

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

The Board of Directors is committed to providing students and staff with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning and working environment that fosters a sense of belonging, nurtures a positive sense of self, respects diversity and promotes well-being in all its aspects.

In accordance with this commitment, the Board does not condone behaviours that constitute bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, or violence, and expects allegations of such behaviours to be investigated and addressed in a timely and thorough manner, as warranted by the circumstance. Further, the Board affirms the rights, as expressed in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, of each student enrolled in the school and each staff member employed by Mother Earth's Children's Charter School Society. Accordingly, the Board believes that the school environment must be free from discrimination based on race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation. The Superintendent is responsible for the development and implementation of practices and procedures that are consistent with this policy.

#### **Definitions**

1. In this policy, “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.
2. In this policy, “harassment” means unwelcome verbal or physical conduct, including conduct 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 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. In this policy, “sexual harassment” means 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.

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4. In this policy, “discrimination” means the unjust or prejudicial treatment of a person or class of persons because of the race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation of that person or class of persons.
5. In this policy, “violence” means the threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that is intended to cause, causes or is likely to cause injury to a person or damage to property. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following: destroying property, throwing objects at others, 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 circumstance.

### Guidelines

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) 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.
  - b.) 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.
  - c.) The principal shall immediately inform the board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison, 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.
  - d.) The principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any; respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity and is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations and activities. For greater certainty, the principal shall not prohibit or discourage students from choosing a name that includes ‘gay-straight alliance’ or ‘queer-straight alliance’.
  - e.) The disclosure of personal information is governed by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)*.
2. The school principal is responsible to develop and implement a *Student Code of Conduct* that includes, at a minimum:
  - a.) A statement of purpose that provides a rationale for the code of conduct, with a focus on welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments.

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- b.) One or more statements about what is acceptable behaviour and what is unacceptable behaviour, whether or not it occurs within the school building, during the school day, or by electronic means.
  - c.) One or more statements about the consequences of unacceptable behaviour. The statement(s) must take into account the student's age, maturity, and individual circumstances, and must ensure that support is provided for students who are impacted by inappropriate behaviour, as well as for students who engage in inappropriate behaviour.
3. This policy and the associated *Student Code of Conduct* shall be reviewed annually, with the review to be confirmed by Board resolution. Following confirmation, the policy and *Student Code of Conduct* shall be posted or re-posted publicly on the school website.
  4. A website link to this policy, the associated administrative procedure, and the *Student Code of Conduct* shall be displayed in a place clearly visible to students in the school.

Legal Reference: Section 12, 16.1, 18, 20, 24, 25, 36, 50, 60, 105, 113 School Act  
Alberta Human Rights Act  
Occupational Health and Safety Act  
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms  
  
Criminal Code

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