

Administrative Procedure 160

Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environment: Inclusive Practices

Background

The Division is committed to providing a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning and working environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. Each student and staff member within the Division has the right to learn and work in facilities that promote equity of opportunity, dignity and respect. The Division is also obligated to protect all students and staff from harassment, discrimination, and violence or threat thereof during the Division's school-related activities. All those involved with the Division including employees, students, parents, volunteers, contractors and visitors must share in the responsibility for eliminating bullying, discrimination, harassment, and violence. The Division prohibits bullying, harassment, discriminatory, and violent behaviors and expects allegations of such behaviors to be investigated in a timely and respectful manner.

The Division affirms the rights, as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, of each staff member employed by the School Authority and each student enrolled in a school operated by the School Authority. Furthermore, every staff member employed by the School Authority and every student enrolled in a school operated by the School Authority will not be discriminated against as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Division acknowledges its responsibility to ensure welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments for all students and staff. It recognizes the importance of students' and staffs' emotional, social, intellectual and physical wellness to their success in school and expects students to adhere to the Division Code of Conduct and schools' codes of conduct.

The Division expects all employees, students, parents, volunteers, visitors, and contractors to embrace and support this administrative procedure.

Procedures

1. The Division encourages reporting to a responsible adult all incidents of threats, bullying, harassment, violence or intimidation regardless of the identity of the alleged harasser or offender.
2. The Division supports the establishment of student organizations and student-led activities that promote equality and non-discrimination, including but not limited to gay-straight alliances, queer-straight alliances, diversity clubs, anti-racism clubs, and anti-bullying clubs.
 - 2.1 If one or more students attending a school operated by a board request a staff member employed by the board 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:
 - 2.1.1 immediately grant permission for the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and
 - 2.1.2 subject to subsection (2.3), within a reasonable time from the date that 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.
 - 2.2 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.
 - 2.2.1 For greater certainty, the principal shall not prohibit or discourage students from choosing a name that includes "gay-straight alliance" or "queer-straight alliance".
 - 2.3 The principal shall immediately inform the board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison referred to in subsection (2.1.2), 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.

- 2.4 The principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in subsection (2) is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity.
- 2.5 The principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in section 16.1 (1) of the *School Act*.
 - 2.5.1 is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity, and
 - 2.5.2 is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations and activities.
 - 2.5.3 as a public body the Division is bound by the provision of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Any collection, use or disclosure of personal information must be consistent with this Act.
3. Creating an education system that is truly inclusive requires all schools to identify and implement evidence-based strategies that ensure the safety, belonging and full participation of all members of the school community.
4. Inclusive practices for supporting students and staff are consistently identified as effective and appropriate in the creation of learning environments that are welcoming, caring, respectful and safe for students, staff, families and all other members of the school community.
5. Inclusive practices include:
 - 5.1 Providing supports that respond to a student's individual needs.
 - 5.2 Defining appropriate expectations, behaviors, language and actions in order to prevent discrimination, prejudice and harassment through greater awareness of, and responsiveness to their harmful effects.
 - 5.3 Ensuring that discriminatory behaviors and complaints are taken seriously, documented and dealt with expeditiously.
 - 5.4 Respecting an individual's right to self-identification.

- 5.5 Maintaining school records in a way that respects privacy and confidentiality.
- 5.6 Ensuring dress codes respect an individual's culture, gender identity and gender expression.
- 5.7 Minimizing gender-segregated curricular activities.
 - 5.7.1 Where segregation by gender occurs, all students are to be given the option to be included in the group that corresponds to their gender identity.
- 5.8 Enabling all students to have full, safe and equitable opportunities for participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- 5.9 Providing safe access to washroom and change-room facilities.
 - 5.9.1 Individual solutions to washroom access are to be implemented with respect and discretion, in ways which demonstrate sensitivity to the needs and safety of all students.
 - 5.9.2 In change rooms that require undressing in front of others, students who desire increased privacy for any reason (medical, religious, cultural, gender identity) shall be provided with accommodations that best meet their individual needs and privacy concerns, subject to safety considerations.
- 5.10 Providing professional learning opportunities that build the capacity of staff to better support all students in building healthy relationships with others, value diversity and demonstrate respect, empathy and compassion.
- 5.11 Using a comprehensive whole-school approach to promote healthy relationships and prevent and respond to bullying behaviour.
- 5.12 Ensuring students have the understanding, skills and opportunities to contribute to welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that respect diversity and nurture a sense of belonging and a positive sense of self.
- 5.13 Ensuring all families are welcomed and supported as valued members of the school community.

- 5.14 Ensuring that school staff have work environments where they are protected from discrimination as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
6. These inclusive practices are mutually supportive and interdependent.
 7. The Principal shall ensure that the resolution of any conflict involves reasonable accommodation and inclusiveness.
 8. This procedure covers behavior whether or not it occurs within the school building, during the school day or by electronic means.

Reference: Section 12, 16, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 30, 45, 50, 60, 61, 96, 105, 113, 116, 117 School Act
Alberta Bill of Rights
Alberta Human Rights Act
Ministerial Order on Student Learning 001/2013
Occupational Health and Safety Act
Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
Teaching Profession Act
Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report
Guidelines for Best Practices: Creating Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions
Criminal Code
Vital Statistics Act