

## **WELCOMING, CARING, RESPECTFUL AND SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR STUDENTS**

### **Background:**

All individuals within the Division have the right to learn in settings that promote equality of opportunity, dignity and respect regardless of race, age, ancestry, place of origin, colour, religious beliefs, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical or mental disability, marital status, family status, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation. The Division is committed to ensuring all members of the school community are provided with welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that respect diversity and foster a sense of belonging. All students and staff have a right to an environment free from discrimination, threats and personal harassment including sexually harassing behaviours. This responsibility is expressed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Education Act*.

Incidents of harassment, bullying or discrimination toward any member of the school community are taken seriously. The Division is also committed to the investigation of these reported incidents in a timely manner and taking necessary action(s) or remedies as a result of an investigation.

### **Definitions:**

#### **Bullying:**

means repeated and hostile or demeaning behaviour by an individual in the school community where the behaviour is intended to cause harm, fear or distress to one or more other individuals in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to an individual's reputation.

#### **Conflict in Relationship:**

occurs through episodic acts of breakdowns in relationship between students. Conflict is an inevitable component of students learning to grow within social relationships. Disagreement and misunderstanding between parties is at the heart of conflict. However, conflict does not constitute premeditated efforts to cause harm, fear or distress. Parameters for addressing conflict between students may be dealt with through counselling and/or [Administrative Procedure 350: Student Conduct](#).

#### **Harassment:**

unwelcome verbal or physical conduct, including discrimination. Usually, it must be repeated to constitute harassment, but single acts can be harassing if they are severe or involve an obvious power imbalance. Harassment is insulting, demeaning or intimidating. The behaviour giving rise to a complaint need not be intentional to be considered harassment—it is sufficient that the offender knows, or ought reasonably to know, that the behaviour is offensive and unwelcome.

## Procedures:

1. All members of the school community are expected to play a positive role in promoting healthy relationships and prevent bullying behaviours.
2. Students and parents/guardians are encouraged to report bullying behaviour to school staff.
3. All reports of bullying or harassment shall be taken seriously and investigated by school staff.
4. If, in the opinion of the teacher or Principal, an act of bullying has occurred, interventions shall be applied dedicated to stopping the behaviour in the future and educating the student who is targeted about how to address the issue in the future. Interventions shall be applied to both those who are targets of bullying behaviour and those who engage in bullying behaviour in order to further a safe and caring culture within the school.
5. Parents/guardians play a primary role in assisting with the resolution of matters pertaining to bullying. Apprising them of issues in this area as they have impacted their children should occur at the earliest opportunity.
6. Principals may use relational, restorative or other evidence-based approaches to discipline and support.
7. Incidences of bullying that adversely impact the safety of individuals or are an affront to the common good of the school community may be addressed through application of sections 36 or 37 of the *Education Act* (Suspension and Expulsion) or [Administrative Procedure 355: Suspension or Expulsion of Students](#).
8. The Division shall establish consistent school-based practices to ensure all students and families—regardless of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical or mental disability, family status, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status—are welcomed, accepted and included in all aspects of education and school life.
9. The Division shall provide and promote opportunities for staff to increase awareness and understanding of discrimination, harassment and barriers impacting students and families from all backgrounds. Professional learning shall address all areas protected under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, and shall support staff in recognizing, responding to and preventing discrimination and harassment.
10. The Division shall engage in ongoing, constructive and open dialogue with diverse communities to promote collaboration among home, school and community partners in support of inclusive school environments.
11. Teachers shall establish, promote and sustain inclusive learning environments where diversity is embraced and every student is welcomed, cared for, respected and safe. Teachers shall use language and educational resources and approaches that are age appropriate, respectful and reflective of diversity.
12. Staff shall have access to information about community resources relevant to the diverse needs of students and families.
13. Learning, curriculum and library resources shall reflect and affirm the diversity of the school community and broader society, so all students see their identities, histories and experiences positively reflected.

14. Principals shall support the establishment and naming of student organizations that promote equality and non-discrimination as outlined in Section 35.1 of the *Education Act*, including but not limited to Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), Queer-Straight Alliances (QSAs), diversity clubs, anti-racism clubs and anti-bullying clubs.
  - 14.1. If one or more students attending a school request a staff member for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the Principal of the school shall:
    - 14.1.1. permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and
    - 14.1.2. subject to section 14.3, within a reasonable time from the date the Principal receives the request, designate a staff member to serve as the staff liaison to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization or to assist in organizing the activity.
  - 14.2. The students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the organization or activity, including the name “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance,” after consulting with the Principal.
  - 14.3. The Principal shall immediately inform the Board of Trustees and the [Minister](#) if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison referred to in section 14.1.2, and, if so informed, the Minister shall appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization at the school.
  - 14.4. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in section 14 is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity.
    - 14.4.1. Notification, if any, is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations or activities.
  - 14.5. The privacy of students who join a GSA or QSA voluntary student organization is protected, and the Principal shall ensure all staff recognize the confidentiality of the sexual orientation and gender identity of all students and protect them from unwanted disclosure of this information in accordance with the *Protection of Privacy Act*.
15. The Division shall ensure staff address and provide appropriate remedial consequences for interactions involving the use of comments, behaviours and actions that are discriminatory, whether they occur in person or in digital form.
16. The Division shall use inclusive and respectful language in communication with students, staff, families and the community. Language and representation in all communications shall reflect the diversity of the Division’s communities and uphold the dignity of all individuals.
17. The Division is committed to fostering a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment for all students. This includes supporting all students with respect to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. The following guidelines must be followed when students request changes to names and pronouns:

- 17.1. For students under 16 years of age, schools shall obtain written consent from parents/guardians prior to recognizing and implementing the change in name, pronouns or both using the [Consent for Name or Pronoun Change](#) (Form 311-1).
  - 17.1.1. In situations where more than one parent/guardian can provide consent and the parents/guardians disagree, the Principal must consult with the Executive Director of Division Supports to determine next steps.
- 17.2. For students 16 or 17 years of age, schools shall notify parents/guardians before recognizing a change in name, pronouns or both and document the phone call as a log entry.
  - 17.2.1. If notifying a parent/guardian could reasonably be expected to cause emotional or psychological harm to the student, the school shall ensure the student is provided with access to counselling or support services prior to notification.
- 17.3. Students shall be informed of any limitations regarding their chosen name, pronouns, gender identity or gender expression related to official school records that require legal name designation.
- 17.4. For students 18 years of age or older, parent/guardian consent and notification are not required.
18. Principals shall ensure dress codes are flexible, inclusive and respectful of all members of the school community.
19. The Division shall make gender-neutral washrooms and change rooms available to students and staff. Students are to be able to access washrooms and change rooms that are congruent with their lived gender identity, and the Division shall make reasonable efforts to provide solutions that are respectful, discreet and safe for all students.
20. All students, regardless of race, religious beliefs, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation, shall be able to participate in physical education classes and extracurricular activities in ways that are safe, inclusive and respectful of all.
21. In accordance with the *Fairness and Safety in Sport Act* and Regulation, students aged 12 and older who wish to participate in a female-only sports league governed by an external athletic body must meet the eligibility requirement of being female based on their sex at birth.
  - 21.1. Prior to participating in the league, the student's parents/guardians must submit a [Female Sports Eligibility Declaration](#) (Form 311-2) confirming:
    - 21.1.1. they understand the eligibility requirement, and
    - 21.1.2. the student meets the requirement based on their sex at birth.
  - 21.2. If a student's eligibility is challenged, the challenge must be submitted in writing to the Executive Director of Division Supports. The Executive Director of Division Supports or designate will determine whether reasonable grounds exist to proceed.
    - 21.2.1. If the challenge is upheld, the student or parent/guardian must submit a valid birth registration document to the designated authority.

- 21.2.2. The student will be deemed eligible if the document confirms the sex at birth is female. If not, the student will be ineligible for that female-only category.
- 21.2.3. The Division shall support students found ineligible by helping them explore inclusive alternatives.
- 21.2.4. The Division shall maintain a process for reconsidering dismissed challenges and may impose sanctions for those submitting challenges in bad faith.
- 21.2.5. The Division shall comply with Ministerial reporting obligations including notifying the [Minister](#) within three business days of a challenge and within 30 business days of the final decision.
- 21.3. All personal information collected for this purpose will be handled in accordance with the *Protection of Privacy Act* and used solely to determine eligibility.
- 22. The Division shall work with all schools, communities and educational stakeholders to ensure this Administrative Procedure is respectfully implemented to support all students, staff and families in Division schools.
- 23. The Division recognizes that understandings of human diversity evolve over time. As societal knowledge develops, procedures and practices supporting welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments shall be updated accordingly to reflect current legal and ethical standards.
- 24. Annually at the start of each school year—or as needed throughout the school year for all families that enrol in the Division mid-year—parents/guardians shall acknowledge they've read and reviewed this Administrative Procedure with their child.

### Reference:

Section 11, 21, 31, 32, 33, 33.2, 35.1, 52, 53, 56, 58.1, 58.2, 68, 196, 197, 204, 222, 225  
*Education Act*  
Alberta Bill of Rights  
*Alberta Human Rights Act*  
*Protection of Privacy Act*  
*Fairness and Safety in Sport Act*  
Fairness and Safety in Sport Regulation  
Ministerial Order 028/2020 - Student Learning  
Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12  
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms  
Truth and Reconciliation Final Report