
POLICY 24

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY AND GENDER
EXPRESSION**

PREAMBLE

The Division values the diversity found within its school communities. The Division recognizes that students, staff and school community members including, but not limited to, those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender diverse, two-spirit, queer/questioning (LGBTQ+) encounter a unique set of challenges within our schools and communities.

All members of the school community have the right to learn and work in an environment free of discrimination, prejudice, and harassment. This right is protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *Alberta Human Rights Act*, and *Alberta School Act*. These rights will be valued, maintained and enforced so that all members work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The Division will not tolerate harassment, bullying, or discrimination on the basis of a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Specifically, the Division believes that all students, staff and families with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions have the right to:

- be fully included and represented in a positive, and respectful manner by all school personnel.
- have equitable access to supports, services and protections.
- the assurance that all such discriminatory behaviors and complaints will be taken seriously, documented and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policy and procedures.
- self-identification as the sole criteria for recognition and support.
- promote and evaluate inclusive educational strategies and supports, create professional development opportunities and administrative guidelines to ensure that students, staff and their families feel welcomed, valued and supported and are treated with respect and dignity in all aspects of the school community.
- identify a staff member in each school to serve as a safe contact for students and staff with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.
- the formation of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or Queer-Straight Alliances (QSAs) in our schools that promote welcoming, caring, respectful, safe and inclusive learning environments for students and their allies. The school will ensure that a caring adult (staff or community member) will be available to facilitate this group. School administration will inform students of this opportunity.

- the expressed confidentiality and privacy of all students, staff and families with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.
- access at least one single-occupancy gender-neutral washroom facility with appropriate signage for those not wishing to use facilities identified with their biological sex; this facility is available to all individuals.

Division is committed to implementing measures that will:

- promote a systemic response, using a whole school approach, which strives to identify and address educational practices, policies and procedures that perpetuates discrimination, harassment and exclusion based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
- ensure all students, including those with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions, are treated as unique individuals therefore requests for supports must be addressed on a case by case basis.
- provide effective supports and procedures to respond, in a timely manner, to complaints of behaviours that perpetuate discrimination, harassment and exclusion based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
- encourage staff to adapt and include current learning resources and strategies to provide opportunities to develop positive awareness with respect to human rights, anti-discrimination and cultural diversity related to sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.

Legal Reference: School Act
Alberta Human Rights Act
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
Education Act (un-proclaimed)

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