

## Policy 19

# WELCOMING, CARING, RESPECTFUL, AND SAFE LEARNING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

The Board is committed to ensuring that 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. As provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the *School Act*, students, staff and all individuals within the Division have the right to learn and work 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.

Our Division 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 this end, the Board supports the creation of voluntary student organizations that promote a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. Further, the Board recognizes its responsibilities around the disclosure of personal information by the school authority as governed by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Personal Information Act*.

The Board affirms the rights of each student enrolled in a school operated by the Board and each staff member employed by the Board as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the *School Act*. The Board is committed to protecting students, staff and all those involved in the Division from discrimination as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, harassment, 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.

To this end, the Board will not tolerate harassment, discrimination, bullying, intimidation, and violence and encourages reporting of all incidents of this nature, regardless of the identity of the alleged harasser or offender. In addition, the Board requires the reporting of allegations of harassment, discrimination, bullying, intimidation, or violence to be investigated in a timely and respectful manner.

### 1. Definitions

1. **Discrimination**

means treating a person negatively or disrespectfully, or refusing, without lawful excuse, to provide an opportunity or benefit with respect to access to learning or access to any term or condition of employment because of any of the protected categories in *The Alberta Human Rights Act*. The behaviour giving rise to a complaint of discrimination need not be intentional in order to be considered discrimination. With respect to student placement decisions, the above does not apply to a refusal, limitation, specification, or preference based on a bona fide educational requirement. With respect to employment, the above does not apply to a refusal, limitation, specification, or preference based on a bona fide occupational requirement.

2. **Harassment**

is unwelcome verbal or physical conduct, including harassment that relates to discrimination. Usually, it must be repeated to constitute harassment, but single acts can be harassing if they are severe, or involve obvious power imbalance. Harassment is insulting, demeaning or intimidating. Examples of harassment include but are not limited to the following: verbal or physical abuse; threats; derogatory remarks; jokes; innuendo or taunts about appearance or beliefs; display or electronic transfer of pornographic, racist or offensive images; and condescension that undermines self-confidence or is an unreasonable invasion of one's person. Harassment can be bullying or outright physical assault. The behaviour giving rise to a complaint need not be intentional in order to be considered harassment; it is sufficient that the offender knows, or ought reasonably to know, that the behaviour is offensive and unwelcome.

3. **Sexual harassment**

is any unwelcome behaviour that is sexual in nature. Unwanted sexual advances, unwanted requests for sexual acts, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when the harasser knows or ought to know that it is unwelcome. Sexual harassment includes such things as unwanted touching (e.g. pinching, patting, rubbing); leering, sexist or dirty jokes; the display of sexually suggestive material; derogatory or degrading comments; sexually suggestive gestures; and unwelcome propositions, innuendos, demands or inquiries of a sexual nature.

4. **Intimidation**

is intentional behaviour that would cause a person of ordinary sensibilities fear of injury or harm.

5. **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.

6. **Violence**

is the threatened, attempted, or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical injury. Examples include, but are not limited to the following: threatening behaviour such as shaking fists, destroying property, or throwing objects; verbal or written threats that express an intent to inflict harm; physical

attacks; or any other act that would arouse fear in a reasonable person in the circumstances.

## 2. Guidelines

1. **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, email, Internet or Intranet, or by any other means of communication.
2. **To ensure application of this policy, the Board has directed administration to create an applicable:**
  1. administrative procedure as specified in the School Act specific to students organizations and activities intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment in accordance with *Section 16.1 of the School Act*.
  2. administrative procedure specific to adults, and
  3. administrative procedure dealing with the student code of conduct that addresses:
    1. resolving issues peacefully;
    2. developing empathy, and
    3. contributing to welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments that foster diversity and nurture a sense of belonging and a positive sense of self.

## Reference:

Sections 12, 16, 18, 20, 24, 25, 45, 50, 105 *School Act*  
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms  
Criminal Code  
*Alberta Human Rights Act*  
*Teaching Profession Act*

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