

Exemplary Strategies/Programs/Practices to Support Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Rights in School Boards



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

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School Board: Simcoe County District School Board

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Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy: Graduation Coach for 2SLGBTQ+ Students

Description of Program/Initiative/Strategy

The focus is on exemplary strategies/programs that increase student confidence, achievement, engagement and retention and reduce systemic barriers. In the brief description below please provide answers to the following questions: Where the program/initiative/strategy is delivered (school/board locations)? Who is responsible for delivering and monitoring the program/initiative/strategy? Who is the target audience? Are there any community partnerships involved? Are there any staffing or budget implications? Are there any special resources required? What are your indicators of success, etc.?

Implementation of 1.0 Permanent Graduation Coach for 2SLGBTQ Students

Simcoe County District School Board is committed to excellence in education and equitable educational outcomes for all students, and to the elimination of discrimination. In the 2021 -2021 student census, 23% of students in Grades 7 through 12 who responded, self-identified as a member of the 2SLGBTQ community.

To be responsive to this statistic, SCDSB hired a member of the 2SLGBTQ community as an Itinerant Graduation Coach to support those students in the board that require such assistance. All schools in the board can access supports via the Graduation Coach by requesting support through the EDI Office. Students and schools are supplied with feedback forms to keep the EDI office and coach abreast to how their service is being received and suggestions for future supports.

The EDI Department works in close partnership with The Gilbert Centre in ensuring we are meeting the needs of our 2SLGBTQ student and staff population.

The EDI Department has been working to ensure that the Graduation Coach received a smooth, positive transition into the schools. The Principal of EDI has included the coach in presentations to Administrators on the subject of 2SLGBTQ students, staff and community inclusion support in order for admin to see the true benefit of utilizing his skills and experience as a gay man who grew up in the Simcoe Area. His presence in the schools has made it a perceived safer space for many of our students.

What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact. (max 200 words)

The impact of the Graduation Coach for 2SLGBTQ students has been many fold. Having such a mixed marginalized group of students actually “see themselves” in the school has been incredible. Students have expressed a sense of relief in working with an individual who truly understands their experiences in the public school system. The Graduation Coach, although specific to the students has also supported staff and admin with questions and suggestions for better inclusion of all students.

The Graduation Coach has been actively involved in supporting staff within the schools to establish and/or maintain existing Gender-Sexuality Alliances (GSAs), which serve to create a safe space within the school setting for LGBTQ2S+ students and their allies to come together and be themselves. This work has also included working on strategies to maintain student involvement, and ensure that the needs of GSA participants are being met.

The position is still too new to have specific data but members of the 2SLGBTQ community have sent many emails and tweets thanking the board for our targeted support of the students themselves.