

May 7, 2014

Vancouver School Board
Committee III – Education & Student Services
1580 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC V6J 5K8

Re: Support for Draft Revised Policy and Regulations – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities (ACB and ACB R-1)

Dear Committee members,

My name is Alan Woo and I am writing to show my support for the revised draft of policy ACB and regulations ACB R-1 for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities.

I am the author of the children's book, *Maggie's Chopsticks*, which won the BC Book Prize for Illustrated Children's Literature in 2013. I am also Chinese-Canadian, a gay man, and an alumnus of the Vancouver School system. I attended Moberly Annex and Sir Sandford Fleming elementary schools, as well as David Thompson Secondary School. Growing up gay was not an easy thing back in the late 80s and early 90s. I can only wish that we had policies and regulations such as these back then, to help protect the safety of LGBTQ youth.

I am surprised I made it out alive, quite frankly. Between getting bullied and fighting off suicidal thoughts, I did manage to find those few friends, that special teacher, and that one counselor, to help me get through it all. I can't imagine what life would have been like had we had these types of policies and regulations around earlier. I strongly support your recent revisions and hope that it will help the next generation feel more included and safe in the school hallways, a feeling that I never felt.

My book *Maggie's Chopsticks* on the surface tells the story of a young girl who doesn't quite know how to use her chopsticks and gets advice from everyone around her on how to do so. On a deeper level, it's the story about trying to fit in/conform and realizing that being yourself is perfectly fine. I have had many people come up to me to let me know how important that message is to send to children. Thank you for your draft revisions to this policy and regulation to help send the message to youth out there that being who they are is perfectly fine.

Thank you for all that you are doing!

Sincerely,

Alan Woo