

## **Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning and Working Environments**

### **Background**

Prairie Land Regional Division #25 is committed and obligated to ensuring each student enrolled in a school operated by the Board and each staff member employed by the Board is provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning and working environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. All individuals within the division have the right to work and learn in settings that are free from discrimination and 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. Federal (e.g. Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms) and provincial (e.g. School Act, Alberta Human Rights Act) legislation, policy and directives are in place to recognize, support and protect the fundamental human rights of all members of the school community.

### **Procedures**

1. The Board values all members of our educational community where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We value and respect diversity and strive to treat others with kindness, caring, and tolerance by appreciating and accepting all those we encounter in our school community. To that end, the superintendent will communicate and enforce appropriate expectations, behaviour, language and actions in order to prevent discrimination, prejudice and harassment to any student or staff member for whatever reason, through greater awareness of and responsiveness to their harmful effects.
2. All students, staff and family shall have their confidentiality protected and respected, while also respecting the legal and fundamental rights of parents and guardians to make informed decisions regarding the education of their children. This includes being kept aware of significant issues in the lives of their children unless it is determined that sharing such information would put the wellbeing of the child at risk.
3. Students, staff or families who wish to make a request to the school principal for support or an accommodation based on their 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, can do so with the help of the school's Family Wellness Worker or a trusted school staff member of their choice. This staff member will then take the request to the principal of the school. These requests will be accommodated whenever possible but must take into consideration the needs and rights of all students, staff and families connected with the school as well as the school's existing infrastructure.
4. The Board will provide staff with inclusive professional learning opportunities and resources to ensure all students, staff and families are treated with respect and dignity regardless of their 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. Application of these and all other resources must be consistent with the principles in this policy and must ensure all students, staff and families are being provided a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning and working environment regardless of their 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.

5. The Board is committed to protect all those involved in the Division from harassment, discrimination, bullying, intimidation, and violence during the Division's work and school-related activities. The Board acknowledges its responsibility to support and assist any employee, volunteer, person providing goods and services, or student who is subjected to harassment or violence within its schools or workplaces. All those involved with the Division including trustees, employees, students, parents, volunteers, contractors, and visitors must be instrumental in creating a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe working and learning environment.
6. The Board acknowledges that the Government of Alberta has passed amendments to Bill 10 that include gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation into the Alberta Bill of Rights as protected from discrimination. The Board acknowledges its responsibility to ensure all students and staff are provided a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning and working environment regardless of their gender, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. This includes those who identify, or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirited, or questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity (LGBTQ+) as well as those who identify as heterosexual according to their biologically assigned sex at birth. Refer to Addendum A Guidelines for Respectful Learning Environment for Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions.
7. Application of this policy includes, but is not limited to, trustees, employees, students, parents, volunteers, visitors, and contractors. This policy covers behaviour not only at Division schools and offices, but also at any Board or school-related function including field trips, conferences, training sessions, work done off-site, and social functions. This applies whether the contact is face-to-face, by phone, fax, e-mail, Internet or by any other means of communication.
8. The Superintendent shall ensure that allegations of bullying, harassing, discriminatory, and violent behaviors toward students and employees are investigated in a timely and respectful manner.
  - 8.1 The Superintendent shall establish, as outlined in Policy 10 – Delegation of Authority, a Code of Conduct for students to conform to section 45.1 of the *School Act*, to be adopted by each school. The philosophical basis for the Code must be:

*“At all schools within the Division, an attitude of respect for each other is to be fostered and nurtured amongst all members of the broadly based school community and members of the general public who may attend at schools, or school supported or sponsored functions. Acceptable behaviours must be consistent with the avoidance of discrimination, as discrimination is defined the Alberta Human Rights Act. Discrimination or bullying in any form, including but not limited to use of electronic media, at any school or school supported or sponsored functions is not acceptable behavior.”*

- 8.2 Adherence to the Student Code of Conduct is mandatory in order to aid in the effective and orderly functioning of each school.
- 8.3 The expectations of others within the broadly based school community and members of the general public referred to above are also mandatory within those settings under the jurisdiction of the Board.
- 8.4 Consequences will follow any breach of the Student Code of Conduct, and will depend on the student's age, maturity, and individual circumstances and will address the needs of students who may experience any impact from breach of the Student Code of Conduct. The focus of such consequences shall be restorative, remedial and educational.
- 8.5 Additional expectations regarding safe and caring schools are set out in Administrative Procedure 175 – Safe and Caring Schools and in Administrative Procedure 176 – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, which may be found at the Division website and are to be consulted in conjunction with Administrative Procedure 350 Appendix – Student Code of Conduct.
9. When the Superintendent has investigated a breach of this policy, the Superintendent shall inform the Board of the details of the situation, within the parameters of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, as well as the outcome.

Legal References:           School Act - Sections 45.1 and 16.1  
                                  Alberta Human Rights Act

Approved:                   September 2016

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