

Respectful Learning Environment for Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions

Prairie Land Regional Division #25 is committed to establishing and maintaining a safe, inclusive, equitable, and welcoming learning and teaching environment for all members of the school community. This includes those students, staff, and families who identify or are perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, queer or questioning their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The Board expects all members of this diverse community to be welcomed, respected, accepted, and supported in every school.

All members of the school community have the right to learn and work in an environment free of discrimination, prejudice, and harassment. This right is guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Alberta Human Rights Act, and Alberta School Act. These rights shall be supported, and enforced so that all members of the school community may work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation for individual differences. The Board will not tolerate harassment, bullying, intimidation, or discrimination on the basis of a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

1. The Board believes that all sexual and gender minority students, staff and families have the right to:
 - 1.1. be treated fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect;
 - 1.2. have their confidentiality protected and respected;
 - 1.3. self-identification and determination;
 - 1.4. freedom of conscience, expression, and association;
 - 1.5. be fully included and represented in an inclusive, positive, and respectful manner by all school personnel;
 - 1.6. have equitable access to the same supports, services, and protections provided to heterosexual students and families;
 - 1.7. have avenues of recourse (without fear of reprisal) available to them when they are victims of harassment, prejudice, discrimination, intimidation, bullying, and/or violence; and
 - 1.8. have their unique identities, families, cultures, and communities included, valued and respected within all aspects of the school environment.

2. Responsibilities under Section 16.1 of the School Act

Support for student organizations

16.1(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

(a) immediately grant permission for the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and

(b) subject to subsection (4), 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.

(3) 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.

(3.1) For greater certainty, the principal shall not prohibit or discourage students from choosing a name that includes “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”.

(4) 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 (1), 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.

(6) The principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in subsection (1) is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity.

Notification, if any, must be consistent with the usual practices relating to other student organizations and activities. The principal shall ensure all legislation such as The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act which governs the disclosure of personal information is adhered to by staff.

3. The Board is committed to implementing measures that will:
 - 3.1. Define appropriate expectations, behaviours, language, and actions in order to prevent discrimination, prejudice, and harassment through greater awareness of, and responsiveness to, their harmful effects.
 - 3.2. Ensure that all such discriminatory behaviours and complaints will be taken seriously, documented, and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policy and procedures.
 - 3.3. Improve understanding of the individual lives of sexual and gender minorities and their families, cultures, and communities.
 - 3.4. Develop, implement, and evaluate inclusive educational strategies, professional development opportunities, and administrative guidelines to ensure that sexual and gender minorities and their families are welcomed and treated with respect and dignity in all aspects of the school community.

The Board understands that institutional and cultural change occurs over time and believes that the provision of an annual report at a public board meeting on progress related to the strategic directions and benchmarks identified from this policy will ensure accountability and demonstrate the Division's commitment to supporting our diverse communities.

The Board also recognizes the need to develop and maintain mutually supportive relationships with a variety of sexual orientation and gender identity minority groups in order to ensure the ongoing improvement of the implementation of this policy.

References: Alberta Teachers' Association Code of Professional Conduct
Alberta Teachers' Association Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities
Alberta Human Rights Act
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
Guidelines for Best Practices
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
School Act

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