

Supporting Every Student Learning Series

CONVERSATION GUIDE

Supporting LGBTQ Students, Families and Staff

Part 3: Creating safe and caring spaces for LGBTQ students

(with Michael Hauptman, Superintendent of Schools, Elk Island Catholic Schools)

Elk Island Catholic School Division shares lessons learned in their four-year journey to develop a new policy for safe and caring schools that considered what it means for LGBTQ students to truly be included.

Key understandings:

- The understanding of inclusion is changing; schools are looking at inclusion from the perspective of what it means for some of the more vulnerable students who may have not been considered in the past, including LGBTQ students.
- Developing new policy for supporting LGBTQ students is a process of learning, growth and understanding.
- An important part of developing new policy is working closely with community groups.
- Reviewing the Alberta Education's [Guidelines for Best Practices: Creating Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions](#) can help a school authority ensure they are using evidence-informed practices.
- An effective starting point for dialogue with students is to ask them open-ended questions such as: what's working now and what can be done better?
- These conversations are an opportunity to learn and grow; it's important to not be afraid of what we don't know.
- Developing policies and procedures that create safe and caring learning environments to support LGBTQ students will ultimately benefit all students.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- Where is your school or school district on the journey to better understanding issues of sexual orientation and gender identity? What can be done to enhance this understanding?
- What can your school or district learn from this school authority's journey to broaden their understanding of inclusion and consider what it means for LGBTQ students to be included?

For more information:

- Alberta Human Services' information on [LGBTQ supports](#).