

RAINBOW DISPLAYS

In recent years rainbow displays have become increasingly popular. They can take many different forms and have the ability to make an impact, both in your school community, and the wider community.

A rainbow display says, “We support you and are inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities at this school.” It signifies that your school is SOGI-inclusive and that you are helping to end the oppression of 2SLGBTQ+ people and children of 2SLGBTQ+ parents. You are committing to educate the school community about homophobia and transphobia, speak out about homophobia and transphobia in your school or community, and promote equal respect and treatment for everyone. This also means that you are pledging to make school SOGI-inclusive by offering a supportive space for students to ask questions and express their concerns.



CREATING AN IMPACT WITH YOUR RAINBOW DISPLAY



There are many fun ways for your school to show support for the 2SLGBTQ+ community (i.e. rainbow flags, 2SLGBTQ+ community groups, queer artists and artwork, banners, etc.), but here are some considerations when starting out:

1. Students' Rights & SOGI-Inclusive Policies & Procedures

- Displays can bring policies and procedures to life so that students see themselves reflected in their school environment.
- This may include other aspects of student identities, and displays may reflect the intersection of SOGI and other diverse cultural representations.

2. School Leadership Planning

- There is a responsibility that comes with displaying rainbows on school property. If a school displays a rainbow flag to show that they are inclusive, but the supports aren't there, then that can actually do more harm than good.
- The act, or gesture, to display the rainbow, comes with responsibility and needs to be authentic.
- Having, and involving, a SOGI Lead is also vital to the success of a rainbow display.
- If your community and/or school would like to provide more visible support, especially pertaining to bigger investments such as crosswalks or sidewalks, here are some considerations:

- ▶ *Have you connected with your local city/municipality office to see if they have any plans in the works?*
- ▶ *Is there a "limit" on how many will be permitted on public property, or a finite amount of money dedicated for this purpose?*
- ▶ *Have you sought advice and help from your local business improvement associations and/or community groups (local pride societies, etc.)?*
- ▶ *What type of visibility are you hoping to achieve? Have you considered vehicle traffic, foot traffic, as well as lines of sight?*

3. Student Dialogue

- Mandating that every school display a rainbow can be interpreted as being inauthentic. Having a staff and student-driven process allows for greater collaboration with all stakeholders, and leads to a more authentic outcome.
- At one school, their GSA created their own "Ally" badge and assembled a list of what it means to them for an educator to be an ally. The educators were asked to pledge to follow the list of recommendations if they were to put up the badge. Not only was this an engaging activity for the GSA, but an opportunity for students to put into their own words how they want the adults in their lives to show support for them.

4. Student Support Team

- What are you doing to ensure that you are hearing from all the relevant voices at the table, as well as the ones that may not be represented? How is space made, and held, for voices that have been historically marginalized in education (i.e. Indigenous voices).
- What are cultural considerations & religious symbols currently used in your area? What are the practices for each?
- How will the purpose of the display be communicated to staff, students, parents, and the broader community? How will this continue to be communicated so that the purpose holds true?
- At one district, where plans for rainbow crosswalks were already in place, a small team of School Leads came together to brainstorm and created "Rainbow Kits." They asked the principal of each school to speak in celebration of the crosswalk when it was unveiled, and the SOGI Lead at each school to speak at a staff meeting about the contents of the Kit and how they could engage with it. Their ideas included activities about the history of the Rainbow Flag and the meaning of the colours, age-appropriate books, and posters to put up in the school.

5. Implementation

- Take this occasion to educate, acknowledge and even celebrate the 2SLGBTQ+ progress that's already been made, and to reflect on the work that still needs to be done. Why not document this moment so that in a few years, your school can reflect back on when or why this was done, or what it stood for?
- Decide what will be a permanent or a temporary display, for example during Pride Month. There are pros and cons to both options and both can be implemented simultaneously.
- You may not always get it right, but because you are trying, you will be responsive to the times when you might fall short.
- BCTF offers helpful resources on how to be an Ally such as the [safe place for 2SLGBTQ+ people sticker](#), and other [2SLGBTQ+](#) related information.

School cultures change with new students, staff, and administration, so it is important to continue the conversation about not just how/where to display a rainbow, but also what is the ongoing work, why it's there, what it means to staff and students, and even whether it has become meaningful.