

Alberta's *Education Amendment Act, 2024*: What Stays the Same

SOGI 123

Green Flags

We understand that the language around Alberta's *Education Amendment Act, 2024* (formerly Bill 27) has been confusing. We want to highlight some of the amazing things Alberta educators **can continue** doing to make their classrooms, schools, and communities more SOGI-inclusive! Here is a resource that speaks to what has **not** changed since the passing of the *Education Amendment Act, 2024*.

GSAs

[GSAs](#) are more important now than ever, and their inclusion has not changed. [GSAs are still protected](#) under the *Education Act* (Section 35.1). There is **no need** to gain parental consent for students requesting the start of a new GSA or participating in an active GSA. Like other student led clubs and/or groups, there is **no requirement** to track attendance, or to inform parents of a student's participation.

Affirming Language

While a change in name and/or pronoun use for gender identity related reasons requires parental notification for students 17 and under, and consent for those under 16, affirming language is a large umbrella. Use gender-neutral language as the default to promote inclusion and avoid using unnecessarily gendered language like "boys and girls". Get creative! Try terms like scholars, adventurers, learners, curious minds, etc.

Affirming language doesn't mean avoiding gendered language altogether – it's more about not making assumptions. You can affirm students' gender identities by mirroring their preferred language whenever possible. Lumping trans kids in with cis kids and using gendered language, ie. "Boys, it's time for class" can communicate that a trans student is seen and accepted. Nicknames and last names can also be really affirming ways to interact with students.

Visible Support

While there will be a need for opt-in forms for lessons and the use of SOGI-dominant educational resources, visual supports are still allowed. This can look like: hanging an

inclusive Pride flag in your classroom or hallway, wearing a pronoun pin or including your pronouns in your email signature, or wearing clothing that demonstrates SOGI support and inclusion. These visible acts of solidarity go a long way.

Note: While visible support is not restricted under the *Education Amendment Act, 2024*, educators may wish to consult with school leadership to ensure alignment with local policies and safety considerations.

Incidental and Indirect References to SOGI

Lessons and conversations do not always stick exactly to the plan, and that is where some of the most important learning can happen – because it is student led and directed. These conversations and references in no way need to be stifled, and in fact, can be fostered. This might look like: reading a book that has 2SLGBTQIA+ characters, answering a relevant question during a current events discussion around human rights, or engaging in a conversation around what families can look like. Teachers and other school staff are also free to share their own pronouns with students without needing an opt-in form signed.

Disclosure

Teachers and school staff often make up the non-family safe adults in a student's life. It isn't uncommon for 2SLGBTQIA+ students to come out to these adults, and the *Education Amendment Act, 2024*, **does not** change this access. Disclosure of a Two-spirit, transgender, non-binary or any other gender identity, or sexual orientation, is **not grounds** for parental notification. For resources on how to support a student who comes out, please see our ["When a Student Comes Out to You"](#) resource guide.

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Nongendered Bathrooms

Gender inclusive bathrooms are another form of infrastructure that can help gender diverse students feel safer and included. Most schools have a single nongendered bathroom, but it is not always in a central location. If this is true for your school, try to be understanding and flexible around bathroom usage times. It is helpful to have consistent messaging among staff to avoid student confusion, and to note this in your sub plans. These bathrooms should be openly accessible to all students, not unlocked upon request.

Student Created Resources

Any and all student created resources are exempt from the otherwise required Ministerial approval process. Students could create these resources during class time as part of their own learning, e.g. posters, presentations, shareable lessons, etc.

Student choice is still highly encouraged! This might look like a student reading books brought from home, or from the school or public library. This can also look like project-based learning. If a student were to choose a 2SLGBTQIA+ figure to do a human rights report on in Social Studies, that is allowed. Modeling curiosity, excitement, and respectful listening as the teacher can be a proactive way to prevent disruptions.

Note: While student created resources are not restricted under the *Education Amendment Act, 2024*, educators may wish to consult with school leadership to ensure alignment with local policies and safety considerations.

Peer Interactions

Students are **not required** to gain parental consent for **other students** to use a chosen name and/or pronouns for them. This is a great way for gender diverse students to feel safe and affirmed at school!

Even if a student has not received parental consent/ their parents haven't been notified, staff still need to address any bullying and harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity that a student is experiencing. Use of unwanted names or pronouns should be directly addressed by staff in accordance with school board policy. Refer to your Board's bullying, harassment, discrimination policies.

Self-expression

Choices such as hair styles, clothing and accessories have long been a way for people to express their gender, culture, and personality. Gender affirming clothing and styles might not align with binary gender norms. These forms of self-expression are beautiful insights into how a student sees themselves and should not be stifled. Gender does not need to be a factor when talking about school-appropriate clothing. All students should be wearing clothing that covers under garments and is free from cultural appropriation, hate symbols, and graphic depictions. Remember that cultural and traditional clothing such as ribbon shirts and skirts, religious head coverings and protective hair styles might not conform to colonial expectations of gender roles and norms. Educators are encouraged to uplift these identities in respectful and culturally grounded ways.

Closing Note

Students and families are an integral part of school communities and are large contributors to school culture. It is important to remember that comfort and safety are two different things, as are rights and responsibilities. All students, staff and families are responsible for contributing to safe and welcoming school environments. These rights and responsibilities are laid out in both the [Education Act](#) and the [Alberta Human Rights Act](#).