Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning and our school partners throughout Manitoba have worked diligently to make all our schools safer and more inclusive for all students. This new publication, Safe and Caring Schools: A Resource for Equity and Inclusion in Manitoba Schools, will serve to enhance the work of our school leaders, administrators, teachers, students, and parents in making our schools safe, respectful, and equitable for all.

We believe that Manitobans want our communities and schools to be welcoming of diversity and places where we can all feel safe, regardless of our origins or who we are. Bullying and other forms of harassment and social exclusion have no place in our communities or schools.

Schools should be places where all our children feel welcomed and safe. Unfortunately, for some students this is often not the reality. No student deserves to be excluded, bullied or harassed because of their gender identity, sexual orientation or any other aspect of who they are. Through social media, school bullying has the potential to extend beyond the school day and site into our homes and our communities. For some children, bullying and social exclusion is experienced 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In 2004, Manitoba took significant steps towards ensuring that all our schools are safer and caring places to learn with the passage of the Safe Schools Charter. The Charter requires all schools to have appropriate and current safety policies that include a code of conduct and an emergency response plan.
However, we recognize that school safety and inclusion requires constant attention and we need to respond to new understandings and forms of bullying. Recent amendments to *The Public Schools Act* build on our past efforts to improve our schools by making them safer and more accepting places for our children. The amendments were designed to address bullying, especially cyber-bullying, promote respect for human diversity, and accommodate the creation of Gay-Straight Alliances in schools.

While this resource provides valuable information and strategies that will help schools become safer and more inclusive from the perspective of diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity, it is ultimately a resource that will help all students feel safer and included.

The information included in this resource builds and extends on the work that Egale Canada Human Rights Trust has undertaken in recent years throughout Canada. We are pleased to have had the opportunity to partner with Egale, Safe Schools Manitoba, and other partners in developing and offering this resource to schools in Manitoba.

We trust that school leaders, administrators, educators, students, and parents will use the information provided in this resource to guide their work and inspire action. Together, we know we can make all of our schools even better places to learn and more caring environments that will allow all children to flourish and grow.
MESSAGE FROM EGALE

THANKS FOR READING THIS SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS - A RESOURCE FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN MANITOBA SCHOOLS

Throughout this document, the acronym LGBTQ references all people with diverse sexual orientations and/or gender identities, including those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two spirit, queer or questioning. In addition, the acronym LGBTQ will commonly be used except when an alternative acronym appears in a direct quote or an excerpt from another resource.

Through our Safe Schools Campaign, Egale is committed to supporting LGBTQ youth, youth perceived as LGBTQ, youth with LGBTQ parents, other family members, and friends as well as educators, librarians, guidance counsellors, education support workers, parents, and administrators and to helping make Canadian schools safer and more inclusive, respectful, and welcoming learning and working environments for all members of school communities.

The Safe Schools Campaign features resources for facilitating change in Canadian learning environments. In addition to this Equity and Inclusive Education Resource Kit, we have also launched the national LGBTQ safer schools and inclusive education website, MyGSA.ca. Additionally, Egale has an anti-heterosexism, anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, anti-transphobia, and intersectionality workshop series. If you have questions about any of these initiatives, or if you would like to get involved or to book a workshop for your school or school board, please contact us at mygsa@egale.ca or 1.888.204.7777 (toll-free).

In addition to the brief overview of significant terms and concepts you’ll find in this introduction, there is a much lengthier section devoted to definitions further on as well as a section on role models and symbols. All of this information should be helpful when planning events, assemblies, and projects in conjunction with the significant dates on the Queer Calendar. The Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Guide provides strategies for starting and maintaining student groups interested in addressing LGBTQ matters.

Egale Canada Human Rights Trust is Canada’s only national charity promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBTQ) human rights through education, research and community engagement.
Welcome to the Manitoba GSA Kit. In 2013, Amendments to The Public Schools Act concerning Safe and Inclusive Schools included the requirement that schools develop a respect for human diversity policy that must (among other things) “accommodate pupils who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that promote (a-iv) the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and (b) use the name Gay-Straight Alliance or any name consistent with the promotion of a positive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all students.”

See [http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250e.php](http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250e.php)

This kit, created in collaboration with Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning is a resource to help you – students, staff and parents – understand more about, be able to talk about, and be able to create GSAs in your schools.

It is filled with lots of useful information that will help you:

- Understand more about why a GSA is helpful to raise awareness and increase safety for all students, not just LGBTQ students;
- Understand the acronym LGBTQ and what all the letters mean;
- Understand what a GSA is and what types of things you may want to do as a club;
- Get some answers to questions that may come up, all with Manitoba legislation in mind;
- Learn terms and concepts;
- Discover LGBTQ role models; and
- Access resources

There is also a section each specifically for teachers, guidance counsellors, administrators, and parents to assist you in understanding your role, and the importance of GSAs in helping to create a positive school climate.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:
SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS – A RESOURCE FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN MANITOBA SCHOOLS

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Out of respect for people’s privacy, not everyone who has contributed to this project is mentioned here—our heartfelt gratitude to all of you!
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- Q1. Everyone at my school says “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay” when they mean they don’t like something. When I asked my teacher why he never intervenes, he said it wasn’t hurting anybody and that I should lighten up. What can I do?

- Q2. I’m trans and I get called names like “he-she” and “tranny.” Students in my class even have a song going. I asked my teacher to intervene, but she said they’re not saying anything offensive unless they use racist or homophobic terms like “paki” or “faggot.” Is this right?

- Q3. My dad gave birth to me before he transitioned from female-to-male (FTM). My teacher insists on calling him my mother, and talks about me as having lesbian parents, which I don’t—I have a mom and a dad. What can I do?
Q4. There is graffiti all over the boys’ washrooms. Most of it is stuff like “Akim f**ks arse” and “John is a faggot.” Shouldn’t the school be removing all of this?

Q5. I come from a First Nation community that is not accepting of diversity of sexuality, which made it very hard to come out as a gay person at school. If First Nations and Inuit people were so inclusive of LGBTQ people before Europeans arrived on Turtle Island, why are some Aboriginal communities today so homophobic and intolerant of diversity?

Q6. I have two moms. My non-biological mom has adopted me. My teacher knows they are both legally responsible for me, but he still keeps asking me which one is my “real” mom. Is this appropriate?

Q7. When somebody in my class asked about my sexual orientation, I referred to myself as “queer” and I got punished by my teacher. Surely that’s wrong?

Q8. When I was walking by the principal’s office the other day, I heard a parent of one of the other students saying something about not finding it appropriate to have a “dating club” at our school and that certain movies should not be shown in classrooms. I didn’t hear the principal’s response. What should she have said?

Role Models & Symbols

Advocacy
Arthur Blankstein, Karen Busby, El-Farouk Khaki, Richard North, Jared Kevin Star, Chris Vogel

Arts & Entertainment
Trey Anthony, Billy Merasty, Rick Mercer, Tegan and Sara Quin, Lucas Silveira, Michel Tremblay, Dany Turcotte

Business
Barbara Bruce, Jan Lederman, Dr. James Makokis

Education
Kristine Barr, Manny Calisto, Albert McLeod, Paul Sherwood, Catherine Taylor,
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\(^1\) The GLBTTQ acronym is used here as it appears in Around the Rainbow’s Toolkit for Educators and Service Providers which has been reproduced with permission from Family Services à la Famille Ottawa.
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