



TAKING A STAND WITH SCHOOL BOARDS

Defending 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion in Schools

Why Do 2SLGBTQ+ and Equity Issues Matter?

Recent events across the province and country have re-emphasized the urgent need for ETFO to advocate for the 2SLGBTQ+ community and step up to build a more socially just world.

Many students, educators, and school communities are experiencing hate, from protests at board meetings, to drag story times as well as increased bullying. This has also led to Pride events being disrupted by transphobic and homophobic groups.

Societal discrimination and hate are not only more prevalent, but they are also becoming normalized. Far-right conservative groups and individuals have been attacking the rights of the rainbow community. This has included trustees voicing discriminatory opinions, as well as attempts to prevent the teaching of queer and transgender inclusion, same-sex families and relationships, and gender diversity.

**We must not accept any form of hate
– now is the time to speak up.**

Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, plus (2SLGBTQ+) workers and youth are especially vulnerable to such challenges:

- ▼ 73% of gender-diverse respondents reported experiencing multiple forms of harassment and violence at work, a disproportionately high number compared to their cisgender colleagues
- ▼ Nationally, police-reported hate crimes based on sexual orientation increased drastically – by almost 65% – between 2020 and 2021

Possibly most concerning, according to ACLED, a non-partisan organization that compiles statistics on violence globally, anti-LGBTQ mobilizations in the United States more than tripled in 2022 compared to 2021. These include horrific tragedies such as the Colorado nightclub shooting, and are prompting concerns of a spillover effect in Canada.

Schools and our public education system need to create and maintain a culture of acceptance and inclusion for all. Creating safer spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ staff and students who are racialized, Indigenous, identify as a woman, or who have a disability is key to building better schools and communities that are welcoming and inclusive.

In establishing safer spaces, it is also important to recognize how the intersectionality of identities can compound the oppression of students and adults when they identify with more than one marginalized group.

This is work that involves active allyship and support, which is about listening, supporting, and taking action to create change.

Organizing small or large events around equity days can help create safe, inclusive spaces in schools. Possible activities include:

- ▼ student-led class or school-wide announcements
- ▼ bulletin boards, assemblies, and speakers themed around equity days
- ▼ raising a flag inside or outside the school

It is important to go beyond tokenism and events to address and stop homophobia and transphobia. Students need to see this content embedded throughout their learning.

This deeper work must be reflected in assessment tools and involves employing classroom resources as well as reviewing policies and practices at the school level.



What Opportunities Exist to Build Awareness and Understanding?

There are a number of school community events that can provide important touch points for students to consider important elements of anti-homophobia, anti-transphobia, 2SLGBTQ+ acceptance, and celebrating diversity, including:

Trans Day of Remembrance
November 20

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
November 25

Pink Shirt Day (against bullying)
Last Wednesday in February

International Women's Day
March 8

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
March 21

International Transgender Day of Visibility
March 31

Day of Pink (against homophobic and transphobic bullying)
Second Wednesday in April

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia
May 17

National Indigenous Day
June 21



Pride Events

Pride events continue to grow in many new and established school communities. There are an increasing number of Gay Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) in elementary schools; however, this is not the case for some communities across the province. This means many students and adults continue to feel isolated.

ETFO's Equity-Based Professional Learning Resources

As a Federation committed to equity and social justice, ETFO continues to develop leading professional learning resources on equity and 2SLGBTQ+ related issues for school board use, including:

- ▼ *Respond and Rebuild: The ETFO Guide to Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy*
- ▼ Starting in early winter, three new 2SLGBTQ+ workshops:
 - ▼ Affirming the Identities of 2SLGBTQ+ Families in Schools
 - ▼ 2SLGBTQ+ Awareness in the Primary Classroom
 - ▼ Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ Students Through an Intersectional and Anti-Oppressive Framework
- ▼ Positive Space materials
- ▼ Learning posters for anti-Black racism; Black History, Women's History, and Asian Heritage months; and more
- ▼ Workshops on anti-Black racism, race and education, culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, Islamophobia, Indigenous Peoples, and ability



We're Ready to Work With You.

See ETFO's Building Better Schools Education Agenda at

BuildingBetterSchools.ca

