

Ministry of Education

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April 17, 2008

Thank you for your email about the teaching of sexual diversity in schools.

Under the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods, and facilities, and without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or handicap. Our government is strongly committed to upholding this code, and has ensured these principles are affirmed in curriculum programs and policies for schools.

Publicly funded education strives to teach students to appreciate diversity and respect differences. Our civil values include respect for sexual orientation. The curriculum is designed to reflect the diversity of Canada, and teachers are expected to implement the curriculum in such a way that students can see the variety of their own backgrounds, interests, and experiences reflected in it.

A curriculum review process initiated in February 2003 has been designed to build on the strengths of the current curriculum and identify areas for improvement. This continuous cycle of review is not a development of a completely new curriculum, but is intended to ensure it remains current, relevant, and age-appropriate from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

The revised documents released as part of the curriculum review process now contain a section on antidiscrimination education that stresses the need for students to respect the diversity of students' various backgrounds, interests, and experiences. A number of courses in our curriculum policy documents contain references to sexual orientation, homophobia, and gay rights. The review of the Social Sciences and Humanities, and the Health and Physical Education curriculum policy documents is now underway. There is an opportunity as part of these reviews to ensure that the documents are more inclusive in nature and reflect the diversity of Ontario society.

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Providing all students with an opportunity to learn and develop in a safe and respectful environment is a responsibility in which school boards and schools play an important role. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. Should a component of any course conflict with a religious belief held by a parent or a student aged eighteen or older, the right to withdraw from that component of the course shall be granted on the written request of the parent or student.

The Provincial Code of Conduct states that all members of the school community must respect and treat others fairly, regardless of factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability. Further, the revised Code also states that members of the school community must not engage in hate propaganda and other forms of behaviour motivated by hate or bias.

In conclusion, as a government we are committed to helping every student reach his or her full potential in schools that are safe, caring, and inclusive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Wynne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Education