

Q Can I be fired because of my sexual orientation?

A No, you cannot be fired because of your sexual orientation. The Nova Scotia Human Rights Act clearly states that an individual cannot be discriminated against on account of his/her sexual orientation.

Q Do I ever have to tolerate derogatory/homophobic comments from students?

A No, you do not. All school boards have harassment policies which prohibit this type of behaviour. School codes of conduct also address this issue. Ensure that you bring such concerns to your administrator and maintain your own documentation.

Q From a human rights perspective, what can I share about myself to help students understand that sexual orientation is a normal part of a person's identity.

A You have no obligation to share any personal information about yourself. Educators, however, often comment about family matters (spouse, children, etc.) as part of their interaction with students. These comments can occur regardless of one's sexual orientation.

Q Is there NSTU support for members who belong to a sexual minority?

A Yes there is. Firstly, the NSTU has an Anti-homophobia, Anti-heterosexism policy. Secondly, professional development sessions are available to members and their staffs. Thirdly, members can access Member Services Staff and/or Counselling Services if required.

Q What is a GSA and how can one be set up in my school?

A GSA is an acronym for Gay-Straight Alliance. These clubs are predominantly set up in high schools. Canadian Teachers' Federation has a wonderful resource entitled "Gay-Straight Student Alliance Handbook" which can be ordered online from CTF at ctf-fce.ca.

Q What can we do to support parents?

A Parents, like educators, need to be educated about sexual orientation issues. Sharing the websites and resources found in this brochure would be a great place to start.

Q How do I make my classroom a safer environment?

A Making your classroom a homophobia-free zone will make it a safer place for all students. NSTU PD workshops provide ways to do this as well as a number of the resources found in this brochure.

Q Why should our school adopt the NSTU anti-homophobia poster campaign?

A The series of award-winning posters which schools can receive free of charge are visible signs to both students and staff that sexual orientation issues are found in schools and must be addressed. These posters reinforce the strong message that the NSTU supports the elimination of homophobia.

Q What do you do if a student comes out to you?

A The first thing to do is to thank the student for telling you and then ask him/her what he/she would like you to do. Often students are looking for help/information. If you feel you can't help them, refer them to someone who can.

Q What is acceptable language to use when speaking to students?

A Educators should always use non-discriminatory language when speaking with students. Students, starting in elementary school, must become familiar with commonly used terms (e.g. same-sex couple, gay, sexual orientation). Many students live in the realities described by these terms.

Q What is the Department of Education doing to support teachers and students on these issues?

A The Department of Education, English Program Services, has identified sexual health as a priority within its business plan. As such, the Department will work with school boards and schools to strengthen the delivery of sexual health components of the curriculum, through provision of learning and teaching resources, and through supporting school boards with the provision of professional development. A new learning outcomes framework for health education grades primary to 9 has identified sexual health as one of six priority health areas addressed at each grade level. Sexual minority issues are addressed in developmentally appropriate ways beginning in grade primary and throughout the grade levels, and include gender identity, sexual orientation, and diverse family structures.

Q Is there a list of approved materials we can use? Where can I find books to enhance my curriculum?

A The Department of Education has approved and listed a range of both teacher and student resources that address the topic of healthy sexuality from grades primary to 12, including sexual minority issues. Annotations are provided for each title listed in the Nova Scotia Book Bureau's Authorized Learning Resources. The catalogue of titles can be found at <https://w3apps.ednet.ns.ca/nssbb/> and teachers may wish to search the health education catalogue to find such titles. Teachers are encouraged to use books listed in Authorized Learning Resources, although new titles continue to be published that highlight sexual minority issues. Teachers are encouraged to share such titles with English Program Services so that they can be evaluated for possible addition to the catalogue. Beyond the Basics: A Sourcebook on Sexual and Reproductive Health Education was provided to teachers of grade 5 and 6, and teachers of Healthy Living 7, 8, and 9 as a teaching and professional resource. This resource includes sexual minority issues, comprehensively addressing healthy sexuality.

Important Resources & Documents

<https://w3apps.ednet.ns.ca/nssbb/>
www.gov.ns.ca/humanrights
www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/resources/sexual-health.asp
www.ctf-fce.ca
www.egale.ca
www.pflagcanada.ca
www.glsen.org
www.youthproject.ns.ca
www.nsrp.ca
www.galebc.org

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Nova Scotia Human Rights Act

Canadian Teachers' Federation Anti-Homophobia Anti-Heterosexism Policy

Nova Scotia Teachers Union Anti-Homophobia Anti-Heterosexism Policy

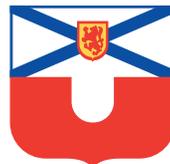
Challenging Silence Challenging Censorship

Gay-Straight Student Alliance Handbook



Education

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Nova Scotia
Teachers Union

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Helping NSTU
members deal
with sexual
orientation issues