew enough about the issues. However, only 60% of the participants believed they had been offered enough training opportunities. The survey of school principals conducted by GLSEN & Harris Interactive (2008) found that only “4% of principals reported their school provides training for staff on LGBT issues” and that 18% of elementary school principals stated that transgender issues were “among the areas where staff need the most support and training” (p. 69). This section will begin by looking at the preparation teachers and principals received during their undergraduate and graduate courses. It will then examine professional development at the district and school level and finally will look at what individual educators can do if they would like to become more gender inclusive.

Undergraduate and graduate level training. In Schneider and Dimito’s 2008 study, 82% of the survey participants stated that they had “received little or no exposure to LGBT issues while training to be a teacher” (p. 62). In the “Every Teacher Project” survey (Taylor et al., 2016b), 13% of the participants had received their Bachelor of Education degree in the past five years. This subgroup was asked about how well the Bachelor of Education program had prepared them to deal with sexual or gender diversity issues. Only 4% of participants felt that
they were “very well prepared” to handle issues of gender diversity and only 7% believed they were “very well prepared” to deal with sexual diversity issues (p. 136). In comparison, 64% of this subgroup believed their Bachelor of Education program did not prepare them to deal with gender diversity issues and 59% did not feel prepared to handle issues of sexual diversity. This subgroup also reported that LGBTQ content was only included in a few courses, if it was included at all. For the subgroup of participants who had taken Graduate courses, only 22% reported that they had taken any courses that contained LGBTQ content. The least likely content to be included was the topic of transgender identity development as 69% of Graduate students reported that none of their courses had discussed that topic.

Taylor et al. (2016b) wanted to also learn what students had been told by their professors about “whether to address LGBTQ issues in the classroom” (p. 137). Their survey results showed that 74% of the professors had given “no formal instruction”, 14% of the professors had “formally instructed” their teacher candidates to “address LGBTQ issues any chance they had to”, and 11% of professors advised students to only discuss LGBTQ topics “if brought up by a student” (p. 138). Students were advised not to bring up LGBTQ issues at all by 3% of professors and another 3% advised teacher candidates “not to bring up LGBTQ issues until they had a permanent contract” (p. 138). Of the 41% of professors who gave informal advice to teacher candidates, 20% advised students to raise LGBTQ topics as often as possible while 8% advised students to not discuss these sorts of issues at all.

Researchers have been beginning to look at what preservice teachers should learn about LGBTQ issues and at effective ways to deliver that content (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Ryan et al., 2013; Swartz, 2003). One key concept to include in preservice teacher training on LGBTQ issues is an understanding that schools are generally heteronormative.
settings which reinforce the commonly held ideas that there are only two genders, male and female, and that students are expected to be heterosexual (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Swartz, 2003). These ideas suggest that any students who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender are somehow other than normal and that may result in their marginalization (Bower & Klecka, 2009). As these ideas may be internalized understandings for teacher candidates who grew up in a society and attended schools that may not have presented alternatives, it is important to create an environment where students can feel safe to reflect on their own personal beliefs and how those beliefs might impact their practice (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Swartz, 2003). Two ways of encouraging deep personal reflection were to have teacher candidates exchange letters with their professors providing feedback about their learning (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012) and to have teacher candidates write in reflective journals (Swartz, 2003).

In their work with teacher candidates, Kitchen and Bellini (2012) used personal stories as one way of creating a safe environment for their students. Kitchen and Bellini (2012) took care to ensure that the stories they chose to share would result in learning rather than discomfort for participants. They also intended to model for teacher candidates what a powerful tool stories can be as well as “the care they should give to vulnerable students in their classes” (Kitchen and Bellini, 2012, p. 218). Teacher candidates were given an overview of up-to-date terminology, the purpose of Gay Straight Alliances, and their responsibilities to learn about what policies and approaches are being used by the schools and districts they will work in. Kitchen and Bellini (2012) used case studies to give their teacher candidates opportunities to practice possible strategies for dealing with complicated issues, differences in opinions, and conflicts they may be faced with in the future.
Swartz (2003) used film and children’s literature to help teacher candidates make personal connections to students who experience prejudice or receive unjust treatment in schools. Even teacher candidates who had various personal opinions about LGBTQ issues agreed that all students deserve to be treated justly in classrooms. Swartz started with familiar themes such as the nature of friendship and family and then moved on to include works that dealt with race, ethnicity, and sexuality. Connections made from discussing these works were then used with material with gender identity and gender non-conformity themes (Swartz, 2003).

Ryan et al. (2013) suggested that an effective strategy for educating preservice teachers is to expose them to educators who are actually teaching in inclusive classrooms. This would show that it is possible to make classrooms LGBTQ-inclusive in practice rather than just in theory. It would also give preservice teachers a chance to see how students actually respond to these lessons. Teachers who learn “how to teach a wide range of social issues” may be “more likely to model the kinds of inclusive behaviours and language they want students to learn” (Ryan et al., 2013, p.102).

Educational leadership candidates, who may go on to become principals or hold district leadership roles, also need to learn about LGBTQ issues and question their views about gender and gender norms (Hernandez, McPhetres, & Marshall, 2015). Payne and Smith (2017) stated that when the people in leadership roles have not learned about these issues, it makes it difficult for them “to advocate for equitable schooling for LGBTQ youth and families” (p. 6). According to Hernandez et al., the reflections made by students who were taking principal preparation training showed that most of the students had little or no exposure to self-identifying LGBTQ people. Another common theme in these reflections was the recognition that most of the bullying and harassment they witnessed at their schools took place “when behaviour was
perceived as being outside of expected gender norms” (p. 13). Many of the students also held the belief that one’s sexual orientation or gender identity was a choice. Hernandez et al. stated that the purpose of a training program is to help leadership candidates to identify their own beliefs, to reflect on how those beliefs came to be, and to “question whether or not their beliefs promote the best possible experiences for their students” (2015, p. 23). The training program should also give leadership candidates qualitative and quantitative evidence that could lead them to change any mistaken beliefs they may hold. In order for this to be effective, leadership candidates need to feel safe to discuss topics openly and to be given lots of time and opportunity to reflect on what they have learned and to changes in their thinking (Hernandez et al., 2015).

Payne and Smith (2017) reported that most of the principals they spoke with had not learned anything about LGBTQ issues in their leadership preparation programs. When principals reported that such issues had been included, “legal issues related to sexual orientation and schooling” was the most common subject matter (Payne and Smith, 2017, p. 5). The type of leadership training Payne and Smith foresee includes

“content about the ways that heteronormative assumptions about student identity shape the school experiences of all students at all grade levels, how LGBTQ stigma and gender expectations limit the possibilities for student expression, and how policies and curriculum often ignore the possibility of children having LGBTQ parents or other loved ones (2017, p. 26).

Principals also need opportunities to gain an understanding of why it is important for those in leadership roles to recognize and change the ways that schools can exclude and stigmatize LGBTQ students in areas of school life such as extracurricular activities, ceremonies, awards, and curriculum (Payne and Smith, 2017). Payne and Smith suggest that leadership training
should give administrators opportunities to learn about how school traditions can send messages about what a school truly values and to discover ways to revise rituals that “privilege heterosexuality and gender conformity” (2017, p. 28).

**Staff training and professional development.** Brill and Pepper (2008) reminded parents of transgender students that even supportive schools with anti-bullying policies may need time for training around gender variance in order to best meet the needs of a child who is social transitioning. Brill and Pepper (2008) and Slesaransky-Poe et al. (2013) suggested parents be proactive with their child’s school and, if possible, meet with the principal and their child’s next teacher before a new school year begins. Parents could share their own experiences with responding to questions or dealing with harassment (Brill & Pepper, 2008). This allows the school to have time for planning, for training staff, and for working with the family to get to know more about the student on a personal level (Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013). While parents may have a lot of personal knowledge about their child to present to school staff, it is also important that parents are not involved in the introductory training so that staff can feel safe to ask questions or voice concerns (Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013).

An examination of the research conducted into staff training models and the effectiveness of professional development sessions showed that some common topics were addressed. A common starting point was to begin by ensuring that workshop participants had a clear understanding of the terminology so that they could differentiate among terms such as gender identity, gender expression, sex, and sexual orientation and have a common vocabulary for discussions (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Case & Meier, 2014; Rands, 2009; Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013; Smith & Payne, 2016). Case and Meier (2014) promoted an active learning technique that involved having participants share what they thought various terms meant before definitions
were provided or having them think about where they first heard these words. In post-training interviews conducted by Smith and Payne (2016), teachers reported that the information they had received about terminology was the most helpful component of the training.

A second common feature of workshops and training models was to spend time learning more about gender differences and gender identity (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Case & Meier, 2014; Rands, 2009; Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013; Smith & Payne, 2016). Teachers interviewed by Smith and Payne (2016) after training stated that the most memorable aspect of the workshops was learning “new information about gender and transgender identity that challenged the gender binary” and that they were most surprised to learn that gender is not a “stable, biological truth” but is “socially constructed” (p. 41). They were also surprised that transgender “is a category of identities that does not necessarily mean a medical change from one sex to another” (p. 41).

Reviewing the fluidity and complexity of gender, current perspectives on gender issues, and our understanding of how gender is affected by time and place were features of the training sessions described by both Case and Meier (2014) and Rands (2009). Studies also recommended providing information about gender development in children including signs of emerging gender identity awareness and how to provide support (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Case & Meier, 2014).

Slesaransky-Poe et al. (2013) asked session participants to write about when they first became cognizant about gender. Through discussion of their responses, they then led trainees to understand that children can be aware that their gender identity is different from a young age but may be hiding their feelings from others out of fear.

Discussions about why children may hide their feelings or behaviours connected to two other common features of the professional development models studied: providing information about the experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming students in schools and
encouraging reflection and discussion about how current practices can result in the marginalization of these students (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Grace & Wells, 2006; Case & Meier, 2014; Rands, 2009; Smith & Payne, 2016; Payne & Smith, 2017). Case and Meier (2014) reported the Gender Infinity training model included both quantitative and qualitative data in presentations by sharing statistical information about verbal and physical harassment and bullying, as well as quotes from gender non-conforming students about their personal experiences. The Gender Infinity training model emphasized the ramifications of such discrimination by acquainting workshop participants with how transgender and gender variant students may be protected by national and provincial laws as well as by local district or school policies. Whenever possible, workshops and training sessions included the voices of transgender and gender non-conforming youth, transgender role models, and allies (Case & Meier, 2014).

A final common feature of the training models looked at by researchers was to examine strategies and practical suggestions for educators and school staff working with transgender and gender non-conforming students (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Case & Meier, 2014; Grace & Wells, 2006; Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013; Smith & Payne, 2016). Some strategies used by Slesaransky-Poe et al. (2013) included using inclusive language such as saying ‘everyone’ instead of ‘boys and girls’ and to use methods other than gender to divide students into groups. The staff was also given examples of language to use to address hurtful comments and of ways to explain gender variance to children. Garcia and Slesaransky-Poe (2010) used a series of six lessons to teach both students and teachers phrases they could use to interrupt gender policing or gender bullying. Their research showed that teaching catch phrases and having participants practice using them in role playing situations was more effective than just using children’s literature to discuss gender bullying. Grace and Wells (2006) used case studies to help workshop
participants think about how they would deal with actual issues and concerns. They also provided networking opportunities for workshop participants with members of the LGBTQ community so they could hear suggestions from those people changes would impact the most (Grace & Wells, 2006). According to Garcia and Slesaransky-Poe (2010), educators can help themselves to feel more comfortable dealing with issues such as gender bullying by learning ways to stop the teasing that can occur as peers try to police their perceived gender norms. The research of Moss (2007) indicated that an effective technique for changing students’ gender assumptions and for increasing their ability to intervene during gender harassment and bullying was to teach students “catch phrases” they could use when teasing occurs.

Smith and Payne (2016) had hoped that their workshops on gender diversity would encourage participants to attempt to find ways of disrupting the gender binaries at their own schools. However, when a follow up survey of the participants was conducted, Smith and Payne (2016) discovered that “their strategies for integrating transgender students into the school were attempts to fit them into existing heteronormative structures” (p. 44). Teachers felt they were successfully supporting transgender students as long as “all students remained safe and disruptions were minimal” (Smith & Payne, 2016, p. 44). In order to help educators move past simply creating plans to accommodate individual transgender students, Smith and Payne suggest that staff development sessions devote more time emphasizing elements of school culture “that privilege heterosexuality and gender normativity and exclude queer identities” (2016, p. 45). They also suggest that participants need to be shown possible ways that school culture could be changed and need to be given time to discuss what small steps they could begin to take to start changing the culture of heteronormativity at their own schools.
**Individual training and professional development.** In addition to preservice training and professional development at the staff or district level, many educators also choose independent study as another route to professional growth. Researchers suggested that in order for teachers to shift their mindsets about gender it is helpful for them to reflect on their own teaching practices and to examine the assumptions they make about gender norms (Ehrensaft, 2011; Garcia & Slesaransky-Poe, 2010; Maheu et al., 2012; Payne & Smith, 2017). The work of both Furman and Shields (as cited in Payne & Smith, 2017, p.10) stressed the importance of educators reflecting on the impacts of the choices they make and emphasized that successful leaders make connections between their reflections and their actions. Garcia and Slesaransky-Poe (2010) suggested that educators ask themselves “Is your classroom a safe, gender expansive place for all children that affirms them and offers opportunities to explore many kinds of gender expression?” (p. 253). Answering this question could involve reflecting on how educators group students, on whether educators use gender inclusive language, or if classroom libraries include books that provide alternatives to gender stereotypes (Garcia & Slesaransky-Poe, 2010; Maheu et al., 2012). Rands (2009) promoted the use of classroom observations and dialogue journals to aid in reflection about questions such as “What challenged my expectations?” or “What surprised me about my reactions?” (p. 427).

Slesaransky-Poe et al. (2013) shared the reflections of the guidance counselor who was a central part of the team planning for the inclusion of a transgender student. Her advice for others embarking on a similar journey was to not “be afraid to admit you have no knowledge or experience in helping children with a specific need, and don’t let fear get in the way of helping a child” (p. 39). She also suggested educators challenge themselves to learn as much as possible about people who are gender non-conforming (Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013). Bowers and Lopez
(2012) suggested that one way individual educators can learn more about transgender and gender non-conforming people is to listen to any feedback and/or criticism they may have and use that knowledge as an opportunity for growth. Maheu et al. (2012) encouraged educators to be open to learning from transgender and gender non-conforming students and to hearing their suggestions.

Conclusion

The examined literature shows that knowledge about how best to support transgender and gender non-conforming children is important for elementary schools. The research shows that children as young as the ages of three or four are becoming aware of societal expectations around gender and are beginning to understand their own sense of gender identity. While research directly pertaining to student experiences in elementary schools is rare, studies have shown that transgender and gender non-conforming youth are more likely to feel unsafe and unwelcome in school than their cisgender peers. Recent changes to both federal and provincial legislation have made it clear that meeting the needs of transgender and gender non-conforming students is a professional obligation for educators. Educators wanting to meet this obligation may find that their preservice and staff development training has not given them much prior knowledge about gender identity, trans-inclusive curriculum, or the effects that our heteronormative school culture has on all students no matter where they find themselves along the gender continuum. Examining the literature helped to clarify what is currently known about the development of transgender and gender non-conforming children and their experiences in our schools. It also helped me to rationalize my choices for the content of the resource guide found in Appendix A “Supporting Transgender and Gender Expansive Students in B.C. Elementary Schools:
Information and Resources for Educators”. What follows in Chapter 3 is a description of the methodology for the design of this resource guide.
Chapter 3: Bridging the Literature and My Resource Guide

Introduction

Deciding to create a resource guide was in part a response to the lack of available guides that met all of the prerequisites for what I was personally looking for in a guide. I wanted to find information about how to support transgender children in elementary schools. I wanted to find information that would apply not just to an elementary school in Canada, but to an elementary school in British Columbia.

As I reviewed the literature, I discovered that I was not alone in feeling that I did not know a lot about gender-inclusive education and that nothing in my training had prepared me to handle gender diversity issues (Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2016b). Some educators even stated that it “would have helped to have ‘crib notes’ with answers to frequently asked questions and sources of reputable information (Luecke, 2011, p. 131). Hopefully putting some of the information I have accumulated into one resource may provide some other educator with just such a set of ‘crib notes’.

This chapter will begin with a section describing how my rationale for creating a resource guide connects to some of my literature review findings. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two highlighted some fundamental components that a resource guide for supporting transgender and gender expansive students would need to include. The remainder of this chapter will describe how my literature review led me to include each component of my guide. These components can be categorized into three broad areas: basic knowledge about gender and about transgender and gender expansive children; issues to consider when supporting a child who is social transitioning; and information and suggestions about making schools and classrooms more gender inclusive.
Why is a Resource Guide Needed?

**Topic Relevancy.** My personal interest in learning more about transgender and gender non-conforming students seems to be mirroring a shift in society in general. While the stories are not always positive, it is not difficult to find mentions of transgender people or gender identity in the news. On the positive side, it has become easier to find peer-reviewed articles about the impact our understanding of gender has on schools and about transgender and gender expansive students. Another positive has been the changes in Canadian legislation. When I started my work on this paper, gender identity and gender expression were not explicitly mentioned in the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Canadian Criminal Code, or the British Columbia Human Rights Code. In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Act and the British Columbia Human Rights Code were both amended to add gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination. The Criminal Code was amended to ensure that gender identity and gender expression was explicitly protected from hate propaganda. Shortly after these legislative changes, Education Minister Mike Bernier announced that explicit references to sexual orientation and gender identity were being added to the policies that school districts and independent schools are required to have in place. Any school districts or independent schools that did not already have such explicit language in their anti-bullying policies were directed to do so by the end of 2016.

Not only are more people openly expressing their transgender identity but more young children who are transgender or gender expansive are being seen in schools (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Ehrensaft, 2011; Slesaransky-Poe, 2013). As Rands (2009) stated, the actual number of transgender individuals in our schools today is difficult to ascertain as fear of harassment and transphobia still leaves many feeling a need to hide their affirmed gender identity.
Unfortunately, even young children can feel pressure to conform to their understanding of gender norms (Brill & Pepper, 2008).

Many Educators Have Limited Knowledge About or Exposure to Transgender People. A 2005 school climate survey conducted by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network found that both students and educators were more than twice as likely to know a gay, lesbian, or bisexual student than a transgender student (as cited by Greytak et al., 2009). “While the climate may be improving, however slowly, around the acceptance of homosexuality as a social norm, people are less aware of, or more resistant to, non-binary gender categories” (Hernandez, McPhetres, & Marshall, 2015). It can be challenging for educators, who may never have had cause to question the concept of a gender binary to create inclusive, affirming environments for transgender and gender expansive students (Hernandez et al., 2015; Kennedy & Hellen, 2010; Payne and Smith, 2014). Teachers expressed a need for training on how to teach gender-inclusive curriculum, how to handle harassment in the classroom, and where to find gender-inclusive supplemental materials (Burdge et al., 2013). Schneider & Dimito (2008) reported that 82% of teachers had not received much preservice training about LGBT issues and that only 19% believed they had been given sufficient professional development opportunities about such issues.

Weaknesses of Current Resources. One of the central purposes of this project was to help educators find ways to fill the gaps in their knowledge and understanding of the needs of transgender and gender expansive students. While the word ‘transgender’ frequently appears in LGBTQ-inclusive journal articles and curricula, these resources frequently put more of an emphasis on sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, bisexual) than on gender identity or transgender issues (Greytak et al., 2013; Rands, 2009). The research also showed that the existing literature
pays little attention to younger transgender students (Luecke, 2011; Rands, 2009; Ryan et al., 2013). Even when resources do exist, survey results from the *Every Teacher Project* showed many teachers are not aware of them (Taylor et al., 2016b).

**Schools and Educators Can Make a Difference.** When schools have introduced gender-inclusive policies, included gender issues in curricula, and visibly supported making changes around gender diversity, both transgender students and their gender expansive peers feel safer and more accepted (McGuire et al., 2010; Payne & Smith; 2017; Taylor & Peter, 2011a). All students need to feel safe and supported at school in order to be effective learners (Brill & Pepper, 2008). As children spend so many hours of their lives at school, the adults who work at these schools can have a tremendous influence on whether a child feels empowered or disenfranchised (Brill & Pepper, 2008; McGuire et al., 2010). Of the transgender youth that Sausa interviewed in 2005, those “who stayed in school were more likely to report that at least one educator or staff member believed in them, advocated for them, and cared about their well-being (p. 24).

**Basic Knowledge About Gender and About Transgender and Gender Expansive Children**

One section of my literature review was an examination of what the literature said about professional development and staff training. A common starting point for workshops and training models was to ensure that workshop participants understood the differences among terms such as gender identity, gender expression, sex, and sexual orientation and had a shared vocabulary for discussions (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Case & Meier, 2014; Rands, 2009; Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013; Smith & Payne, 2016). In post-training interviews, teachers reported that the most helpful component of the training was the information they had received about terminology (Smith and Payne, 2016). These same teachers reported that learning
information that challenged their perceptions of a gender binary was the most memorable aspect of the workshops. This information provided the rationale for including a section called “Gender Diversity 101” which focused on terminology that is commonly conflated and an introduction to the gender spectrum. Additional terminology that educators may wish to know was included in Appendix One.

Studies also recommended providing information about gender development in children including signs of emerging gender identity awareness and how to provide support (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Case & Meier, 2014). Building background knowledge about transgender child development also seemed necessary in light of what the literature had to say about educator beliefs and practices in regards to gender-inclusive education. Educators in lower grades were least likely to agree that they practiced gender-inclusive education. Among the reasons cited were that this was not a concern at their school and that their students were too young to learn about gender issues (Taylor et al., 2016b). Some educators believed that the children they teach are too young to know their gender identity (Maheu, et al., 2012; Smith & Payne, 2016; Swartz, 2003). Reviewing the ages and stages of transgender child development may lend support to the idea that the topics of gender expansiveness and gender identification should be a part of elementary classrooms, as developmentally, children have had an awareness of both since they were preschool-aged (Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013).

The final two areas of basic knowledge included in my guide were also common features of the professional development models reviewed: providing information about the experiences of transgender and gender expansive students in schools and explaining about how transgender and gender variant students may be protected by national and provincial laws as well as by local district or school policies (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Grace & Wells, 2006; Case & Meier, 2014;
Rands, 2009; Smith & Payne, 2016; Payne & Smith, 2017). Information was provided about not just how transgender and gender expansive students are marginalized by the heteronormativity of schools but about how all students can be impacted by our assumptions about gender.

Knowledge of the rights students are provided by laws and local policies supports the view that addressing gender identity issues is not just a personal position, or a way to help students to feel more included, but a professional obligation.

**Issues to Consider When Supporting a Child who is Social Transitioning**

When faced with the challenge of supporting a child who is social transitioning, schools often focus on the logistics of what needs to be done to accommodate the needs of an individual student in a specific context (Payne & Smith, 2017). Even after learning about how transgender and gender expansive students are marginalized by the heteronormativity of schools, most of the teachers interviewed by Smith and Payne (2016) remained mainly concerned with procedural issues such as bathrooms and pronoun use. The work of Palmer et al. (2012) showed that many transgender students experienced discriminatory policies and practices such as staff being unwilling to use preferred gender pronouns or only being allowed into bathrooms and locker rooms matching assigned sex at birth. Some students had experienced a violation of privacy when their school revealed their transgender identity to their families. Other discriminatory policies and practices reported included dress codes reinforcing gender boundaries and gender based segregation of school activities.

I designed Section Three of the resource guide to provide information for schools and educators about some of the issues to consider when creating school policies or when trying to meet the needs of a socially transitioning student. By starting with describing what social transitioning might actually look like in an elementary school, I hoped to answer some of the
immediate questions an educator might have when told a child in their school was desiring to start this process. I also wanted to provide a list of items to include in school policies with some information specific to British Columbia schools. Section Three was intended to be a starting point for anyone wanting to clearly outline transgender student rights in their policies.

**Making Schools and Classrooms More Gender Inclusive**

The remaining components of this resource guide were designed for educators who want to move beyond just meeting the needs of individual transgender or gender expansive students to finding ways to make their classrooms more gender inclusive. Research into the impact of the gender binary and stereotypical gender roles indicates that all children benefit when gender inclusion becomes a focus. Brill and Pepper (2008) reminded readers that even children as young as three years old can feel pressured to conform to gender norms and can come to believe that “the way they are and who they are, is not good enough” (p.34). Narrow and rigid gender roles have been found to limit the academic performance of all students (Payne & Smith, 2017). Gender-based aggression towards peers decreases in schools that are inclusive of all gender expressions and identities (Smith & Payne, 2016).

Smith and Payne (2016) suggest that educators need to be shown possible ways that school culture could be changed and need to be given time to discuss what small steps they could begin to take to start changing the culture of heteronormativity at their own schools. An examination of the literature showed that most training models included time to explore strategies and practical suggestions (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Case & Meier, 2014; Grace & Wells, 2006; Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013; Smith & Payne, 2016). Educators who want practical suggestions and ideas for first steps to take can refer to Section Four’s “Ideas for Creating Gender-inclusive Classrooms.”
Frohard-Dourlent’s 2016 interviews of staff in British Columbia schools showed that individual teachers have control over how much gender-inclusive content is included in classrooms. Teachers who were asked why they might not include such content most often stated that it was because they lacked training and/or resources (Taylor et al., 2016b). The annotated resource list found in Appendix Two was included to help educators find a range of resources in a timely manner. Section Four also included information to help educators find ways to add more gender-inclusive content to their classrooms. Page 30 of the guide lists various places in the new Kindergarten to Grade 7 curriculum that could serve as entry points for discussing diversity and/or gender identity and expression. Page 31 of the guide provides information about the SOGI education network which has ideas for creating SOGI-inclusive learning environments and has links to a variety of curriculum resources. Another way to begin to explore gender diversity, particularly for younger children, is through children’s books that have transgender or gender expansive characters, challenge gender stereotypes, or explore themes like family diversity or acceptance (Dykstra, 2005). Appendix Three is a list of children’s books that educators might want to add to a classroom or school library.

The literature review also showed that fear of parent opposition was another factor educators considered when deciding whether or not to include gender-inclusive content (Flores, 2014; GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2008; Schneider & Dimito, 2008; Taylor et al., 2016b). Pages 32 and 33 of the resource guide provide educators with some suggestions for dealing with parent concerns as well as links to the websites of organizations that have compiled similar lists.

**Conclusion**

Learning about and being asked to teach students who may exhibit a variety of alternative gender expressions can make some educators feel anxious (Garcia & Slesaransky-Poe, 2010;
Payne & Smith, 2014; Slesaransky-Poe, Ruzzi, Dimedio, & Stanley, 2013). The intent of my project was to draw on the current literature to create a resource guide that might help to allay some of those fears. The guide was also designed to make finding information easier and quicker. The design of the guide evolved from being just a guide that might have helped me to better support the student in my life who was social transitioning, to a guide that might also encourage educators like myself to create more gender–inclusive environments. Hopefully one take-away for readers will be that by creating a more inclusive environment for all students, you will also meet the needs of the individual transgender or gender expansive student in your life.
Chapter 4: Where to Next?

Introduction: What I Have Learned

I started this project believing I would be creating a resource to help others learn some of the things I had learned through trial and error as I tried to help Mary socially transition in my school. As I explained in the introduction to this paper, Mary is the pseudonym I am using for the transgender student who inspired me to choose this topic for my project. I also hoped to save educators time by listing some of the websites and resources I had discovered during hours of searching. I never would have categorized myself as an expert in the subject of transgender children and I would have readily avowed that I still had a lot to learn. Even so, I was taken aback by just how much there was for me to learn or, as Ehrensaft (2011) described, unlearn and relearn.

While I recognized that the concept of a gender binary did not adequately describe the wide range of ways people identify their gender, a lot of my “unlearning” and “relearning” had to do with my understanding of the impact of heteronormativity in schools. Even though I have either attended or worked in schools for almost fifty years, I had never really given much thought to how much the concept of a gender binary affected so many of the policies, practices and traditions that exist in schools. I had also never realized how simple things like saying “Good morning, girls and boys” might make some children feel unwelcome or left out.

Until my work on this project, I always felt I was fairly inclusive in my practices. As a former special education teacher, I was used to questioning assumptions about what children should be able to do. In my classroom, children could go to any centres, wear any colours, or play with whomever they chose to. I read children’s stories that challenged gender stereotypes and tried to expose my students to role models who might inspire them to follow their passions.
Sometimes the role models had jobs outside of stereotypical gender norms and sometimes the role models were members of the local first nation band who had grown up to be nurses, or carvers, or lawyers.

As Mary moved up through the grades, I sometimes had questions as I watched colleagues try to navigate their way through Mary’s social transitioning. Why did it matter to Teacher A that Mary did not always wear “Boy shoes” or why did Teacher B always create groups that were made up of all boys or all girls? I found myself thinking about how some of these practices might make Mary feel. What I did not spend time thinking about was how these practices might be affecting the rest of the students. That this line of thinking did not enter my head is quite ironic because as a child, I was a student who frequently rebelled against the idea that I was expected to behave a certain way because I was a girl.

Growing up, I am sure that most of my peers would have described me as a tomboy. As a primary student I resented having to wear dresses to school and tried to join the boys in their line at dismissal. I was known to always have a baseball with me so that when the boys needed a ball for their game, I could play too. My family never seems to tire of telling the story about how when preparing for my first communion, I told my mother that I wanted to wear a suit like the rest of the boys. When I was reminded that, as a girl I would be wearing a dress, my response was to insist that the dress be black. I had to settle for navy blue. Upon reflection, I never really believed I was a boy. My assigned gender and my affirmed gender did align. Claiming to be a boy as a child really came from a deep-seated envy of what they were allowed to do simply because they were boys. My expression of gender has always been more towards the masculine end of the continuum. I prefer pants to dresses, short hair to long hair, and watching sports to watching “chick flicks.” My attempts at gender equity as a teacher were never made as
conscious attempts to challenge the heteronormativity of school culture. Rather, they were made as a response to how I had felt as a child being told that I could only behave in a certain way.

As I was completing my literature review I came across a quote which really resonated with me:

“Often gender is an invisible—or at least uncontested—issue in schools, and educators are rarely pushed to examine how their practices or institutional structures privilege traditional masculinity and femininity while marginalizing nonnormative gender identities. However, the presence of a transgender child in the school brings gender to the surface; it shines light on the ways that schools are reliant on the assumption that all children will fit one or two categories, and it raises awareness of gender bias and gender stereotyping.” (Smith & Payne, 2016, p. 45).

Working with Mary made me want to learn more about what it meant to be transgender and about how I could be an advocate for her as she was social transitioning. As I started this project, my focus was on how an individual student might be supported or kept safe. As I got further and further into my literature review, I began to change my thinking. Change needs to be about more than just helping individual transgender or gender non-conforming students as they come along. Gender bias affects everyone. Heteronormativity is so pervasive in schools that it is just accepted as normal. Our preconceptions about gender have an impact on the policies we create and on the cultures of our schools. Whether we intend to or not, we are sending children messages about what is valued and about what behaviors we believe are appropriate for boys or for girls. Change needs to be systemic so that no matter where children exist along the gender spectrum, they have equal access to educational opportunities and they feel valued.
Some systemic changes have been happening. In 2016, changes were made to the British Columbia Human Rights Code and the B.C. Ministry of Education directed districts to include explicit references to gender identity in their anti-bullying policies. On the one hand, these can be seen as positive changes. Researchers such as Taylor and Peter (2011a) have found that safe school policies that do not include explicit protection of gender identity and gender expression are not effective in bettering school climate. Such policy changes also serve notice that transgender and gender non-conforming youth are valued (Greytak et al., 2013).

However, an examination of the literature also shows that when changes to school and district policies come as a result of legislation and ministry directives, there can be negative side effects. Court cases such as School District No. 44 (North Vancouver) v. Jubran (2005), led to mandatory Codes of Conduct. Initiatives such as the Safe Schools Task Force (2003) and the government’s ERASE strategy (Office of the Premier, 2012) put an emphasis on managing bullying. Schools were directed to keep track of every incident of violence and to account for how each incident was dealt with.

Focusing on bullying allows schools to avoid addressing how their policies and practices perpetuate a culture of heteronormativity. The focus on each incident seems to encourage schools to be reactive rather than proactive. I initially thought that principals using “safe schools” or anti-bullying messages as the rationale for providing staff training on LGBTQ-issues was a good thing. I had failed to consider that the reason for bringing in training sends a message about what is important. It is not about changing schools so that they are more inclusive. Rather, it is about managing student bullying behavior and encouraging tolerance of others.
Perhaps the greatest negative side effect of the “safe schools” narrative is that the transgender or gender non-conforming child who is being physically or verbally harassed is considered to be a victim. Victims need protection. Student safety becomes the goal rather than changing school culture. Finding better ways to deal with bullying can be beneficial to any school. However, I now believe that creating gender-inclusive classrooms and schools would reduce the need for anti-bullying initiatives. Misconceptions about gender identity and gender expression are responsible for much of the bullying I have seen at elementary schools.

**Resource Guide Limitations and Recommendations**

My intent was to create a resource guide that would give educators in British Columbia elementary school a basic introduction to some of the terminology, concepts and issues around gender identity and gender expression. I wanted to provide schools with a starting place for locating more detailed information and resources if they would like to go deeper into the subject. Rather than simply recreating resources that others had already created, my hope was to find ways of linking an interested reader with the resources in a more expedient manner.

The main limitation of such a resource is that it can never include everything that is available. This resource only represents what I could find during the time period I was creating it. The good news is that there is more information and resources being published on this subject all of the time. My initial attempts to find information in 2012 produced far fewer results than the searches I conducted in 2016 and 2017.

As this field continues to evolve, so too do the language and terminology used to describe it. There are now, and will continue to be, differences in opinion about what terms should be used, when, and by whom. In the body of this paper, I primarily used the term gender non-conforming to describe people whose gender expression falls outside what is generally
considered typical for their assigned sex at birth. I used this term because it seemed to be the one most frequently used in the literature I was reviewing. Another term frequently used to describe this same group was gender variant. Some researchers have moved away from using gender non-conforming or gender variant as either term seems to emphasize that these people are different from the norm. The terms gender creative or gender expansive seem to be gaining acceptance in the literature as these terms seem more representative of the idea of a gender spectrum. I chose to use the term gender expansive for the resource guide.

Another limitation is that links to websites are subject to change. While every link was checked at the time this resource guide was created, it would not be unreasonable to assume that at some point at least some of these links will become inactive. At this time, website addresses listed in the guide need to be entered into a browser by the user. Perhaps in the future this guide could possibly be converted into an online document with hyperlinks to any digital resources.

Now that this resource guide has been created, another limitation seems to be finding ways to ensure that the educators who may find it useful actually learn that it exists. I will be giving copies to the elementary schools in my district and to the family of the transgender child who was my inspiration. I also plan on sending a pdf version of the guide to the Social Justice wing of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation and to the British Columbia SOGI Education Network.

Unanswered Questions

Reflections on Current and Future Research. While it seems to be becoming easier to find research about transgender youth and their experiences at school, there are limitations to the research being done. One of the limitations of the school climate surveys was the sample sizes for transgender students. Greytak et al. (2009) had a sample size of 295 transgender students in
their study. Taylor & Peter (2011a) had a sample size of 111 transgender students who responded to their Canadian climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Having larger sample sizes would allow researchers to look more closely at subgroups such as transgender youth in rural communities or Aboriginal youth within the larger group of transgender students (Greytak et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2012; Taylor & Peter, 2011a). Both of these subgroups would be of interest to my community. Grossman and D’augelli (2006) recommended that when recruiting research participants, samples include transgender youth from a variety of racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds as well as youth from various subgroups such as male-affirmed, female-affirmed, straight, or homosexual.

There is a lack of quantitative data in this research field and the quantitative data that exists tends to be connected to the area of harassment and victimization (Greytak et al., 2013; Grossman & D’augelli, 2006; Payne & Smith, 2017). Qualitative investigation can provide a greater understanding of daily experiences than can a tally of reported acts of harassment (Payne & Smith, 2012). Several researchers identified the need for longitudinal studies as a means of learning more about transgender child development or about how classroom experiences may evolve over time (Ehrensaft, 2011; Lamb et al., 2009; Snapp et al., 2015).

Another area needing further research is the area of curriculum development and implementation (Burdge et al., 2013; Greytak et al., 2013; Ryan et al., 2013; Schneider and Dimito, 2008; Taylor et al., 2016a). Greytak et al. (2013) stated that research should examine the extent to which LGBT-related resources were transgender inclusive and how this might affect outcomes for transgender youth.

Burdge et al. (2013) posited several questions that could warrant further investigation: What impact do factors such as school size, location (rural/urban), teacher-student ratios, socio-
economic status of the student population, or racial/ethnic make-up of a school have on gender-inclusive curriculum efforts? What are the best strategies to train teachers and staff on how to teach gender-inclusive curriculum? What impact does implementing gender-inclusive curriculum have on the attendance and school dropout rates for transgender and gender expansive youth?

**My Own Questions.** My literature review indicated that gender identity, gender expression, and the impact of heteronormative school cultures were seldom addressed during pre-service teacher training. In my personal post-secondary experience, heteronormativity was only mentioned in one course, my graduate level ethics course. In my undergraduate years, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation were never discussed. This made me wonder if I would learn more about these topics if I was just beginning my teacher training today. As more students are self-identifying as transgender and/or are displaying expressions of gender from a variety of places along a gender continuum, are Education Faculties doing more to give undergrads a basic level of knowledge about gender issues? I am optimistic that this is the case, as my project advisor commented that LGBT issues have been addressed in the teacher training programs he has been associated with. The 2008 article by Schneider and Dimito that I had cited stated that undergraduate students had not been exposed to LGBT issues. As this was an American study, I am curious about whether a Canadian survey would have similar findings. Would there be any differences in the responses given by students from different provinces or by students from different institutions in the same province?

I also have questions related to the impact of some of the changes we have seen provincially. Gender identity and gender expression are now explicitly included in the British Columbia Human Rights Code and in the anti-bullying policies of all school districts. Will that
have an impact on the ability of schools to become more gender inclusive? Will the SOGI education network expand beyond the nine pilot districts? Will the Ministry of Education take a more active role in promoting and defending SOGI education?

The curriculum has changed for students from Kindergarten to grade nine. The Physical and Health Education curriculum includes topics such as factors that influence self-identity, responding to bullying, and changes that occur during puberty. I wonder how much instructional time will actually be devoted to the health topics now that they are combined with physical education topics. Will there be enough time to give these topics the attention they deserve?

My final question is about whether a resource guide such as the one I just created is the best way of disseminating information. Would this resource be of more use to more people if it was in a purely digital format? Would the information be accessed by more people if it was housed on a website? Are there ways of sharing information such as the “Gender 101” facts in more engaging ways? Would short video clips or animated content be more interesting to educators? While I tried to make my resource guide visually appealing and to give readers options for how to access the material, the amount of text could be a drawback for some people.

**Questions About Mary’s Future.** My desire to better understand Mary’s journey and to learn about how to be a better advocate, led me to my choice of thesis topic. This ultimately led to my decision to create a resource guide to share what I had learned with others. As I have described, Mary has been able to socially transition over a number of years and has always been quite open about it. While still in the primary grades, Mary was able to answer the questions of curious peers, proudly proclaiming that she was transgender and that that meant she was really a girl. For the most part, in our community, Mary is just Mary.
My questions about Mary are a reflection of some of my fears. What will happen when Mary leaves the safety of our community to pursue post-secondary opportunities or other interests? Will she need to go stealth to avoid harassment and bullying in a world away from our community? Could she be the target of physical violence? Maybe she will not have a need to disclose that she is a transgender individual but will simply be accepted as the female gender she affirms herself to be. Why should she need to hide that piece of herself in order to possibly preserve her safety? My wish for Mary is that she is always able to proudly proclaim who she is. I wish for her to be happy, to follow her passions, and to love and be loved in return.

**Conclusion**

I began this journey with the intent of creating a resource guide that would help others who were trying to support transgender students in their schools. I end this stage of my journey realizing that the best way to support transgender and gender non-conforming children is to have schools become places that celebrate gender diversity. While I now recognize that the heteronormative nature of schools can be oppressive for some students, I also believe that schools can be the agents of change. Educators are often some of the biggest supporters of social justice issues. I know that the next time I have the opportunity to teach, I will be more diligent about examining my own practice and about looking for ways to model what a gender-inclusive classroom could be. I look forward to the day when the transgender child is not viewed as a problem to be solved. I look forward to the day when a child who is socially transitioning causes no more of a sensation than the child who is getting taller. I am grateful that my time with Mary taught me so much and led me to learn so much more.
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Appendix One

Supporting Transgender and Gender Expansive Students in B.C. Elementary Schools:
Information and Resources for Educators
Supporting Transgender and Gender Expansive Students in B.C. Elementary Schools

Information and Resources For Educators

Written by Marie H. Doiron 2017

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Digital Copies Available from mdoiron@sd49.ca
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Section One
An Introduction

“When those who have the power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you...when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing.”

Author Background: Why Create This Resource?

My personal journey with this topic began as a Kindergarten teacher and continued on as I took on the role of principal at my small elementary school. I was fortunate to meet a young student who was to become one of my greatest teachers. In Kindergarten, this student was one of many children I had taught who was comfortable engaging in activities that fell outside of stereotypical gender norms. Little girls playing with blocks or trucks and little boys stomping around the room in their high heel shoes was not an uncommon occurrence in my classroom. What was different for this one child was that the gender she had been assigned at birth was not the gender she truly knew herself to be. Her supportive parents allowed her to express her gender creativity at home and when they realized that their child was possibly transgender, they started to advocate for her at school. The school followed the wishes of the student and her parents when it came to how her social transition was handled. The student would decide when she was ready to make changes and the school would support her along the way. I was the principal of the school, when this student asked if she could have female pronouns used on her report card and if she could use a private gender neutral bathroom on the stage rather than the boys’ bathroom. As she entered Grade 5, the student started using a new name on her assignments and reports and let her mother know that she would like to be able to use the girls’ washroom at school. All of these changes happened without fanfare or controversy. Perhaps this was because this student and her family were well known in our small community and knowing this student personally made it easier for people to accept her social transition.
My experiences left me with many questions. I wondered if my school’s reaction to this student’s social transition was typical of how most schools responded. I wondered what more I could have done, or should have done, to make this student more confident that the school would support her decisions. I wondered what information and training I could make available to myself and my fellow educators so that we would better understand this student’s gender identity and the needs of gender expansive students in general. I wondered why our school was being reactive to this student and her needs, almost as if having a transgender student was a problem to be solved, rather than just helping her on the basis that all students need school to be a safe, welcoming and supportive environment.

As I started looking for resources, I found very few that were readily at hand. Transgender and gender expansive students were not the main groups addressed by many LGBTQ resources and even fewer resources looked at elementary aged students specifically. This led me to create a resource that might give educators a faster way of finding some of the information needed to support individual transgender or gender expansive students or to develop gender inclusive practices that benefit all students. I hope you find this resource a useful place to start.
Entry Points for Using This Resource

Knowledge about transgender and gender expansive children is constantly evolving and expanding. This resource is meant to be used as a starting place for anyone interested in this topic. Depending on your interests and/or your current needs, you may wish to look at the entire guide or just the sections or pages that are most relevant to you. The descriptions below are possible entry points you might consider.

All information and links described in this guide are current as of November 2017.

Building Background Knowledge
Perhaps, like me, you have had little or no training about gender or about the impact gender issues can have on students. Section Two of this guide includes descriptions of basic concepts of gender and transgender child development. You will also find information about the importance of supporting transgender and gender expansive students, as well as up-to-date information about laws and policies pertaining to gender identity and gender expression. A more extensive list of terminology can be found in Appendix One.

Accommodating Individual Student Needs
Perhaps you have a transgender or other gender expansive child enrolling in your school, or know a currently enrolled student who is changing their gender identity or expression in some significant way. Section Three covers some of the issues teams creating school policies and student transition plans might need to consider.

Creating More Gender Inclusive Classrooms and Schools
Gender inclusive practices, strategies and lesson ideas can be found in Section Four. Topics include ideas for primary classrooms, handling parent concerns, and connections to British Columbia curriculum. Appendix Two is an annotated resource list of books, guides, journal articles and websites. Appendix Three is a list of children’s books with themes such as family diversity, gender identity, or stereotypes.
Section Two
Building Background Knowledge

“If you’re new to this subject, you might feel overwhelmed by the vocabulary or the variety of issues. Don’t worry — you don’t have to master it all overnight. Simply let your students know that you are supportive, open, and eager to learn, and ask them to teach you what else you need to know.”

Gender Diversity 101

All people can describe their identities using a variety of terms that can be easily conflated. Understanding these words and labels can provide a common vocabulary for discussions and may provide answers to some of the questions you may have about gender identity. A more complete list of definitions can be found in Appendix One.

**Binary Model vs. Gender Spectrum**
Schools typically reflect the assumption that people fit neatly into a *binary model* in which everyone fits into one of two opposite and distinct categories, male or female. This view is often accompanied by the misconception that the body you are born with is the sole determinant of your gender. *Gender* is made up of a combination of a person’s physical and genetic traits, their own sense of gender identity and their gender expression. As these factors can create many different combinations, gender is better thought of as a *spectrum*.

**Sexual Orientation vs. Gender Identity vs. Gender Expression**
Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are often confused but are actually very different. *Sexual orientation* refers to a person’s physical, emotional and/or romantic attraction to others. *Gender identity* refers to a person’s own personal, deeply held sense of being male, female, both or neither. *Gender expression* refers to how a person shows their gender to others through appearance and behavior (e.g., a person’s name, clothing, hair style, body language and mannerisms). A transgender person can be gay, lesbian, straight, or bisexual, just like someone who’s cisgender, or someone who self-identifies anywhere else along the gender spectrum.

**Assigned Sex/Gender vs. Affirmed Gender**
The terms *assigned sex* and *assigned gender* refer to the classification of a person as male, female or intersex based on biological characteristics (chromosomes, hormones, external genitalia and reproductive organs). Most often, sex is assigned by a medical professional at birth and is based on a visual assessment of external genitalia. This can also be referred to as biological sex or natal sex. A person’s *affirmed gender* is their gender identity: a person’s own personal, deeply held sense of being male, female, both or neither.

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Cisgender vs. Transgender vs. Gender Non-conforming/Gender Expansive

The term *cisgender* is used to describe a person whose gender identity and assigned gender align. The term *transgender* is an adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity is different from what is generally considered typical for their sex assigned at birth. The term *gender expansive* is one of several terms that can be used to describe a person whose behaviours or gender expression falls outside what is generally considered typical for their assigned sex at birth. Other commonly used terms include *gender creative*, *gender variant*, and *gender non-conforming*.

The above infographic (used with permission of Trans Student Educational Resources, 2016) was created by a group of young transgender people as a way to illustrate the fluidity of gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and romantic/emotional orientation.
Everyone has a gender identity and a sexual orientation.

You cannot guess a student’s gender identity by their appearance. The only way to know a student’s gender identity is if they tell you!

Gender expression is not an indicator of sexual orientation.

Examples of more expansive understandings of gender than the binary model provides can be found in every part of the world. Examples include the hirja of India, two-spirit first nations people, and the calabai and calalai of India.

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Transgender Child Development

Gender identity formation is a fluid progression that might extend over the course of childhood and into adulthood.

Not all exploration or gender variant behaviour means that a child is definitely a transgender person.

Follow the lead of the child. Let them explore and listen carefully to what each child is telling us about whom they really are as they grow and develop.

Although gender identity is usually fixed for life, some children choose not to express their true gender identity until a later time. Some children can take on a false gender self by behaving in ways they feel the world expects them to behave. This can sometimes depend on whether they are in an unaccepting environment or a supportive one (e.g. a child who wears clothes that match their affirmed gender identity in a supportive home setting but dresses in clothing that matches their assigned gender identity while attending school).

The most important thing is that the transgender child has control over when and where to show their true gender self.

Ages and Stages

At age 2 or 3:
- Children start building an internal sense of gender.
- Children start looking for indications of how each gender is supposed to act.
- Children learn that things such as toys or clothing can be associated with either boys or girls.
- Most children start showing a preference for items usually associated with their assigned gender.
- Children identify people as male or female based on features they can see such as hair length.
- Some children are already able to sense a difference between what they are told they are and what they know about their own gender identity.

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At age 3 or 4:
- Some transgender children begin to express their sense of feeling different to the people around them.
- Cross-gender behaviour can be observed in areas such as fantasy play, playmate choice, games and clothing.
- Clothing choices can often be the first way that children reflect their inner sense of gender.
- Children are learning about societal expectations about how gender is expressed from media, interactions from others, and family beliefs.
- Gender segregation begins to emerge with boys more often choosing to play with boys and girls more often choosing to spend time with other girls.

At ages 4 to 6:
- Children strongly connect gender with certain behaviours and believe behaviours apply to only one gender or the other.
- Children can still believe they can grow up to be a man or a woman or a princess or anything else.
- Many transgender children have shown a consistent pattern of behaviour for a long time and it starts to become clear that this is not a stage.

At ages 5 to 8:
- Children realize gender is consistent and stable.
- Children start to express themselves more fully.
- Gender non-conforming or transgender children may feel that they have to be careful expressing themselves at places like school if they get the feeling from others that how they are expressing themselves is wrong. This can result in behavioural issues.

At ages 9 to 14:
- Some children who have been gender variant their entire lives start to act more stereotypically male or female.
- Gender non-conforming or transgender children starting to go through the physical and hormonal changes of early puberty may start to more intensely sense that they do not belong in the body they were born with.
- Some gender non-conforming or transgender children may try to communicate this newfound sense of self to their families.
- Some transgender children may be susceptible to self-harm, self-neglect, and/or depression if they are not ready for the body changes that come with puberty.
**Why Thinking About Gender Matters**
**To Transgender and Gender Expansive Students**

In 2011, Egale Canada Human Rights Trust released “Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools”. Of the more than 3700 high school students who were surveyed across the country, 25% were from British Columbia and 3% identified as transgender youth.

The transgender youth responses showed:

- Transgender students experienced higher levels of harassment than heterosexual, lesbian, gay, or bisexual students
- 90% of transgender youth reported hearing transphobic comments
- 23% reported that they had heard their teachers use negative gender-related or transphobic comments daily or weekly
- 74% reported having been verbally harassed about their gender expression
- 37% reported having been physically harassed or assaulted about their gender expression
- 78% reported feeling unsafe in some way at school
- 44% reported being likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe
- 15% reported having skipped more than 10 days because of feeling unsafe at school
- 52% reported feeling unsafe in both change rooms and washrooms

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In 2015, the Manitoba Teachers’ Society released “The Every Teacher Project on LGBTQ-inclusive Education in Canada’s K-12 Schools: Final Report”. More than 3400 Canadian K-12 educators completed online surveys about their perspective on LGBTQ-inclusive education.

The data collected showed that:

- Educators believed that the safety of marginalized students depends on their inclusion as fully respected members of the school community

- Only 53% of the teachers surveyed agreed with the statement that a transgender student would feel safe in their school

- 50% of teachers said that they personally did a good job of addressing transphobic harassment

- These same teachers believed that school administration did a good job of dealing with transphobic harassment 35% of the time, colleagues did a good job 26% of the time, and students only intervened effectively 18% of the time

Transgender and gender expansive children often feel they need to be secretive and hide what they feel. Before they know transgender-related words, transgender children often believe they are the only ones in the world experiencing feelings of being different.

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Why Thinking About Gender Matters
To All Students

- Gender affects everybody. We have all experienced times when others’ beliefs about our gender have resulted in unfair limitations or expectations.

- Improving a school’s overall climate ultimately increases all students’ sense of safety, engagement and inclusion.

- Gender-based bullying affects all children.

- Children have always exhibited a wide range of gender expressions such as girls who are ‘tomboys’ or shy, sensitive boys. Inclusive schools create space for all individuals to more fully explore and celebrate who they are.

- Schools reinforce stereotypes about gender in many ways. When we limit toys or activities they can enjoy based on gender stereotypes, children may feel cut off from exploring interests, talents or intellectual pursuits.

- Inclusive schools can develop positive attitudes and respect for individuals, families and cultural differences, including diversity related to gender identity and gender expression.

- Inclusive schools help to instill a sense of shared responsibility for keeping classrooms and safe, respectful, and inclusive.

- Learning about gender diversity helps children learn that there are not strict gender ‘rules’ that they should be concerned about violating. For example, it might be the pattern that girls wear earrings more often than boys, but that doesn’t mean that boys can’t wear earrings too.

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Transgender Rights in Canada and British Columbia

**Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**
Equality rights are covered under Section 15 of the Canadian Charter which states “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability” (para. 1). The Canadian Charter applies to all publicly funded institutions, including public schools, and is one of the legal documents education systems reference when developing safe school policy statements.

**Canadian Human Rights Act and Criminal Code**
In the spring of 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Act was amended to add gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination. The Criminal Code was amended to ensure that gender identity and gender expression are explicitly protected from hate propaganda and to ensure that courts consider evidence of hate, bias, or prejudice based on a victim’s gender identity or gender expression as an aggravating circumstance when passing a sentence.

**British Columbia Human Rights Code**
Since education and school boards are provincial responsibilities, gender discrimination impacting school districts is dealt with under the human rights legislation of every province. In 2016, the British Columbia Human Rights Code was amended to add the words “gender identity or expression” to all sections that list provisions for prohibited discrimination.

**British Columbia Education Policies**
On September 8, 2016, Education Minister Mike Bernier announced that explicit references to sexual orientation and gender identity are being added to the policies that school districts and independent schools are required to have in place. Any school districts or independent schools that did not already have such explicit language in their anti-bullying policies were directed to do so by the end of 2016.
Section Three
Supporting a Socially Transitioning Student

“A child’s experience at school can significantly enhance or undermine their sense of self. Furthermore, children need to feel emotionally safe in order to learn effectively. A welcoming and supportive school where bullying and teasing is not permitted and children are actively taught to respect and celebrate difference is the ideal environment for all children. This is especially true for gender-variant and transgender children, who frequently are the targets of teasing and bullying. A child cannot feel emotionally safe, and will most likely experience problems in learning, if they regularly experience discrimination at school.” 11

What is Social Transitioning?

Not all children who are gender expansive are or will become transgender individuals. It is normal for some children’s gender expression to remain fluid while others may be exploring a range of gender expressions. However, some children are consistent, insistent and persistent about their gender identity being different from their gender assigned from birth. Some, but not all, of these individuals wish to go through a gender transition. Gender transitioning is the process through which transgender people begin to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than the one typically associated with their sex assigned at birth. There are basically two kinds of gender transitions: social and physical.\textsuperscript{12}

A \textit{social transition} may include things such as using a different name, using different pronouns, changing hairstyles or clothing, or using the bathroom that matches their affirmed gender. Social transitioning means letting others know your authentic gender self and beginning to live your life that way. In a recent study, researchers found that allowing social transition can be greatly beneficial to the mental health of transgender children.\textsuperscript{13} Researchers found there was no difference between transgender children who were allowed to transition and their peers and siblings on measures of self-worth, depressive symptoms or anxiety.

A \textit{physical transition} may include medical components such as using puberty blockers or hormones and surgical options. Not every transgender person chooses to undergo a physical transition. Some elementary age students may start to take hormone blockers in order to delay the changes that occur with puberty so that they can be older before making other decisions regarding gender transitioning.

\textbf{Social Transitioning in Elementary School}

Transition for pre-pubescent children is a social process. Some students may decide to begin socially transitioning during elementary school. There is no one single approach that works for all students going through a social transition. Each child’s timeframe for social transitioning will be unique. Transitions can be gradual or sudden. Creating welcoming and gender-inclusive classrooms makes transitions easier.

No matter what, the main goal is to support the child. Take direction from the family and the child. Listen to what each child is telling you about how they want to express their gender, how soon they want to transition, and whether they want more time to feel prepared.


Suggestions to Help Social Transitioning Go More Smoothly

- Before creating a transition plan or assembling a support team, find out what concerns the child and the parents have regarding privacy and confidentiality around social transitioning. Parents have the right to choose whom they talk to about their child’s transition, and school officials need to be careful to respect privacy. Until you have parent permission, share information with school staff only on a need-to-know basis. Some questions to consider include:
  - When will the transition take place? Some families choose to initiate the transition over the summer often over the summer or when the child is moving from one phase of school to another (e.g., elementary to middle). Depending on what point in the school year the child is transitioning, a social transition may be may be more public or private. Some to families choose to change schools so their child can have more privacy.
  - Does the family want a letter to go home to other parents?
  - Does the family want the teacher to inform the student’s peers?

- Transition plans should be flexible and adjusted as needed to address the unique educational, health, and safety needs of the child.

- School personnel and parents/guardians need to work together and maintain regular communication and check-ins.

- Ask the child what adult in the school they want to be the person they can turn to if they need help—if someone is teasing them or asking them questions they don’t want to answer. Children are better able to cope with social transitioning when they feel that someone understands them and is on their side.

- Designate a staff person within the school, or school district, who can act in an extended advocacy role for transgender students. Name a person who can “take the lead” during a transition and serve as a resource for others. Decide who will be responsible for answering any difficult questions or concerns parents and families may have.

- Have a plan in place to provide education for school community members. It shouldn’t be up to the transgender child to educate others.

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Issues to Consider

This section includes suggestions that schools may want to consider when developing policy statements related to transgender and gender expansive students.

Each transgender and gender expansive student’s case should be looked at individually as students may have unique needs and not all of these suggestions will work in all cases. Students should be asked what would work for them. An accommodation that works for one student cannot simply be assumed to work for another. The school should not make assumptions about students’ gender identity based on sex or gender expression but should honour whatever way students choose to identify themselves.

The suggestions in this section have been adapted from the following sources unless otherwise noted. Descriptions of all of these resources can be found in the annotated resource list found in Appendix Two.


Privacy Issues

Every student has the right to privacy. School staff should not reveal a student’s status as a transgender person to any other people, including parents, other students or other members of the school staff, unless the student has given consent to do so. A student’s transgender status may be “disclosed to others to the limited extent necessary to investigate and/or resolve a claim of discrimination or harassment brought by that student”  

or if there is a specific reason such as a medical emergency. For transgender youth who are not “out”, telling anyone without the child’s permission could leave them vulnerable to harassment at home or at school.

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School Records

The legal names recorded on a student’s official records can be changed if the school receives a court order documenting a legal change in name. A student can ask to have their preferred name noted on all official records even if a court order does not exist. The gender recorded on any form should reflect the student’s gender identity.

Policies and Forms

Update all policies and forms to include gender-neutral language and to offer gender-inclusive choices. This allows people to correctly reflect their genders and also conveys your school’s acceptance of gender variance. An example might look like this:

- Please check the boxes that apply to you:
  - Sex/Gender Identity
  - M □  F □  Transgender □
- Please tell us if you have other words to express your gender.
- Comments:
  - If any of this information is confidential, please be sure to designate it here.

Another example might be changing contact information forms saying “Mother’s Name” and “Father’s Name” to “Adult 1” and “Adult 2”.

Further examples of gender inclusive registration forms can be found in the Gender Inclusive Schools Toolkit which can be retrieved from www.genderspectrum.org/resources/education-2/#dos

Gender-Segregated Activities

Whenever possible, reduce or do away with routines that segregate children by gender. As a general rule, in any other circumstances where students are separated by gender (class discussions, activities, field trips), students shall be permitted to participate according to their gender identity. Issues involving housing or accommodation should be decided on a case-by-case basis. If the transgender student has concerns over privacy or safety, private accommodations should be made available.
Names and Pronouns

Transgender and gender non-conforming students may want others to use a name that corresponds to their gender identity rather than their legal name. If a student has asked to be addressed by a different name, it is discriminatory for staff to consistently and intentionally use their legal name. All students can be asked what name they would prefer to be called at the start of the year. Schools in British Columbia who use MyEducation for student attendance and reporting will note that the data input fields have spaces for both the student’s legal and preferred names.

Students should be privately asked what name they would like to use at school and what name they would like used on materials going home or at meetings with parents. Students should also be asked what pronouns they prefer to use. Some students may wish to use pronouns other than masculine or feminine ones. The graphic below (used with permission of Trans Student Educational Resources, 2017) shows some of the pronoun options students may choose. This does not include all of the possible options.

![Pronouns 101 Table](image)

For more information, go to www.transstudent.org/graphics
Restroom Accessibility

Deciding which bathroom to use can be stressful or confusing for younger gender expansive children. As Brill and Pepper explained in their book *The Transgender Child*, if these children choose the bathroom they feel they belong in, others are made uncomfortable, but choosing the other option makes them uncomfortable. If others perceive them to be in the wrong bathroom, gender expansive children can be exposed to verbal or physical harassment.

Transgender students should be allowed to use the washroom that corresponds to their gender identity. If a student desires privacy, a gender-neutral single stall washroom should be made available. The use of a gender-neutral single stall washroom should be a personal choice, rather than a mandated decision. If possible, provide more than one gender-neutral single stall washroom. If only gender specific bathrooms are available, ensure that there are enclosed stalls available for privacy. If a school has several bathrooms, some can be designated as unisex or gender-neutral. It is important that private, gender-neutral bathrooms are made available to all children not just the one child who has self-identified.

Physical Education, School Sports and Transgender Student Athletes

Transgender student athletes can participate in gender-segregated P.E. or sports in accordance with their gender identity. They have the right to accommodations that best meet their individual needs. Accommodations could include being allowed to use the change room, shower, and toilet facility the student athlete associates with their gender identity. Each change room should have some private enclosed changing areas, shower areas and toilets. Schools should provide a transgender athlete with a private separate facility if they request one. However, a transgender athlete should NOT be required to use a separate space.

Some Grade 7 and/or middle school students may be eligible to compete in interschool sporting events sanctioned by B.C. School Sports (BCSS). BCSS describes its regulations for transgender athletes in Section 35 of the 2017-2018 BCSS handbook. This section states that a “student-athlete may participate with the opposite sex in a sex-segregated sport on the basis that doing so would be consistent with his/her gender identity if the student-athlete’s application [to the Eligibility Officer] is granted”. The application needs to include a written statement from the student-athlete and/or parent or guardian, as well as a “professional opinion concerning the student-athlete’s gender identity from a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other professional with experience in gender identity health care.” The BCSS handbook can be accessed at www.bcschoolsports.ca/sites/default/files/Complete%20Version%20INTERACTIVE.pdf
Dress Codes

Dress codes should be adaptable and gender neutral. Students should not have to choose between ‘male’ and ‘female’ clothing. Some students are the most comfortable wearing clothing that is a combination of both. Students dressing in clothing consistent with their gender identity would still be expected to adhere to other dress code provisions such as skirt length or not wearing revealing clothing. Safety considerations such as wearing running shoes rather than shoes with high heels during PE classes would also expected to be followed.
Section Four
Changing School Culture

“There are a world where kids would no longer be afraid to go to school and where school would never again feel like running the gauntlet for a gender non-conforming or transgender child. This would happen because the schools would be educated not just to tolerate but to fully accept gender in all its variations, and children would no longer be frightened or threatened by those who are different from themselves. There would be room for everybody.”

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Where to Next?
Ideas for Creating Gender-Inclusive Classrooms

The suggestions listed below are adapted from ideas found at www.genderspectrum.org and www.welcomingschools.org. You can find links to more information and strategies in Appendix Two of this resource guide. Two good places to start are: http://www.welcomingschools.org/pages/gender-and-children-a-place-to-begin/ and http://www.welcomingschools.org/pages/framework-for-developing-a-gender-inclusive-school/

Find Ways to Integrate Gender Inclusion into Your Instructional Approaches

- **Develop classroom messages** that emphasize “All children can… (dance, cook, have short or long hair, do math, make art…)”
- **Use** lesson plans designed to expand children’s understanding of gender.
  - You can find links to lesson plans and curriculum suggestions in the annotated resource guide found in Appendix Two.
- **Read** books to your class that teach about gender and breakdown stereotypes related to gender expression and gender identity.
  - Appendix Three has a list of children’s books with these types of themes.
- Teachers can use gender neutral language and names such as Ashley and Sam when creating math problems. Write math problems with contexts that include a variety of family structures and gender-expressions. For example, “Darren wants to bake special cookies for his class. The original recipe calls for 2 cups of flour. If he is doubling the recipe, how much flour does he need?”
- **Provide role models through books and guest speakers.** Show a wide range of achievements and emotions for all people that move beyond gender-role stereotypes.
- **Be a role model!** Give examples of how you or people you know like to do things outside of gender stereotypes.

Give All Students Individualized Attention

- Let children know that you recognize their strengths and that you can appreciate their unique nature.
- Encourage students to find activities that they enjoy and that respect their interests.
- Honour the name and the pronouns that a student uses. Give all children the opportunity to tell you what names and/or pronouns they wish to use.
Use Inclusive Phrases and Gender Neutral Language in Your Classroom

- Instead of addressing your class using “boys” and “girls,” try something different. Words like “class,” “students,” or “learners” help all students feel included. Saying “Good morning everyone” or “Good morning Grade 3’s” models the use of inclusive language.
- Ask all students their preferred names and pronouns and use them.
- Help students recognize “all or nothing” language by helping them understand the difference between patterns and rules. Teach them phrases like:
  - “That may be true for some people but not all people”
  - “frequently, but not always”
  - “more common and less common”
  - “sometimes, but not always”
- Information about gender neutral language can be found at the BCTF website. It can be downloaded from [https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/Issues/LGBTQ/GenderNeutral.pdf](https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/Issues/LGBTQ/GenderNeutral.pdf)
- Information about gender neutral report card comments can be found at the BCTF website. It can be downloaded from [https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/Issues/LGBTQ/Gender-neutral%2520report%2520card%2520comments.pdf](https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/Issues/LGBTQ/Gender-neutral%2520report%2520card%2520comments.pdf)

Avoid Using Gender to Divide Students

- Avoid situations that force children to make gendered choices. This can leave some children feeling out-of-place or isolated.
- **Group students** in ways that do not rely on gender such as table groups, letters in their names or colors of their clothes.
- Find ways of lining up students other than “boys here, girls there” or “Girls line up first.” Try saying, “Anyone wearing a green shirt can line up,” or “If your name has an ‘E’ please line up.” You can also try dividing your class into two consistent groups like 1’s and 2’s.
- Monitor choice activity time to ensure that students are not segregating themselves by gender. If you notice this occurring, form groups based on some other characteristics such as birthday months.
- Avoid labels. For example, just have a bathroom pass rather than a girls’ bathroom pass and a boys’ bathroom pass. Do not unnecessarily label any container or folder as ‘boys’ or ‘girls’.
Develop a Gender Expansive Environment

- Be mindful of the ways you might be gender stereotyping students.
- Create classroom displays and show videos that challenge gender stereotypes and show a wide range of occupations and achievements for all genders.
- Post pictures depicting gender expressive individuals or cultures in which gender is expressed differently than typically presented by traditionally binary notions.
- Put up inclusive signs that recognize and affirm gender diversity. Signs can be found at:
  - [https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/2016-17_SJ_Resources.pdf](https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/2016-17_SJ_Resources.pdf)
  - [https://www.genderspectrum.org/resources/education-2/#more-424](https://www.genderspectrum.org/resources/education-2/#more-424)
- Teach empathy and respect.
  - How do you think you would feel if people were always asking you about your own gender?
  - Have you ever been teased? How does it feel when you are teased or treated as an outsider?
- When binary statements about gender are made, interrupt them by asking questions like “Is that always true?” or “Can anyone think of an example that does not fit the pattern?”

Prepare for Teachable Moments

- Respond to gender based putdowns firmly, but instructionally, always being careful about further marginalizing the target of the statements. Follow up privately to see if how you handled the situation was comfortable for the student involved.
- Practice answering questions related to gender or interrupting hurtful teasing based on gender to make these situations easier to deal with.
  - Suggestions of ways to respond to children’s questions about LGBTQ topics can be found at [http://www.welcomingschools.org/resources/challenging-questions/](http://www.welcomingschools.org/resources/challenging-questions/)
- Practice simple phrases with students so they also have ways to more easily respond to gender exclusion or put-downs.
Connections to British Columbia Curriculum

Gender identity is not explicitly mentioned in the Kindergarten to Grade 7 curriculum. LGBTQ rights are mentioned as a possible Social Studies topic in Grade 5 to help students learn about “human rights and responses to discrimination in Canadian society”. The K-7 curriculum has other entry points for topics such as gender identity and LGBTQ issues, especially in social studies and physical and health education.

**Primary Entry Points**

Social Studies
- Grades K-3 “Big Idea”: Individuals and/or communities can be diverse.
- Kindergarten: Students are expected to know “ways in which individuals and families differ and are the same.
- Grade One: Students are expected to explore “different perspectives on people, places, issues, or events in their lives.”

Physical and Health Education
- Grades 2-4: Students should know about “factors that influence self-identity.”

**Intermediate Entry Points**

Social Studies
- Grade Six Social Studies “Big Idea”: “Media sources can both positively and negatively affect our understanding of important events and issues.”

Physical and Health Education
- Grade 4: Students start to learn “strategies for responding to bullying, discrimination, and violence.”
- Grade 4: Students start learning about the “physical, emotional, and social changes that occur during puberty.”
  - Some transgender children may be susceptible to self-harm, self-neglect, and/or depression if they are not ready for the body changes that come with puberty.
- Grade 6: Students learn about “influences on individual identity, including sexual identity, gender, values, and beliefs” (emphasis in original).
Beginning in the fall of 2016, nine B.C. school districts started taking part in the ARC Foundation SOGI Educator Network pilot. SOGI is an acronym for sexual orientation and gender identity. The school districts involved in the pilot were Langley, Burnaby, Delta, Kamloops/Thompson, Nanaimo-Ladysmith, North Vancouver, Sea to Sky, Vancouver, and West Vancouver. Participating districts were asked to pilot two roles: a SOGI school lead and a district SOGI coordinator. The educators in these roles were expected to develop and implement SOGI-inclusive practices and initiatives.

Information about SOGI-inclusive policies and procedures, SOGI-inclusive learning environments, and curriculum resources have been provided to the pilot districts but are also available to all B.C. educators at the SOGI 3 website: https://www.sogieducation.org/home

The section on curriculum resources includes age-appropriate lesson plans for elementary and secondary schools. The elementary resources include eight detailed lesson plans that are directly connected to requirements of the new BC curriculum for grades K-7 as well as other information that teachers at any grade levels could use.

- **K-12 - Why "That's So Gay" is not Okay**
- **K/1 Social Studies & PHE – Family Diversity**
- **K/1 Social Studies & PHE – Name Calling**
- **2/3 English Language Arts & PHE – Gender Identity**
- **2/3/4/5 English Language Arts & PHE – Questioning Gender Expectations**
- **4/5 Physical and Health Education – Gender Identity, Media and Stereotypes**
- **5/6 Social Studies - LGBTQ Human Rights**
- **5/6/7 Arts Education & PHE – Gender Stereotypes and Bullying**
- **6/7 PHE & English Language Arts – Gender and Appearance in Media**

The SOGI 3 website also includes a professional development section with resources for personal and collective learning. This section includes a collection of five-minute videos designed to prompt discussion at a staff meeting or for use as a tool for personal learning. The section’s 40-minute learning modules include a facilitator’s guide, a PowerPoint with speaker’s notes, a video, and activities with handouts.
Dealing with Concerns

You may encounter opposition to gender-inclusive education. Sometimes concerns are voiced by parents and sometimes concerns may come from colleagues. The ideas listed below are just a few possible suggestions of ways to handle these concerns.

You can also find lists of ways of responding to concerns at the following locations:


2. **Gender Spectrum Website**: You can find two different documents at this website. The first document is called “Responding to Concerns: Teaching About Gender” and the second document is called “Responding to Concerns: Supporting Transgender Students.” Both can be retrieved from [https://www.genderspectrum.org/resources/education-2/#more-424](https://www.genderspectrum.org/resources/education-2/#more-424)

3. **SOGI 1 2 3 Website**: The SOGI Educator Network encourages parents to explore their professional development videos and presentations. Each of the 40 Minute learning modules has a facilitator’s guide which includes a section called “Discussing Objections: Speaking Points for Opposition to SOGI Education”. All of this material can be accessed at: [https://www.sogieducation.org/pro-d/](https://www.sogieducation.org/pro-d/)

**In general, when dealing with concerns:**

- Listen reflectively
- Appreciate the sharing of their question or concern
- Try to learn what’s underneath the question or concern
- Return to shared beliefs about safety, kindness, and learning
Some possible talking points for dealing with concerns include:

- It is important for all students to feel that their families and identities are a valued and visible part of the school and classroom community. They should be able to see their lives positively reflected in curriculum and classroom activities.

- All students and their families can expect to be treated with dignity and respect. All students (and staff) have the right to attend school in a safe, caring and inclusive environment.

- All students should expect to feel safe at school. The 2011 Canadian school climate survey “Every Class in Every School” found that:
  - 90% of transgender youth reported hearing transphobic comments
  - 74% reported having been verbally harassed about their gender expression
  - 37% reported having been physically harassed or assaulted about their gender expression
  - 78% reported feeling unsafe in some way at school

- These are educational issues; they are not about religious beliefs, moral views or sexual practice. The real issue for any school to address is the creation of an educational environment that is free from prejudice, discrimination, transphobia and heterosexism.

- Individual families will always have a range of values. Schools have a duty to teach the societal value of respect for all.

- Teachers have professional, ethical and legal responsibilities to ensure that all classrooms and schools are safe, caring and inclusive environments for all students regardless of differences.
• All teachers, principals and support staff have a legal obligation to respond to all forms of harassment and discrimination in schools. Reminders taken from “Discussing Objections: Speaking Points for Opposition to SOGI Education”)

• In September 2016 BC Ministry of Education directed both public and independent schools to include explicit protections based on sexuality and gender identity/expression to their anti-bullying policies and school codes of conduct.

• Courts have stated that, “Public schools must be inclusive and secular, and that when religious rights are in opposition, schools should err on the side of inclusion.”

• Courts have stated that, “School boards must respond effectively to allegations of harassment or bullying based on either “perceived” or “real” characteristics and must provide students with an educational environment that does not expose them to discriminatory harassment.”

• Courts have stated that, “Tolerance is always age-appropriate, children cannot learn unless they are exposed to views that differ from those they are taught at home.”
“My basic desire for my kids and all kids is that, if they turn out to be some gender we have not even heard of yet—or if they grow up perfectly happy with the cultural gender norm—they will know that they are good just as they are.”

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Appendix 1: Terminology

The terminology and language used to describe transgender youth and their experiences is constantly changing and evolving. When Sausa (2005) asked twenty-four transgender youth what words they used to describe themselves, they provided sixteen different terms. The terminology and language youth preferred was influenced by factors such as their age, location, culture and socioeconomic status. The following list was compiled from a variety of sources which can be found on the final page of this appendix. Please consider this list a starting point and whenever possible ask the students you are working with what terminology they would prefer you to use.

Basic Terminology:

**Transgender/Trans**: Encompassing term of many gender identities of those who do not identify or exclusively identify with their sex assigned at birth. The term transgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life.

**Cisgender/Cis**: Term for someone who exclusively identifies as their sex assigned at birth. The term cisgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life.

**Gender Expression/Presentation**: The physical manifestation of one’s gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc. (typically referred to as masculine or feminine). Many transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender identity (who they are), rather than their sex assigned at birth. Someone with a gender non-conforming gender expression may or may not be transgender.

**Gender Identity**: One’s internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or other gender(s). Everyone has a gender identity, including you. For transgender people, their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity are not necessarily the same.

**Sex/Assigned Sex**: The classification of a person as male, female or intersex based on biological characteristics, including chromosomes, hormones, external genitalia and reproductive organs. Most often, sex is assigned by a medical professional at birth and is based on a visual assessment of external genitalia. This can also be referred to as biological sex or natal sex.

**Sexual Orientation**: A person’s physical, romantic, emotional, aesthetic, and/or other form of attraction to others. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Trans people can be straight, bisexual, lesbian, gay, asexual, pansexual, queer, etc. just like anyone else.
Additional Terminology:

**Ally:** Someone who advocates and supports a community other than their own. Allies are not part of the communities they help. A person should not self-identify as an ally but show that they are one through action.

**Bisexual:** A person who is attracted physically, sexually, and emotionally to persons of the same and opposite sex.

**Gay:** Men who feel romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to other men; a term used to proclaim self-acceptance and self-affirmation.

**Gay-straight Alliance (GSA):** Formal organization of GLBTQ and straight people in support of the dignity and rights of GLBTQ people, usually in the context of and to create change within educational institutions and environments.

**Gender:** This is one’s internal sense of being female, male, both, neither. Gender is socially constructed; it is learned through social and cultural processes since birth. We used to think of gender as a binary, where we were either female or male. We now know there is a broad variation in how gender is expressed and that gender is really a continuum.

**Gender Binary:** This is a system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two, opposite categories, termed “male and female”, in which no other possibilities for gender or anatomy are believed to exist.

**Gender Conformity:** Acting within the culturally expected gender role for people of one’s biological sex.

**Gender Fluidity:** The belief that social constructions of gender identity and gender roles lie along a spectrum and cannot be limited to two genders; a feeling that one’s gender varies from societal norms of two genders.

**Gender Neutral:** Anything (such as clothing, styles, activities, or spaces) that a society or culture considers appropriate for anyone, irrespective of gender; anything that carries with it no particular gender associations.

**Gender Non-conforming:** Describes a person whose behaviours or gender expression falls outside what is generally considered typical for their assigned sex at birth.

**Gender Spectrum:** An understanding of gender as encompassing a wide range of identities and expressions.

**Heteronormative/ Heteronormativity:** These terms refer to the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm, which plays out in interpersonal interactions and society and furthers the marginalization of LGBTQ people.
**Heterosexism:** The assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that this sexual orientation is superior.

**Heterosexual:** A person who is physically, sexually, and emotionally attracted to someone of the opposite sex.

**Homophobia:** Fear and/or hatred of homosexuality, often exhibited by prejudice, discrimination, bullying, and/or acts of violence.

**Homosexual:** A person who is physically, sexually, and emotionally attracted to someone of the same sex.

**LGBTQ (GLBTQ):** Standard acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning people; variations exist, such as including an I for intersex and a second Q for queer.

**Lesbian:** A woman who feels romantically, emotionally, and sexually attracted to other women; a descriptive and socially acceptable label that homosexual women often prefer because it offers an identity separate from that of homosexual men.

**Queer:** A term for people of marginalized gender identities and sexual orientations who are not cisgender and/or heterosexual. This term has a complicated history as a reclaimed slur.

**Questioning:** Refers to people who are in the process of understanding and exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity. They are often seeking information and support during this stage of their identity development.

**Stealth:** To not be openly transgender in all or almost all social situations.

**SOGI:** An acronym for Sexual Orientation Gender Identity.

**Transnegativity:** A negative attitude towards transgender people and gender expression that falls outside the male-masculine/female-feminine conventions. Transnegativity is often distinguished from transphobia as being attitudinal rather than emotional in nature.

**Transphobia:** Fear and/or hatred of any transgression of perceived gender norms, often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination or acts of violence. Anyone who is, or is perceived to be trans and/or gender diverse can be the target of transphobia.

**Two-Spirit:** A term whose definition varies across North American cultures, but which generally means a person born with one biological sex and fulfilling at least some of the gender roles assigned to both sexes; often considered part male and part female or wholly male and wholly female; often revered as natural peace makers as well as healers and shamans.
Terminology References


Appendix Two: Annotated Resource List

Books

The Gender Creative Child: Pathways for Nurturing and Supporting Children Who Live Outside Gender Boxes (2016) by Dr. Diane Ehrensaft

Publisher: The Experiment

In this book, Dr. Ehrensaft uses both her own personal experiences and the latest research to describe how biology, nurture, and culture interact to create the great variety of gender identities and expressions seen in children. This book also explains why gender is fluid rather than binary. Dr. Ehrensaft includes many real-life stories of gender creative children and their families to help illustrate her message that we should listen to carefully to each child to discover their unique needs and support their search for their true gender self. This book provides suggestions for creating safe, accepting environments that support the development of all children.

Gender Born, Gender Made (2011) by Dr. Diane Ehrensaft

Publisher: The Experiment

In this, her first book, Dr. Ehrensaft first used the term 'gender creative' to describe children whose sense of gender identity is not defined by the sex indicated on their birth certificates. This book describes the roles of nature, nurture, and culture in creating gender identity and exposes the outdated approaches to gender non-conformity. Dr. Ehrensaft addresses the concerns some may have about working with gender creative children and offers ideas for supporting a child to become their own individual, gender-authentic person.


Publisher: Cleis Press

This book was the first handbook of its kind. The book includes personal stories and technical information about gender variant and transgender children and teenagers. The authors discuss the challenges faced by families and share professional research and personal experiences. Of particular interest to educators would be Chapter 3 which describes the developmental stages of the transgender child and Chapter 5 which discusses transgender families and the educational system.
Curriculum/Lesson Ideas

Gender Doesn't Limit You! A Research-Based Anti-Bullying Program for the Early Grades (n.d.): This curriculum presents six lesson plans that served as the basis of a study examining ways to counteract gender bullying among young children. A traditional multicultural technique, using literature to challenge gender stereotypes, was compared to teaching students catchphrases to interrupt gender bullying. The latter approach produced far greater changes to students’ gender attitudes and significantly increased their willingness to take a stand against gender bullying. Each of the six lessons addresses a different type of gender bullying. The six lesson themes are: Peer Exclusion (e.g., “Girls can’t play.”); Role Exclusion (e.g., “Girls have to be the nurses.”); Teasing about Gendered Activities (e.g., “You have a girls' lunch box,” directed at a boy.); Biased Judgments (e.g., “Boys are better at math than girls.”); Gendered Beliefs (e.g., “Only boys can fix cars.”); and Highlighting Gender (e.g., “Boys sit over here and girls sit over there.”). Each lesson is sequenced to introduce the problem, teach students a catchphrase and then practice using the response. A pdf version of this resource can be found at www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/tt_gender_doesnt_limit-2.pdf

The Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know (2011): This resource was created by the Pride Education Network with support from the B.C. Teachers’ Federation and the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers’ Association. The guide provides information about gender, about the role of educational leadership in creating a gender inclusive school culture, and about classroom strategies. The guide also provides 13 lesson plans on the topic of gender, 7 of which are designed for elementary age students. A pdf version of this resource can be found at www.pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the-gender-spectrum.pdf

Ready, Set, Respect: GLSEN’s Elementary School Toolkit (2016): This resource includes three sets of thematic lessons for grade K-2 and 3-5 students. The three themes are ‘Name-Calling, Bullying, and Bias;’ ‘Family Diversity’ and ‘Gender Roles and Diversity.’ Each set of lessons opens with example situations teachers have faced. This resource also includes suggestions for everyday inclusion, responding to bullying, and making recess and physical education more respectful. This resource can be found at www.glsen.org
Other Guides/Handbooks

**Bending the Mold: An Action Kit for Transgender Students (2013):** This kit is designed for transgender students and their allies who want to advocate for change and make schools safer. In addition to describing ways to take action, this kit also has a list of highlights in transgender history. A pdf version of this document can be downloaded from [www.getthetoolkit.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/BendingTheMold.pdf](http://www.getthetoolkit.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/BendingTheMold.pdf)

**Beyond the Binary: A Tool Kit for Gender Identity Activism in Schools (2004):** This resource is a collaborative project of GSA Network, Transgender Law Center, and the National Center for Lesbian Rights. The kit is designed for student leaders, allies, and others who want to address the heteronormativity of schools by educating students and staff about gender creativity and transgender issues. Some of the key components of this tool kit are concrete ideas for what to do if you are discriminated against, ways to design and implement your campaign and ideas for conducting student, teacher, and administrator trainings. A pdf version of this document can be found at [www.gsanetwork.org/files/getinvolved/BeyondtheBinary-Manual.pdf](http://www.gsanetwork.org/files/getinvolved/BeyondtheBinary-Manual.pdf)

**Discussing Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Identity and Issues: Suggestions and Resources for K-12 Teachers (2014):** This American resource was developed by the Anti-Defamation League. Topics covered included in this booklet include why we teach children about transgender people and issues, how to prepare for discussions and handle questions, and how to address issues in the classroom. An electronic version of this document can be found at [www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/discussing-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-identity-and-issues.pdf](http://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/discussing-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-identity-and-issues.pdf)

**Queer Youth Advice for Educators: How to Respect and Protect Your Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students (2011):** This unique resource presents the voices of thirty American LGBTQ youth who were interviewed over four months on the topic of school. The youth share their thoughts and feelings about peer and adult actions that were hurtful or harmful and also describe peer and adult interactions that helped them at school. By interspersing quotes from the youth interviews with facts and information, the reader is encouraged to listen to the students’ advice. A pdf version of this document can be downloaded from [www.whatkidscando.org/publications/pdfs/QueerYouthAdvice.pdf](http://www.whatkidscando.org/publications/pdfs/QueerYouthAdvice.pdf)

**Questions & Answers: Gender Identity in Schools (2010):** This resource, developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada, uses a ‘question and answer’ format to provide answers to commonly asked questions about gender identity and how to create supportive school settings. An electronic version of this document can be found at [http://librarypdf.catie.ca/PDF/ATI-20000s/26289E.pdf](http://librarypdf.catie.ca/PDF/ATI-20000s/26289E.pdf)
The Safe Space Kit: Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students (2016): The downloaded PDF of the Safe Space Kit includes the Guide to Being an Ally, a printable poster and printable stickers. The Guide to Being an Ally is divided into four main sections. The first section provides background knowledge about anti-LGBT bias and the experiences of LGBT students. The second section explains specific ways to support LGBT students. The third section looks at ways to teach students and staff about how to combat anti-LGBT behaviour and bias. The final section shares strategies for promoting school change. The guide also has “Ask Yourself” questions to use for personal reflection about the information provided in the guide and how you might use it in your role at your school. Electronic versions of this guide can be found at www.glsen.org/safespace

Safe and Caring Schools for Transgender Students: A Guide for Teachers (2012): This Canadian resource from Alberta was developed by the Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities. The booklet describes issues related to transgender students and strategies for making these students feel included, safe, and cared for. The booklet opens with the reflections and personal stories of both a male-affirmed and a female-affirmed transgender student. An electronic version of this document can be found at www.resources.safeandcaring.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Transgender-Youth.pdf

Safe and Caring Schools for Two-Spirit Youth (2014): This Canadian resource from Alberta was developed by the Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities. The booklet describes what it means to be a Two-Spirit person by sharing the stories of Dr. James Makokis and Dr. Alexandria Wilson who both identify as Two-Spirit individuals. Elder Leonard Saddleback of the Samson Cree Nation shares his knowledge of teachings about Two-Spirit people found in the oral history of his people. The booklet also describes terms related to two-spiritedness and strategies to help teachers support Two-Spirit students in their schools. An electronic version of this document can be found at www.resources.safeandcaring.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Two-Spirit-Youth.pdf

Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools (2015): This American resource was created by the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), Gender Spectrum, the National Education Association (NEA), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). In addition to information about gender identity and planning tips, this resource includes sample gender support and gender transition plans and suggestions for dealing with parents who do not affirm their child’s gender identity. Appendix C of this document supplies educators with ‘talking points’ they can use when addressing common questions and concerns. An electronic version of this document can be found at www.nea.org/assets/docs/Schools_in_Transition_2015.pdf
Supporting Transgender and Transsexual Students in K-12 Schools: A Guide for Educators (2012): This resource, developed by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, includes basic information about gender identity, common misconceptions, and risk factors for transgender youth. It also describes how to create an in-school transition plan and provides suggestions for creating more inclusive schools. Sample policies and a checklist for creating a supportive school environment can also be found in this resource. This resource can be purchased from the Canadian Teachers’ Federation website www.ctf-fce.ca

Journal Articles and Other Print Resources

Every Class in Every School: The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools - Final Report (2011): This Canadian report looks at the results of a national survey of 3700 high school students who were asked questions about what school life is like for gender or sexual minority students. The report describes school climate issues such as experiences with various types of harassment and safer schools policies. The report also describes how homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia affect various subgroups of students such as trans youth, aboriginal youth, youth of colour, and heterosexual youth. This full version and a summary of this report can be downloaded from the Egale Human Rights Trust website www.egale.ca/every-class/

Harsh Realities: The Experiences of Transgender Youth in Our Nation’s Schools (2009): This American report uses the data from 2007 National School Climate Survey to more closely examine the experiences of the 295 students in the survey who identified as transgender. When examining differences between transgender students and non-transgender students, the full sample of 6,209 LGBT students was used. Harsh Realities looks at transgender students’ experiences with biased language, harassment and assault. This report also examines the effect victimization has on the educational outcomes of transgender students and looks at transgender students’ school engagement and access to institutional resources. This report can be downloaded from the GLSEN website at www.glSEN.org/sites/default/files/Harsh%20Realities.pdf

Which Way to the Restroom? Respecting the Rights of Transgender Youth in the School System (2012) Grant Bowers and Wendy Lopez (Toronto District School Board) This article was part of a presentation made by Bowers and Lopez to an American organization called the National School Boards Association. The paper discusses some of the legal issues school districts might face in regards to transgender students. The main article uses primarily American examples but Appendix A of this paper looks at Canadian Law and the Ontario experience. This article can be downloaded from www.nsba.org/sites/default/files/reports/Respecting%20the%20Rights%20of%20Transgender%20Youth%20and%20appendices.pdf
Implementing Lessons that Matter: The Impact of LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum on Student Safety, Well-Being, and Achievement (2013): This is a report on the results of an American multi-method research project examining the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive lessons and curriculum. Students in focus groups were asked about their experiences with LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and about how safe schools were perceived to be for LGBTQ students, gender creative students, and students who are perceived to be LGBTQ. The report also describes case studies from four California high schools and includes stories from participants interviewed at each site. The report describes barriers to implementation of such curriculum, strategies that supported implementation, and the impacts of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on school climate. This report can be downloaded from the GSA network website at www.gsanetwork.org/files/aboutus/ImplementingLessons_fullreport.pdf

Transgender Children: More Than a Theoretical Challenge (2010) Natacha Kennedy and Mark Hellen. Graduate Journal of Social Science, 7:2, 25-43. This paper presents evidence that transgender children become aware of their gender identities at a very young age. Kennedy and Hellen then look at how pressure to conform to societal expectations can lead to concealment of gender identity and ultimately negatively impact the live of transgender children. This article can be found at the GJSS website at www.gjss.org/sites/default/files/issues/chapters/papers/Journal-07-02--02-Kennedy-Hellen.pdf

Trans Youth at Schools: Y-Gap Community Bulletin This six-page bulletin of Toronto’s Youth-Gender Action Project outlines the challenges faced by transgender students at schools, the way schools can provide support, and ways to take action. This pdf document can be downloaded from www.ctys.org

Working with Transgender Children and Their Classmates in Pre-Adolescence: Just Be Supportive (2011) Julie C. Luecke. Journal of LGBT Youth, 8:2, 116-156. This study examines how one school system handled the social transition of a female- affirmed transgender child. The article includes excerpts from interviews and journal entries of the child, the guardian, and of the involved staff. The author suggests that other schools may be able to use the model presented as a place to start when helping students who wish to socially transition. This article can be downloaded from www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/19361653.2011.544941
Websites

Canadian:

www.sogieducation.org – The SOGI 1 2 3 website provides information about SOGI-inclusive policies and procedures, learning environments, and curriculum resources. SOGI is an acronym for sexual orientation and gender identity. The section on curriculum resources includes age-appropriate lesson plans for elementary and secondary schools. The elementary resources include eight detailed lesson plans that are directly connected to requirements of the new BC curriculum for grades K-7 as well as other information that teachers at all grade levels can use. The SOGI 1 2 3 website also includes a professional development section with a collection of five-minute videos designed to prompt discussion at a staff meeting or for use as a tool for personal learning. The professional development section also includes 40-minute learning modules comprised of a facilitator’s guide, a PowerPoint with speaker’s notes, a video, and activities with handouts.

www.egale.ca - This is the website of Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, a national charity that promotes LGBTQ human rights through education, research and community engagement. This site has some informative blog posts on topics such as gender pronouns, creating LGBTQ-inclusive schools, talking about LGBTQ-inclusiveness with parents and community members, and being an ally.

www.gendercreativekids.ca - This website provides resources to help families, schools and communities support gender creative kids. This website has an extensive resource library that can be searched by the type of resource and/or by the intended audience of the resource. Types of resources include links websites, books and DVDs, news articles, blogs, curriculum and policy documents, online videos, and research reports or journal articles.

https://libraries.phsa.ca/fsrc - This link connects you to the Family Libraries at BC Children’s & BC Women’s Hospitals. This page allows you to search the collection of over 5,000 health books, pamphlets and videos located at the Family Support & Resource Centre and Sunny Hill Education Resource Centre. Using ‘transgender’ as a search term brings up a list of 80 records for a variety of resources including children's stories, links to videos, and informative books for adults. You can check items out online and then pick them up from the library. If you cannot pick up items in person, the resource centre will mail them to you for free. You can keep the item for 30 days and return postage is included.
www.bctf.ca/Social%20Justice.aspx?id=6106 - You can find a lot of relevant information at the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation website by looking at the ‘LGBTQ issues in schools’ page found at the Social Justice link. This page can connect you to lesson plans, resources, websites, and links to B.C. school districts policies addressing LGBTQ issues. You can also find links related to advocacy and events such as the Day of Silence (April 15), Pink Shirt Day, and the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (May 17).

The following free workshops are available for booking through the BCTF. You can find a workshop request form at the website or call 1-800-663-9163 local 1857.

Creating a Gender Inclusive School Culture: This workshop is designed to increase familiarity with terminology and awareness of gender identity and gender expression. Among the topics covered are risks faced by transgender students, and best practices to support students transitioning in schools.

Reach Out, Speak Out: This workshop is designed to provide information on being an ally and supporting LGBTQ students. It also looks at ways to integrate LGBTQ issues into the curriculum at all grade levels. The BCTF recommends this workshop to people who are trying to develop a school-wide approach to reducing or preventing transphobia/homophobia and to creating an inclusive school climate for everyone.

Supporting Gender-Inclusive Communities (Parent Workshop): This workshop is designed to explain to parents why having gender-inclusive schools is important and how schools are working with all students on the gender spectrum. Parents will increase their familiarity with terminology and their awareness of gender identity and gender expression.

bcsaferschools.com - This is the website of the British Columbia Safer Schools Coalition which was originally formed to support the Vancouver School Board’s updates to its Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities Policy. After this policy was adopted in 2014, the organization shifted its focus to seeing that similar policies are adopted in school districts across British Columbia. In addition to a section clear explaining terminology of gender diversity, this website has links to the Vancouver School Board’s policy document and to similar policies successfully implemented in Edmonton and Toronto. The website’s ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ section has answers to questions about topics such as washroom access, why transgender and gender creative students need extra support, what makes transgender inclusive policies effective, and where to find information about religious views on transgender issues.

www.pflag.ca - This is the website of Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG - Canada). PFLAG offers support and information to anyone with questions or concerns about issues of gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation. The website also has an online quarterly newsletter and links to resources.
www.pridenet.ca - This is the website of Pride Education Network, a group of British Columbia teachers, administrators, support staff, youth and parents working to make the B.C. school system more inclusive and fair for LGBTQ students, staff, and families. Pride Education Network has mentors available to any educator who would like to learn about resources or talk with someone about LGBTQ issues they are dealing with. The PEN website also has sample lesson plans, book lists, a weekly online newsletter, and links to websites and further reading. One of the lesson plans provides “What would you do?” scenarios for teachers to discuss and reflect on. This website can also link you to LGBTQ policies and/or motions passed by the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation, the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, and various school districts throughout British Columbia.

www.beyourselfbook.ca - This is the website for the book ‘Be Yourself’ written by Jackie Swirsky and illustrated by her seven year old gender creative son Jacob Swirsky and sister-in-law Jaimee Appel. The main character of the book is a gender creative child and the story promotes gender diversity and acceptance of others. Discussion questions about the book’s themes can be found at the end of the book. “Be Yourself” can be ordered from this website which also has links to a free song version of the book and sample lesson plans and activities for a K-6 audience.

www.safeatschool.ca - This Ontario based website is not transgender specific but has many resources that could help create a safer school environment for gender creative and transgender students. One feature of this site is a set of ‘professional learning modules’ on the topics of bullying prevention, equity and inclusive education, and working in partnership with parents and caregivers. The module on equity and inclusive education is designed for Grade 7-12 educators but has strategies and content about dealing with homophobia, racism, and sexism that could be useful to elementary educators as well. Bullying prevention resources include lesson plans and links to websites, books, videos, and research. Equity and inclusive education resources are organized by topic area and the following subsections: reference materials, lesson plans and tool kits, and resources for youth. This website also has an e-boutique where items such as posters, buttons, storybooks, and guides can be ordered for just the cost of administration fees and shipping.

International:

www.raisingmyrainbow.com - This link will take you to a blog discussing Lori Duron’s life experiences raising a gender creative child. Lori Duron is the author of the book Raising My Rainbow: Adventures in Raising a Fabulous, Gender Creative Son. This website also has the same tips for educators and list of resources found at the back of Lori’s book.
www.glSEN.org - This is the American website of Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network whose mission is “to create safe and affirming schools for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.” GLSEN has conducted national school climate surveys which describe American LGBTQ middle and high school students' experiences with harassment, discrimination, and assault, as well as the availability and impact of supportive school services. The 2013 National School Climate Survey report can be accessed from this website, as can a webinar about the key findings of the report. The website also has a 50 minute research webinar called “Gender Identity and Expression in the Classroom: The Experiences of Gender Nonconforming and Transgender Students in School.” The GLSEN site also has lesson plans about bullying, bias, and diversity and links to educator guides such as a ‘Safe Space Kit’, a “Back to School” guide, and a ‘Libraries as Safe Spaces’ guide. GLSEN also hosts an educator network.

www.transstudent.org - This is the American website of Trans Student Educational Resources. This site has a comprehensive list of LGBTQ definitions, free graphics such as the Gender Unicorn, a Gender Pronouns chart, and a gender unicorn colouring page.

www.gIRES.org.uk - This is the website of England’s Gender Identity Research and Eduaction Society. At this website, you can find lesson plans and a report about play and gender identity. The education archives contain a toolkit entitled “Guidance on Combating Transphobic Bullying in Schools”.

www.gsAnetwork.org - This is the American website of the Genders and Sexualities Alliance Network (formally known as the Gay-Straight Alliance Network). The resources available at this website include information about building and creating inclusive GSAs and links to research conducted in American schools about LGBTQ issues.

www.welcomingschools.org - This American website of Welcoming Schools, a project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, has resources to help schools support transgender and gender creative students, prevent bias-based bullying and stereotyping, and create LGBTQ-inclusive schools. This site has lists of books about diversity, lesson plans using books on the lists, and lesson plans on topics such as name-calling, being an ally, and alternatives to traditional family tree activities. The website has an entire section devoted to answering children’s questions on LGBTQ topics including how to discuss gender with children and deal with gender-role stereotypes and anti-LGBTQ language.
www.adl.org - This link will take you to the American website of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The ADL website has a comprehensive list of terminology and lesson plans on the topics of anti-bias education and bullying/cyberbullying. The site also has resources entitled ‘Toward Communication Free of Gender Bias’ and ‘Discussing Transgender and Gender Non-conforming Identity and Issues’.

www.genderspectrum.org - This is the American website of Gender Spectrum, an organization founded by Stephanie Brill, co-author of The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals. This site has links to short pdf articles on a variety of topics such as using gender-inclusive language with students and understanding gender. One resource available in the education section is the ‘Gender Inclusive Schools Toolkit’. This downloadable pdf document has features such as an assessment tool, gender inclusive signs, and suggestions for talking to young children about gender and responding to concerns.

www.tolerance.org - This link will take you to the American website for Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Centre. Under ‘classroom resources’ you will find lessons on a variety of topics including school climate, gender equity, and gender expression. Under ‘Professional Development’ you will find educational materials in the areas of classroom strategies, school climate, and reflective teaching. The reflective teaching section has self-directed activities and readings. This website also has links to back issues of Teaching Tolerance magazine. The following issues would be of particular interest to educators working with transgender and/or gender creative students: Fall 2005 (#28), Fall 2007 (#32), Summer 2013 (#44), Summer 2015 (#50), and Summer 2016 (#53).

www.ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TSsuccesses/TSsuccesses.html - This is an international website with links to successful transsexual women’s stories and photos. The main purpose of these pages is to provide role models for individuals who are facing gender transition, especially young transgender girls who are often fearful of what the future might hold for them.

www.ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TSsuccesses/TransMen.html - This is an international website with successful transsexual men’s links, stories and photos. The main purpose of these pages is to provide role models for individuals who are facing gender transition, especially young transgender boys.

www.livingaboldlife.com - This link will take you to a family blog about raising three children, including one gender creative child. Some of the blog posts are about her child’s experiences in a supportive school.
Appendix Three: Children’s Book List

10,000 Dresses (2008) Marcus Ewert
Theme(s): Gender Identity, Stereotyping

ABC: A Family Alphabet Book (2012) Bobbie Combs
Theme(s): Family Diversity, LGBTQ Family Members/Characters, Alphabet

The Adventure of Tulip, Birthday Wish Fairy (2012) S. Bear Bergman
Theme(s): Transgender Characters, Gender Identity

All Families are Special (2003) Norma Simon
Theme(s): Family Diversity, Adoption

All I Want to Be is Me (2011) Phyllis Rothblatt
Theme(s): Gender Identity, Stereotypes

And Tango Makes Three (2005) Justin Richardson & Peter Parnell
Theme(s): Family Diversity, LGBTQ Family Members/Characters, Adoption, Penguins

Are You a Boy or a Girl? (2000) Karleen P. Jiménez
Theme(s): Gender Identity, Stereotyping, Acceptance

Asha’s Mums (1990) Rosamund Elwin & Michele Paulse
Theme(s): Family Diversity (two-mom family), LGBTQ Family Members/Characters

Backwards Day (2012) S. Bear Bergman
Theme(s): Transgender Characters, Male-affirmed, Gender Identity, Self-Esteem

Theme(s): Gender Stereotypes, Self-Esteem
Theme(s): Transgender Characters, Female-affirmed

Boys don't knit! (1990)  Janice Schoop
Theme(s): Gender Stereotypes

Theme(s): Family Diversity (same-sex couples, interracial couples, single parents), LGBTQ Characters, Conservation

Daddy, Papa and Me (2009)  Lesléa Newman
Theme(s): LGBTQ Family Members/Characters, Family Diversity (two-dad family)

Daddy's Roommate (1994)  Michael Willhoite
Theme(s): Family Diversity (same-sex couple), LGBTQ Family Members/Characters

Theme(s): Family Diversity (two-dad family), LGBTQ Family Members/Characters

The Different Dragon (2011)  Jennifer Bryan
Theme(s): Family Diversity (two-mom family), LGBTQ Family Members/Characters

Donovan's Big Day (2011)  Lesléa Newman
Theme(s): LGBTQ Family Members/Characters, Family Diversity (two-mom family)

Theme(s): LGBTQ Family Members/Characters, Family Diversity, Fairy Tales

Theme(s): Family Diversity (two-mom family), LGBTQ Characters, Pets

Families (2015)  Shelley Rotner & Sheila M. Kelly
Theme(s): Family Diversity (same-sex parents, single parents, multiracial, etc.)
Todd Parr  
Theme(s): Family Diversity (adoptive families, stepfamilies, single-parent families, two-mom and two-dad families and families with a mom and a dad)

**Felicia's Favorite Story** (2002)  
Lesléa Newman  
Theme(s): Family Diversity (two-mom family), LGBTQ Family Members/Characters, Adoption

Lesléa Newman  
Theme(s): Gender Identity, Stereotypes

**George** (2015)  
Alex Gino  
Intermediate Level  
Theme(s): Transgender Character, Female-affirmed, Self-Esteem, Friendship

**Gracefully Grayson** (2014)  
Ami Polonsky  
Intermediate Level  
Theme(s): Transgender Character, Female-affirmed, Gender Stereotypes

**The Great Big Book of Families** (2015)  
Mary Hoffman  
Theme(s): Family Diversity (mom and dad, same-sex parents, single parent, interracial)

**Heather Has Two Mommies** (2015)  
Lesléa Newman  
Theme(s): LGBTQ Family Members/Characters, Family Diversity (two-mom family)

**Henry Holton Takes the Ice** (2015)  
Sandra Bradley  
Theme(s): Gender Stereotyping

**Holly’s Secret** (2000)  
Nancy Garden  
Intermediate Level  
Theme(s): Family Diversity (two-mom family), LGBTQ Family Members/Characters

**I Am Jazz** (2014)  
Jessica Hershel  
Theme(s): Transgender Character, Female-affirmed, Gender Identity, Tolerance
In Our Mothers’ House (2009) Patricia Polacco
Theme(s): Family Diversity (two-mom family), LGBTQ Characters, Adoption

Theme(s): Family Diversity (two-mom family), LGBTQ Family Members/Characters

It’s Okay to be Different (2001) Todd Parr
Theme(s): Accepting Differences

Jacob’s New Dress (2014) Sarah Hoffman & Ian Hoffman
Theme(s): Gender Identity, Stereotyping, Gender Non-conforming, Self-Esteem

Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World (2010) Mildred Pitts Walter
Theme(s): Gender Stereotypes

Kate and the Beanstalk (2005) Mary Pope Osborne
Theme(s): Gender Stereotypes, Fairy Tales

King and King (2003) Linda De Haan & Stern Nijland
Theme(s): LGBTQ Family Members/Characters, Fairy Tales

Lucy’s Family Tree (2006) Karen Halvorsen Schreck
Theme(s): Adoption, Family Diversity (two-mom family, step-parents)

Theme(s): LGBTQ Characters, Tolerance, Self-Esteem

Melinda and the Class Photograph (1992) Deborah Van Der Beek
Theme(s): Gender Identity, Stereotypes

Molly’s Family (2004) Nancy Garden
Theme(s): Family Diversity (two-mom family), LGBTQ Family Members/Characters
Mom and Mum are getting Married (2004)  
Ken Setterington  
Theme(s): Family Diversity (two-mom family), LGBTQ Family Members/Characters  

Mommy, Mama and Me (2009)  
Lesléa Newman  
Theme(s): LGBTQ Family Members/Characters, Family Diversity (two-mom family)  

Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress (2014)  
Christine Baldacchino  
Theme(s): Gender Stereotypes, Self-Esteem  

Muskrat Will Be Swimming (2006)  
Cheryl Savageau  
Theme(s): Bullying, Self-Esteem, First Nations  

My Princess Boy (2010)  
Cheryl Kilodavis  
Theme(s): Gender Identity, Stereotyping, Tolerance  

Oliver Button is a Sissy (2001)  
Tomie Depaola  
Theme(s): Gender Identity, Stereotypes  

One (2008)  
Kathryn Otoshi  
Theme(s): Allies, Bullying, Numbers, Colours  

One Family (2015)  
George Shannon  
Theme(s): Family Diversity, Numbers, Concept of “One”  

The Paperbag Princess (1992)  
Robert Munsch  
Theme(s): Gender Stereotypes, Fairy Tales  

Pinky and Rex and the Bully (1996)  
James Howe  
Theme(s): Gender Stereotypes, Bullying, Self Esteem  

The Popularity Papers: Book One (2010)  
Amy Ignitor  
First Book of Series  
Theme(s): Family Diversity (two-dad family), LGBTQ Family Members/Characters
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
<th>Theme(s)</th>
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**When Kathy is Keith** (2011)  
Wallace Wong  
Theme(s): Transgender Character, Male-affirmed, Gender Identity

**Who's in a Family?** (1997)  
Robert Skutch  
Theme(s): Family Diversity (traditional, only-child, single-parent, same-gender, extended, childless, step-parent, and inter-racial)

**William’s Doll** (1985)  
Charlotte Zolotow  
Theme(s): Gender Identity, Stereotypes, Self-Esteem

**When Kayla was Kyle** (2013)  
Amy Fabrikant  
Theme(s): Transgender Character, Female-affirmed, Gender Identity, Tolerance

**Worm Loves Worm** (2016)  
J.J. Austrian  
Theme(s): Stereotypes, LGBTQ Characters