

351 WELCOMING, SAFE, RESPECTFUL AND CARING SCHOOL CULTURE

Background

A welcoming, safe, respectful and caring school exists with the full support and assistance of all members of the school community. We seek to develop a just, peaceful and democratic society in our schools, in accordance with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *School Act*. The Division commits to ensure that all are treated with respect and dignity, and where everyone feels they belong. The Division expects employees, students, volunteers, parents, community members - any person - who visits Division facilities to conduct themselves in a manner which promotes and protects the best interests of students, staff, and colleagues.

Definitions

A positive school culture

One in which each individual is valued, trusted, respected and involved. The operating ethos is one of collaboration, high expectations, mutual trust, caring and support for all individuals.

An Inclusive education system

A way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance of, and belonging for all students.

A welcoming, safe, respectful and caring school learning environment

One that is physically, emotionally and psychologically safe, characterized by:

- a. diversity is respected, celebrated and understood as a strength;
- b. values, rights and responsibilities are respected;
- c. appropriate modeling by staff and students;
- d. expectations are clear, consistent and regularly communicated;

- e. healthy and respectful relationships are built and fostered;
- f. students feel that adults care for them as a group and as individuals;
- g. positive mental health is promoted;
- h. support is demonstrated through collaboration, high expectations, mutual trust and caring;
- i. consequences of unacceptable behaviour take into account the students age, maturity, and individual circumstances;
- j. support is provided for those impacted by inappropriate behaviour as well as for those who engage in inappropriate behaviours;
- k. children, youth and adults model positive social-emotional skills, including empathy and compassion.

Bullying

A conscious, persistent and repeated behaviour by one or more people, which is intended to harm others. Bullying takes many forms and can include a variety of behaviours and can include physical, verbal, social and cyber bullying. Bullying is the assertion of power through aggression.

Cyber bullying

Includes the use of email, cell phones, text messages, and internet sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude. or damage reputations and friendships.

Bystander

A person who observes a conflict or unacceptable behavior. This group includes everyone, other than the bully and victim, who is present during a bullying incident.

Harassment

Any unwelcome or unwanted act or comment that is hurtful, degrading, humiliating, or offensive to another person. Of particular concern is such behaviour that persists after the aggressor has been asked to stop.

Please refer also to AP 172: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

Defamation

Any action that attacks or injures the reputation or honour of an individual or group by false and malicious statements.

Restorative Discipline

Restorative Discipline adds to the current discipline framework of our schools. It promotes values and principles that use inclusive, collaborative approaches between students, home, and the school. Restorative practices emphasize repairing the harm done to people and relationships, rather than punishing people. By building more supportive learning environments and focusing on social-emotional learning, restorative practices can reduce social barriers to

learning, engage more students, create a context for understanding and valuing diversity, nurture a sense of belonging and promote positive mental health.

Key components of restorative practices include:

- a strong focus on relationships
 - universal strategies for enhanced communication skills for the whole school
 - strategies for a targeted population to practice conflict resolution skills
 - more intensive interventions for students who have been involved in serious incidents
- strong leadership and positive modeling by school staff
- a continuum of strategies, from informal (affective statements and questions) to formal (restorative conferences)

Positive Behaviour Supports

Research over the past 15 years has shown that positive behaviour supports is effective in promoting positive behaviour in students and schools. Schools that implement a whole school approach also report increased time engaged in academic activities and improved academic performance.

Key components related to positive behaviour supports in schools include:

- focusing on building positive relationships
- structuring learning environments to optimize student success
- differentiating instruction to make learning engaging, meaningful and effective for all students
- teaching social-emotional skills
- setting clear behavioural expectations
- positive reinforcement
- fair and predictable consequences, including clear and helpful feedback
- collecting and using data to make decisions and measure effectiveness
- collaborative team planning and monitoring

Within this model, predetermined levels of support and intervention are established to enhance a positive climate of school engagement for all students. Three levels are identified as part of the intervention protocol:

- **Basic/Universal Support:** Systemic teaching that produces a clear understanding of expectations is developed in a collaborative and respectful culture. Typical universal supports are school-wide and focus on: positive interactions with adults, clear expectations, social-emotional learning and differentiated instruction.

Research shows that 80% to 85% of students demonstrate positive behaviour when universal supports are in place.

- Targeted Support: Additional support is provided for students who may have difficulty meeting basic behaviour expectations or are at-risk of developing serious behaviour issues in the future. Targeted supports can be offered in small groups and for a finite period of time. The support strategy should look at the root causes of a students' problem behaviour. Targeted supports need to be provided with universal strategies that are in place for all students.
- Individual/Intensive Support: Even with universal and targeted supports in place, there may still be a small group of students with behaviour difficulties that interfere with their learning and relationships. Many of these students have also experienced trauma and/or have medical conditions/disabilities or mental health concerns. These students require intensive and individualized supports, which may include an individual behaviour support plan.

Responsibilities

1. The Superintendent shall:

- a. Ensure all schools are welcoming, safe, respectful, and caring for all students and staff; and visitors.
- b. Develop, implement and regularly evaluate policy, procedures, programs and practices to support welcoming, safe, respectful and caring schools.
- c. Provide support for education and training for staff, elected trustees, and parents to develop their knowledge, skills, awareness and behaviours to create and maintain welcoming, safe, respectful and caring schools.

2. The Principal shall:

- a. Ensure their school is welcoming, safe, respectful and caring for all by working in collaboration with parents, students, schools staff and community agencies: verify teachers complete professional learning required by the district.
- b. Work in collaboration with the Crisis Response Team, to support a welcoming, safe, respectful and caring school environment.
- c. Provide information on school expectations that support a welcoming, safe, respectful and caring environment.
- d. Establish learning environments where students and staff feel physically, psychologically, socially and culturally safe.

3. Teachers shall:

- a. Create and maintain classroom environments that are welcoming, safe, respectful and caring for all.

- b. Provide information on school expectations that support a welcoming, safe, respectful and caring environment: complete professional learning required by the Division.
 - c. Support, model and uphold the expected behaviours, and guide students to do the same.
 - d. Establish learning environments where students feel physically, psychologically, socially and culturally safe.
4. Support Staff, and Bus Drivers shall:
- a. Work in partnership to ensure school, bus or field trips are environments where students feel physically, psychologically, socially safe.
5. Parents are responsible for:
- a. Understanding school expectations for student behavior.
 - b. Supporting the school in the upholding of these expectations, procedures and regulations at all school functions, both on-campus and off campus or by electronic means.
 - c. Instilling in their child, respect for the rights and the property of others.
 - d. Respecting the authority of the school staff to provide a welcoming, safe, respectful, and caring environment.
6. Students are responsible for:
- a. Conducting themselves in a manner that supports a welcoming, safe, respectful and caring environment for all.
 - b. Conducting themselves so as to comply with the Code of Conduct specified in Section 31 of the Education Act.

Intervention Strategies

Developmentally appropriate responses to inappropriate choices will be based on what the student can learn from the incident and how to support a safe and caring environment for all. The goal is to encourage empathy, to make amends and to help students associate power with kindness and pro-social activities. Responses may include:

- *an Interview with students;*
- *problem solve with all parties involved with the goal of restoring the relationship(s);*
- *verbal warning;*
- *detention;*
- *temporary removal from class;*

- *parent communication and/or meeting;*
- *outside agency involvement (Child and Family Services, Mental Health, RCMP, etc as necessary or required by law);*
- *counselling;*
- *restitution;*
- *in school /out of school suspension;*
- *expulsion to alternative education program.*

References:

Section 3, 11, 19,,36,37,52,53,196,197,222
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
Alberta Human Rights Act
Canadian Rockies Public Schools Administrative Procedures 170, 171, 172, 352, 380, 409
Guidelines for Best Practices: Creating Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities, and Gender Expressions (Alberta Government)
Canadian Rockies Public Schools Code of Conduct
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
Bill 24 - An Act to Support Gay Straight Alliances
Alberta Education: Welcoming, caring, respectful and safe schools

History

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