

Administrative Procedure 160

Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe Learning Environments

Background

The District is committed to ensure that each student enrolled in a school operated by Medicine Hat Catholic, and each employee is provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging.

Section 45.1 of the *School Act* indicates that a board has the responsibility to ensure 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 environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. Section 16.1 of the *School Act* outlines regulations for the creation of student groups. Student groups can serve as one mechanism to create inclusive schools, and Medicine Hat Catholic supports their formation and operation.

The *School Act* also requires the District to establish a student code of conduct that addresses bullying behaviour. The District's student code of conduct is Administrative Procedure 351.

Definitions

For the purpose of this Administrative Procedure: “bullying” has the same meaning as under the *School Act*;

“District” means the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education; and

“parent” includes legal guardian.

Nothing in this administrative procedure of the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education is to be interpreted so as to limit or be a waiver of the Medicine Hat Catholic School Board's rights and powers pursuant the *Constitution Act, 1867* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to maintain the denominational character of Catholic schools. If any of the provisions in this administrative procedure of the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education conflict with the Medicine Hat Catholic's Board's rights and powers pursuant to the *Constitution Act, 1867* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to maintain the denominational character of Catholic schools, the Medicine Hat Catholic School Board's rights and powers pursuant the *Constitution Act, 1867* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to maintain the denominational character of Catholic schools will govern.



Procedures

1. Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environments
 - 1.1. Each school operated by Medicine Hat Catholic must establish a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that:
 - 1.1.1. focuses on building respectful and compassionate school environments rooted in Catholic values;
 - 1.1.2. is grounded in community involvement, ministry and service, student forums and conferences, parent and family involvement, integration of Catholic values, and an emphasis on building relationships;
 - 1.1.3. creates a climate that embraces the values of faith, caring, respect, responsibility, trust, and family; and
 - 1.1.4. is based on the principle that students learn and understand values in three ways:
 - 1.1.4.1.1 students need to “know the good” through ethical discussion;
 - 1.1.4.1.2 students need to “see the good” through role modeling and “experience the good” by being a part of a caring community; and
 - 1.1.4.1.3 students need to “do the good” through service learning opportunities and relationships with others.
2. District responsibilities and bullying
 - 2.1. No action toward another student, regardless of the intent of that action will cause harm, fear, or distress to that student.
 - 2.2. No action toward another student within the school community will diminish the student’s reputation within the school community.
 - 2.3. Any action that contributes to a perception of bullying, whether or not the behavior occurs within the school building, during the school day or 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.
 - 2.4. Any action that humiliates or contributes to diminishing the reputation of a student is deemed to be an act of bullying or harassment.
 - 2.5. 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.



- 2.6. The principal will establish a distinction between those matters of bullying that will be addressed by teachers, and those to be addressed by the principal.
 - 2.7. Students who are bystanders to an act of bullying have a responsibility to report observed incidences to school staff. Students are expected to either exercise communication dedicated to prevent bullying behaviour, or failing this, immediately report such incidences to school staff.
 - 2.8. Students do not have a role in disciplining other students who have allegedly participated in bullying behaviour. They are encouraged to discourage these actions by labeling the behaviour through communication to others as bullying, requesting that the behaviour cease, and report the incident to a school official.
 - 2.9. In establishing consequences for bullying, teachers and principals will use corrective interventions that consider the context of the circumstance, the behavioural history of the students involved, and the age / stage of development of the student.
 - 2.10. If in the opinion of the teacher or principal an act of bullying has occurred, interventions will be applied dedicated to stopping the behaviour in the future, and educating the student victimized about how to address the issue in the future. Those disciplined for their involvement in bullying will be communicated what to “stop” doing, and “start” doing in order to further a safe and caring culture within the school.
 - 2.11. Parents play a primary role in assisting with the resolution of matters pertaining to bullying. Apprising them of issues in this area as they have impacted their children should occur at the earliest opportunity.
 - 2.12. A principal may use a Restorative Discipline or Positive Behavioural Support model to address matters of discipline.
 - 2.13. Incidences 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 pertinent sections of the *School Act*.
3. Support for student organizations
 - 3.1 Each District employee must comply with all provisions under the School Act respecting support for student organizations, including in particular the following provisions under the School Act:

16.1(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) subject to subsection (4) [of section 16.1 of the School Act], 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.

[...]

(3) 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.

(3.1) For greater certainty, the principal shall not prohibit or discourage students from choosing a name that includes “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”.

(4) The principal shall immediately inform the board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison referred to in subsection (1) [of section 16.1 of the School Act], 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.

[...]

(6) The principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in subsection (1) [of section 16.1 of the *School Act*] is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity.

[...]

45.1(4)(c) [...] [T]he principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in [subsection (1) of section 16.1 of the *School Act*] [...] is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations and activities[.]

3.2 A principal who carries out functions under section 16.1 of the School Act should refer to the CCSSA’s LIFE Framework, as amended from time to time, and use it as a resource guide.

3.3. The District may disclose personal information only if it is authorized to do so



under legislation that governs such disclosure, which, depending on the circumstances, may include the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the School Act, the Children First Act, and the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.

4. Student code of conduct

4.1. Each school operated by the District must:

- 4.1.1. follow the student code of conduct Administrative Procedure 351 Appendix A that supplements the District student code of conduct Administrative Procedure 351 with statements about acceptable and unacceptable behaviours; and
- 4.1.2. include the District-wide student code of conduct Appendix A and the school-specific code of conduct in student handbooks, agendas, or similar items or documents that the school provides to students at the start of the school year.

5. Rights and discrimination

- 5.1. Subject to the right and responsibility of the District to provide education programs to students through separate schools in such a way that the rights guaranteed under the Constitution of Canada of separate school electors are preserved and maintained, the District affirms the rights of each student and employee as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and will not discriminate against students and employees as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

References:

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
Alberta Human Rights Act
Alberta Bill of Rights
An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children
School Act; Section 16.1 and 45.1
Board Policy 1: District Foundational Statement
AP 160 Safe and Caring Learning Environments
AP 170 Discrimination and Harassment
AP 350 Rights and Responsibilities of Students
AP 351 Student Conduct
AP 358 Harassment
AP 390 Student Appeals
Living Inclusion Faithfully For Everyone (LIFE) Framework (2018) developed by the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta (CCSSA)
A Resource for a Pastoral Approach for Supporting and Guiding Students in Inclusive Communities 2018 (CCSSA)

