

# Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse Students in Ontario Schools

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Educators' Responses

Wayne Martino, Jenny Kassen,  
Kenan Omercajic, and Lynn Dare

**The University of Western Ontario, Canada**

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We have written and composed this report on the traditional lands of the Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as scholars conducting research at a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching, research and community service.

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We would like to acknowledge SSHRC and Western University for their support without which this research report would not have been possible. SSHRC Grant entitled: *Supporting transgender and gender minority youth in schools: Investigating Policy and practice* [435-2015-0077] (Principal Investigator: Wayne Martino).

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We would like to thank all the educators who took time to complete the survey. We would especially like to acknowledge the advisory committee members for the SSHRC research study who were only too willing to meet and to provide invaluable feedback on initial drafts of the survey instrument:

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**Ronnie Ali** (Psychotherapist and Consultant and formally Mental Health Counsellor in the 2SLGBTQ Programs and Services at Sherbourne Health Toronto and before that Counsellor for Egale YouthOutreach)

**Barry Bedford** (Principal at Sir William Stephenson PS Whitby, ON and formerly Equity Officer at the Durham District School Board)

**Benjamin lee hicks** (A visual artist, elementary school teacher, and PhD candidate in Curriculum and Pedagogy at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto.)

**Ken Jeffers** (Formerly Manager of The Gender Violence Prevention Office and Senior Manager, Equitable & Inclusive System Culture at the Toronto District School Board)

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## **ETHICS APPROVAL**

This research was approved by Western University's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board, project number 107140. Upon clicking the survey link, participants were directed to a landing page housing the Letter of Information containing details about the study, participant confidentiality, risks and benefits, voluntary participation, and the Principal Investigator's contact information should they have any questions. After indicating that they had read the Letter of Information, participants were redirected to the Consent Form where they indicated their consent to participate in the study.





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# Dear Reader,

## **Welcome, and thank you for picking up this report.**

Your commitment to learning more about supporting transgender and gender diverse students is extremely important. Despite much work in the Ontario education system over the last decade, schools remain unsafe for students and staff who are transgender and gender diverse. By learning from the perspectives presented in this report, you are contributing to creating safer and more affirming learning and working environments. This report is one part of a larger study seeking to better understand the role of policy and practice in creating safer school environments for trans and gender diverse students. The educator voice in this report includes the perspectives of educational staff in all different roles that contribute to the education of children and youth in Ontario schools. This voice is vital in understanding the successes and challenges of doing this work and plotting a path forward that supports further affirmation of trans and gender diverse students.

**A note about transphobic content.** Educators who participated in this survey varied greatly in their understandings of trans-affirmative policy and practice. Some responses included perspectives that denied the existence of trans and gender diverse people and were disparaging of trans inclusion in schools. We have included selected responses that contain explicitly transphobic language, not for shock value, but because they reflect a very real and ingrained transphobic belief system that exists in Ontario schools. We did not make this decision lightly. We included these comments because they highlight certain attitudes and beliefs that are not just a reflection of individuals but of a broader system of cisgenderism and trans marginalization which must be addressed. With full recognition of the power and harm that these words represent, we have contained them to the following pages: 44, 58. These pages are also marked by the following symbols   so that you can choose to skip over them.

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**Our Commitment.** Working towards more equitable learning environments for trans and gender diverse students is an unending task. We are committed to supporting this work in Ontario schools. We have created a resource entitled Supporting Trans-Affirming Education in Schools: An Educator Toolkit which responds to issues identified by the educators who contributed to this survey; you can access this toolkit via our website <https://trans-affirm.edu.uwo.ca/>.

Thank you for your interest in this work and for the work that you do to support trans and gender diverse students every day.

Please reach out to us if you have questions about this report, about enacting the recommendations at your school, or if you are looking for support in any other area. We'd love to hear from you!

Warmly,

**The Research Team.**

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# Terms we use in this report

In writing this report, we must choose from a range of nuanced terms that reflect complex experiences. In doing so, we acknowledge that language changes and evolves over time where preferential terms naturally change and shift as the field grows and develops. We ask the reader to understand the limitations of the terms we use in this report – we respect that different people may use different terms or use these terms in different ways. Nevertheless, we underscore the imperative that we expand our understanding of terms and definitions to encapsulate all people’s lived individual experiences and self-identification processes. To clarify how we are using these terms, we provide the following glossary of definitions and a brief introduction to some key terms below.

**Anti-Imperialist** – refers to a position categorized by opposition to colonialism/ colonial empire, and those who resist formal and informal means of control by stronger nations over weaker ones, and which are designed to subjugate people’s different cultures. It entails “political opposition to territorial expansion of a country beyond its established borders” (Educalingo, n.d.).

**Cisgender** – refers to individuals whose gender identity aligns with their legal designation at birth (The 519).

**Cisgenderism** – We employ this term as “the cultural and systemic ideology that denies, denigrates or pathologizes self-identified gender identities that do not align with assigned gender at birth, as well as resulting behavior, expression and community” (Lennon & Mistler, 2014, p. 63).

**Cisnormativity** – The assumption that gender is strictly a binary category and concept that is naturally emergent from one’s sex assigned at birth (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016; The 519).

**Cissexism** – is a form of sexism that is based on the assumption or belief that cisgender people’s gender identities are more natural and legitimate than trans people (Serano, 2014).

**Decolonial** – refers to ongoing resistance against colonialism that includes struggles for land redress, self-determination, healing historical trauma, cultural continuance, and reconciliation for Indigenous people. (Driskill, 2010, p. 69). It is a work and critical project that “belongs to all of us, everywhere [which] asks us to think about our relationship with Indigenous lands that colonizers have unjustly claimed, re-defined and repurposed over the world ... [and] to embrace responsibility as opposed to accepting fault” (Belfi & Sandiford, 2021)

**Gender Democratization** – refers to the commitment of confronting gender hierarchies and moving beyond a discourse of trans inclusivity that relies solely on a fundamental logics of accommodation and liberal notions of human rights. Such a commitment seeks to “equalize gender orders, rather than shrink them to nothing” to establish “a more just society” (Connell, 2009, p. 146).



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**Gender Diverse** – an umbrella term which refers to broad range of gender identities that reflect a diversity of expression beyond the gender binary (A Gender Agenda, 2021). It is considered a less stigmatizing term than gender-non-conformity (American Psychological Association, 2015).

**Gender Expansive** – conveys a “wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the gender binary system” (Human Rights Campaign & Gender Spectrum, 2014). As a concept gender expansiveness “push[es] the boundaries of what we think we know about gender through creativity and imagination ... [it] gives rise to an ever-growing number of possible combinations of identities, expressions and bodies” (Pastel et al, 2019, p. 45). It includes both trans individuals and those who identify “as cisgender people but whose gender expression is not confined to binary expressions of their gender” (ibid, p. 45).

**Gender Expansive Education** – refers to both addressing gender diversity in the curriculum and pedagogically with respect to explicitly and concretely educating about cisgenderism, transphobia and gender justice in the classroom.

**Gender Justice** – refers to addressing the institutionalization of cisnormativity and cissexism through purposeful interrogation of gender hierarchies by creating spaces that allow for more nuanced understandings beyond the gender binary system (Connell, 2009; Twist et al., 2020).

**Gender Non-conforming** – An umbrella term for those who do not follow gender stereotypes and identify with a non-binary gender (PFLAG, 2021).

**Non-Binary** – The view that only two genders exist is referred to as a “**gender binary**”. Therefore, non-binary identities are broadly defined as those which defy the social pressure and expectation to choose one gender category – male or female (Pastel et al., 2019). “For example, some people have a gender that blends elements of being a man or a woman, or a gender that is different than either male or female. Some people don’t identify with any gender. Some people’s gender changes over time” (National Centre for Transgender Equality, 2018).

**Trans** – We use **trans** and **transgender** interchangeably throughout the report (while acknowledging that not everyone in the community does so) and employ them largely as **umbrella terms** that encompass many gender identities of those who do not identify with their gender assigned at birth (Trans Student Educational Resources, 2020).

**Transphobia** – A pervasive cultural system of prejudice, intolerance, and discrimination directed toward the transgender community. These feelings largely emerge based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment, and violence toward trans people, or those perceived to be transgender (Bettcher, 2014).

# Contents

- Terms we use in this report ..... **8**
- Executive Summary ..... **12**
- 01 Introduction ..... **24**
  - Purpose ..... **24**
  - Importance ..... **24**
  - Survey design ..... **25**
  - Data collection ..... **25**
  - Data analysis and reporting ..... **26**
- 02 Respondent Demographics ..... **27**
- 03 Findings..... **31**
  - Trans Inclusive Policies in Schools ..... **32**
  - General Approaches to Equity and Prioritizing Race..... **45**
  - Knowledge and Understanding of Trans-Inclusion and Gender Diversity Issues..... **47**
  - Understanding and Comfort Using Terms..... **51**
  - Training in Trans Inclusion and Gender Diversity ..... **62**
  - Resources for Addressing Gender Diversity in Classrooms and Schools ..... **67**
  - Comments about resources ..... **69**
  - Barriers to Using Resources..... **74**
  - Additional Supports that Educators Need..... **82**
  - Barriers to Addressing Trans-Inclusivity and Gender Diversity in Schools..... **86**
  - Advice on Improving Education about Trans-Inclusivity and Gender Diversity ..... **92**
  - Highlighting Trans Educators’ Voices ..... **102**
- 04 Conclusions and Implications ..... **112**
- 05 Recommendations..... **115**
  - 1 Develop Trans-Affirmative Policies ..... **115**
  - 2 Provide Professional Learning and Curriculum Resources ..... **117**
  - 3 Ensure Accountability ..... **118**
- 06 Final Note ..... **119**

<b>Appendix A:</b> Glossary of terms .....	<b>120</b>
<b>Appendix B:</b> Survey Sharing Partners .....	<b>123</b>
References .....	<b>125</b>

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1:</b> Educators’ awareness of school/schoolboard policy on supporting transgender and gender diverse students .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Figure 2:</b> Perceived relevance of school/schoolboard policy on supporting transgender and gender diverse students. ....	<b>17</b>
<b>Figure 3:</b> How likely educators are to follow policy in practice .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Figure 4:</b> Administrative support for policy .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Figure 5:</b> Educators’ knowledge and understanding of trans-inclusion and gender diversity issues .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Figure 6:</b> Level of training, specific education, or professional development received on issues facing transgender and gender diverse people .....	<b>36</b>
<b>Figure 7:</b> Where educators received training, education, or professional development on issues facing transgender and gender diverse people .....	<b>37</b>

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1:</b> Comments on trans-inclusive policies in schools .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Table 2:</b> Comments on self-rated knowledge and understanding .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Table 3:</b> Self-rated understanding and comfort with terms related to gender diversity and transgender issues .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Table 4:</b> Comfort using terminology in the classroom / professional context .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Table 5:</b> Educators’ training in trans inclusion and gender diversity issues .....	<b>38</b>
<b>Table 6:</b> Type and frequency of resources used for addressing gender diversity in classrooms and schools .....	<b>41</b>
<b>Table 7:</b> Reasons for not accessing resources .....	<b>45</b>
<b>Table 8:</b> Additional supports that educators need .....	<b>51</b>
<b>Table 9:</b> Barriers to addressing trans-inclusivity and gender diversity in schools .....	<b>54</b>
<b>Table 10:</b> Educators’ recommendations .....	<b>57</b>



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## **Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse Students in Schools: Educators' Responses**

reports the findings of an Ontario-wide survey of educators. The report is part of a larger study, *Supporting Transgender and Gender Minority Youth in the School System: Investigating Policy and Practice*, funded by the Social Sciences Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)<sup>1</sup>.

**About the survey:** The survey was developed in consultation with trans educators, school board officials and community members and included a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions. It was shared through several social media platforms including Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF), and various Facebook groups for Ontario educators.

**About the respondents:** **1194 educators** across Ontario responded to the survey. They include a wide range of educational roles, racial/ethnic backgrounds, gender identities, and sexualities.

## Findings

**Recognizing volunteer bias.** Participation in this study was voluntary and respondents may have had a special interest in the topic. Indeed, compared to statistics reported by Ontario College of Teachers, a higher proportion of respondents identified as a gender minority.

**Awareness, knowledge, and understanding may be lower among those who are perhaps less interested or willing to learn and teach about trans inclusion and gender diversity issues as well as among those who are resistant and transphobic.**

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<sup>1</sup> SSHRC Grant entitled: *Supporting transgender and gender minority youth in schools: Policy and practice [435-2015-0077]* Principal Investigator: Wayne Martino.



# POLICIES SUPPORTING TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE STUDENTS

**Policy awareness varies greatly.** More than one quarter (28%) of educators who participated in the study indicated **little or no awareness** of transgender and gender diverse inclusive policies in schools.

**Policies are implemented inconsistently.** Among those who were aware of local policies (73%), most (93%) rated the policy as somewhat or very relevant and almost all (96%) indicated they were somewhat or very likely to follow policy recommendations. However, educators painted a different picture in their comments. For example, many comments reflected an understanding of the policy as a **reactive or individualized response** to the visible presence of a trans student. Others conceived of policy as accommodating individual trans students regarding provision of washroom access and pronoun use.

**Support for policies varies.** Although most educators (94%) rated their school

administration as very or somewhat supportive of trans-inclusion and gender diverse policies, levels of support varied, and many educators noted **a lack of support** from administrators.

**General Approaches to Equity and Prioritizing Race.** Some educators shared that while there was no specific policy devoted to addressing trans inclusion and gender diversity, there was a general “equity policy for all”. Others also highlighted a prioritized focus on FMNI and newcomer immigrant students in their school communities which resulted in trans inclusion and gender diversity not being addressed. These responses highlight the importance and value of both a prioritized focus on anti-racism education in schools and an intersectional approach that is aligned with a critical trans politics.



# UNDERSTANDING TRANS INCLUSION AND GENDER DIVERSITY

**Understanding comes from personal experience.** 72% of survey respondents rated their knowledge and understanding of trans-inclusion and gender diversity as good or very good. Among 220 comments on this topic, more than half (58%) mentioned a **personal interest** and/or knowing a trans person. While professional development (PD) was a source of knowledge for some (15%), many mentioned that their learning was self-directed and motivated by knowing a trans person either as a student in their class(es) or a family member.

**Many educators are uncomfortable using key terms around gender diversity.** Educators rated their understanding of and comfort using 24 terms related to gender diversity. Knowledge and comfort were highly positively correlated [ $r(827) = .75, p < .001$ ], suggesting that better understanding of terms is associated with greater comfort discussing these issues with students. Comments reinforced this finding, with more than one third (37%) noting their lack of comfort with

such terms was because they did not fully understand them.

**Some educators question using gender expansive language in early years.** Almost one in five (17%) comments suggested gender expansive language was inappropriate in primary classes, raising questions about how gender diversity is understood and communicated in early years.

**Resistance to trans inclusion and gender diversity remains.** Of concern, some comments (9%) expressed resistance or outright refusal to embrace learning and knowledge about trans inclusion and gender diversity. Some responses expressed overt transphobia and cissexism.

**Lack of support from administration.** Some educators pointed to a lack of “back up” from administrators, which lowered their confidence in whether trans inclusion would be supported in their classrooms.



# TRAINING IN TRANS INCLUSION AND GENDER DIVERSITY

**Most educators have little or no training in trans and gender diversity issues.** 75% of respondents had received little or no explicit training, education, or professional development about transgender and gender diverse people.

**Most educators are self-taught in trans and gender diversity issues.** Most respondents (79%) indicated that self-education was their primary source of training. Among comments, half (51%) gained some knowledge through PD offered by their school/

school board; 18% accessed training offered by their union and/ or community partners such as Egale<sup>2</sup>. Other sources of training included taking AQ<sup>3</sup> courses and graduate studies, reading board policy, accessing online research, and listening to podcasts.

**Gaps exist in local school/school board training.** Some educators mentioned that explicit training on gender diversity provided by schools/school boards was inadequate and often buried in broader discussions about equity and social justice.

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<sup>2</sup> Egale (2019) is an advocacy organization committed to advancing the human rights of 2SLGBTQI+ people through research, education, and public policy.

<sup>3</sup> Additional Qualification courses are courses accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers. They are designed to support professional learning of teachers and are a means by which to update and gain further qualifications in a particular subject area.



# RESOURCES FOR ADDRESSING GENDER DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS

## **Invited speakers and picture books were identified as the most helpful resources.**

Educators rated **school visits or workshops** delivered by trans and gender diverse individuals as by far the most useful resource, with 93% of educators who had accessed this resource rating them as very or moderately useful. However, educators commented on various barriers to securing presenters, including difficulty finding speakers, lack of compensation, and constraints particular to the Catholic school system.

Among those who used **picture story books**, many educators (90%) rated them as very or moderately useful. However, educators claimed finding appropriate materials was challenging, and some educators noted a particular lack of relevant resources for early grades. Accessing age-appropriate resources in French can also be difficult.

## **The internet is often accessed but less helpful.**

Two-thirds (67%) of educators accessed YouTube and other websites to learn about trans inclusion and gender diversity. Fewer educators rated the internet as a very useful resource (32%).

## **Existing materials need improvement.**

School board curriculum support materials and documents were the least useful resource, with over a quarter of respondents (27%) who had accessed them indicating they were not useful, and only 10% indicating they were very useful.

Notably, many respondents had **not accessed any resources**. Many identified a lack of institutional support from their school administration and school board as a barrier to access and use of resources.



# ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS THAT EDUCATORS NEED

**Educators need PD, resources, and a shift in school culture.** Respondents commented on additional supports they need to respond more effectively to transgender and gender diverse students (n= 655). Almost half (45%) **reiterated the need for additional professional development** with some suggesting that this education be mandatory. They noted that PD must include how “to use common, acceptable language and consistently create safe spaces for the learning of all communities”. A third (32%) expressed **a strong need for more resources.**

Some (8%) identified a need for support from colleagues (including administrators) to create supportive, school-wide cultures where gender diversity is embraced. Other areas of need included support for addressing parental opposition, providing trans-affirmative counselling, clarifying policy directives and facilitating student feedback to learn about students’ needs.



# BARRIERS TO ADDRESSING TRANS-INCLUSIVITY AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS

## **Lack of training, knowledge, and resources are barriers to inclusivity.**

Almost half (44%) of respondents noted lack of education negatively impacted their ability to address trans inclusivity and gender diversity. Many acknowledged their lack of understanding, specifically about gender diverse terms and correct pronoun usage, was a significant challenge. In addition, 9% identified a lack of resources as a barrier.

**Lack of support and transphobia are challenges.** Over one quarter (28%) of respondents expressed concerns over lack of support and backlash from parents and colleagues. Some respondents specifically

mentioned overt expressions of transphobia and resistance from both groups. These attitudes act as barriers to creating school-wide gender inclusivity and supporting gender expansive education.

**Religious beliefs can create barriers.** Some respondents (7%) indicated that embracing gender diversity is “more challenging in the Catholic system” and that “many educators avoid this subject for faith reasons”.



# IMPROVING EDUCATION ABOUT TRANS-INCLUSIVITY AND GENDER DIVERSITY

**Provide PD and engage the LGBT community.** 38% of respondents advocated for professional development and training (for educators and administrators) with 7% suggesting training should be mandatory. Some recommended the experiences and voice of trans folks be included in this PD and called for schools to actively collaborate with the LGBT community (5%).

**Address curriculum concerns.** 11% of respondents wanted more support to include trans and gender diversity representation in the curriculum. Some (3%) advised introducing gender diversity in the curriculum as early as possible.



# TRANS EDUCATORS' VOICES

To better understand the experiences of trans educators, we analyzed responses of educators who self-identified as trans, nonbinary, genderqueer, genderfluid, gender non-conforming and/or Two Spirit (n=38) as a subset of the overall data. These educators:

- demonstrated greater awareness of trans-inclusive policies and resources
- stressed the absence of system-level support for trans inclusion and trans-affirmative education and noted that increased training and awareness are needed for trans-inclusion to be a shared responsibility among all school staff
- advocated for professional learning offered by trans individuals
- identified transphobia and lack of knowledge as significant unaddressed challenges
- called for more trans representation and greater visibility of trans teachers and students in schools

Overall, their responses strongly support the view that inclusive education and the provision of curriculum resources must not fall solely on the shoulders of trans educators and trans students; it is a collective responsibility.



# Conclusions

This survey provided insights into educator knowledge, awareness, and understanding of trans inclusion and gender diversity in Ontario schools. While many educators indicated an awareness of trans inclusive policies, there were varying levels of understanding about what support for trans and gender diverse students really entails. Often, educators understood policies as catering to individual students and did not consider broader systemic issues that foster and nurture a gender expansive school culture. In addition, the findings highlighted gaps between policy and practice, with many educators claiming local policy was not enacted or was not supported by the school administration and/or their colleagues. Our findings highlight a need for intersectional approaches to equity policy that address the ways in which trans inclusion interfaces with a necessary and prioritized commitment to antiracist, anti-imperialist and decolonial educational reform in schools.

A key theme running throughout the data was a lack of education provided to educators. The lack of PD was one of the biggest barriers to addressing trans-inclusivity and gender

diversity in the education system, with some educators calling for mandatory PD. Overall, respondents highlighted that training was personally motivated and not systemically directed.

Another barrier was a lack of resources and support for curriculum development to teach about gender diversity in schools. In addition, educators encounter lack of support from some administrators, as well as resistance from colleagues who do not believe trans inclusion is necessary. Issues of parental backlash and lack of support for trans inclusion and gender diversity, especially in the Catholic school system, were also mentioned as problems.

Overall, the findings draw attention to **systemic barriers** such as inadequate training for educators and administrators, a need for more robust policies, and the need to ensure policies are enacted. These findings raise important questions about **accountability** and Ontario's overall **commitment** to trans inclusion and gender expansive education.

## **NOTE: Educator Toolkit**

In the short term, educators need better access to resources, as well guidance and support to support gender expansive education and trans inclusion in schools. To help address this need, we are developing **a resource entitled Supporting Trans-Affirming Education in Schools: An Educator Toolkit** to support educators in their classrooms and schools.



# Recommendations

## 1 DEVELOP TRANS-AFFIRMATIVE POLICIES

Provincial and local policies must move beyond a focus on individual accommodation to incorporate system-wide supports and foster gender-affirming school climates. Regulatory organizations that govern education-related professions such as the Ontario College of Teachers, the College of Early Childhood Education, and others must also develop and issue Trans-affirmative policies and professional advisories.

### Key actions to develop trans-affirmative policies

- Update existing provincial equity policies and guidelines to include an informed focus on fostering trans-affirmative and intersectional approaches in the education system
- Develop specific guidelines for supporting trans and gender diverse students that are consistent with the OHRC (Ontario Human Rights Code) for supporting gender diversity in all schools
- Develop policies and professional advisories on supporting trans students, trans educators and trans-affirmative education in schools through regulatory organizations of professions related to public education
- Provide dedicated financial and human resources to develop and enact trans affirming policies and pedagogies in all schools



## 2 PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND CURRICULUM RESOURCES

Educators need relevant professional learning opportunities and resources so they can support gender expansive education. Our findings show that educators lack the supports they need to address gender justice. Currently, the Ontario Ministry of Education (the Ministry) does not require educational workers to attend professional development that focuses on gender identity, though it does list “equity, inclusion, and human rights” as an option for one of three mandatory Professional Activity Days (PPM 151, 2019, p.5).

### Key actions to provide professional learning and resources:

- Provide funding at provincial, school board and school levels to support PD centred on gender expansive education and trans-affirmative policy.
- Foster professional learning communities that are committed to gender justice
- Ensure mandatory training on trans-affirmative policy and gender expansive education in pre-service programs related to public education and teacher education
- Develop and provide appropriate curriculum resources that affirm trans and gender diverse students, and support gender expansive education in schools.

## 3 ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY

The commitment to support trans students and gender diverse education cannot depend on individuals—and specifically trans educators—who take it upon themselves to be better educated on these issues. The Ministry must provide systemic support and funding, so school boards can offer ongoing PD, develop resources, and foster inclusive school cultures. Subsuming trans inclusion within an overall commitment to supporting equity and inclusive education is not enough. Educators need professional learning informed by an intersectional approach with a focus on trans and nonbinary students from various cultural, economic, and racialized backgrounds and faiths, as well as those with disabilities. Teacher Education faculties also have a particular responsibility in ensuring that teacher candidates have the requisite knowledge about trans affirmative theories that need to inform a critical understanding of policy and practice in schools. Accountability measures are needed to ensure gender-affirmative policies translate into practice.

### Key actions to ensure accountability:

- Ensure that all school boards develop trans-affirmative policies
- Develop detailed accountability measures to ensure trans-affirmative policies are enacted in schools and in teacher education faculties.





# 01 Introduction

This report is based on a Social Sciences Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funded study<sup>4</sup> entitled *Supporting transgender and gender minority youth in the school system: Investigating policy and practice*.

## **PURPOSE**

Our purpose is to increase understanding of trans-affirmative policies and education in Ontario schools. We heard from educators and administrators about their experiences regarding the provision of support for transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse students in their classrooms and schools. Through this work, we learned about their knowledge and understanding of policies and practices, as well as the types of resources that are needed to foster gender expansive education and trans inclusivity in schools.

## **IMPORTANCE**

Research shows that trans students in schools do not feel safe and supported and are subjected to more frequent harassment and exclusion (Greytak, Kosciw & Diaz, 2009; Youth Gender Action Project, 2009). In their 2011 report, a national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in Canadian schools,

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<sup>4</sup> SSHRC Grant entitled: *Supporting transgender and gender minority youth in schools: Policy and practice [435-2015-0077]* (Principal Investigator: Wayne Martino).

Taylor and Peter (2011) found that 65% of trans students reported being verbally harassed about their gender in school and “were much more likely than sexual minority or LGBTQ students to have been physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression” (p. 64). In their 2021 follow up report, Peter, Campbell, and Taylor (2021) claim that while there have been many improvements over the past decade for cisgender LGBTQ students in schools, “these advances have not necessarily translated into a safer and more inclusive school environment for trans students, and in many instances the situation is significantly worse” (p. 17). This finding is corroborated by other large-scale studies which detail widespread harassment of, and lack of support for, trans youth in schools in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Bradlow et al., 2018; Kosciw et al., 2020; Ullman, 2015, 2021). Such research strengthened our commitment to learn more about the barriers and systemic forces that contribute to an untenable situation in Ontario schools where trans youth often do not feel safe and supported.

### **SURVEY DESIGN**

The survey was developed in consultation with school board members, consultants, educators, counsellors, and representatives from community organizations, including trans and non-binary people with a background of teaching in schools. The survey included a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions.

Through the survey, respondents reported

their awareness of their school/school board policy for supporting transgender and gender diverse students, how relevant they found the policy, their likelihood of following recommendations of this policy in their practice, and the extent to which they felt supported by administration. Respondents also rated their knowledge and understanding of transgender inclusion and gender diversity, as well as how much education or professional development they had received and where they received this training. In addition, they rated their understanding of and comfort in using selected terminology related to gender identity and gender diversity. They identified specific resources that they found helpful in addressing trans inclusion and gender diversity in their classrooms and schools and provided feedback on additional supports that are needed to effectively respond to transgender and gender diverse students. At the end of the survey, educators could comment on the biggest challenges or barriers in addressing trans-inclusivity and gender diversity in the education system and offer advice or recommendations. Throughout the survey educators could add further comments in response to self-rated items.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

The survey was open from October 2019 to March 2020 and was shared through several social media platforms including the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (EFTO), Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF), Ontario Teachers’

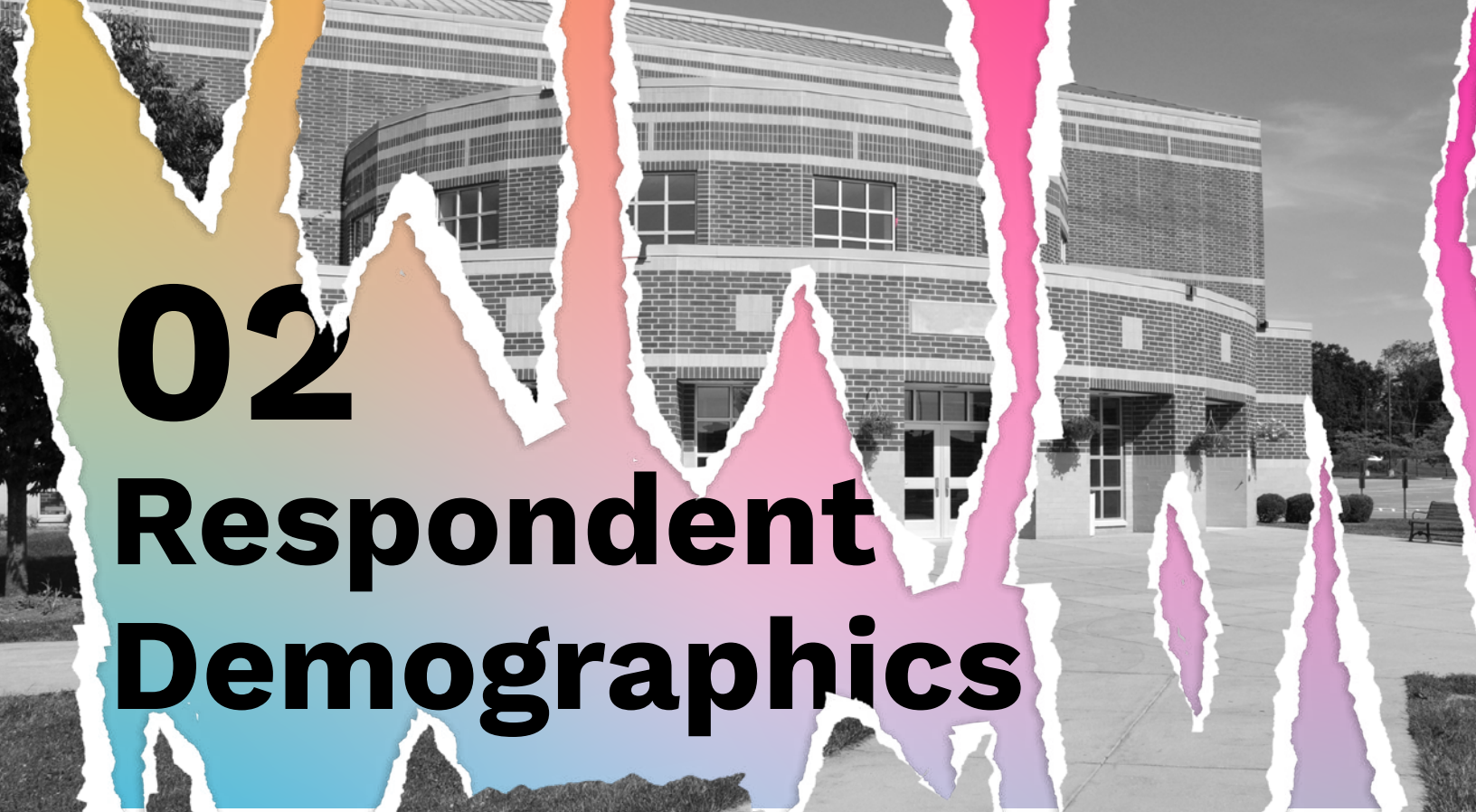
Federation (OTF) and numerous Facebook groups for Ontario educators specifically (see Appendix B). We heard from more than 1200 respondents. After we applied inclusion/exclusion criteria to clean the data, our dataset included 1194 educators in Ontario. Specifically, we removed data from respondents who were not educators or who were located outside Ontario.

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING**

We analyzed quantitative data using frequencies, mean averages, and Pearson's correlations. When reporting percentages, we rounded decimals to whole numbers using customary rounding conventions. As a result, some percentages might not add to 100.

We analyzed qualitative data using a coding and thematic approach to identify patterns and clusters of meaning in respondents' comments (Braun, Clark, Hayfield & Terry, 2018; Patton, 2014). For each question, we provide a quantitative summary of key themes among responses and a brief description of the themes with illustrative comments for each (participant comments are indicated with pink quotations “”). Some respondents provided comments that touched on more than one theme. As a result, the total number of comments in each quantitative summary of comments is greater than the number of respondents for each question.





# 02 Respondent Demographics

Here we describe respondent demographics to illustrate the diversity among survey respondents.

**Gender identity.** Respondents reported their gender identity and selected as many responses as they felt applied. Most respondents identified as Woman/Girl or Cisgender Woman/Girl (78%) and reflect the representation of the teaching profession as a largely female-dominated field. For example, in 2020 the Ontario College of Teachers reported that, of 231,053 members in good standing, 75% identified as women, 25% identified as men, and fewer than 1% of members identified as X. In this study, 7% identified as gender minorities.

Gender Identity	Number of Responses
Woman/Girl	397
Cisgender Woman/Girl	310
Man/Boy	59
Cisgender Man/Boy	39
Prefer not to answer	24
Not listed	16
Genderqueer	14
Gender-nonconforming	11
Non-binary	8
Trans Man/Boy	6
Trans Woman/Girl	6
Agender	6
Two-Spirit	4
Intersex	1
Genderfluid	1
TOTAL	902

**Sexual orientation.** Respondents reported sexual orientation and selected as many responses as applied. Approximately two thirds of responses (68%) indicated heterosexual/straight sexual orientation while 29% indicated a sexual minority status. Specifically, the following sexual orientations were selected: bisexual (7%), queer (5%), pansexual (5%), lesbian (4%), gay (3%), asexual (2%), questioning (2%), and demisexual<sup>5</sup> (0.5%).

Sexual Orientation	Number of Responses
Heterosexual/Straight	613
Bisexual	62
Queer	41
Pansexual	40
Lesbian	34
Gay	28
Prefer not to answer	23
Asexual	21
Questioning	15
Not Listed	12
Two-Spirit	6
TOTAL	895

<sup>5</sup> Demisexual refers to those who are only sexually attracted to those with whom they have a deep or close emotional connection (Healthline, 2019).

**Racial/ethnic background.** Respondents reported racial/cultural/ethnic background and selected as many responses as applied. Most (84%) indicated a white racial/ethnic background, with the remaining identifying as East Asian (3%), Black (3%), Indigenous (2%), South Asian (2%), Middle Eastern, Latin American, and Southeast Asian (less than 1%) and Other (5%).

Racial/ethnic background	Number of Responses
White	717
East Asian	22
Black	21
Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis)	19
South Asian	16
Middle Eastern	7
Latin American	5
Southeast Asian	3
Other	46
TOTAL	856

**Age.** Most respondents were age 55 or younger (89%).

Age	Number of responses
Less than 30 years	90
30-40 years	225
41-55 years	408
56-65 years	85
65 years and over	7
TOTAL	815

**Region in Ontario.**

Region	Number of responses
<b>Central</b> (Simcoe, Dufferin, Peel, York, Toronto, Durham)	295
<b>West</b> (Essex, Chatham, Lambton, Middlesex, Elgin, Huron, Perth, Oxford, Norfolk, Bruce, Grey, Wellington, Waterloo, Brant, Haldimand, Niagara, Hamilton, Halton)	241
<b>East</b> (Muskoka; Haliburton; Kawartha; Peterborough; Northumberland; Hastings; Prince Edward; Lennox & Addington; Renfrew; Lanark; Ottawa; Leeds & Greenville; Prescott & Russell; Stormont, Dundas, & Glengarry)	127
<b>North</b> (Nipissing, Parry Sound, Manitoulin, Sudbury, Cochrane, Algoma, Thunder Bay, Rainy River, Kenora)	49
<b>TOTAL</b>	712

**Current position.** Among respondents who indicated their position, 53% were elementary educators, while 37% were secondary educators.

Of those in the elementary panel, 51% were homeroom educators, with others indicating specializations in Special Education (19%), French (18%), Visual Arts (14%), Gym (11%) and Music (10%). Of those in the secondary panel, the following specializations were identified: English (24%), Science (17%), Math (13%), French (9%), Art (7%), Resource (7%), Technology (5%) and Music (3%).

Position	Number of responses
Elementary/Intermediate	447
Secondary	312
Daily Occasional	34
Support staff (e.g., guidance, CYW, EA)	17
Admin/Principal/VP	11
Librarian	10
Teacher Candidate	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	836



# 03 Findings

**Recognizing volunteer bias.** We acknowledge that participation in this study was voluntary, and respondents may have had a special interest in the topic. Indeed, a higher proportion of respondents identified with a gender minority, compared to statistics reported by Ontario College of Teachers. Awareness, knowledge, and understanding may be **lower among those who are perhaps less interested** or willing to learn and teach about trans inclusion and gender diversity issues.

**How the findings are structured.** We report educators' responses to questions about local trans inclusive policies first, as these policies provide direction for educators to support trans and gender diverse students in schools. Second, we report educators' self-rated knowledge and understanding of trans inclusion and gender diversity. Third, we report the training that educators have received in this area. Fourth, we report on resources educators use, as well as additional needed supports. Fifth, we report on barriers to addressing trans-inclusivity and gender diversity in schools. Sixth, we report educators' advice and recommendations on improving education about trans-inclusivity and gender diversity. Finally, we report findings from trans educators who responded to our survey to highlight their unique perspectives.

## TRANS INCLUSIVE POLICIES IN SCHOOLS

**Awareness of policy.** Respondents indicated their awareness and the perceived relevance of their local board policy on supporting transgender and gender diverse students (see figure 1). Most (60%) indicated they were somewhat aware of local board policy; however, more than one in four (28%) indicated no awareness of local policy. In the qualitative comment section, some respondents explained there was no policy in place and they had selected ‘not aware’ or ‘not relevant’ with a qualifying statement that no policy existed.

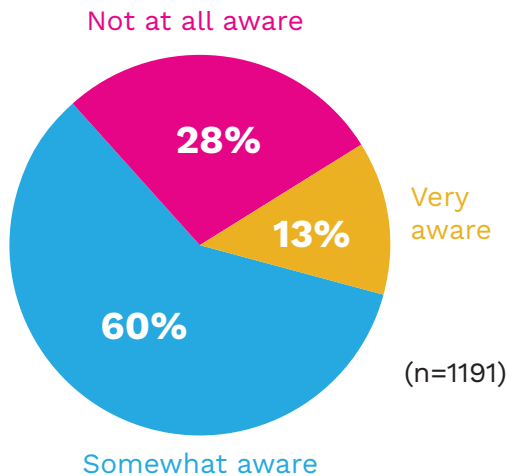
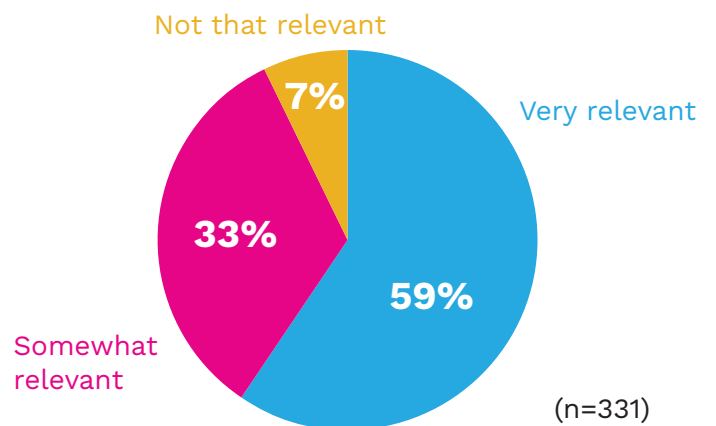


Figure 1: Educators’ awareness of school/schoolboard policy on supporting transgender and gender diverse students

**Perceived relevance of policy.** Among those who were somewhat or very aware of local policy, most (92%-94%) considered the policy to be very or somewhat relevant, indicating that where educators are aware of local policies, these policies are perceived as relevant. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of perceived relevance by degree of awareness.

### Educators Who Are Very Aware of Policy



### Educators Who Are Somewhat Aware of Policy

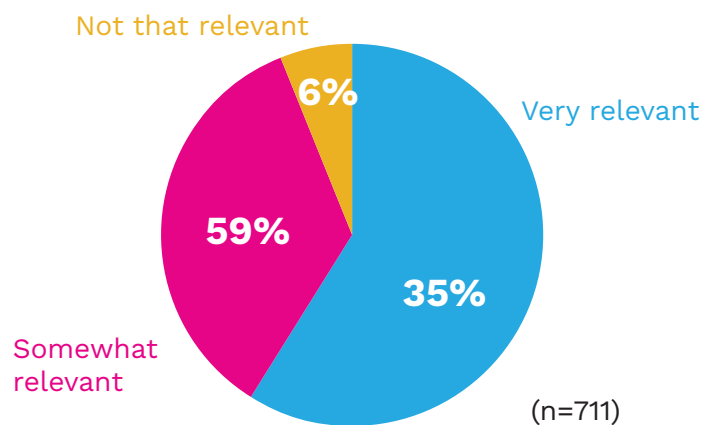
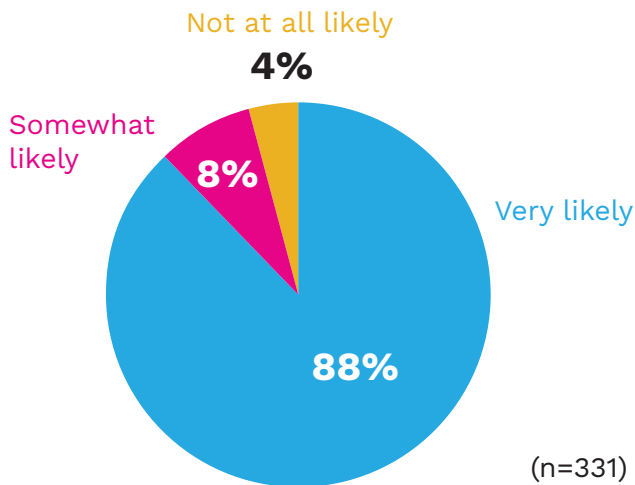


Figure 2: Perceived relevance of school/schoolboard policy on supporting transgender and gender diverse students.



**Likelihood to follow policy.** Among those who were somewhat or very aware of local policy, most (96%) indicated they were somewhat or very likely to follow policy recommendations on transgender and gender diversity issues. This finding suggests that **where educators are aware of local policy, they are likely to follow policy recommendations.** Figure 3 shows the breakdown of likelihood to follow policy by degree of awareness.

**Educators Who Are Very Aware of Policy**



**Educators Who Are Somewhat Aware of Policy**

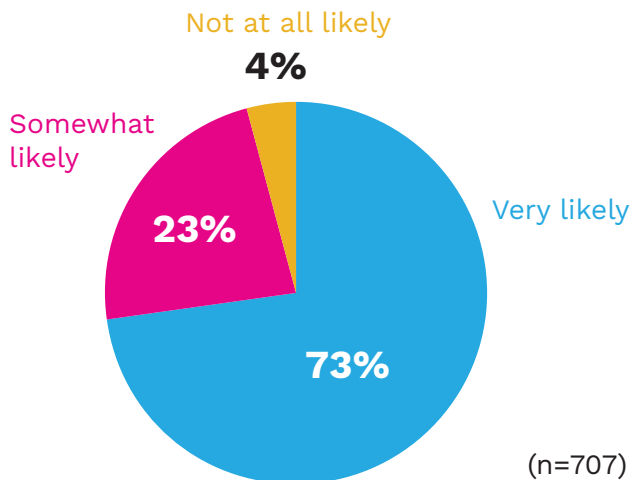


Figure 3: How likely educators are to follow policy in practice

**Administrative support for local policy.**

The majority of respondents (94%) indicated their school administration was very or somewhat supportive of trans-inclusion and gender diverse policies. This finding suggests that *if policies are implemented*, they are perceived to be mostly supported by administration.

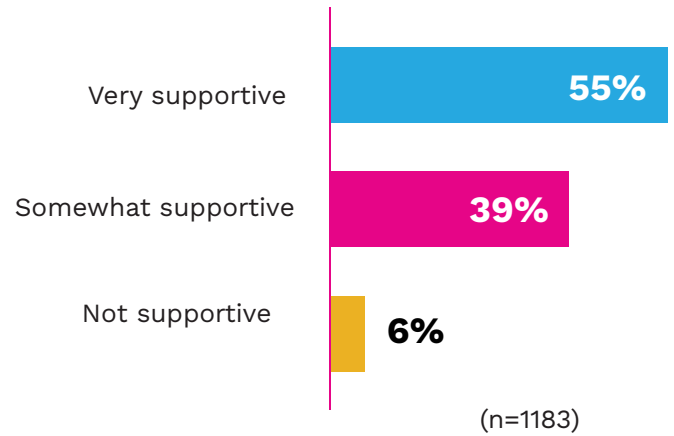


Figure 4: Administrative support for policy

In addition to providing ratings, respondents also provided many comments (n = 535) on trans-inclusive policies in their schools. Their comments reflected differences in levels of awareness and understanding of what trans inclusion and support entails. The level of support provided for trans-inclusive policies, and the extent to which educators felt supported to practice trans-inclusivity and teach about gender diversity, varied by school administration. Educators also provided insights into the complexities of enacting such policies in schools (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012; De Pedro et al., 2016; Eckes, 2020; Kurt & Chenault, 2017; GLSEN, 2019; Leonardi & Staley, 2018; Martino, Kassen & Omercajic, 2022; Omercajic & Martino, 2020).

Key themes among the comments are shown in table.

**Table 1:** Comments on trans-inclusive policies in schools

Key themes	Number of comments
Policy as Accommodation	132
Lack of Support/ Intervention	114
Policy vs Practice	109
An Individualized Approach	63
School as Supportive	36
Education and Curriculum	31
General Acceptance of Diversity	28
Transphobic Resistance	22

## ENACTING POLICY AS ACCOMMODATION

Almost a quarter (23%) of comments mentioned trans inclusive policy as accommodating trans students; for example, having gender-free washrooms, forming GSAs (Gender, Sexuality Alliances), and using preferred pronouns. Trans inclusive policies were also associated with visible symbols such as Pride or Rainbow flags being posted in schools.

Many educators considered these accommodations as evidence of support for trans students and trans inclusive policies being enacted in schools. However, some educators pointed to the limitations of policies focused on accommodation and said education about gender diversity was also needed. They also realised that providing an all-inclusive gender washroom space did not ensure the needs of trans and gender diverse students were being met.

**“ We finished adding our 4th gender neutral washroom in our building of only 2 floors to help make a safe washroom space be more accessible no matter where you are in the school.**

**“ Kids preferred names and pronouns are respected. Single occupancy washrooms. Inclusive sports activities. Special events promoted. Referral to supports. “Acceptance for All” club supports LGBTQ folks.**

**“ All schools in our board now have all-gender bathrooms and staff are encouraged to ask students what pronouns they prefer.**

**“ There is one bathroom in the high school designated for transgendered [sic] students. I am concerned that because this information is shared amongst the students, this may target this specific location as a focal point for bullying.**

**“ We have an “all access bathroom” but you need a special key card to access it.**

## LACK OF SUPPORT OR INTERVENTION

One in five educators who said they were aware of their local policy (20%) indicated there was a lack of support from administration or a lack of intervention, claiming it was often left to the individual educator to enact the policy.

**“ We are made aware of the policies, but it is left up to individual education workers to actually read and understand them. Attempts at implementing the policies are somewhat half-hearted.**

**“ We have a gender creative student. His teachers have had to seek help for educating themselves from outside the school.**

**“ The reason I would not follow [the local policy] is due to the lack of actual support the policy provides. There is zero consequence for transphobia and zero education for any staff members. I feel that our school is NOT supportive.**

This educator commented that lack of intervention and support meant transphobic bullying was simply not addressed in school:

**“ Unfortunately, students are still bullied and attacked within schools and the policies do nothing to protect them. It’s hard for trans and LGBTQ students to feel safe when bullies face no consequences.**

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Some educators did not feel supported by the administration in general and their principal in particular.

**“ Principals rarely defend us, the teachers, on the front lines, boots on the ground, in the trenches [so to speak] to support us if there are any difficulties between a parent and a student because of our teaching and following the curriculum, policies and procedures.**

**“ Admin doesn’t really actively talk about these policies. The information we get comes from the school board. Any activities or events in support of trans-inclusiveness are initiated by interested staff. Admin neither actively supports nor has a negative view.**

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Some comments reflected a lack of accountability on action to support trans students.

**“ They [the administration], after several times that I have pointed this out, still have not fixed their system to print out class rosters with the students’ preferred name. This means that students can be outed when there is a supply teacher.**

**“ Sports teams continue to be gendered. People are not pro-actively educated, so [this student] must continuously self-advocate.**

Among some comments, religious beliefs and/or biases were mentioned as leading to trans youth not being supported in schools. In particular, respondents from Catholic schools were explicit about the lack of support; they highlighted the tension between the Catholic doctrine and provision of support for trans students in their schools.

## POLICY VS PRACTICE

One in five respondents (19%) commented that simply *having* a policy does not always mean it will be followed; context and interpretation affect how policy is translated into practice. For example, individual beliefs, prejudices, and biases impact support for local policy.

This daily occasional teacher offered unique insights into how policies are enacted differently in different schools.

**“ The policy of my Catholic school board is to ignore and not mention trans students or employees. Although we are required to follow the Ontario Human Rights Code, our school board hides behind the Catholic curriculum which only minimally addresses gender identity. Silence and actively dissuading teachers from speaking about gender is the real “policy” of our school board.**

**“ [Policies] are great on paper but mean nothing when they aren’t enforced.**

**“ While many of my colleagues are supportive, the several who are not are very vocal and have the ear of our admin. As such, there is unlikely to be any school-wide acknowledgement of trans-inclusive policies and/or the LGBTQ+ community at large.**

**“ We have two gender diverse children in our school that I know of, and we have NO education or discussion about how to engage or educate regarding the policies.**

**“ As a supply teacher, I work in many schools, so the policies of the school board are manifested in different ways across the schools. Some administrators support and implement trans inclusive policies more than others.**



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Additionally, educators pointed out that having a policy that supports gender inclusive washrooms does not mean that trans students are going to be served well by creating these spaces. These respondents highlighted the need for administrative policy support.

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For some educators, the policy was only relevant in spaces where there were openly trans students, which does not address broader issues of transphobia and cissexism that can prevent students from feeling safe and comfortable about self-identifying more publicly. In short, trans and nonbinary students may be present, even if they are not visible.

- “ **They recently added an all-gender bathroom, but you have to go to the office to get a pass key to use it, so it singles people out that way.**
- “ **Even though the school board has trans-inclusive policies, the school administration refuses to even mention anything about our transgender student and cancels the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia every year due to ‘everyone is so busy’.**
- “ **Board initiatives are broadly misinformed and led by individuals who do not understand the issues. Principals often resist involvement or support and provide only superficial window dressing support when forced to do so.**
- “ **My admin is somewhat supportive but afraid of parent backlash. I think a lot of their steps forward though are due to my presence as an out queer teacher who is very vocal about upholding policy.**
- “ **I don’t think that the policies really look at the barriers which trans folks face. The policies are not about uncovering and challenging biases.**

## AN INDIVIDUALIZED APPROACH

One in ten educators (11%) understood trans inclusive policies as responding to individual trans students, which we characterize as an individualized approach. Support and awareness of the policy were defined and understood in terms of the visible presence of a trans student who was out in the school. In many cases, local policy was not considered relevant or enacted in the absence of openly identified trans students, resulting in an understanding of trans inclusive policies being enacted on “a case-by-case basis”.

This individualized approach often led educators to mistakenly assert that they and their school administration were committed to ensuring that *all* students were included and treated with respect.

**“ As of now it is a non-issue at our school. So, it is not applicable as of yet. We have not had trans students, so awareness and policies have not been enacted.**

**“ We tend to approach on a case-by-case basis and build on what the student wants and needs.**

**“ I feel that it is only addressed on a case-by-case basis. Rich conversations are not openly encouraged.**

**“ We could do a better job as a school. I think that because we have no “visibly” trans students in our school, our administration has not focused on this aspect of inclusion.**

**“ We’ve not had a trans student or family yet, but we intend to be ready when it happens.**

## SCHOOL AS SUPPORTIVE

Some respondents viewed their schools as supportive of transgender and gender diverse students. However, support primarily accommodated individual trans students through gender neutral bathrooms, a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), or other symbolic measures (e.g., pride stickers), rather than a systemic commitment to creating gender facilitative schools.

- “ Our school strives to be inclusive to all who enter our doors. We have a GSA and teachers work towards educating others. We have a transgender museum in our front hall.**
- “ We have an anti-discrimination policy. We have a no tolerance policy for disrespectful language and actions. We have a script to use if we hear or see it. Teachers can post the rainbow symbol on their doors to welcome students, staff, and parents. We have gender neutral washrooms.**
- “ We had a meeting among admin and intermediate staff to crack down on transphobic bullying.**



## EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM

Educators pointed to gaps in policies especially as they related to the focus on accommodation. They highlighted the need for more education on how to address gender diversity as part of everyday curriculum and learning.

- “ Staff are overall willing to be supportive, but more education of staff is required for greater understanding.
- “ While admin is supportive, and there are a few of us who are very outspoken, I believe the majority of staff are open but not as educated as they need to be.
- “ I believe that education for all educators around gender and transgender students’ needs to be completed and revisited frequently as our understanding and body of research grows.
- “ I am not aware of any policy, but I am aware that there is no training except for optional training that is often limited to NTIP [New Teacher Induction Program] and equity reps. Training such as this should be mandatory, including on FNIM [First Nations, Inuit, and Métis].
- “ [We] need more open conversation in curriculum.
- “ [We need] more curriculum surrounding the diverse LGBTQIA+ identities, queer focused sex ed and programming for teachers to learn themselves the best policies for supporting queer/trans students.

## GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY

Some educators (n= 28) considered their schools to be inclusive, regardless of whether there was an explicit trans-inclusive policy, equating trans inclusion with a liberal embrace and celebration of diversity. However, being “inclusive” does not mean that educators are well-informed and well-equipped to support trans students.

- “ We are very inclusive and supportive but also very ill informed.**
- “ We don’t go out of our way to recognize specific individuals as unique, but our policy is to be inclusive of all students.**
- “ I don’t think they have a straight up policy; I think it is really just we live in a day and age where it doesn’t matter who you are, and everyone gets treated the same.**



## TRANSPHOBIC RESISTANCE

Some respondents (n=22) expressed resistance to trans inclusion and blatant transphobia. Their responses raise concerns about the potential harm of such beliefs among educators in Ontario's school systems. Research suggests that such ignorance often reflects an active refusal to learn about the effects of normalization in maintaining the status quo in a system of gender privilege (Britzman, 1998; Kumashiro, 2000).

Some educators expressed concern about the age-appropriateness of trans-informed approaches to addressing gender diversity in elementary classrooms. In contrast to such misconceptions, research shows that young trans and gender diverse students need an educational environment that provides the proper language to help them understand and communicate about their gender (DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; Robinson, 2008; Steele & Nicholson, 2020).

**“ There are only two genders. Let's stop damaging children by lying to them about SCIENCE. We're supposed to be educators for heaven's sake!!!!**

**“ Catholic faith supports specific male and female gender roles as defined by our DNA.**

**“ I work with really young children. This is not an important issue for this age group. Reading, writing and math are more important.**



# General Approaches to Equity and Prioritizing Race

Some educators shared that while there was no specific policy devoted to addressing trans inclusion and gender diversity, there was a general “equity policy for all”:

A general approach to addressing equity does not effectively serve the needs of students who have multiple intersecting identities. For example, a general approach does not foster knowledge about systemic oppression and the ways in which they intersect and impact the lives of Two Spirit, Black, people of colour and those from various faith backgrounds who are trans, non-binary, and gender diverse (Black Coalition for Aids Prevention, 2008; Laing, 2021; Youthline, 2020a, 2020b; Muslim Youth Leadership Council, 2019). Generalized equity frameworks subsume all minority and racialized groups and obscure how settler colonialism, anti-black racism, ableism, cisgenderism, heterosexism and classism intersect in the lives of students from different communities.

- “ Our board has always had a policy of equity for all.
- “ Inclusivity, in general, is a policy and administration would be supportive of initiatives involving trans-inclusive policies.
- “ I am not aware of distinction of inclusive policies specifically about trans-gender apart from general policies about being inclusive (it’s ok to be yourself).

## RACE AND GENDER MATTERS

Several respondents highlighted the need for a prioritized and necessary focus on First Nations, Métis and Inuit and immigrant students in their schools, and in so doing alluded to ways in which systemic forms of oppression can be pitted against each another:

Even though respondents understood issues of race as requiring prioritization, it is essential to view all issues of equity as interlocking and intersecting systems and not as silos within a hierarchy. As such, addressing gender diversity in schools needs to be considered in intersectional terms with respect to how settler colonialist thinking led to the imposition of cis-hetero-patriarchal and binary ways of thinking about gender and sexual diversity (Driskill, 2010). A decolonizing approach to gender places the lives of Two-Spirit youth and educators at the centre of discussions about self-determination and sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples. A prioritized focus on racialized minorities and newcomer/immigrant populations in schools and more specifically anti-racist education is central to conceiving a critical trans politics that “interface[s] with anti-racism, feminism, anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, immigration politics and disability politics” (Spade, 2015, p. xiv). This approach avoids an additive approach to equity which has a silo effect that not only erases and

- “ In a First-Nation private school, it is hard to balance self-determination and sovereignty of First Nations against imposing values such as trans-rights in some communities which do not have a history of individualized values.
- “ My administrators will support any policy put forth by the board. My board is currently pushing FNMI content, so the policy on trans-inclusivity is present and accommodating but not pushed.
- “ This topic has not really come up in my school. We have a huge Syrian refugee population and extreme violence in our school with students of needs. Our priorities are surviving from one day to next without injury to all.

invisibilizes gender and sexual diversity but other aspects of one’s identity and lived experience. Moreover, it is important not to forget that in focusing on the equity concerns of one minoritized group or community there is the potential for opening up dialogue about and building alliances with other minority groups. In this way it is possible to draw connections to the systemic ways in which barriers to access, participation, and resources as a result of disadvantage and discrimination intersect or apply to all minorities (Erikainen et al., 2020).

# Knowledge and Understanding of Trans-Inclusion and Gender Diversity Issues

In response to the question, “How would you rate your knowledge and understanding of trans-inclusion and gender diversity issues?” educators rated their knowledge and understanding on a four-point scale (see figure 4). Almost three quarters (72%) rated their understanding as good or very good.

Educators (n = 222) provided comments on their knowledge of trans-inclusion and gender diversity. Key themes among the comments are shown in the table below.

**Table 2:** Comments on self-rated knowledge and understanding

Key themes	Number of comments
Personal Interest & Self-Directed Learning	81
Knowing a Trans Person	60
More to Learn	37
Professional Development	34
Learning from Students	18
Lack of Confidence	13

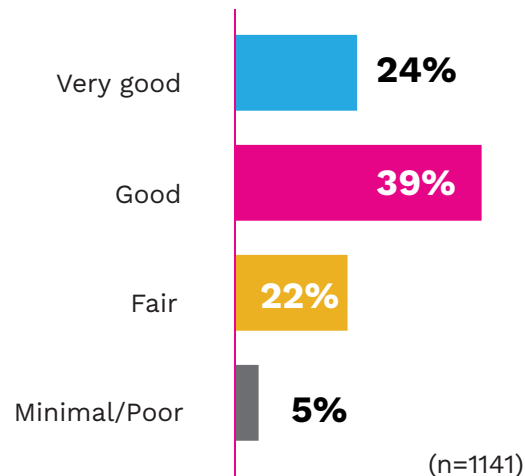


Figure 5: Educators’ knowledge and understanding of trans-inclusion and gender diversity issues.

## PERSONAL INTEREST AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Over half of comments (58%) mentioned a personal interest and/or personally knowing someone affected by trans-inclusion or gender diversity policies/issues. Indeed, many responses stated that a personal interest or motivation accounted for the primary source of their knowledge rather than PD provided by their schools/school boards.

- “ I only have knowledge based on my own learning. Little has been conveyed at a school level to share this info.
- “ I have an understanding because I read material I come across and I support and promote Human Rights wherever I am. I feel there should be more discussion in schools [about] inclusiveness.
- “ This is a very important topic for me, and I have read extensively in order to support trans-inclusion and gender diversity in my classroom.

## KNOWING/BEING A TRANS PERSON

Educators who identified as LGBTQ indicated their identities self-directed their learning and commitment to building their knowledge and understanding of gender diversity, as well as to educate others about it.

- “ I am a trans educator. I work for a camp geared towards supporting rural queer and trans youth. I wrote a major research paper on the importance of queer and trans representation within schools.
- “ I have friends, family and students who are a part of the LGBTQ community.
- “ I have a teenage son who has friends that are transgender.
- “ I have worked closely with trans\* students before at my school/within my board.



## MORE TO LEARN

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17% of responses acknowledged they had more to learn to continue to expand their knowledge of gender diversity so they could better support trans and non-binary students in schools.

**“ The more I learn, the more I realize I need to learn but I am reading and listening to acquire knowledge.**

**“ Always more knowledge to be had; could do more research on how to support trans students in schools specifically.**

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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While 15% of responses indicated the importance of professional learning in broadening understanding and awareness about gender diversity, respondents pointed to educator unions and organizations such as Egale as key sources of education and training that contributed to their knowledge and learning.

**“ My personal experience is limited, so I have tried to expand my knowledge by reading, attending PD, and following a number of people on Twitter who are engaged in these issues and are advocates.**

**“ I’ve had professional development on trans-inclusion and gender diversity awareness and best practices through my teacher’s provincial union and local.**

**“ I have done my best to go to after-school workshops and conferences to learn more. All of these programs are provided by my union (ETFO and ETT).**

## LEARNING FROM STUDENTS

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27% of responses indicated respondents' knowledge and understanding had grown out of knowing a trans person and/or teaching a trans student.

- “ I learn more when I am in a classroom where a student self-identifies.**
- “ I tend to read a lot of articles on transgender teens to improve my understanding. That said, the best growth is through experience working with these students.**
- “ I have had a few students in the past who were gender fluid or transgendered [sic], which gave me opportunities to work closely with their families who were supportive of their children's gender expression.**

## LACK OF CONFIDENCE

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Some respondents indicated that while they were supportive of trans inclusion, they expressed a degree of hesitancy or a lack of confidence in their awareness and knowledge of gender diversity.

- “ I'm listening and trying but I don't know all the info.**
- “ I am not sure how to teach it and I don't know if I fully understand those terms and culture as an adult. The only thing I do is bring awareness that boys can wear dresses to my kindergarten class by reading [a] book.**
- “ Awareness helps me be respectful, but I have a long way to go. I struggle to remember new preferred names and preferred pronouns.**

## Understanding and Comfort Using Terms

To gain a deeper understanding of educators' knowledge of trans-inclusion and gender diversity issues, we asked educators to rate their understanding of and comfort using 24 key terms related to gender diversity and transgender issues. We chose these terms – not as a comprehensive list – but rather to introduce terminology that is relevant and pertinent to understanding gender identity,

gender expansiveness and expression that is informed by current literature (Human Rights Campaign and Gender Spectrum, 2014; Kennedy, 2018; Serano, 2014; Pyne, 2014).<sup>6</sup> The table below shows respondents' ratings of their understanding of and comfort using these terms. In the table, highest ratings for each term are indicated in bold font (n-values 814-843).

**Table 3:** *Self-rated understanding and comfort with terms related to gender diversity and transgender issues*

Term		None	Limited	Moderate	Very Good
<b>Agender</b>	Understanding	33.1%	21.9%	22.2%	22.8%
	Comfort	41.5%	21.9%	15.6%	21.0%
<b>Androgynous</b>	Understanding	7.0%	12.0%	30.9%	50.7%
	Comfort	22.1%	18.9%	20.1%	40.0%
<b>Assigned Sex</b>	Understanding	5.0%	7.3%	17.9%	70.3%
	Comfort	18.2%	13.6%	19.3%	50.0%
<b>Bigender</b>	Understanding	20.0%	21.5%	27.2%	31.9%
	Comfort	35.3%	22.5%	17.2%	25.9%
<b>Cisgender</b>	Understanding	18.8%	11.0%	14.1%	56.8%
	Comfort	27.3%	15.5%	12.8%	45.8%
<b>Cisnormativity</b>	Understanding	31.5%	12.0%	14.5%	42.6%
	Comfort	33.4%	17.2%	13.8%	36.2%

<sup>6</sup> Appendix A provides a non-exhaustive glossary of the terms we selected to present to participants.

Term		None	Limited	Moderate	Very Good
<b>Femme</b>	Understanding	21.0%	24.1%	23.4%	32.4%
	Comfort	39.2%	21.9%	14.9%	24.9%
<b>Gender Binary</b>	Understanding	11.4%	19.8%	24.1%	45.6%
	Comfort	30.3%	17.2%	15.6%	38.0%
<b>Gender Creativity</b>	Understanding	38.6%	20.7%	19.7%	21.3%
	Comfort	41.8%	21.7%	14.3%	23.0%
<b>Gender Expression</b>	Understanding	7.7%	11.5%	26.4%	54.9%
	Comfort	18.1%	14.6%	19.4%	49.4%
<b>Gender Fluid</b>	Understanding	6.8%	11.5%	28.3%	54.1%
	Comfort	21.4%	16.0%	22.2%	41.8%
<b>Gender Identity</b>	Understanding	2.0%	5.2%	23.7%	69.5%
	Comfort	12.4%	9.5%	22.2%	57.1%
<b>Gender Independence</b>	Understanding	43.5%	25.1%	19.3%	12.8%
	Comfort	42.3%	24.6%	14.6%	19.3%
<b>Gender Non-conformity</b>	Understanding	13.3%	18.1%	24.3%	45.1%
	Comfort	25.6%	20.3%	16.6%	39.1%
<b>Genderqueer</b>	Understanding	24.0%	23.1%	22.9%	30.5%
	Comfort	38.8%	19.5%	16.2%	26.0%
<b>Gender Variant</b>	Understanding	41.8%	23.3%	18.9%	16.4%
	Comfort	44.0%	23.3%	14.4%	18.9%
<b>Heteronormative</b>	Understanding	21.9%	9.8%	15.8%	52.9%
	Comfort	27.8%	13.1%	15.1%	45.1%
<b>Intersex</b>	Understanding	21.0%	22.5%	19.7%	37.5%
	Comfort	32.7%	21.3%	13.6%	32.9%



Term		None	Limited	Moderate	Very Good
<b>Non-binary</b>	Understanding	10.3%	19.5%	24.2%	46.6%
	Comfort	24.2%	15.7%	17.7%	43.2%
<b>Sex</b>	Understanding	0.7%	2.8%	20.9%	76.5%
	Comfort	9.1%	9.1%	22.4%	60.7%
<b>Transgender</b>	Understanding	0.5%	5.2%	24.8%	70.4%
	Comfort	8.7%	10.6%	22.6%	59.7%
<b>Transgender (MTF)</b>	Understanding	10.2%	9.2%	20.5%	61.2%
	Comfort	17.9%	12.4%	20.9%	50.0%
<b>Transgender (FTM)</b>	Understanding	9.8%	8.8%	21.2%	61.0%
	Comfort	18.1%	12.4%	20.5%	50.1%
<b>Two-Spirit</b>	Understanding	13.2%	19.2%	27.9%	40.0%
	Comfort	22.7%	18.2%	21.7%	38.2%

To examine the relationship between educators' knowledge of these terms associated with gender diversity and trans inclusion and their comfort using them, we calculated knowledge and comfort scores for each respondent based on mean average ratings. We compared these scores using Pearson's correlation, which showed educators' knowledge and comfort levels are highly positively correlated [ $r(827) = .75$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. This finding suggests that **when educators improve their understanding of terms related to gender diversity and transgender issues, they are more comfortable bringing conversations about these issues into the classroom**. This insight offers important implications for ensuring

educators are sufficiently equipped with knowledge about terms associated with gender diversity to support their preparedness and comfort in the classroom.

Educators provided a total of 388 comments on the topic of comfort using terms associated with gender diversity and trans inclusion in the classroom/ professional context. Key themes among the comments are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** *Comfort using terminology in the classroom / professional context*

Key themes	Number of comments
Lack of Knowledge/ Comfort/Confidence	145
Primary Grades	66
Lack of PD and Resources (Need for More Education)	38
Transphobic Refusal and Resistance	36
Feeling Comfortable	29
Doesn't Come Up	20
Fear of Offence	18
Subject Specific	17
Fear Community Reaction	16
Lack of Support	14

## LACK OF KNOWLEDGE/ COMFORT/ CONFIDENCE

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37% of responses highlighted how a lack of comfort and/or confidence with such terminology was a direct result of not having enough knowledge and understanding.

- “ **My discomfort is based solely on my lack of clear knowledge or understanding of the terms, not acceptance of.**
- “ **I feel that several of these terms have nuance that I do not understand and would not be comfortable sharing or defining with students. I would be able to give a basic definition of most if they came up, but would not initiate the conversation.**
- “ **I have a transgender child (age 8) in my class that I am often unsure what is acceptable or unacceptable to say or do.**
- “ **I find the topic somewhat fraught because I don't have sufficient understanding or experience. I also am uncomfortable discussing what I consider private issues with students.**

## PRIMARY GRADES<sup>7</sup>

Many responses (17%) indicated that terms related to gender diversity and transgender issues are not appropriate or suitable in the primary school and early years classroom. This finding raises questions about how gender expansive knowledge and understanding is communicated in these contexts.

- “ Working with young children, it’s not often appropriate to speak about ANY sex/gender issues. Too busy teaching what’s in the curriculum.**
- “ I do not have enough knowledge or resources to speak comfortably about any of it. Also, how are other teachers addressing it in their primary classrooms? I know these are very valuable discussions and feelings, but I am not sure where or how to even start.**
- “ I teach Kindergarten, so we don’t typically utilize these terms. It’s more about, “anyone can wear pink” or “yes, boys can wear dresses too”.**
- “ I teach grade 1/2 in a largely immigrant Muslim low-income neighbourhood. If I were to have a student who at a young age displayed confusion regarding personal gender identity, I would get the help needed to enable them to feel more comfortable, but at this age, I find that gender seldom comes up. I encourage and am happy to see them work and play together without gender coming up.**

<sup>7</sup> In the Ontario (and Canadian) context, primary grades specifically refer to students in grades 1 to 3 (i.e., ages 6–9).



## LACK OF PD AND RESOURCES

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One in ten responses (10%) suggested that with more knowledge, educators would feel more confident and comfortable. Being exposed to these terms in the survey highlighted their need for more education and their lack of exposure to such language in their everyday professional contexts.

**“ I would be happy to use any of these terms if I felt I was using them respectfully and appropriately - which won't happen if I am not properly taught to whom they apply.**

**“ The only reason I indicated that I was uncomfortable is because I do not fully understand the terms myself. With more education on my part, I would be 100% comfortable.**

**“ It breaks my heart and is truly a shame that the lack of education in my school board leads to pain and ignorance for students. We have a few students struggling with their identity and minimal teacher support.**

**“ I teach in French Immersion, so it would be great to have vocabulary to support French language learners.**

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Respondents also pointed out a need for pre-service training on issues related to trans-inclusion and gender diversity.

**“ There's very little teacher training in this.**



## TRANSPHOBIC REFUSAL AND RESISTANCE

A similar number of respondents (10%) were resistant or refused to embrace such learning and knowledge. These comments are troubling as they amount to overt expressions of transphobia and cissexism.

It is important to keep in mind that while these participants were quite vocal in their overt transphobia and blatant cissexism, there are many others who are not but who equally contribute to this violence by remaining silent in their refusal of support for trans inclusion and gender diversity in schools.

**“ I think we, as educators, are very misguided and are misleading our youth in very dangerous ways in promoting alternative lifestyles.**

**“ I am not comfortable using these terms in my classroom because I do not think children should be taught about these topics.**

**“ There are 2 genders, period.**

**“ The ‘social’ construct of gender is an ineffective use of language.**

## FEELING COMFORTABLE

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Fewer than one in ten (8%) responses commented on feeling comfortable with using this terminology in their classrooms and school communities.

- “ I have had good conversations over the last 3-4 years with many students regarding these terms and realities. I’ve learned quite a bit from my students!**
- “ I teach in a Northern community where Two-Spirit is taught and talked about more openly and often.**
- “ I am comfortable using these terms because I personally believe the more they are used and recognized, the more power we give to students and even coworkers to feel safe and comfortable.**

## DOESN'T COME UP

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Some respondents (5%) noted that these terms are never raised or used in the classroom, pointing to barriers such as teaching in Catholic schools, elementary education, or lacking expertise to lead discussions around them.

- “ The topic doesn’t come up. If it did, I would be honest and say I am not an expert in this area.**
- “ I teach in a Catholic elementary school in a lower grade, so many of these terms and issues have never arisen.**

*While numerous participants highlighted the systematic problem and failure of Catholic schools to address trans inclusion and gender diversity, it is important to note, as many educators also highlighted, that there is a systemic problem with supporting trans inclusion in public secular schools as well. This highlights the institutionalization of cisgenderism in the school system as a whole.*

## FEAR OF OFFENCE

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As reflected by the quantitative data, lack of knowledge was often linked to lack of comfort and contributed to a lack of confidence. Some educators expressed concern and fear about causing offence and “harm through ignorance” in using the various terminologies. Given more knowledge and understanding many educators expressed that they would have no trouble using trans and more gender inclusive terminology.

**“ I do not feel knowledgeable enough to use the terms. I do not want to offend anyone by using them incorrectly despite my genuine desire to be respectful.**

**“ I would be comfortable using all terms within my classroom provided that I had a good understanding of the term. I would not want to use a term inaccurately and hurt someone unintentionally.**

## SUBJECT SPECIFIC

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Some educators felt learning about gender diversity and trans inclusion was the responsibility of Health and Physical Education educators and should be relegated to this curricular domain. This finding highlights a need for **all** educators to understand trans and gender diversity issues, so that they can support trans and gender diverse students throughout the school and in their classrooms, no matter what subject they teach.

**“ I don’t teach health this year. I only teach what’s directly printed in the curriculum using Ministry-approved resources.**

**“ Because my job is to deliver the huge science curriculum, and there is not enough time during a semester to make it through the required content, this knowledge is rarely touched on directly in the classroom.**

**“ The French courses aren’t really designed around talking about these subjects. I have no clue what these terms might be in French, hence I have very little comfort with it. Bringing this up may cause issues, as the French language has a very distinct gender binary in terms of verb and adjective agreement that simply cannot be ignored.**



## FEAR OF COMMUNITY REACTION

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Some educators indicated that backlash and/or negative response from the community, particularly from religious or conservative families, impacted their decision to use these terms in the classroom.

**“ I teach in the Catholic School Board and I am unsure how parents will react to use of these terms in the classroom. Also, the school board policy is very vague.**

**“ There are conservative parents within my class and no need to address these terms.**

## LACK OF SUPPORT

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Some educators also pointed to a lack of support and “back up” from administrators in their school which was also a contributing factor to provision of knowledge and enhancing their own confidence and self-efficacy in enacting trans inclusive policies and practices in their classrooms and schools.

**“ I do not feel confident that I would have the support of my administration or school board if I used any of these terms in my junior classroom.**

**“ I would like principals to model these words in an inclusive way.**

# Training in Trans Inclusion and Gender Diversity

We asked educators about their level of training and where training was received. As Figure 5 shows, only 25% of survey respondents indicated they had *extensive or quite a bit* of training. Three quarters (75%) had no training or only a little. This finding highlights a **strong need for systemic support and resourcing** to ensure that adequate and ongoing training opportunities for educators are provided.

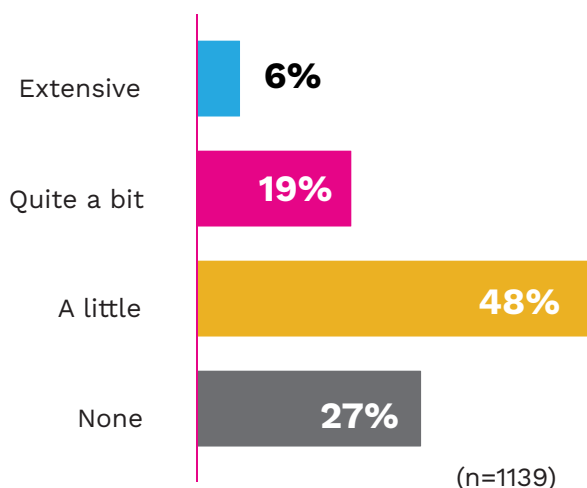


Figure 6: Level of training, specific education, or professional development received on issues facing transgender and gender diverse people.

Respondents were asked to indicate the source(s) of where they received their training. From a list of five options, educators indicated where they received their training, with space for additional comments. Respondents could check all responses that applied. **Self-education was a source of training for most educators** (79% of responses). Half of the responses indicated access to training through the school or school board.

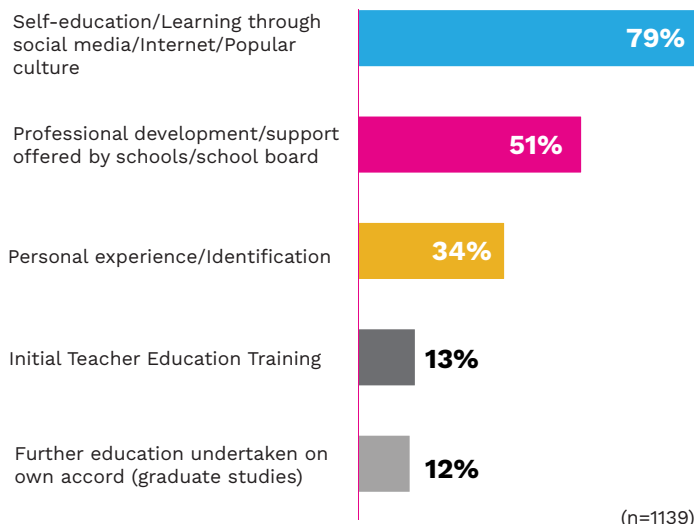


Figure 7: Where educators received training, education, or professional development on issues facing transgender and gender diverse people.

We invited educators to provide further comments or details about the education, training, or professional development they had received. The table below summarizes the themes we identified among responses (n = 236).

Table 5: Educators’ training in trans inclusion and gender diversity issues.

Key themes	Number of comments
Union/Community PD	77
Board/School PD	59
Education Motivated by Personal Connection	56
Self-directed Education	50
No Training	30
Pre-service Education	11

## UNION/COMMUNITY PD

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While half of respondents (51%) indicated that they had gained their knowledge about trans inclusion and gender diversity through professional development, one in five (18%) identified the source of this training was their union and/ or community partners such as Egale.

- “ **My union has offered workshops by 519 and I have attended training offered by Egale.**
- “ **Through our OSSTF union PD.**
- “ **Professional development in this area has been most readily available from my federation (ETFO).**
- “ **Union professional development included discussions and learning sessions with Trans Adults from The 519 in Toronto, as well as Primary LGBTQ2S awareness and gender expression.**

## BOARD/SCHOOL PD.

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Some respondents mentioned PD from their school board, with comments about limitations in school board offerings. PD offerings were often inadequate or not supported by release time funding.

- “ **My school was given some support from board members when we had our first identified transgender student in 2013.**
- “ **There is little, if any, training or professional development from my school board and NONE from my school. Much of the PD requires the school to pay for release time, which my administration will not do.**



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Among those who received PD from their board, many said gender diversity issues were briefly mentioned in more generalized equity sessions. Respondents also noted that when training is couched in broader discussions about equity and inclusion, explicit training on gender diversity is often sidelined.

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Also, school board training tended to be voluntary.

## SELF-DIRECTED EDUCATION

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One in five (21%) respondents indicated pursuing their own self-education on gender diversity and trans inclusion, also citing union-led professional learning, graduate studies and AQ courses as sources.

**“ We touched on gender diversity in an equity training provided by the board.**

**“ We had one [PD] day focusing on equity, where we could choose two short or one long workshop. Some workshops related to gender/sexuality, but I chose a different equity-related topic.**

**“ Colleagues who need the training the MOST often skip the PD.**

**“ There was some training offered through my school board, but only because I sought it out or because I was selected to go as the openly LGBTQ+ teacher on staff. It wasn't generally promoted to everyone.**

**“ I participated in an ETFO book club about trans-inclusivity. Most training is self-directed and self-sought.**

**“ I have never been given board presented information about 2SLGBTQ+ students. I have a lot of personal experience with my own gender identity and schooling. This has driven me to learn more so I can advocate for not only myself but also my students.**

**“ ... I have recently completed an AQ for teachers on teaching 2SLGBTQ+ students.**

Some respondents also sought out and read board policy, accessed online research, and listened to podcasts.

## EDUCATION MOTIVATED BY PERSONAL CONNECTION

One quarter (24%) also revealed the significance of personal connection with a trans person either as a student in their class(es) or a family member which provided the catalyst for further self-directed learning and education. Overall, the responses reiterated that training was personally motivated and not systemically directed.

**“ Reading the school board policy and equity manual on my own time and initiative.**

**“ I have taken it upon myself to get training so that I am there for my students and their needs. Online reading, sessions at medical centre that were offered, and talking with teenagers from GSA.**

**“ One of my best friends is trans\* and this has led me to seek out education on my own.**

**“ I have learned the most through my students.**

**“ My family has been on a journey together when my daughter first explained she was unhappy with her body. We participated with the transgender youth clinic at Sick Kids and learned a lot through the team of people who helped support and educate our family.**

**“ Some education at school, but very little. Mostly self-education after own child came out as trans.**

## NO TRAINING

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More than one in ten (13%) indicated they had received no training at all.

- “ Thankful for this question as it has made me realize that there has been no training that I am aware of. I get support, I seek support, when needed.
- “ I have not received any training but would be very open to receiving some from my board.
- “ I have not had any training. I have a student who has identified this year and am learning as I go.

## PRE-SERVICE EDUCATION

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Some respondents (n = 11) indicated that their education regarding trans inclusion and gender diversity emerged during their B.Ed. program. Meanwhile, some noted that preservice education was diluted among other equity in education learnings.

- “ Throughout my B.Ed. program, mandatory courses on equitable, inclusive, and diverse education were offered and touched on such issues of representation in teaching. I found these courses to be very valuable and beneficial and crucial to my practice.
- “ At [teacher’s college], we really learned very little about this topic. Our anti-discriminatory education class focused more on race and Indigenous topics, such as decolonization and reconciliation. We learned about the intersectionality of LGBTQ+ identities with other identities, sexist homophobia and homophobic sexism. However, the basics of LGBTQ+ topics was covered VERY little and discussed VERY infrequently.

## Resources for Addressing Gender Diversity in Classrooms and Schools

We asked educators what **specific resources** they found useful or helpful in addressing transgender and gender diversity in their classroom and/or schools. Although less than half of respondents had school visits/workshops delivered by trans and gender diverse individuals, among educators who did have school visits, 93% rated them as moderately (29%) or very useful (65%). School visits were by far the most useful resource for addressing gender diversity in schools, followed by picture books.





**Table 6:** *Type and frequency of resources used for addressing gender diversity in classrooms and schools*

Resource	Have not used (%)	Usefulness ratings among educators who used the resource (n = 813-825)		
		Not useful	Moderately Useful	Very Useful
School Visits/Workshops Delivered by Trans and Gender Diverse Individuals	57%	6%	28%	65%
Picture Books	54%	10%	43%	47%
Novels and Other Forms of Literature	51%	7%	56%	37%
Community Generated Resources	43%	7%	57%	36%
Internet (YouTube and Other Websites)	33%	4%	64%	32%
Teacher Union Support Sources/Documents	51%	10%	58%	32%
Films/Documentaries	48%	4%	67%	28%
Newspaper/Magazine Articles	41%	11%	69%	20%
School Board Curriculum Support Materials/Documents	46%	27%	63%	10%

Notably, many resources had not been accessed by educators in this study. The most commonly accessed resource was the internet, with two-thirds (67%) of educators accessing YouTube and other websites to learn about gender diversity and trans inclusion.

School board curriculum support materials and documents were rated as the least useful resource, with over a quarter of respondents (27%) who had accessed them indicating they were not useful, and only 10% indicating they were very useful.

## Comments about resources

We asked respondents to provide specific titles or details of relevant resources that they have used in their classrooms and found helpful which resulted in 489 responses. Educators provided titles for resources in every category which revealed the range of resources they are accessing. However, one in ten (n=49) responses indicated that “no classroom resources had been used” or that they could not remember specific resource titles.

### SCHOOL VISITS/WORKSHOPS DELIVERED BY TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE INDIVIDUAL

Presenters and school visits (n=48) were sourced from community organizations, school board networks, and unaffiliated individuals. In addition to workshops from larger organizations and individual speakers sharing their personal narrative, educators invited slam poets, authors, motivational speakers and theatre troupes. This category also included examples of arts-based community resources as well as mental health resources and training.

- “ **A local transgender woman spoke to the school about her journey. Truly the best experience for the kids!**
- “ **Having speakers come in is what solidifies the idea that transgender education is about humans and not about policy or politics.**
- “ **Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity is a great resource well. I’ve brought them in to speak as well and it’s amazing.**

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Respondents noted these visits are important because the quality of information was perceived as **authentic and reliable**, and the personal connection fostered reflexivity following the presentation.

## PICTURE BOOKS

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Educators mentioned specific picture books as resources they had used to support discussions about gender diversity in class. The most frequently mentioned print resources were story books for younger audiences. Respondents reported that picture books are **an excellent entry point** for discussion with younger age groups - and have potential as resources for older students.

## NOVELS AND OTHER LITERATURE

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Respondents also mentioned specific novels, non-fiction, poetry, academic paper, and handbooks or guides as resources (n=50). Stories were reported to address universal themes of inclusion, affirmation, and self-expression but could also provide **a more nuanced representation** depending on the narrative.

**“ Someone who is living that life provides more relevant information than a document that may or may not have been created with consultations made with that community.**

**“ Having speakers come in is what solidifies the idea that transgender education is about humans and not about policy or politics.**

**“ Working with primary students, picture books have been very useful, and even having older reading buddies read these books have helped both age groups discuss gender issues.**

**“ I have used mostly picture books because of the age group I teach, and I felt that picture books generated conversations around kindness and inclusion, which we focus in our daily teaching in school.**

**“ Children’s stories are good for all ages.**

**“ Many of the White Pine novels feature main characters that are gender diverse.**

## COMMUNITY GENERATED RESOURCES/ORGANIZATIONS

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Community-created resources which included materials and workshops created by large trans-affirming organizations were mentioned in 86 responses. Organizations included national and international resources from EGALÉ Canada (n=23), GLSEN (n=6), and the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity (n=8) and local community, health, and faith organizations (n=13).

- “ **As a member of the GSA Network in my school board, I belong to a group of other professionals who have shared resources.**
- “ **[We] brought in a LGBTQ+ representative from the [Local] Family Services.**
- “ **I have been using a printable full colour booklet created by a parent showing stereotypes being broken (from guys wearing pink or flowers to relationships to gender expression and identification.**

## INTERNET

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Though YouTube and TedTalks were mentioned, internet resources also included web comics, human rights-focused websites/organizations, and social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. According to respondents, the internet offers **accessible, relatable, and current learning supports** to exploring gender diversity both for independent professional development and in-class use.

- “ **Used a video interviewing a trans gender young adult. My students were able to connect to the youth and were excited about the human connection.**



## UNION SUPPORTS

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Union-related resources (n=31) included workshops and conferences as well as equity curriculum, publications, and guidelines.

- “ Reaching Every Student from OECTA [Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association].
- “ Book and workshop from ETFO.
- “ OSSTF common threads “Still Not Laughing”.
- “ Supporting Transgender and Transsexual Students in K-12 Schools” by CTF [Canadian Teachers’ Federation].

## FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES.

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Film and video resources (n=15) included mainstream movies, foreign films, documentaries, and student-created films.

- “ Student created stop-motion film reflecting family member experience
- “ Participation in a local Indie Film festival featuring Trans issues

## SCHOOL BOARD CURRICULUM SUPPORTS

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School board-specific resources included professional development opportunities, educator networks, anti-bullying policies and guidelines, board-organized conferences, student-led clubs such as Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSA) and memos. Importantly, the resources collected here were not always related to gender diversity. Many of the resources identified by respondents dealt either exclusively with sexuality or more generally with inclusion.

- “ LGBTQ2S+ workshop through First Nation school.
- “ “Rainbow Resources” posted internally on our school board website.

## NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE ARTICLES

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Respondents indicated newspapers and magazines as another resource for educating about trans inclusion and gender diversity in the classroom.

**“ I use newspaper articles to talk about current issues and intentionally include transgender issues when they are current.**

## PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

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In addition to the above categories, personal connections such as family members, friends who identify as trans or gender diverse, and the respondent's own lived experience was mentioned as an important resource (n=12).

**“ I have used my experience working with transgender and gender diverse individuals.**

**“ I've only brought the topic to my classroom as identity inclusivity and human rights issues. I've used personal experience as my partner is trans as a guideline.**

# Barriers to Using Resources

Educators offered additional comments on why they considered certain resources effective or not, as well as the challenges associated with each. The comments provide deeper insight into the considerations and challenges associated with accessing and using resources. The table below summarizes key themes among comments.

**Table 7:** Reasons for not accessing resources

Key themes	Number of comments
Lack of Institutional Support	72
Outside of Professional Purview (Not Relevant)	51
Limited Knowledge of Resources and Resource Deployment	20

## LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Respondents (n=72) identified a lack of institutional support as a systemic problem impacting access to and use of resources. Lack of availability and quality in resources was a key challenge.

- “ I have not been given resources or permission to specifically speak about the LGBTQ community. I just teach tolerance, acceptance and inclusion.
- “ Access to resources is not always evident, a lot of research needs to be done from the teacher, but there isn't enough time.

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School visits and workshops delivered by trans and gender diverse individuals are valued, but **visits may be difficult to organize**. Respondents noted logistical challenges such as the time needed to identify, contact, and book a speaker, lack of financial resources to compensate the presenter, and difficulty finding presenters to speak to certain experiences.

- “ [We need] money to bring guest speakers in.
- “ Community member – difficult to schedule.
- “ Visits to the classroom: I plan to, but have not had a class long enough to arrange yet.
- “ I would love to have a transgender student come and talk to our students, but I'm not sure how to arrange this.
- “ There was a trans play offered by the school. Unfortunately, the admin did not make it [available to everyone and only] allowed 100 students to be pulled out by their parents and stay at school.

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School visits by trans and gender diverse individuals can be especially difficult to arrange in Catholic school boards.

- “ [I] have not used guest speakers as it's difficult to find trans gender speakers with a Catholic lens.



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Sourcing age-appropriate and subject-specific books and novels present considerable challenges and there is **a lack of meaningful resources for primary and junior grades.**

Respondents noted that accessing appropriate resources in French was particularly difficult.

**“ I teach French to younger students and thus it is harder to address these issues in a second language.**

**“ I have used numerous resources for my own professional development; however, it is notably harder to find resources that are appropriate for the middle school age sometimes (e.g., finding age appropriate resources for 2-Spirited folks or items related to sexuality)**

**“ I do not have age-appropriate resources for years 5-11 old.**

**“ I teach kindergarten and have not had opportunity to use any resources in this setting as of yet. One of the main reasons is the need for resources/ picture books appropriate for this age group in my school.**

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Though the internet provides a wide range of resources, **accessing relevant resources takes time** to properly source and assess materials, and some educators encounter on-site barriers such as limits on internet bandwidth that make reliably streaming videos difficult.

**“ I have hesitated to use unvetted material from the Internet, because I would be nervous to choose inappropriate videos, clips etc.**

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Educators noted their administrators' and school board's position towards gender diversity influenced their willingness to engage with relevant resources. For some educators, their school board's **ambivalence towards affirming gender diversity was a deterrent** to using these resources.

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This ambivalence raised questions about how educators would be supported should they receive community push-back. One educator even referenced the “snitch-line” implemented by the Ford government following the repeal of the 2015 sex-ed curriculum in Ontario; parents could contact this line if they believed teachers were still teaching the trans-inclusive sex-ed curriculum in the classroom (Teotonio, 2018).

- “ **Our school board and individual schools (being Catholic) do not warmly welcome open discussion of gender diversity.**
- “ **I feel a little uncomfortable discussing trans issues in a Catholic school for fear of the reaction of close-minded parents.**
- “ **I would feel afraid to teach my students about LGBTQ+ because I am unaware of the school board's stance on it, as well as the negative backlash from many closed-minded parents.**
- “ **Government snitch lines regarding gay/trans inclusive curriculum make it scary to approach the topic for an FTM person like me.**

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Educators shared **concerns about the quality of materials** made available by their school or school board. In some cases, board-supplied materials tended to be “reactive to student need (rather than proactive)”.

“**The board is behind the wave of where we should be as a profession, so I use almost exclusively external resources.**”

“**I avoid resources that use binary language. Most board documents fall into this category.**”

“**School/Board resources are general and do not address issues within a community that is outwardly trans- and homophobic.**”

“**Board issued material (Catholic school board) teaches tolerance, but still views the idea of being transgender as “antithetical to Catholic teachings”, and do not address issues within a community that is outwardly trans- and homophobic.**”

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A few educators reported that they did not use resources due to the lack of support from the Ontario Ministry of Education (the Ministry).

“**I have not used many other resources, as the Ministry of education does not support teach[ing] about gender identity in elementary schools**”

“**Our government (Ford) is Homophobic. Dangerous times for all of us.**”

Lack of systemic support extended to **a lack of professional learning opportunities** on trans inclusive and gender diversity issues. Opportunities were either not available or did not reach a wide enough audience.

**“ School board policies are not good enough. They need to provide more PD for staff and provide staff with the tools to normalize the appropriate terms.**

**“ I am an EA, so it is not up to me what is taught in any given classroom I happen to be in. I participated in one ‘diversity’ PA Day workshop at my school, but that has been it. Nothing has been done for the students as far as I can tell.**

**“ There are no other resources in my school in regard to this topic and I do not feel fully confident to teach this topic furthermore without training.**

## **PERCEIVED AS BEYOND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Some respondents claimed that using trans-affirmative resources was not relevant to their professional role. Respondents cited the following academic subjects as not relevant to addressing gender diversity: sciences, mathematics, French, credit recovery and Resource/Student Success. In some cases, respondents indicated their role was to “model expected behaviour” and to “be supportive of students in the classroom”. Some mentioned they would address issues as they come up and source relevant materials when needed as opposed to integrating topics related to gender diversity directly in their teaching practice.

**“ I teach manufacturing, the topic is not part of my teaching.**

**“ I teach science and the curriculum I deliver does not address this specific topic. My role is to be supportive of students in the classroom rather than deliver lessons on this topic.**

**“ I teach math, so topics involving discrimination or education about differences only present themselves when there is an issue in the class or school community. Then I usually choose the most available resource at the time.**



Educators also reported not engaging in discussions and lessons about gender diversity when they felt it was not relevant to the children and youth in their care. Students for whom gender diversity was deemed irrelevant included autistic students, students with disabilities and “minority” students. In these cases, educators stated that gender identity was either too abstract or secondary to more pressing issues.

## LIMITED KNOWLEDGE RELATED TO ACCESSING AND DEPLOYING RESOURCES

Some respondents indicated they did not know “where to find relevant, useful resources” and felt “unsure” and “uninformed”. In addition, some educators do not feel knowledgeable enough about gender diversity to choose classroom-appropriate resources.

Respondents said they lack the logistical knowhow to use certain resources.

**“ My class is Credit Recovery, and everyone is working on different credits at their own pace.**

**“ I work with students with autism who are focused on learning basic communication and life skills, so we haven’t addressed these issues in my class.**

**“ Transgender issues have not always been top of mind in the classes I teach. There are a lot of minority groups and issues, therefore I have not had a lot of opportunity to discuss the issues in my classroom.**

**“ I don’t know where to find relevant, useful resources.**

**“ Don’t know where to access many of these resources.**

**“ I am not familiar with enough resources related to gender diversity.**

**“ Difficult to teach about this Explicitly without being construed as “preachy”.**

**“ I’m not sure how I would authentically include a specific resource into my lessons.**

**“ I was not sure how to incorporate this subject in my classroom in a way that would not offend students and parents.**

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In some cases, respondents' self-reported limited knowledge was related to a lack of institutional support.

**“ There is confusion around the changes made to the PE/Health curriculum and what we can teach/talk about in class around this subject.**

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Despite these challenges, comments also revealed the strategies that educators use when resources are scarce. Some respondents reported circumventing a lack of resources by creating their own.

**“ Resources are not readily available and have not been relevant to my particular teaching assignment in the past 5 years...However, I make my own. For example, for Family Day I include all types of families, including the LGBT community.**

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Others sourced materials on a case-by-case basis for individual students, drew on personal connections, facilitated organic class discussions, and engaged in 'quality control' of resources made available by the school.

**“ I've tried to remove from my library a number of books that present very stereotypical or rigid ideas of gender including certain romance series.**

## Additional Supports that Educators Need

Respondents provided 645 comments in response to a question about what additional supports they need to respond more effectively to transgender and gender diverse students in schools and in their classrooms. The table below summarises the key themes among supports educators need.

**Table 8:** *Additional supports that educators need*

Key themes among additional supports educators need	Number of comments
Professional Development, Training & Workshops	296
Relevant Resources (Curricular and Pedagogical, Trans-Led Education, Age Appropriate and Accessible)	206
Supportive School Culture	55
Readiness to Address Parental Opposition	28
Clearer Policies and Support for Their Enactment	28
Counselling Support for Individual Students	18
Facilitating Student Feedback	14

### PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, TRAINING, AND WORKSHOPS

Almost half of comments (45%) reiterated the need for additional professional learning opportunities, with some stipulating that such education needs to be mandatory. They said that PD needs to include explicit instruction on how to address trans and gender diverse issues and asked for workshops to be conducted during school hours.

- “ [PD should include how] to use common, acceptable language and consistently create safe spaces for the learning of all communities.
- “ Sensitivity training, some teachers don’t understand what the students are going through.
- “ All staff should be provided with professional development.

- “ **Mandatory professional learning. I see the same faces in every voluntary workshop.**
- “ **More In schoolhouse mandatory PD. I find there are a lot of teachers who are “uncomfortable “with this topic that are part of the PUBLIC school board. They shy away from it completely during health and everyday curriculum.**

## RELEVANT RESOURCES

One third (32%) expressed a strong need for more resources.

- “ **Online ready to go resources, such as a list of books, organized by grade level...**
- “ **Classroom resources need to include more inclusive examples of LGBTQ students.**
- “ **Like matters of race and diversity/ inclusion generally, we need to integrate this into the fabric of our everyday teaching. Seeing model/ sample lessons where it’s not especially ABOUT trans stuff, but rather it is incorporated into other existing lessons I think is very helpful.**
- “ **For students who are questioning, Guidance and the LGBTQ group helps tremendously. The bigger challenge is to provide appropriate resources to the other students, so that they understand and, particularly in high school, to avoid trans bullying.**

## SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

One in ten (8%) identified a need for additional support to create and sustain a school culture that supports gender diversity and trans inclusion. They called for support from principals, school administrators, and colleagues in creating a school culture where gender expansiveness is embraced and taught.

- “ **School leadership needs to directly lead conversations, learning and build awareness in this area of our equity & inclusion work.**
- “ **More open talk and communication by admin that it’s the human rights code that allows individuals to be who they are, love who they love, and identify the way their self wants them to identify. No questions.**
- “ **Teachers need the full support of those who govern them. Everyone up the chain on the union side, the government side, the OCT side, and all of their superiors in the board.**
- “ **More support from other staff.**

## READINESS TO ADDRESS PARENTAL OPPOSITION

Other needed supports related to addressing parental opposition (4%).

- “ **Teachers need to know that they will be supported by admin, superintendents, etc. if/when parents complain about resources supporting trans and gender diverse students are used in the school or classroom.**
- “ **I do fear parental backlash if the topic were just randomly brought up.**
- “ **Information to go out to the parent community from our school board. The message of inclusion HAS to come from them!**
- “ **[We need] workshops offered during school hours, e.g., how to handle unsupportive parents while empowering the student.**



## CLEARER POLICIES AND SUPPORT FOR THEIR ENACTMENT

Respondents emphasized the importance of having board specific policies to support educators and students. Boards must ensure all educators and administrators are aware of their legal obligations to support and accommodate transgender and gender diverse students.

- “ Stronger policies and support that protect teachers who support, care and work with transgender and gender diverse students.
- “ The school board needs a policy that is open and clear and ensures equity and inclusion without prejudice.... The policy needs to be shared and taught to all staff and implemented in each school.
- “ [All educators] need to understand that it is their obligation, regardless of personally held beliefs to call students by their preferred name and ensure that the students’ preference is respected.

## COUNSELLING SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

Educators mentioned a need for trans-affirmative counselling (n = 18).

- “ Students need more social workers and CYWs available to them.
- “ More caring adults in guidance roles who have knowledge or are part of the community.

## FACILITATING STUDENT FEEDBACK

Educators valued student feedback as an additional support to ensure they are meeting the needs of trans and gender diverse students in their care.

- “ Feedback from those students to see if we’re meeting their needs.
- “ I think asking students what they need is the best approach. Each student has their own unique needs that begin with respecting them as individuals. From the answers given, we can assess other required additional supports.

# Barriers to Addressing Trans-Inclusivity and Gender Diversity in Schools

We asked, “What do you think are the biggest challenges or barriers in addressing trans-inclusivity and gender diversity in the education system?”, which resulted in 652 responses. Key themes among the data are summarized in the table below.

**Table 9:** Barriers to addressing trans-inclusivity and gender diversity in schools

Key themes among barriers to addressing trans-inclusivity and gender diversity in the education system.	Number of comments
Lack of Education	259
Unsupportive parents & Colleagues	185
Lack of Resources and Curricular Support	58
Stigma/Transphobia	55
Catholic School System/ Religious Beliefs	50
Systemic/Structural environment	45

## LACK OF EDUCATION

Two out of five respondents (40%) cited a lack of education influencing their ability to address gender inclusivity and diversity in their schools. Many respondents identified a lack of understanding specifically about terms and proper pronoun usage as a major challenge.

**“ I think a lot of folks think sex and gender are somehow too private or personal to discuss with their students. That myth has to be dissolved as it simply perpetuates hetero- and cisnormativity. It gets needlessly lumped in with other “sensitive” or “controversial” issues.**

**“ People not having enough information to be able to address the challenges that arise correctly and respectfully. Others may be embarrassed or not comfortable talking about it.**

**“ There are many people who have strong negative opinions about trans-inclusivity (both teachers and guardians), are not educated in these areas, or misinformed, and those who feel uneasy making it part of their classroom discussions and curriculum.**

**“ The education system is still predominantly white, straight, and male. There is still A LOT of homophobia, transphobia, workplace harassment and bullying towards the LGBTQ+2S, minority communities and women. So long as the training is optional, it will always be the same crowd that attends and the ones that need to change their truth will never get the opportunity to do so.**

## UNSUPPORTIVE PARENTS AND COLLEAGUES

Just over a quarter (28%) of respondents expressed concerns over backlash and lack of support from parents and colleagues which they identified as a considerable barrier to supporting trans inclusion in schools. Some respondents specifically pointed to overt expressions of transphobia and resistance from both groups as a barrier to fostering trans inclusivity and gender diversity in schools. Such a fear of parents also emerged in the comfortability of employing gender inclusive language, indicating a fear of being “accused of spreading an agenda” despite “want[ing] to create safe spaces for my students”. Other educators were often cited as having a lack of knowledge and understanding about gender diversity, and an otherwise lack of comfort with gender diversity.

- “ One of the largest barriers is resistance from parents.
- “ Parents. The reality is that certain communities claim a strong moral objection to learning that promotes trans-inclusivity. This results in teachers feeling intimidated when it comes to addressing these topics.
- “ Parents exempting their kids, parents being outraged, teachers not being comfortable presenting about these topics, our current politic climate in education.
- “ Our new curriculum does not address these concepts early enough, many teachers are uncomfortable addressing them, many parents don’t want their children participating in these discussions and have the right to withdraw them from any human growth and development learning.
- “ [L]ack of knowledge and a fear of things others don’t understand. Teachers also form this false narrative in which the parents of students in their class will be somehow offended by using inclusive information. They need to be empowered to use that language.
- “ Many parents are reluctant to accept that schools can and should include these topics. They push back hard, especially certain religious groups.

## LACK OF RESOURCES AND CURRICULAR SUPPORT

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Linked to a lack of education, one in ten (9%) identified a lack of resources as another barrier. Respondents insisted upon the necessity of more nuanced integration of gender diversity into curriculum and more time to learn and address gender expansive understandings that are central to supporting trans and non-binary students (Lueke, 2018; Human Rights Campaign and Gender Spectrum, 2014; Martino, Kassen, & Omercajic, 2022; Pastel et al., 2019; Steele & Nicholson, 2019).

- “ We simply don’t have the resources and training.
- “ Lack of representation in curriculum and learning materials especially in the primary grades.
- “ I teach French. There are little to no resources that are gender inclusive since the Académie Française has rejected gender neutral pronouns.
- “ I believe the first barrier to be that the curriculum is still being taught from an aggressively hetero normative point of view....

## STIGMA/ TRANSPHOBIA

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Notably, almost one in ten (8%) identified systemic barriers such as stigma and transphobia.

- “ Public opinion and administrative silence ... too often trans students are discriminated against not just by peers but by teachers and administrators, even if it’s just by ignoring the bullying trans students face in schools.
- “ I had a really transphobic class and I needed to take baby steps, so I didn’t alienate them altogether. It didn’t really work. They get transphobic messages from home, and I couldn’t change that.
- “ I think people are still uncomfortable with accepting non-conforming individuals.



## CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM AND/OR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Some respondents (7%) indicated that embracing gender diversity is more challenging in the context of certain religious beliefs, for example, in the Catholic school system. The faith of other educators and the community was also listed as an obstacle.

- “ Many educators avoid this subject for faith reasons.
- “ The rights of competing minorities. It can be difficult to maintain a trans-inclusive classroom and discuss gender diversity in the classroom while respecting the rights of more conservative religious groups.
- “ The stigma from fundamentalist Catholics and from parents who think we are pushing gender diversity on to their sons/daughters.
- “ Working in a Catholic School Board [has] conflicting outlooks.

## SYSTEMIC/STRUCTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Some respondents (7%) identified structural impediments related to providing accessible and safe washrooms, receiving board level/school administrative support for trans inclusion, and creating a gender inclusive school culture.

- “ Biggest challenge is changing the norm. For example, preferred pronouns they/them/their just isn't commonplace yet. It will take time for the public to see these words as part of a common vernacular. Educating people in the school system about these terms is a first step.
- “ There are minimal policies and guidelines when it comes to addressing transgender issues. There needs to be clear policies with how to approach issues regarding transgendered students- for instance, washroom breaks.

- “ Many things are still split by gender, gym, change rooms, washrooms, even teacher language (“boys and girls...”).**
- “ Appropriate washrooms. We need to find a way to get rid of gendered washrooms altogether so those students who identify as other have a washroom that isn’t hidden or difficult to access.**

# Advice on Improving Education about Trans-Inclusivity and Gender Diversity

The question, “Do you have advice or recommendations for improving education about trans-inclusivity and gender diversity in the education system?” resulted in 533 responses. Six key themes are listed in the table below, along with sub-themes.

**Table 10:** *Educators’ recommendations*

Key themes among educators’ advice and recommendations	Number of comments
<b>1 Provide Relevant Professional Learning</b>	275
Include training in pre-service teacher education	
Make training mandatory	
Offer PD for administrators	
Educate about trans terminology	
<b>2 Address Systemic and Community Barriers</b>	101
Educate about and implement policy	
Engage and inform parents	
Address community resistance	
Address religious prejudice	

Key themes among educators' advice and recommendations	Number of comments
<b>3 Create a Culture of Inclusivity</b>	69
Start young	
Foster respect for diversity and human rights	
Support educators to teach about trans inclusion	
Reduce stigma and transphobia	
Improve access to fundamental human rights	
Listen to student voice	
<b>4 Include Topics in the Curriculum</b>	60
<b>5 Provide Relevant Resources</b>	54
<b>6 Support Trans Positive Visibility and Role Models</b>	53
Foster engagement with the LGBTQ community	
Invite trans, non-binary, and gender diverse guest speakers	

## 1 PROVIDE RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Almost half of comments (45%) called for **more professional development and training**. Respondents asked for training that was relevant and focused on trans inclusion and gender diversity issues.

Respondents suggested that **including training in pre-service teacher education** was an important step towards improving education about trans and gender diversity issues.

Respondents also called for **making professional development mandatory** to ensure all educators are knowledgeable about these issues.

Consistent with other findings in this study, some comments suggested that professional learning include **offering PD and support for administrators**.

“ [We need] more in-service to teachers to improve their comfort level.

“ Everything tends to get lumped into equity, which makes it hard to go deep on anything.

“ As with other anti-oppressive education, it has to be interwoven in the curriculum of every teacher’s college.

“ Trans-inclusivity and gender diversity must be addressed in teachers’ college.

“ Make it mandatory - every staff member should have to be educated.

“ [Provide] more specific, formal, and mandatory training for all teachers regardless of personal views.

“ Train admin for the trickle down.

“ We need to create more informal networks to support educators and admin in doing this work so that they know they are not alone, especially in rural communities.



Educators wanted professional learning to **include education about trans terminology** so they can speak with confidence about trans inclusion.

## 2 ADDRESS SYSTEMIC AND COMMUNITY BARRIERS

Many comments (n = 101) pointed to systemic and community barriers that must be addressed to ensure training and resources for trans inclusion and gender expansive education are funded and provided system wide.

Among comments on systemic barriers, respondents underscored the need to **educate about trans inclusive policies**.

**“ Staff need tutorials in the terminology and how to be inclusive.**

**“ [Educators need] fully formed lessons that people can use that address correct terminology.**

**“ I think it has to come from the Ministry of Ed as a mandate. Until we are told that inclusivity and equity are tied to recognizing gender fluidity, then school boards aren't going to take it on as a mandate.**

**“ Boards should ensure we all [have] the same info. There's a huge difference from teacher to teacher.**

**“ Boards of education need to follow human rights codes and hire for inclusivity.**

**“ Start at the top with admin and board staff so that policies can be better developed & implemented.**

**“ I feel that there is a knowledge gap for the teachers. We do not have time to discuss these policies and see how we can concretely improve our schools.**

**“ Finding money for release time for teachers to learn.**

Comments also highlighted the need to **support policy enactment**.

Education about trans inclusion and gender diversity should **engage and inform parents**. Such education could be provided through workshops by school council.

Educating administrators, parents, and community members could help to **address community resistance**.

Among comments about community barriers, some respondents called for support to **address religious prejudice**. These comments reflected a tension in the Catholic school system between following religious beliefs and practicing trans inclusion.

**“ Start at the top with admin and board staff so that policies can be better developed & implemented.**

**“ [We need] more school wide initiatives by admin to address parent populations.**

**“ Provide workshops for parents.**

**“ I would love to see information/ resources that our parent council could distribute to parents.**

**“ Some communities do not embrace this teaching.**

**“ How do you deal with this situation if the parents are not on board?**

**“ [There is a] fear of teachers in getting negative feedback/resistance from the school community (parents, students, etc.).**

**“ Some teachers are not comfortable with educating students based on their personal beliefs and religion.**

**“ We still have a publicly funded Catholic education system [that] is part of the problem.**

**“ [We have a] Restrictive curriculum due to religious tradition.**

### 3 CREATE A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVITY

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One in ten comments (11%) referred to the key theme of creating a school culture that fosters inclusivity. Some respondents commented that creating this culture must **start young**.

- “ **Start it early! It is a discussion that should start in Primary and continue until the end of high school.**
- “ **Begin by introducing [gender diversity] in kindergarten through literacy and normalize it. Characters who just happen to be transgender. Then begin discussing it in the primary division, so by the time transgender youth are able to identify it in themselves it will have no negative stigma.**
- “ **Begin introducing inclusive language, stories, ideas, to children at a young age.**

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Another aspect of creating a positive school culture is to **reduce stigma and transphobia** through education and action to address transphobia.

- “ **Normalize gender issues as part of students' lives.**
- “ **More information always helps to alleviate fears and break stigma.**
- “ **Address transphobia in the classroom when it occurs.**

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Educators also indicated their support for trans inclusion and gender diversity as part of an overall, system-wide approach to **fostering respect for diversity and human rights**.

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While students need to feel supported, educators also need **support to teach about trans-inclusion** within an accepting, inclusive school environment. Educators need to feel supported by administrators, board officials, and colleagues.

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Creating an inclusive school culture relies on **improving access to basic human rights** such as safe washrooms and preferred pronouns.

**“ There needs to be a strong message from the Ministry of Education as well as from school boards around the commitment to trans-inclusivity. The public system is for everybody, and as such, leadership should not shy away from clearly articulating our responsibilities in education to uphold human rights through a firm commitment to equity and inclusion.**

**“ Bring attention to the fact that while everyone is different, we have more in common than we have differences; ensure ALL kids are treated with respect.**

**“ Support for teachers so that feel secure enough in their jobs to broach these topics with students.**

**“ Make sure teachers feel supported/protected by school boards so if there is a complaint by a parent there is no fear of consequences and full support of the principal.**

**“ We must address basic human rights such as single stall washrooms before we can get to anything else.**

**“ Every school should have a gender neutral bathroom and changerooms.**

**“ Our papers and programs need to allow us to enter preferred names.**

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In addition, a truly inclusive culture requires educators to **listen to student voice**.

#### **4 INCLUDE TOPICS IN THE CURRICULUM**

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One in ten comments (10%) advocated for more intervention and support to include gender diversity and trans representation in the curriculum. Lessons across all subjects need to include a focus on gender diversity. Interestingly, while some respondents had indicated that teaching gender diversity to young children was not age appropriate or not relevant, among their recommendations, educators advocated for introducing discussions of gender diversity in the curriculum as early as possible.

**“ Increasing student voice—they are much more aware than we are!**

**“ Hearing from trans students specifically about their experience.**

**“ We tend to teach it only when there’s a situation where everyone needs to know about it and understand it. We need to teach it more concretely in the regular curriculum units.**

**“ [Gender diversity] Needs to be more specifically addressed in curriculum and policy.**

**“ Include trans people across the curriculum whenever possible (trans History, trans authors, athletes, and contributors).**

**“ It should be included as part of the curriculum early on so that students can have an understanding from a young age which will work to normalize the terms.**



## 5 PROVIDE RELEVANT RESOURCES

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Respondents (9%) asked for more resources for educators, administrators and also parents (including those who are supportive of gender diversity and also those who are not).

- “ We simply don’t have the resources and training.
- “ Put it in the curriculum and provide resources for teaching.
- “ Provide early years education lessons that are age appropriate as children are much more accepting of information when they are young.
- “ The more education and resources teachers are given, the less daunting it can seem for those who have negative preconceptions or who don’t know how to introduce the topic/ language in an age-appropriate way.

## 6 SUPPORT TRANS POSITIVE VISIBILITY AND ROLE MODELS

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Respondents recommended **supporting trans positive visibility, role models, and inclusion of gender diversity in the curriculum**, as well as the need to foster engagement with the LGBTQ community and to learn from trans students.

- “ Hire more trans and queer staff members.
- “ Keep ensuring trans folks are visible - in the texts we study, in our posted information and in our halls. It will be especially good when we have more trans teachers in the system.
- “ Access, visibility, understating. It’s hard for little kids to accept and understand something that they don’t see, hear, feel.

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Some advocated for the experiences and voice of trans folks to be included as part of this professional development and called for a commitment in schools to **fostering an active engagement with the LGBT community.**

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Another way to support trans positive visibility and role models is to **invite trans, non-binary, and gender diverse guest speakers.**

- “ **Encourage all school community members to engage with trans\* folks and their needs, not just the GSA advisor or guidance counsellor.**
- “ **Giving voice to members of the community to come in and share their stories.**
  
- “ **[We need] More guest speakers who are transgender.**
- “ **[Educators] need to interact with more people from diverse communities and hear from them how to better support them. So, invite speakers in to [speak to] teachers and, separately, to students.**

## Highlighting Trans Educators' Voices

As a subset of the survey data, we separated out participant responses of educators who self-identified as trans, nonbinary, genderqueer, genderfluid, gender non-conforming and/or Two Spirit (n=38). Some respondents checked off more than one of these identity markers. In this section, we highlight their perspectives and critical insights. While trans educators demonstrated heightened awareness of trans-inclusive policies and resources, they also indicated their need for further education despite their own personal identification.

This highlights the impact of pervasive cisgenderism which has prevented the development of trans-affirmative knowledges and language about gender expansiveness, gender creativity and gender independence (Kennedy, 2018; Pyne, 2014; Ehrensaft, 2016). It must be emphasized that identifying as transgender or gender diverse does not position one as an expert in how to address administrative systems that impact the lives of trans folks. However, given the history of erasure and pathologization of trans people, it is important to privilege their insider perspectives, insights, and experiences within the school system. This knowledge is a necessary prerequisite for developing policy and reform in schools that is committed to addressing trans marginalization.

## GREATER KNOWLEDGE

A majority (55%) of trans educators rated their knowledge of trans inclusion and gender diversity as very good. Only 15% indicated that they had received extensive training, and 76% of trans educators identified personal experience as the primary source for their education about trans inclusion and gender diversity. Moreover, 74% of trans educators indicated that self-education and learning through the internet, social media and popular culture were also a major source of their education. Notably, trans educators highlighted that they had received little or no training from their school boards with one respondent advocating their board for in-service training:

**“ If I include personal experience and self-education as professional development, then my answer to the previous question would be extensive. What I think of my actual training was only a little, but it was provided by my school.**

**“ I have never been given board presented information about 2SLGBTQ+ students. I have a lot of personal experience with my own gender identity and schooling. This has driven me to learn more so I can advocate for not only myself but also my students**

**“ Upon my recommendations my board offered inservices to teachers concerning LGBTQ students**

## FINDING USEFUL RESOURCES

Notably, 57% of trans educators found school visits and workshops delivered by gender diverse and trans individuals to be moderately or very useful, 68% of trans educators indicated community generated resources to be moderately or very useful, and 79% of trans educators found the internet to be moderately or very useful. However, the majority of trans respondents (63%) had either not used school board curriculum materials or simply found them not useful. Their comments point to systemic problems, particularly within the Catholic Board:

**“ Board issued material (Catholic school board) teaches tolerance, but still views the idea of being transgender as antithetical to Catholic teachings.**

**“ I have been nervous about using resources as I teach in a Catholic high school, and I also don't want to draw unnecessary attention to my grade 9 trans students in particular because there are so few of them that I don't want them to feel I am talking about them indirectly.**

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They also highlighted the limitations of using board generated documents as well as concerns about parents:

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS FOR TEACHERS

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Trans teachers were particularly sensitized to the need for hiring practices that encourage trans-representation amongst educators and affirm their authentic presence in the workplace:

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Trans teachers were adamant about the need for systemic support at the board and school level for trans teachers and trans-inclusion. They noted that increased training and awareness are necessary if trans-inclusion is to be a responsibility that is shared by school staff:

**“ I avoid resources that use binary language. Most board documents fall into this category.**

**“ I was not sure how to incorporate this subject in my classroom in a way that would not offend students and parents**

**“ [We need to] Have direct policy, resources found at the school board to support positive inclusive hiring practices for transgender teachers.**

**“ Full backing by the board to be out to our students to serve as role models.**

**“ Teachers need the full support of those who govern them. Everyone up the chain on the union side, the government side, the OCT side, and all of their superiors in the board. At the moment, that is ridiculously not present; trustees even had the audacity to speak against the raising of the rainbow flag because it contravened their rights. The government is stepping in to do an equity assessment of the board; but I have no confidence in it whatsoever. Previously, the board did an assessment through an outside agency, and LGBT+ issues didn't even make it into their report.**



- “ Active admin support; inclusivity at all levels of the board (e.g., pronouns on nametags and email signature); LGBTQ knowledge of other staff so that it is not all on one out staff member**
- “ Elementary educators and admin personnel need to be trained to understand that even if they think “this doesn’t come up here” it does. If they aren’t seeing it that means that they aren’t a safe space because the students who grow into my students were first in their schools.**
- “ More PD, more AQs, more inclusive language [is needed] in Ministry/ board/union communication. Make trans issues an in-your-face priority.**
- “ I have started including my pronouns in my email signature (haven’t had a chance on physical name tags - but I plan to). More awareness of this in school board PD and examples set by superintendents would be great. I DO NOT agree that it should be required.**
- “ Workshops by trans individuals and groups would help generate more visibility and concrete knowledge about trans people and gender diversity. We talk about them but listening to them would be so much more effective.**

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Trans educators also advocated for PD that is offered by trans individuals themselves:

They also stressed the need for trans-inclusive curriculum:

## BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF TERMINOLOGY

Trans educators indicated high levels of understanding of all terms listed and comfort levels about applying these terms in the classroom. For example, 70% of trans educators indicated a moderate to very good understanding of the term cisnormativity. Similarly, 89% of trans educators had a moderate to very good understanding of the term non-binary and 69% of trans teachers had high levels of understanding of the term genderqueer. In the absence of system-level support for trans inclusion and trans-affirmative education, these teachers actively sought out this education for themselves:

- “ I think more integration of transgender and gender diverse positive examples, literature, or materials into the curriculum would help normalize it.**
- “ Lots of professional development around language and pronouns (trans 101s) and maybe concrete ways to include trans content in curriculum and everyday teaching. Access to many children’s books about trans people and issues.**
- “ I have done a lot of self-directed PD.**
- “ Since I am a trans woman who may very well have realized it sooner than 38 years old if there had been supports in place for me to realize my identity. That would have changed my life to a *\*significant\** degree.**
- “ I would like principals to model these words in an inclusive way.**
- “ I’m most comfortable with terms I know well and can easily pin down. Gender creativity suggests that NB [non-binary] and trans people are making their gender up rather than trying to express their non-normative experience with gender.**
- “ I mean, as mentioned above, I am queer and gender non-conforming so...**
- “ Those are very positive terms. But they put teachers at great professional risk.**

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Importantly, trans educators recognized that despite their current knowledge and comfort levels, their knowledge had limits and that this impacted on their comfort using certain terms:

- “ I feel that several of these terms have nuance that I do not understand and would not be comfortable sharing or defining with students. I would be able to give a basic definition of most if they came up but would not initiate the conversation.
- “ I’m comfortable using terms I understand with students of an appropriate age.
- “ I’m not comfortable using a term in the class where I lack understanding.
- “ I can’t remember what some of them are without looking it up. I’m still very willing to use terms that I have been educated about.

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These comments point to the **need for systemic support for trans-affirmative education and provision of curriculum resources for trans and all educators in the system**, so that they can effectively educate about gender diversity. This education and provision of pedagogical support cannot fall on the shoulders of trans educators and trans students. The current system is failing to provide this support.

## THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSPHOBIA

Trans educators specifically identified transphobia and a lack of knowledge as major challenges that need to be overcome:

- “ **Transphobia and (willful) ignorance.**
- “ **Othering. Fear of controversy.**
- “ **Lack of knowledge and understanding - many cis people just don't get it and so they avoid dealing with the issue.**
- “ **Little representation and unfamiliarity with the concept among cis staff members resulting in adults unwilling to address the topic with their students.**
- “ **There are many people who have strong negative opinions about trans-inclusivity (both teachers and guardians), are not educated in these areas, or misinformed, and those who feel uneasy making it part of their classroom discussions and curriculum.**
- “ **People think that it's new or strange and don't understand that trans people have always existed. Despite significant growth in diversity among teachers, we are not encouraged to speak about our families as that's not within our curriculum and is seen as breaching professional boundaries. Government insistence that teaching children about the breadth of diversity within humanity will somehow harm them. Instead, they are harmed because they end up having to figure out their differences all by themselves without knowing that there are people available to support them.**

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One trans teacher specifically identified the problem of the Catholic school board failing to support out trans teachers:

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**Trans educators' advice and recommendations on improving education about trans-inclusivity and gender diversity in the education system.** Trans educators' advice centred on the need for more trans representation and visibility of trans teachers and students in schools:

- “ Many people believe that discussing trans issues are not age appropriate. They say this starting in elementary school and some people would argue it into high school as well. It creates a massive barrier because adults are hesitant to participate in discussions.**
- “ We need to change habits and practice using things other than assigned gender in groupings for kids. Keep discussing and practicing phrases that allow for a gender spectrum**
- “ Let teachers be able to be out in the Catholic boards.**
- “ [We need] More representation. Or at the least, have the Catholic boards admit they won't discriminate against hiring trans staff. At present, they won't say what their policy is.**
- “ Let out teachers be role models.**
- “ Build relationships with [trans] people. Chances are you will come to realize that trans\* folx are just people and want to be treated as such.**
- “ More teacher training on why it is critical that all students see themselves reflected in the classroom environment in a safe supportive way.**
- “ Get trans speakers to mainstream the concepts and diverse gender identities.**



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Provision of PD led by trans people was also advocated:

- “ **[We need] Guest speakers, literature (short stories, for example) which include gender diverse and trans characters.**
- “ **[We need] Panels of people willing to speak from personal experience about their times in elementary school and how they felt oppressed by gender normativity.**

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Trans educators also highlighted the need for sustained trans-inclusive education for students, educators, and administrators in schools as well as preservice teachers:

- “ **Start it early! It is a discussion that should start in Primary and continue until the end of high school.**
- “ **Exposure in a detailed and visible way, and not just once, but regularly. It can't just be a flavour of the week.**
- “ **LGBTQ students need to be considered a mandatory focus during teacher training, in PD and AQs.**
- “ **Continue to offer specific pd to educators and administrators.**

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Administrative support as well as queer leadership were also identified:

- “ **Strong admin and more queer leadership**

Overall, trans educators' comments highlighted **the urgent need for trans representation in schools**. They were acutely aware of the systemic barriers and oppression related to enforced gender normativity and cisgenderism that impact on their daily lives. However, it is important to highlight that simply having more representation is not enough and that a commitment to addressing system-wide barriers of institutionalized cisgenderism and cissexism is vital to ensure that trans teachers are supported and can thrive in the education system. Moreover, trans affirmative education and the provision of support for trans students cannot fall on their shoulders and needs to be conceived of as a collective responsibility. In short, all teachers need to be actively committed to educating about cisgender privilege and how it is implicated in interlocking systems of oppression.



# 04 Conclusions and Implications

This research provides useful insights into supporting trans students and gender expansive education in Ontario schools. While many respondents indicated an awareness of trans inclusive policies, a meaningful minority had no awareness of local policy. The data also revealed different interpretations and understandings of what trans inclusion and support meant. Over 30% characterized trans inclusive policy as an individualized response to the presence of trans students in their schools which necessitated accommodation of their needs. However, such policies relied on individual trans students to be out and to advocate for themselves. This approach highlights the failure of such policies in serving the needs of all trans students, especially those who are not visible or are questioning. As several educators pointed out, simply providing gender inclusive washrooms does not translate into facilitating and fostering safe and comfortable access to these spaces for trans and nonbinary students. These findings raise important questions about how well local policies and their enactment address broader systemic issues related to the impact of cisgenderism and the need to create more gender expansive school cultures.

Educators also identified a lack of support and intervention from administrators, claiming individual educators often had to address trans inclusion on their own. Such conditions mean transphobia and broad support

for gender expansive education are not being addressed in schools. As such, educators identified a policy-practice gap: simply having a policy or being aware of it was not enough – support was needed for it to be enacted.

A key theme throughout the data was the lack of relevant education, training, and support for educators. This deficit was one of the biggest barriers to addressing trans-inclusivity and gender diversity in the education system, with. Many educators highlighted that professional learning was seldom provided or simply inadequate, and many called for such learning to be mandatory. Positioning trans inclusion within an overall approach to equity and diversity, or simply embracing inclusion as generalized approach, fails to provide the specific gender facilitative knowledge and understanding that educators need to support trans and nonbinary students. In addition, this approach does not address the need for curricular development that addresses gender expansiveness.

Most respondents (70%) indicated self-education was the primary source of their training. They actively sought out knowledge and resources about gender diversity outside of their schools/school boards, turning to unions and other community organizations such as Egale and CCGSD (Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity) to better educate themselves. This finding raises broader questions about resource allocation for professional learning, which is central to creating ongoing professional learning communities in schools (Darling Hammond,

Hyer, & Gardner, 2017). Of concern, among a wider population of educators (who may not have personal interest in self-education) knowledge and understanding about gender diversity and how to support trans and non-binary students may be even lower than among survey respondents. Educators also wanted more professional learning on this topic delivered to beginning educators. These findings highlight areas where Ontario's system fails to support trans inclusion and gender expansive education.

Another central concern and barrier that educators identified was a lack of resources and committed support for curricular development and teaching specifically about gender diversity in their classrooms. Of concern, some educators saw such a trans inclusive focus as not relevant to their particular subject area or simply considered such knowledge not to be age-appropriate or translatable especially in the early years. This finding indicates a widespread lack of knowledge and awareness of available resources, as well as a need for more training on how to foster trans inclusion and knowledge about gender diversity across the curriculum and with young children (see Luecke, 2018; Gender Spectrum, 2021).

Educators also raised the issue of backlash from parents and colleagues who refused to embrace gender diversity as a major barrier to creating gender inclusive school cultures. Another element of this resistance related to the systemic problem of narrow interpretations of the Catholic faith and

pastoral care, which resulted in paying lip service to supporting human rights of all students without providing support for trans students or committing to educating about gender diversity.

These findings draw attention to systemic barriers to the provision of relevant professional learning, as well as the need for more robust policy development and enactment. These issues raise important questions about accountability in the education system with respect to supporting the well-being of trans and gender diverse students in schools and an overall commitment to gender expansive education. In addition, a noteworthy minority of respondents expressed resistance and refusal to support trans gender students and diversity. Some comments amounted to overt expressions of transphobia. This problem was confirmed by other respondents who commented on unsupportive parents and colleagues as a barrier to addressing trans-inclusivity and gender diversity in schools.

Educators pointed to systemic barriers related to policy and provision of support for trans inclusion and gender diversity. Their comments highlight a problem of Ministry, school board, and administrative governance at the school level. While Ontario's Human Rights Code ensures human rights anti-discrimination protection on the basis of gender identity and expression, there do not appear to be accountability measures in place at the system, board, and school levels to

ensure such protections and rights of trans students. Accountability is also needed to ensure supports are in place for the provision of gender expansive education for educators and students in schools. Our research reveals a lack of systematic and sustained support for trans students with the onus for educating about trans inclusion often being relegated to individual administrators, educators, and even trans students themselves—who are required to be out and visible for their needs to be addressed.

This report highlights that the realization of equity goals in public schools in Ontario has not been met and many educators continue to be confronted by systemic barriers in their efforts to support trans students and gender expansive education. In light of these findings, we provide the following recommendations.



# 05

# Recommendations

## 1 Develop Trans-Affirmative Policies

Trans-affirmative policies must be developed and enacted to address the systemic barriers to fostering gender-affirmative schools and cultures. These policies need to move beyond an individualized focus on accommodation as a basis for supporting trans students in schools. It is also important to specifically address intersectional approaches in equity policy that are cognizant of the ways in which trans inclusion interfaces and is aligned with a prioritized focus on anti-racist, anti-imperialist and decolonial educational reform in schools. Currently, the Ministry of Education’s budget for 2021-2022 allocates “\$49.0 million for special education, mental health, and equity initiatives” with **no mention of trans-inclusivity or intersectional considerations** (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021a, p. 2; 2021b).

Policymakers must incorporate an educative focus in such policies that identify the allocation of resources for both PD and curriculum development as central to the necessary provision of support for trans students and creating gender-affirming schools. Support for these policies and their dissemination in schools

is central to their enactment as is ongoing provision of PD and access to relevant resources for building both an understanding of trans inclusion and gender diversity and a commitment to educating about gender expansiveness as integral to enacting gender justice in schools. This is in accordance with the Ontario Ministry's Policy/Program Memorandum 119: "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013), its Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009) and its more recent Equity Action Plan (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017). Employing an intersectional approach to equity is vital to addressing the systemic oppression that trans and gender diverse populations face. Fiscal considerations are central to both the development and enactment of such policies as PD and curricular support are key elements in fostering gender inclusivity and gender diversity in schools that transcends a focus on accommodation of individual trans students. **The report findings call for intervention from the Ontario Ministry of Education with respect to an equity policy brief on trans inclusion and the development of specific guidelines for supporting trans students and gender expansive education in schools.** It also calls on the regulatory organizations that govern education-related professions such as the Ontario College of Teachers, the College of Early Childhood Educators, and others to develop *a professional advisory on Trans-affirmative and Gender Expansive Education* that includes attention to the intersectional experiences of racialized students as well as those who are disabled and from diverse, multi-faith and low-income backgrounds (see for example, OCT, 2021).

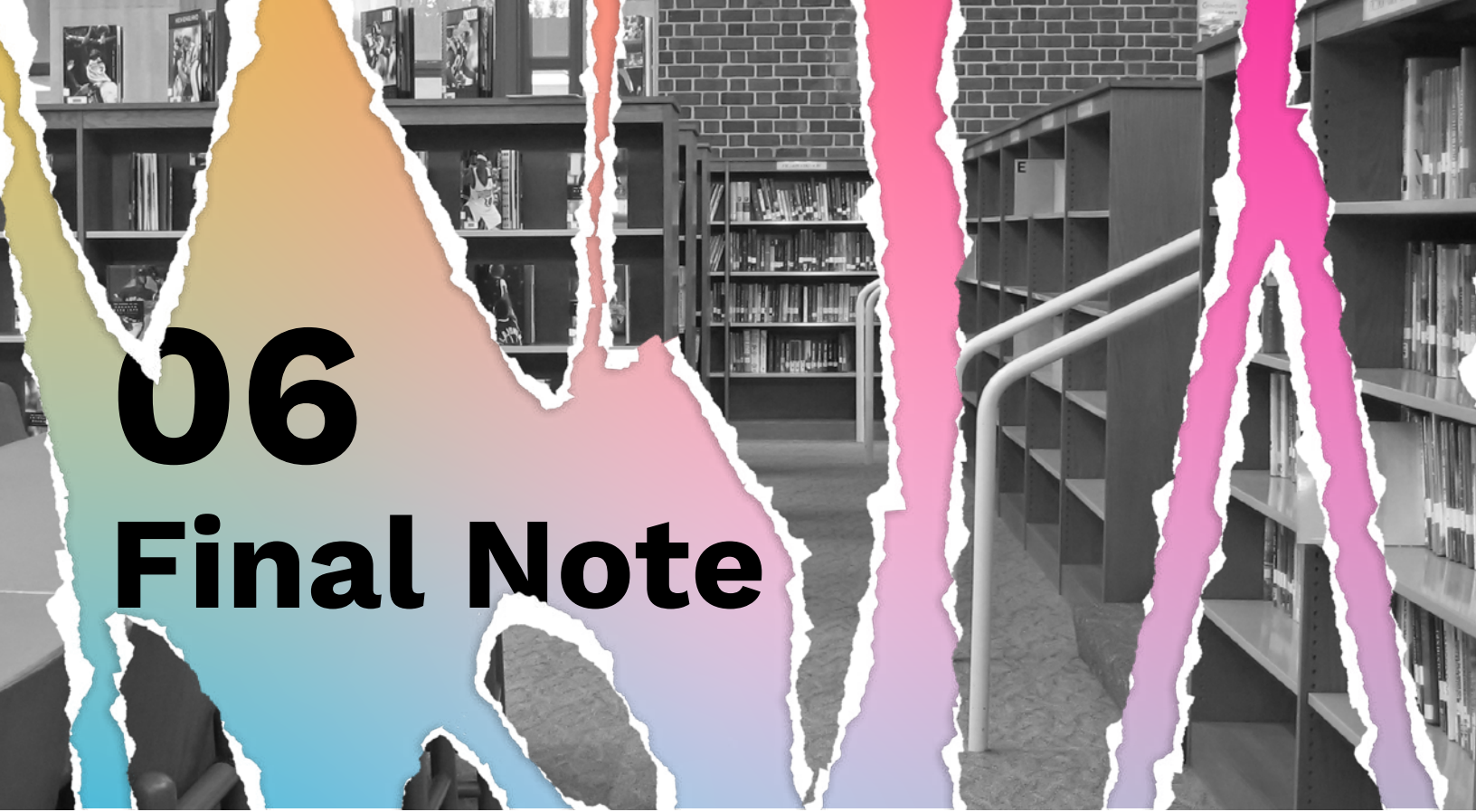
## 2 Provide Professional Learning and Curriculum Resources

Central to supporting trans students and gender expansive education in schools is the provision of Professional Development and curriculum resources for educators. Such a commitment is supported by the OHRC (Ontario Human Rights Code) which includes gender identity and gender expression as grounds for anti-discrimination. This also includes the need for pre-service education which educators highlighted was lacking. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2021b) details the allocation of three PD days focused specifically on special education, mental health, and well-being, and emphasize the importance of understanding “historical and current discrimination faced by students and staff experiencing marginalization, including those from Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities.” However, what is lacking is a necessary focus on interlocking systems of oppression and how a prioritized focus on anti-racism interfaces with a commitment to a critical trans politics. Also, subsuming education about trans and gender diverse identities within an overall commitment to supporting equity and inclusive education is inadequate and often resorts in erasure or is merely performative.

Educators reiterated both **a lack of and inadequate provision of PD as one of the systemic barriers that needed to be addressed**. The Ministry and school boards need to provide both sustained PD and resources for curriculum development that lead to building professional learning communities in schools. The building of such communities is central to fostering and building a gender-affirmative culture and curriculum that is committed to gender expansiveness and supporting trans students in schools. However, given the lack of support from school leaders that many educators identified, education provision and support also need to be targeted specifically at this group of education workers to ensure that they have the support they need to support trans students and to teach about gender expansiveness as an integral part of the curriculum. Fiscal considerations and support are central to the adequate provision of such supports and building of professional learning communities in schools that are committed to enacting and realizing gender justice in the education system. It is also imperative that PD be provided by individuals who have training in and experience with facilitating anti-oppressive pedagogy, trans-affirming pedagogies/education. **The report findings call for further support from the Ministry of Education and school boards to address these systemic barriers in the form of better provision of PD and curricular resources.**

### **3 Ensure Accountability**

Further sustained accountability measures for supporting gender diversity and trans inclusion need to be developed and articulated by governing educational bodies such as the Ontario Ministry of Education with the explicit objective of supporting school boards fiscally in the provision of PD and development of resources. Such a commitment cannot be dependent on the commitment of an individual administrator or educator in a school who take it upon themselves to be better educated. Systemic support as well as fiscal allocation of resources are needed. Including a focus on gender identity and trans inclusion within an overall commitment to supporting equity and inclusive education with an intersectional focus while important is not enough. Specific policies and resource allocation that are committed specifically to addressing gender expansive education and support for trans students are required as are accountability measure to ensure that such policies are enacted systemically to avoid the problem of individual educators taking on the responsibility to educate themselves. **The report findings call for the Ontario Ministry of Education to develop accountability measures to ensure better provision of trans-affirmative policies and their enactment in schools, as well as resource allocation for PD and curriculum development that fosters awareness and deep understanding of trans inclusion and gender expansiveness. The report also calls for Teacher Education faculties to ensure that teacher educators are equipped with the knowledge and critical understanding of trans affirmative theories and their application in schools.**



# 06 Final Note

Our findings show that educators need better access to resources, as well as further guidance and support in providing gender expansive education and trans inclusion in schools. To help address this need, we will develop a **Trans Resource Tool Kit for Educators in K-12 Schools**, incorporating recommendations and suggestions offered by educators in this study, to support all educators in their classrooms and schools.



# Appendix A: Glossary of terms

**Agender** — A person who does not identify with or experience any gender. (PFLAG, 2021).

**Androgynous** — A behaviour, trait, or style of expression that either blends both masculine and feminine forms of expression or is culturally read as gender-neutral (Egale Canada, 2020).

**Assigned Sex** — The sex assigned to at birth based on the child’s visible sex organs (PFLAG, 2021).

**Bigender** — A person whose gender identity encompasses two genders, (often man and woman, but not exclusively) or is moving between two genders (PFLAG, 2021).

**Cisgender** — A person whose gender identity is in alignment with the sex they were assigned at birth. (The 519, 2020).

**Cisnormativity** — The assumption that all people are cisgender and that everyone accepts this as “the norm”; it is used to describe systemic prejudice against trans people (The 519, 2020).

**Femme** — A person who is feminine of center in dress, attitude, and/or presentation. It is often, but not exclusively, used in a lesbian context (PFLAG, 2021).

**Gender Binary** — A social system whereby people are thought to have either one of two genders: “man” or “woman.” These genders are expected to correspond to birth sex: male or female (The 519, 2020)

**Gender Creativity** — Those who don’t conform to traditional or stereotypical gender norms; a developmental position in which one moves beyond the gender binary to creatively interweave a sense of gender that come neither totally from the inside (the body, the psyche), nor totally from the outside (culture, others’ perceptions).

**Gender Expansive** – conveys a “wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the gender binary system” (Human Rights Campaign & Gender Spectrum, 2014). As a concept gender expansiveness “push[es] the boundaries of what we think we know about gender through creativity and imagination ... [it] gives rise to an ever-growing number of possible combinations of identities, expressions and bodies” (Pastel et al, 2019, p. 45).It includes both trans individuals and those who identify “as cisgender people but whose gender expression is not confined to binary expressions of their gender” (ibid, p. 45).

**Gender Expansive Education** – refers to both addressing gender diversity in the curriculum and pedagogically with respect to explicitly and concretely educating about cisgenderism, transphobia and gender justice in the classroom.

**Gender Expression** — How a person publicly expresses or presents their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language, and voice (The 519, 2020).

**Gender Fluid** — A person who does not adhere to one fixed gender and who may move among genders (PFLAG, 2021).

**Gender Identity** — A person’s internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person’s sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither or anywhere along the gender spectrum (The 519, 2020).

**Gender Independence** — A person whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what others expect of their assigned (natal) sex.

**Gender Non-conformity** — Often deployed as an umbrella term for those who do not follow gender stereotypes and identify with a non-binary gender (PFLAG, 2021).

**Genderqueer** — Individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth. They may identify and express themselves as “feminine men” or “masculine women” or as androgynous, outside of the categories “boy/man” and “girl/woman.” (The 519, 2020)

**Gender Variant** — A term often used by the medical community to describe individuals who dress, behave, or express themselves in a way that does not conform to dominant gender norms (PFLAG, 2021)

**Heteronormative** — The assumption that all people are heterosexual and that everyone accepts this as “the norm.” The term heteronormativity is used to describe prejudice against people that are not heterosexual, and is less overt or direct and more widespread or systemic in society, organizations, and institutions. This form of systemic prejudice may even be unintentional and unrecognized by the people or organizations responsible.

**Intersex** — A person whose chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical sex characteristics fall outside of the conventional classifications of male or female (Egale Canada, 2020).

**Non-binary** — The view that only two genders exist is referred to as a “**gender binary**”. Therefore, non-binary identities are broadly defined as those which defy the social pressure and expectation to choose one gender category – male or female (Pastel et al., 2019). “For example, some people have a gender that blends elements of being a man or a woman, or a gender that is different than either male or female. Some people don’t identify with any gender. Some people’s gender changes over time” (National Centre for Transgender Equality, 2018).

**Sex** — The classification of people as either male, female, or intersex. Sex is usually assigned at birth and is based on an assessment of a person’s reproductive systems, hormones, chromosomes, and other physical characteristics (The 519, 2020).

**Transgender** — A person whose gender identity does not correspond with what is socially expected based on their sex assigned at birth. It can be used as an umbrella term to refer to a range of gender identities and experiences (Egale Canada, 2020).

**Transgender (MTF)** — A trans woman/trans feminine person assigned male at birth (PFLAG, 2021).

**Transgender (FTM)** — A trans man/trans masculine person assigned female at birth (PFLAG, 2021).

**Two-Spirit** — An umbrella and cultural term – reserved for those who are Indigenous – encompassing gender and sexual diversity in Indigenous communities (The 519, 2020).

# Appendix B: Survey Sharing Partners

## FACEBOOK:

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ECE Teachers Ontario	Ontario Grade 4/5 Teachers
Education Related Jobs for Ontario Teachers	Ontario Grade 6 Teachers
Elementary Art Teachers (K-5th grade)	Ontario Grade 6/7 Teachers
Elementary Teachers for Truth and Reconciliation	Ontario Health and Physical Education Teacher
Geography Teachers of Ontario	Ontario High School English Teachers
Grade 3 Teachers (Ontario)	Ontario Kindergarten Educators (RECEs, OCTs, EAs, TAs)
Grade 4 Teachers (Ontario)	Ontario Occasional Teachers
Grade 8 Teachers (Ontario)	Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
Health and Physical Education Teachers of Ontario	Ontario Special Education Teachers' Resource Page
Intermediate Teachers (Ontario)-Resource and Idea sharing	Ontario Supply Teachers
Junior French Immersion Teachers (Ontario)-Resource Share	Ontario Teachers--Buy, Sell, Website Exchange
Nipissing University Teachers	Ontario Teachers - Career/Interview Discussions
Ontario -Assessment & Evaluation	Ontario Teachers Grade 2
Ontario Careers Studies Teachers	Ontario Teachers Grade 7
Ontario Core French Teachers	Ontario Teachers Grade 7/8
Ontario Core French Intermediate/Secondary Teachers	Ontario Teachers (High School)- resource and idea sharing
Ontario Elementary French Teachers	Ontario Teachers - High School Science - Resource and Idea Sharing
Ontario Elementary Music Teachers	Ontario Teachers of Indigenous Content
Ontario ESL/ELL Teachers	Ontario Teachers (Junior) - resource and idea sharing
Ontario Family Studies Teachers	Ontario Teacher-Librarians
Ontario Geography Teachers	
Ontario Grade 1 Teachers	

Ontario Teachers (Primary) - resource and idea sharing

Ontario teachers-resource and idea sharing

Ontario Teachers Who Tutor - Resource and Idea Sharing

Ontario Visual Arts Teachers

Rethink the Teacher Candidate Math Legislation

South Western Ontario Teachers PD Lite

Special Education Teachers

Spiralling Ontario Math Curriculum

Teacher Buy and Sell-Guelph Area

Teachers York Region and Area Swap, Buy, Sell

## **TWITTER:**

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Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation

Ontario Teachers' Federation



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