

## **SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS**

### **Background**

The mission of our school division speaks to educating in an atmosphere of faith, hope, and love and to preparing our students to live as compassionate, confident and contributing citizens. In order to bring this mission to life, we are committed to promoting a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe Catholic learning environment that promotes the well-being of all students and staff. Our schools are committed to supporting inclusive communities that teach care and compassion for every person, regardless of age, race, colour, religious belief, place of origin, ancestry, family circumstance, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation or any other factor and require that every person be treated with dignity and respect. One of our division's goals is to develop responsible, compassionate and respectful members of a just, peaceful and democratic society. All efforts to further the caring and safe environment of a school will be in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church. This requires the support and assistance of all members of the school community.

A positive school climate contributes to the prevention and reduction of misbehaviors in school. School staff, under the direction of the principal, are to maintain order and discipline in the school, on school grounds and during division-sponsored activities. School staff must operate in loco parentis, that is to say, as responsible caring parents in relation to students. In exercising their authority under the School Act, staff must always consider the educational interests and fundamental rights of all students. Students and staff are expected to model and reinforce socially responsible and respectful behaviors so teaching and learning can take place in a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe Catholic environment.

### **Definitions**

1. Bullying is hereby defined to respond to the Board's responsibility to uphold Section 45.1 (1) of the School Act, which stipulates that it must provide a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for all students and staff. Bullying means repeated and hostile or demeaning behavior by a student where the behavior is intended by the student to cause harm, fear or distress to another individual in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to the individual's reputation. Bullying often occurs in circumstances where one party endeavors to maintain power and control over another based upon systemic inequalities within a social setting. Parameters for addressing bullying are outlined within this policy.

2. Conflict in Relationship occurs through single episodic acts of breakdown in relationships between students. Conflict is an inevitable component of students learning to grow within social relationships. Disagreement and misunderstanding between parties is at the heart of conflict. However, conflict does not necessarily constitute premeditated efforts to cause harm, fear, or distress. Parameters for addressing conflict in relationships between students may be dealt with through counseling and the division's Student Conduct Policy.
3. Personal Harassment refers to unwelcome, discriminatory conduct or behavior which is known or ought to be known to cause offense to another person. It does not reflect a relationship of mutual consent.
4. Sexual Harassment refers to unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which is known or ought to be known to impact the well-being of another person.

Harassment represents more than conflict in relationship and is a serious form of bullying that will be addressed through the division's Administrative Procedure on Harassment.

5. Sanctity of Human Life – A foundational principle of Catholic social teaching is the sanctity of human life. Recognizing each human person as having been created in the image and likeness of God, the Catholic Church believes that the inherent dignity of the human person begins at conception and extends until natural death. Human life is valued above all material possessions in the world. This is the lens through which the division views all students and advocates for their safety and well-being within our schools.<sup>1</sup>
6. Respect for the Human Person – Social justice can be achieved only by respecting the transcendent dignity of the human person. The person represents the ultimate end of society, which is ordered to man and woman. What is always at stake is the dignity of the human person, “whose defense and promotion have been entrusted to us by the Creator, and to whom men and women at every moment of history are strictly and responsibly in debt.”<sup>2</sup>

Catholic teaching on social relationships recognizes all those called to a life with Christ as, simply and completely, children of God. Christians afford no other title to that giftedness other than to be called by name to a life of love and to be compelled, through discipleship, to share it abundantly with others. As St. Paul reminds us, “For in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God, through faith. There

is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ (Galatians 3: 27-28).”

It is the responsibility of our students to respect the unique differences of every person, extending understanding and compassion to others. We do not limit or narrow our understanding of each other to specific traits that make us different. This would be a reductionist view of the human person. Rather, each of us is recognized for the entirety of our gifts and is called forth to contribute these gifts for the betterment of creation and the building of God’s kingdom. This understanding of the human person and God’s plan for each of us defines all of our social relationships. Our relationships, therefore, are characterized by generosity of self, mutual respect, and a desire for the good of the other.

7. Chastity – Our definition of chastity is rooted in God’s plan for us as human persons created in God’s image and likeness. Our bodies are, as St. Paul writes, “a temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6: 19), designed to reflect God’s love in the world. Gifted with our sexuality, we are called to express it with dignity and reverence and with purity of both body and mind. The challenge for each of us, young and old, is to control our desires and passions and to live our sexuality as the Father wills in a way that honors God, ourselves, and others. To do so is to be chaste. For unmarried persons, “chastity entails abstinence [from sexual relations], because God’s design is that sex belongs in marriage.”<sup>3</sup> Our sexuality is to be self-giving in nature, and the sexual act is to be unitive and procreative and exclusive to marriage, a union between a man and a woman.<sup>4</sup>

The Alberta Bishops’ *A Resource for an Inclusive Community (2001)* remains an instructive pastoral resource for teachers and counselors in our ministry to students experiencing same-sex attractions. The Canadian Catholic Bishops’ *Pastoral Letter to Young People on Chastity* summarizes the importance of this virtue by stating: “Persons who experience attraction to those of the same sex are also called to chastity. They too can grow in Christian holiness through a life of self-control, prayer, and the reception of the sacraments.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CCCB (1994). *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Ottawa, Ontario: CCCB Publishing, 2273, p. 465.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 1929, p. 401.

<sup>3</sup> Episcopal Commission for Doctrine (2011). *Pastoral Letter to Young People on Chastity*, Ottawa, Ontario: Concacan Inc., p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Episcopal commission for Doctrine (2011). *Pastoral Ministry to Young People with Same-Sex Attraction*, Ottawa, Ontario: Concacan Inc., p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Chastity for Single Persons, p. 23.

## **Procedures**

### 1. The Division shall:

- 1.1 Ensure the best educational interests of the student are the paramount consideration in the exercise of their authority;
- 1.2 Ensure all schools foster welcoming, caring, respectful and safe Catholic environments;
- 1.3 Develop, implement and continually evaluate procedures, programs and practices to prevent and respond to incidents that disrupt teaching and learning;
- 1.4 Act in manner that is legally, professionally and educationally sound.

### 2. The Principal shall:

- 2.1 Ensure that students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister;
- 2.2 Develop an action plan in consultation with students, staff, school council, police, community representatives and parents, that:
  - 2.2.1 Provides data management and internal/external communications system;
  - 2.2.2 Clarifies roles and responsibilities of students, school staff, parents/guardians and community agencies to support safe and caring schools;
  - 2.2.3 Establishes procedures for developing, implementing and evaluating violence prevention;
  - 2.2.4 Provides crisis management and school disaster plans;
  - 2.2.5 Provides staff with professional development on safe and caring schools;
- 2.3 Ensure a system of monitoring student attendance is in place.

- 2.3.1 Follow-up phone calls shall be made for unaccounted student absences;
  - 2.3.2 Unaccounted morning absences shall be followed up as soon as possible no later than noon (12:00 p.m.). Unaccounted afternoon absences shall be followed up as soon as possible, not later than the end of the school day.
3. Teachers shall:
- 3.1 Create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning;
  - 3.2 Establish learning environments wherein students feel physically, psychologically, socially and culturally secure;
  - 3.3 Be respectful of students' human dignity;
  - 3.4 Establish a positive, professional relationship with each student that is characterized by mutual respect, trust and harmony;
  - 3.5 Model beliefs, principles, values and intellectual characteristics outlined in the Guide to Education, ECS to grade 12.
4. School Council members and/or parent/guardians shall:
- 4.1 Have a right and responsibility to make decisions respecting the education of their children;
  - 4.2 Consult with the Principal to ensure students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister;
  - 4.3 Advise and consult with the Principal on matters related to student conduct, discipline and consequences.
5. Students shall:
- 5.1 Demonstrate desirable personal characteristics, such as respect, responsibility, fairness, honesty, caring, loyalty and commitment to democratic ideals;

- 5.2 Conduct themselves so as to reasonably comply with the following code of conduct:
  - 5.2.1 Be diligent in pursuing their studies;
  - 5.2.2 Attend school regularly and punctually;
  - 5.2.3 Comply fully with everyone authorized by the division to provide education programs and other services;
  - 5.2.4 Comply with rules of the school;
  - 5.2.5 Account to their teachers for their conduct;
  - 5.2.6 Respect the rights of others.
6. All actions by students that impact the safety and well-being of students or staff or call into question a student's success in being accountable for his/her conduct to the successful operation of the school will be addressed through the division's administrative procedure on Student Conduct.
7. All schools and classrooms must enact procedures that support the following expectations with respect to bullying:
  - 7.1 No action toward another student, regardless of the intent of that action, will cause harm, fear, or distress to that student.
  - 7.2 No action toward another student within the school community will diminish the student's reputation within the school community.
  - 7.3 Any action that contributes to a perception of bullying, whether it occurs during school time or after school hours, or whether by electronic or other means, will be addressed by the school if it is determined that the actions impact the well-being of the alleged victim within the school community.
  - 7.4 Any action that humiliates or contributes to diminishing the reputation of a student because of race, religious beliefs, color, gender, physical disability, mental disability, ancestry, place of origin, marital status of parents, source of income of parents, family circumstances, or sexual orientation of a student is deemed to be an act of bullying.

- 7.5 No report by a student that he/or she is being “bullied” will be ignored by a school official. The official will respond as if an incident has happened and report the incident to a teacher or principal.
- 7.6 The principal will establish a distinction between those matters of bullying that will be addressed by teachers, and those to be addressed by the school administrator.
- 7.7 Students who are bystanders to an act of bullying have a responsibility to report observed incidents to school staff. Students are expected to either exercise communication dedicated to prevent bullying behavior, or failing this, to immediately report such incidents to school staff.
- 7.8 Students do not have a role in disciplining other students who have allegedly participated in bullying behavior. They are encouraged to discourage these actions by labeling the behavior through communication to others as bullying, requesting that the behavior cease, and report the incident to a school official.
- 7.9 In establishing consequences for bullying, teachers and principals will use corrective interventions that consider the context of the circumstance, the behavioral history of the students involved, and the age /stage of development of the student.
- 7.10 If, in the opinion of the teacher or principal, an act of bullying has occurred, interventions dedicated to stopping future bullying behavior and educating bullied students about how to address the issue in the future will be applied. Those disciplined for their involvement in bullying will be clearly directed about what to “stop” doing and “start” doing in order to foster a safe and caring culture within the school.
- 7.11 Parents play a primary role in assisting with the resolution of matters pertaining to bullying. Apprising them of incidents in this area that have impacted their child/children should occur at the earliest opportunity.
- 7.12 Incidents of bullying that adversely impact the safety of individuals or are an affront to the common good of the school community may be addressed through the application of Sections 24 or 25 of the *School Act*.

8. Students will be afforded the following:
  - 8.1 Inclusive communities which support welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that foster diversity and nurture a sense of belonging and positive sense of self.
  - 8.2 Opportunities to have access to meaningful and relevant learning experiences that include appropriate instructional supports, regardless of age, race, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation or any other factor
    - 8.2.1 Schools will use Division resources/services, “A Resource for a Pastoral Approach to Supporting and Guiding Students in Inclusive Communities – Gender Identity and Expression” as developed by the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta (2016) and may also refer to the “Guidelines for Best Practices: Creating Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions” as developed by the Government of Alberta, to determine which accommodations and supports may be acceptable;
    - 8.2.2 Principals in consultation with the school learning team, specialists, parent(s), student and division staff will determine, on a case-by-case basis, accommodations and supports which are acceptable and emphasize a loving and pastoral response to gender diversity as well as requiring that persons who are gender diverse be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Therefore, the level of ongoing support and guidance required will vary, depending on individual need, Accommodations may include but not limited to, a change in common name, use of a suitable change room/bathroom, classroom adaptations and field trip accommodations.
    - 8.2.3 Principals will provide opportunities for staff to increase their knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes in promoting respect for human rights, respecting diversity and understanding issues related to gender identity and/or gender expression in relation to the Catholic faith as well as the greater society. All school-based staff are expected to act pastorally within the spirit of the “Pastoral Approach” document.
  - 8.3 Information on the code of conduct with which they are expected to comply and possible consequences for noncompliance;
  - 8.4 Opportunities to explain and present evidence with respect to incidents;



- 8.5 Decisions made as objectively as possible and based on all the facts presented.
- 8.6 In order to enhance an overall approach to supporting safe and caring learning environments for students, schools may establish co-curricular learning opportunities where an enhanced cause for promoting respect for the human person may be established. These co-curricular learning opportunities may be in the form of a club or group and may explore issues such as bullying, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, body image, race, culture, peer acceptance, discrimination, justice, and respectful relationships and language. When students, out of concern for each other within the school or within the greater or global communities, seek to initiate this request, the following expectations will be in place:
- 8.6.1 a proposal must be presented to the principal who will use Division services and the *LIFE Framework* as developed by the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta (March 2016), to determine the scope of support required and the purpose (advocacy, peer support, counselling) for the club or group;
  - 8.6.2 the principal, in consultation with other division staff and the students, will approve or amend the request based on its capacity to uphold the sanctity of human life through acts of justice/social action while upholding Catholic teaching on social relationships. The principal will use the *LIFE Framework* as a mechanism to determine the kind of school based support that will be required for the students;
  - 8.6.3 the principal must establish the supervisory and educational authority for the group or club, through the designation of a Catholic teacher, as advisor and facilitator, who will monitor and support the student group;
  - 8.6.4 the principal must clarify the objectives of the group with the teacher advisor before meeting with students;
  - 8.6.5 the principal must provide in-service for staff advisors regarding the purpose for the student group, how the group can be supported and to increase their knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes in respecting diversity and understanding issues related to gender identity and/or gender expression in relation to the Catholic faith as well as the greater society. Therefore as a minimal standard, all school-based staff will

review “A Resource for a Pastoral Approach to Supporting and Guiding Students in Inclusive Communities – Gender Identity and Expression” (2016) and the LIFE Framework (2016), as developed by the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta, at the beginning of each school year;

- 8.6.6 the principal must approve materials used within the student group and maintain supervision over conversations that support the intent of FOIPP legislation within the province;
- 8.6.7 the teacher advisor must be present for all meetings from beginning to end and use the mission, vision, and core values of the division, Catholic teaching on social relationships, and the Church’s definition of chastity as a basis for advising students within their work. When matters arise within these groups that necessitate the intervention of outside agencies, the latter may be involved subject to their capacity to support the intention of this policy;
- 8.6.8 student groups that further the intent of this policy must, through their activities, demonstrate an understanding and respect for the sanctity of, human life, respect for the human person, Catholic teaching on social relationships, and Church teaching on chastity as outlined within this policy. This implies that full cooperation with the expectations of the staff supervisor is of paramount importance. Failure to work cooperatively with staff supervisors in order to contribute to a positive environment within the group or school community can result in individual participation within the group being restricted or the dissolution of the group;
- 8.6.9 Names for student groups seeking to further respect the human person will incorporate language in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Names will be approved by the principal in consultation with division staff and students and, will respect the intent of this procedure and section 16.1 of the *School Act*.
- 8.6.10 A general notice will be provided to the school community indicating that students may be organizing Life Framework/Diversity clubs at the school in the future.

- 8.6.11 If a Diversity club is formed in a school, notification of the formation of the club is sent to all parents (not naming of any students involved in the formation of the clubs). This notification includes the responsibility of parents to discuss with their child the purpose and nature of the club, whether their child wishes to become a member and their child's obligation to both refrain from bullying behavior and contribute to a safe learning school environment that respects diversity. At all times, parents are invited to converse with the school regarding the intention of the LIFE Framework/Diversity club.
9. Consequences for inappropriate behavior will be determined by each school staff, in accordance with division procedures, to fit the unique circumstances of the school and student. Appropriate consequences will be based on helping the student(s) learn from the misbehavior.
- 9.1 Consequences for noncompliance may include:
- 9.1.1 Verbal warning and/or reprimand;
  - 9.1.2 Removal of privileges;
  - 9.1.3 Formal removal from class;
  - 9.1.4 Minor or major detention;
  - 9.1.5 Interview and/or contract with student;
  - 9.1.6 Parent/guardian communication and/or meeting;
  - 9.1.7 Temporary removal from class and/or restitution;
  - 9.1.8 Counselling and/or referral for services;
  - 9.1.9 Suspension and/or expulsion to alternative education program.

Reference: Section 1, 8, 12, 16,18, 20, 22, 24, 27, 45, 45.1(1), 60, 61, 113, 123, 124, 125 School Act  
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms  
Individual Rights Protection Act  
Alberta Human Rights Act  
An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children;  
School Act; Alberta Bill of Rights  
Supporting Safe, Secure and Caring Schools in Alberta (1999)

