

Westboro School Council & Westboro Parents Group Communication Protocol

Preamble

Though they are two separate legal entities, Westboro School Council (WSC) and Westboro Parents Group (WPG) often work in unison and as such, both follow the same Communication Protocol.

The Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) Communication Protocol For Schools (<https://www.eips.ca/download/40981>) is the basis for the WSC/WPG specific protocol and serves as a reference attached to this document. Where this protocol adopts content directly from the EIPS protocol, that content is shown in *italics*.

Communication Channels

WSC and WPG seek to communicate in many different ways so as to meet the needs of most parents/guardians. *Generally, the more issues-driven and/or detailed the information is, the more direct the communication channel chosen should be.*

Communication channels include:

- *Face to face communication:* WSC and WPG meetings, events (both formal and informal)
- *Telephone conversations*
- *Hard copy, written communication:* letters sent home
- *Electronic Communications:* email, electronic newsletters, websites, social media

WSC and WPG maintain a separate email distribution list from the school. Parents are invited to join and are at liberty at any time to withdraw consent, at which point they will be removed from this list. WSC/WPG will use this email list to send out meeting minutes and agendas, along with other information as deemed appropriate.

WSC and WPG also maintain a Facebook Group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/WestboroParents/>). The Facebook Group is for parents/guardians/staff. The designated administrator will approve people added by existing members of the group. The administrator will send others wanting to join the group a message asking what class(es) their child(ren) is/are in to confirm they have children attending our Westboro Elementary (people from other areas have asked to join in the past, as there are other schools/establishments named Westboro across North America). Students are not allowed to join, which is in keeping with Facebook's minimum age of 13, as well as, the discussion and subsequent decision when WSC and WPG decided to create the group. WSC/WPG will use the Facebook Group for sharing information and reminders, as well as, for gathering feedback or asking basic questions or clarification. The administrators will delete criticism and negative comments and remove any disruptive or disrespectful members.

WSC and WPG submits a monthly article to the school newsletter as well.

WSC and WPG have an email address: WestboroParents@gmail.com, which is used to send out information to our email distribution list. It is also a way for others to contact us with questions, ideas or concerns.

In partnership with the school, WSC and WPG have a page on the school website (www.westboroelementary.ca). The Principal, or designate, will post meeting minutes to this page, beginning with the DRAFT minutes and followed by the APPROVED version after the WSC/WPG approves them. In addition, we will post general information about the two groups on this page, along with, names of the Executive, Committee chairs, and meeting dates for the year. The Principal, or designate, updates the information, with input from the Executive.

Being Respectful in All Forms of Communication

Regardless of the communication channel used or the people involved, all communication should adhere to Board Policy 19, Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe Learning and Working Environments (<https://www.eips.ca/about-us/board-policies/535>) and Administrative Procedure 311, Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe Learning Environments for Students (www.eips.ca/about-us/administrative-procedures/311); and Administrative Procedure 170, Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe Learning and Working Environments (www.eips.ca/about-us/administrative-procedures/170). Everyone has the right to be treated with respect, whether it's in a face-to-face meeting, in a telephone conversation, or through email. All of these documents are attached hereto.

WSC/WPG will address all respectfully brought forward inquiries or concerns.

Addressing Concerns

If parents/guardians have concerns, they are encouraged to address the appropriate person directly. If contact information is not available, email WestboroParents@gmail.com and we will forward it. General questions or concerns can be addressed to this email as well and we will respond or try to set up a face-to-face meeting to discuss. There is always an Open Questions section on each meeting agenda. Those with concerns are encouraged to try to address any issues directly with the appropriate party; they are welcome to address the concern at a meeting as long as it is done respectfully.

Response Time Frames

WSC and WPG will endeavor to respond promptly and within reason to all inquiries and concerns. Please be mindful, however, that our members are all volunteers and at times have other pressing commitments as well. If not able to respond, they will endeavor to at a minimum acknowledge the inquiry/concern and either indicate when they will be able to respond, or to ask another person to take over the response.

Referenced Addendum Documents

EIPS Communication Protocol for Schools

Board Policy 19, Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe Learning and Working Environments

Administrative Procedure 311, Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe Learning Environments for Students

Administrative Procedure 170, Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning and Working Environments



Communication Protocol for Schools

Communication plays a key role in creating and fostering strong, positive relationships between the school and the home. Communication is a two-way street; our schools share information with our families and community, and our families share information with our schools.

The purpose of this document is to guide, manage, and improve school-home communication by offering a standard format, structure, and sequence for regular, ongoing communication.

Communication Channels

Communication can take place in a variety of formats. The message and the purpose of the communication can help determine which format is most appropriate. Generally, the more issues-driven and/or detailed the information is, the more direct the communication channel chosen should be.

Communication channels include:

- Face-to-face communication – one-on-one meetings, School Council meetings, Parent-Student-Teacher interviews
- Telephone conversations
- Hard copy, written communication – letters sent home from the school, paper school newsletters
- Electronic communication – email, electronic newsletters, websites, social media

When the communication requires a dialogue, such as bringing forward a question or concern or when a discussion is required on a particular topic, the preferred channels of communication are ones that allow for an immediate and ongoing interaction between the people involved. The best formats for this kind of communication are face-to-face conversations or telephone conversations.

Schools and families are encouraged to use these direct channels of communication when a topic is complex or requires a dialogue. These more direct forms of communication also help us establish a personal connection, which helps build relationships that we don't get in other forms of communication.

When it comes to communication from the school to our families, very rarely do we use only one communication channel. Often we use multiple communication formats together with one another to help ensure the message reaches everyone it needs to.

All staff at a particular school are encouraged to collectively select one common communication tool to use as their primary channel when communicating with parents (e.g., email). This will help ensure consistency throughout the school, so parents have a consistent place to go for information. Some staff may then choose to also use other communication tools to supplement the main communication channel, if they wish.

School and Division Use of Synrevoice

Synrevoice is a communication tool used by EIPS' schools and the division office to provide information to families via telephone and/or email messages (using the contact information families provide during the registration process). Synrevoice is used to share information about:

- Upcoming school and division events and activities
- Community engagement opportunities
- Provincial initiatives
- Emergency preparedness and crisis response



Communication Protocol for Schools

The Role of Social Media

Social media is quickly becoming a common communication tool used throughout education and the world. The speed at which we can share information using social media and how easily accessible that information becomes, makes it a valuable tool in our communications toolbox. However, social media has its limitations, and therefore it is just that – one tool in the toolbox.

Some social media channels, such as Twitter, only allow the sharing of very short messages. Therefore, it is difficult to share a complex message via Twitter. Instead we sometimes see Twitter being used to share a link to another communication channel (e.g., a website) where the audience can find the detailed information.

Social media platforms may work well for:

- Sharing snippets of good news stories and celebrations
- Sending reminders of key dates
- Communicating important information during a crisis (however, keep in mind the information can change quickly in these situations and our first priority is always responding to the situation to ensure students and staff safety)
- Providing links to more detailed information or sharing resources
- Asking basic questions of clarification (however, more complex questions may be better asked using email or a telephone conversation when more detail is required in the answer)

Expectations

Addressing Concerns Directly

If parents/guardians have a concern about something at the school or in the classroom, they are encouraged to bring the concern forward in a timely manner directly to the appropriate person. These discussions should take place in the following order:

1. Discuss the concern with the classroom teacher to determine if the issue can be resolved at the classroom level.
2. If this issue cannot be resolved at the classroom level, bring it forward for discussion with the school principal or assistant principal. Most concerns can be addressed at the school level when school staff and administration as well as parents/guardians engage in open and collaborative discussion.
3. If the issue cannot be resolved at the school level, bring it forward for discussion with the appropriate Central Administration personnel.

Any level of the above discussions may be initiated by telephone or email, but may evolve into a face-to-face meeting, which allows for the best and most collaborative discussion to take place.

Being Respectful in All Forms of Communication

Regardless of the communication channel used or the people involved, all communication should adhere to *Board Policy 19, Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe Learning and Working Environments* (www.eips.ca/about-us/board-policies/535); *Administrative Procedure 311, Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe Learning Environments for Students* (www.eips.ca/about-us/administrative-procedures/311); and *Administrative Procedure 170, Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe Learning and Working Environments* (www.eips.ca/about-us/administrative-procedures/170). Everyone has the right to be treated with respect, whether it's in a face-to-face meeting, in a telephone conversation, or through email.



Communication Protocol for Schools

Response Time Frames

Every effort should be made to respond in a timely manner, whether the response is required from the home to the school, school to the home, or among schools and/or departments. While there is no guarantee on the specific time frame for a response, generally families can expect a response within two (2) business days.

Just because a school or teacher uses a communication channel that lends itself well to quick communication (e.g., email or social media), doesn't mean they can always respond just as quickly as that format allows. Schools and/or teachers are encouraged to establish processes or guidelines to ensure those they are communicating with have an understanding of how and when they can expect a response.

Other Resources

Additional information and resources related to home/school communication is also available from Alberta Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA).

Alberta Education: *Working Together to Resolve Differences*

<http://education.alberta.ca/parents/role/workingtogether.aspx>

ATA: *Staying Connected to Your Child's School*

<http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Teaching%20in%20Alberta/Resources%20for%20Parents/Parent-Friendly%20Articles/Pages/Staying%20Connected%20to%20Your%20Childs%20School.aspx>

ATA: *Preparing for a Parent-Teacher Interview*

<http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Teaching%20in%20Alberta/Resources%20for%20Parents/Parent-Friendly%20Articles/Pages/PreparingforaParentTeacherInterview.aspx>

Board Policies

Policy 19

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

The Board is committed to ensuring 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 and working environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. All individuals within the Division have the right to learn and work in settings that promote equality of opportunity, dignity, and respect regardless of race, age, ancestry, place of origin, colour, religious beliefs, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical or mental disability, marital status, family status, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation.

Our Division values all members of our educational community where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We value and respect diversity and strive to treat others with kindness, caring, and tolerance by appreciating and accepting all those we encounter in our school community. To this end, the Board supports the creation of voluntary student organizations that promote a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging.

The Board is committed to protect all those involved in the Division from harassment, discrimination, bullying, intimidation, and violence during the Division's work and school-related activities. The Board acknowledges its responsibility to support and assist any employee, volunteer, person providing goods and services, or student who is subjected to harassment or violence within its schools or workplaces. All those involved with the Division including trustees, employees, students, parents, volunteers, contractors, and visitors must be instrumental in creating a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe working and learning environment.

To this end, the Board will not tolerate harassment, discrimination, bullying, intimidation, and violence and encourages reporting of all incidents of this nature, regardless of the identity of the alleged harasser or offender. In addition, the Board requires the reporting of allegations of harassment, discrimination, bullying, intimidation, or violence to be investigated in a timely and respectful manner.

1. Definitions

1.1. Discrimination

means treating a person negatively or disrespectfully, or refusing, without lawful excuse, to provide an opportunity or benefit with respect to access to learning or access to any term or condition of employment because of any of the protected categories in *The Alberta Human Rights Act*. The behaviour giving rise to a complaint of discrimination need not be intentional in order to be considered discrimination. With respect to student placement decisions, the above does not apply to a refusal, limitation, specification, or preference based on a bona fide

educational requirement. With respect to employment, the above does not apply to a refusal, limitation, specification, or preference based on a bona fide occupational requirement.

1.2. Harassment

is unwelcome verbal or physical conduct, including harassment 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 pornographic, racist or offensive images; and condescension that undermines self-confidence or is an 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.

1.3. Sexual harassment

is 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.

1.4. Intimidation

is intentional behaviour that would cause a person of ordinary sensibilities fear of injury or harm.

1.5. 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.

1.6. Violence

is the threatened, attempted, or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical injury. Examples include, but are not limited to the following: threatening behaviour such as shaking fists, destroying property, or throwing objects; 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 circumstances.

2. Guidelines

2.1. Application of this policy includes, but is not limited to, trustees, employees, students, parents, volunteers, visitors, and contractors. This policy covers behaviour not only at Division schools and offices, but also at any Board or school-related function including field trips, conferences, training sessions, work done off site, and social functions. This applies whether the contact is face-to-face, by phone, fax, email, Internet or Intranet, or by any other means of communication.

2.2. To ensure application of this policy, the Board has directed administration to create an applicable:

2.2.1. administrative procedure specific to students;

2.2.2. administrative procedure specific to adults, and

2.2.3. administrative procedure dealing with the student code of conduct that addresses:

2.2.3.1. resolving issues peacefully;

2.2.3.2. developing empathy, and

2.2.3.3. contributing to welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments that foster diversity and nurture a sense of belonging and a positive sense of self.

References

Sections 12, 16, 18, 20, 24, 25, 45, 50, 105 *School Act*

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Criminal Code

Alberta Human Rights Act

Teaching Profession Act

Last reviewed:	Last updated:
March 17, 2016	March 17, 2016
December 12, 2016	

Administrative Procedures

Administrative Procedure 311

WELCOMING, CARING, RESPECTFUL, AND SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR STUDENTS

Background

The Division is committed to ensuring all members of the school community are provided with welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments that respect diversity and foster a sense of belonging. All students and staff have a right to an environment free from discrimination, threats, and personal harassment including sexually harassing behaviours.

This includes ensuring we create safe, caring environments for all irrespective of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender identity. This responsibility is expressed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, and the *School Act*. Additionally, Bill 10 directs school boards to have policies and practices in place to protect the rights of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning) students, families, and staff.

Incidents of harassment, bullying, or discrimination related to actual or perceived diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions of any member of the school community are taken seriously. The Division is also committed to the investigation of these reported incidents in a timely manner and taking necessary action(s) or remedies as a result of an investigation.

Definitions

Bullying:

is 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.

Bullying can take different forms:

- physical – pushing, hitting;
- verbal – name calling, threats;
- social – exclusion, rumors; and
- cyber – using the computer or other technology to harass or threaten.

Conflict in Relationship:

occurs through episodic acts of breakdowns in relationship 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 constitute premeditated efforts to cause harm, fear, or distress. Parameters for addressing conflict between students may be dealt with through counselling and/or [Administrative Procedure 350, Student Conduct](#).

Personal Harassment:

is any unwelcome behaviour, conduct, or communication directed intentionally or unintentionally at an individual that is offensive to that individual and is based on the rights identified in the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, including, but not limited to, race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, physical disability, mental disability, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, or sexual orientation. Personal harassing behaviour may include, but is not limited to, threats, intimidation, ostracism, offensive gestures, offensive remarks or jokes, demeaning or humiliating actions, or behaviour that supports a hostile or poisonous environment.

The test in determining if an action is harassing is whether a reasonable person knows or ought to know the behaviour would be considered unwelcome or inappropriate by the recipient. Such an action may be a single event or may involve a continuing series of incidents. It may involve the abuse of authority or position, or it may involve relations among co-workers and affiliated personnel. Personal harassment, however, does not include the appropriate exercising of an individual's supervisory authority.

Sexual Harassment:

is any unwelcome behaviour, conduct, or communication directed intentionally or unintentionally at an individual which is sexual in nature and known or ought to be known to impact the well-being of others. This includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome physical contact (e.g., patting, pinching, rubbing, grabbing), unwelcome remarks or compromising invitations or requests, verbal abuse or display of suggestive pictures, leering, whistling, innuendoes, jokes, demands for sexual favours, stalking, embarrassing, suggestive or threatening language, displays of pornographic materials, sexting, or behaviour that supports a hostile or poisonous environment.

Restorative Practice:

promotes values and principles that use inclusive, collaborative approaches among students, families, and school staff. These approaches validate the experiences and needs of everyone within the community, particularly those who have been marginalized, oppressed, or harmed. These approaches allow schools to act and respond in ways that are healing, rather than alienating or coercive. Restorative discipline is a strategy that a principal may use to address bullying within a school.

Supporting Positive Behaviours:

is a strategy for schools to further the social responsibility and responsiveness of students in meeting behavioural expectations in a school. Within this model, pre-determined levels of support and intervention are established to enhance a positive climate of school engagement for all students. While the support model may look different at each school, three levels may be clearly identified:

- **Basic/Universal Support:** Systematic teaching that produces a clear understanding of expectations is developed in a collaborative and respectful culture.
- **Targeted Support:** Additional support is provided for those students who have not yet internalized appropriate responses to the expectations that they have been expected to follow.

- Individual/Intensive Support: Highly focused support is established for those students who require ongoing adult monitoring in order to engage in appropriate behaviours.

Supporting Positive Behaviours is based upon a belief that teaching and nourishing appropriate behaviours has a far greater success than relying upon a model of consequences and punishment. This model is applied according to the age and stage of development of the learner, and is a strategy that a principal may also use to address bullying within a school.

Procedures

1. All members of the school community are expected to play a positive role to promote healthy relationships and prevent bullying behaviours.
2. Students and parents are encouraged to report bullying behaviour to school staff.
3. All reports of bullying and/or harassment shall be taken seriously and investigated by school staff.
4. If, in the opinion of the teacher or Principal, an act of bullying has occurred, interventions shall be applied dedicated to stopping the behaviour in the future and educating the student who is targeted about how to address the issue in the future. Interventions shall be applied to both those who are targets of bullying behaviour and those who engage in bullying behaviour in order to further a safe and caring culture within the school.
5. 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.
6. A Principal may use a Restorative Discipline or Positive Behavioural Support model to address matters of discipline.
7. 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 application of Sections 24 or 25 of the *School Act* (Suspension and Expulsion) or *Administrative Procedure 355, Suspension or Expulsion of Students*.
8. The Division shall establish consistent school-based practices to ensure LGBTQ members of school communities and their families are welcomed, accepted, and included in all aspects of education and school life. Further, the Division shall make resources and support services available for LGBTQ students and staff.
9. The Division shall provide and promote opportunities for staff to increase their awareness and understanding of the scope and impact of discrimination against LGBTQ people, including professional learning opportunities, so staff are informed and familiar with expectations pertaining to human rights, discrimination, harassment, sexual and gender minority diversity, and become aware of and sensitive to the needs and concerns of sexual and gender minority students and their families.
10. The Division shall commit to ongoing, constructive, and open dialogue with LGBTQ communities to increase cooperation and collaboration among home, school, and community.
11. Teachers are encouraged to help students acquire the skills and knowledge to understand the unique perspectives and lived realities of sexual and gender minorities.
12. Staff will have access to information about available community resources and expertise. When needed, staff may help a student (or student's family) identify and access relevant and appropriate resources beyond the school.

13. Learning, curriculum, and library resources shall reflect and value the diversity in the Division, so all students see themselves and their lives positively reflected.
14. Principals shall identify a staff person(s) to be a safe contact for students who identify themselves as LGBTQ. Principals shall inform students and staff about the location and availability of this contact person.
15. Principals shall support the establishment and naming of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), Queer-Straight Alliances (QSAs), or other similar clubs as specified in the *School Act*, Section 16. Parental permission or notification is not required to attend a GSA or QSA.
16. The Division shall ensure staff address and provide appropriate remedial consequences for interactions involving the use of comments, behaviours, and actions that are homophobic, transphobic, and sexist, whether they occur in person or in digital form.
17. The Division shall use respectful and inclusive language in its communication to students, staff, families, and the community.
18. The Division shall maintain the right of LGBTQ students and staff to privacy and confidentiality regarding their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression and protect them from unwanted disclosure of such information. This includes all student and employee records, forms, and processes.
19. Transgender students shall have the right to be addressed by their preferred name(s) and pronoun(s) that correspond to their lived gender identities. Students shall be informed of limitations regarding their chosen name and gender identity or gender expression in relation to official school records that require legal name designation.
20. Principals shall ensure dress codes are flexible, inclusive, and respectful of the gender identities and gender expressions of all members of the school community.
21. The Division shall make gender neutral washrooms available to students. Students are to be able to access washrooms that are congruent with their gender identity and the Division shall make reasonable efforts to provide solutions that are respectful, discreet, and safe for all students.
22. All students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, shall be able to participate in physical education classes and extracurricular activities in ways that are safe, comfortable, and consistent with their lived gender identity.
23. The Division shall work with all schools, communities, and educational stakeholders to ensure this Administrative Procedure is respectfully implemented to support all students, staff, and families in our schools.
24. The Division recognizes that change occurs over time and that as understandings of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions evolve, procedures and practices to support welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning and working environments shall develop correspondingly.

References

Section 12, 16.1, 16.2, 18, 20, 23, 30, 45, 45.1, 50.1, 50.2, 60, 61, 96, 113, 116, 117 *School Act*
Alberta Bill of Rights
Alberta Human Rights Act
Ministerial Order on Student Learning 001/2013

Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Truth and Reconciliation Final Report

Guidelines for Best Practices: Creating Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions

Last Updated: November 2017

Administrative Procedures

Administrative Procedure 170

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

Background

Elk Island Public Schools is committed to ensuring that all students and staff are provided with welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments that respect diversity and foster a sense of belonging.

The Division is committed to providing and promoting a learning and working environment that continually fosters respect for the dignity and well-being of all employees, students, trustees, parents, volunteers, and all others who visit Division facilities. Such individuals have a right to an environment free from discrimination, threats, and personal harassment including sexually harassing behaviours. Therefore, harassment in the learning and working environment is strictly prohibited and shall not be tolerated. See [Administrative Procedure 311, Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe Learning Environments for Students](#).

The Division affirms its commitment to human rights as outlined by the Alberta Human Rights Commission. Incidents of harassment, bullying, or discrimination related to actual or perceived diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions of school staff by any member of the school community are taken seriously. The Division is also committed to the investigation of these reported incidents in a timely manner and taking necessary action(s) or remedies as a result of an investigation.

Definitions

Bullying:

is 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.

Bullying can take different forms:

- physical – pushing, hitting;
- verbal – name calling, threats;
- social – exclusion, rumors; and
- cyber – using the computer or other technology to harass or threaten.

Personal Harassment:

is any unwelcome behaviour, conduct, or communication directed intentionally or unintentionally at an individual that is offensive to that individual and is based on the rights identified in the Alberta *Human Rights Act*, including, but not limited to, race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, physical disability, mental disability, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, or sexual orientation. Personal harassing behaviour may include, but is not limited to, threats, intimidation, ostracism, offensive gestures, offensive remarks or jokes, demeaning or humiliating actions, or behaviour that supports a hostile or poisonous environment.

The test in determining if an action is harassing is whether a reasonable person knows or ought to know the behaviour would be considered unwelcome or inappropriate by the recipient. Such an action may be a single event or may involve a continuing series of incidents. It may involve the abuse of authority or position, or it may involve relations among co-workers and affiliated personnel. Personal harassment, however, does not include the appropriate exercising of an individual's supervisory authority.

Sexual Harassment:

is any unwelcome behaviour, conduct, or communication directed intentionally or unintentionally at an individual which is sexual in nature and directly or indirectly affects a person's job security, prospects, promotion, earnings, or working conditions and includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome physical contact (e.g., patting, pinching, rubbing, grabbing), unwelcome remarks or compromising invitations or requests, verbal abuse or display of suggestive pictures, leering, whistling, innuendoes, jokes, demands for sexual favours, stalking, embarrassing, suggestive or threatening language, displays of pornographic materials, sexting, or behaviour that supports a hostile or poisonous environment.

Safety:

means freedom from physical harm, mental, emotional, or psychological trauma.

Learning and Working Environment:

is the immediate school or school jurisdiction worksite and may also include:

- any school or work-related social activities,
- any school or work-related travel and field trips,
- any settings where the individuals involved are engaged in a work or school-related activity such as field placement or a cooperative educational work term, and
- the use of electronic or digital media such as telephone, fax, email, network computers, and internet/intranet communications at any time.

Hostile or Poisonous Environment:

is a learning or working environment in which the actions of one or more people may not be directed at any one person in particular but contribute to an atmosphere which directly or indirectly affects a person's ability to work or learn effectively.

Complainant:

is a person who has reported a situation that appears to be a form of harassment related to the work and learning environment.

Alleged Harasser:

is a person accused of any above form of harassment related to the learning and working environment.

Harasser:

is a person who, as a result of an investigation, has carried out any harassing behaviour.

Procedures

1. Employees, parents, volunteers, and visitors must conduct themselves in a manner that promotes and protects the best interests and well-being of employees, students, co-workers, parents, volunteers, and visitors.
2. An employee, parent, volunteer, or visitor who subjects an employee, student, parent, volunteer, or visitor to any form of harassment may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment or exclusion from the Division learning and working environment.
3. Action may be taken against members of the public whose conduct has resulted in any form of harassment of employees, students, parents, volunteers, visitors, or representatives of the Division.
 - 3.1. An employee who considers that s/he has been subjected to any form of harassment in the learning or working environment by a person who is not a student, employee, parent, or volunteer for the Division, is to seek the advice of his/her immediate supervisor.
 - 3.2. The supervisor shall take whatever action is deemed appropriate to ensure the Division fulfills its responsibility to support and assist the individual who has been subjected to such alleged harassment.
4. It is the responsibility of all employees, students, parents, volunteers, and visitors to help maintain a harassment-free learning and working environment through, but not limited to, participating in education programs, reducing incidents of harassment by practicing incidents of prevention, and reporting incidents of harassment as outlined in these procedures.
5. Where an employee believes a fellow employee or student has experienced or is experiencing harassment in the learning or working environment, and reports this belief to his/her immediate supervisor, the supervisor shall meet with the person who is suspected to have been subjected to harassing behaviours. Steps shall be taken to investigate according to this Administrative Procedure and refer the complaint to the Managing Director of Human Resources if appropriate.
6. In the absence of a specific complaint, the Managing Director of Human Resources may initiate an independent investigation where:
 - 6.1. there is a pattern of inquiries or complaints over time that suggests the existence of a specific problem that has not been corrected;
 - 6.2. there is reason to believe a broader, systemic problem exists which causes, contributes to, or encourages harassment;
 - 6.3. as a result of an investigation, a specific complaint is not supported but there is reasonable evidence that a broader systemic problem exists; and
 - 6.4. there are other circumstances in which the Managing Director of Human Resources deems it appropriate.
7. Any retaliation against an individual for:

- 7.1. invoking this Administrative Procedure whether on their own behalf or on behalf of another individual,
- 7.2. participating or cooperating in any investigation under this Administrative Procedure, and
- 7.3. associating with a person who has invoked this Administrative Procedure or participated in procedures under this Administrative Procedure

is strictly prohibited and shall be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal from employment or exclusion from the Division's learning and working environment.

8. If an individual has experienced retaliation, the individual must inform his/her supervisor, or the Managing Director of Human Resources about the exact nature of the behaviour.
9. The Managing Director of Human Resources shall initiate an investigation into the allegations of retaliation.
10. Complaints of harassment are to be made within a reasonable period of time from the date of occurrence. Complaints that are filed more than one year from the date of the occurrence may not, at the discretion of the Managing Director of Human Resources, be investigated.
11. Harassment inquiries or complaints are confidential and may only be disclosed to investigate and respond to a complaint and to advise the alleged harasser about the complaint and the identity of the complainant. Any unauthorized disclosure of confidential information relating to a harassment complaint may result in disciplinary action.
12. If a harassment complaint is filed in good faith, and the complainant is an employee, no permanent documentation shall be placed in the complainant's file, regardless of the outcome.
13. If an investigation determines a complainant falsely accused someone of any form of harassment, knowingly or in a malicious or vindictive manner, the complainant may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, or legal action for an employee.
14. The Managing Director of Human Resources shall ensure this Administrative Procedure is widely publicized and distributed among all supervisory personnel and staff members.
15. This Administrative Procedure does not affect an individual's right to file a complaint or to respond to a complaint with the Alberta Human Rights Commission or to seek other redress as may be provided by law, or by an employee's union or association. Complaints filed with the Alberta Human Rights Commission must be received within one year of the incident. If circumstances warrant it, a charge of assault may be filed with the police.
16. Informal Resolution
 - 16.1. If an employee, volunteer, or visitor believes they are being harassed, s/he is to:
 - 16.1.1. immediately inform the alleged harasser of the unwelcome behaviour and tell the alleged harasser to stop. This can be done verbally or in writing stating disapproval of the alleged harasser's behaviour and/or actions. Individuals who believe they have been the subject of harassment have a responsibility to make their objection known to the alleged harasser. Individuals can seek the support of their immediate supervisor, the Director of Staff Relations and Training, or association representative as to how to proceed.

16.1.2. keep a record. Whether an informal process or a formal process is carried out, a written record of dates, times, places, the nature of the behaviour, and the names of any people who may have witnessed the incidents is to be kept. An indication of what action has been taken to stop the harassment is also to be noted.

16.2. The use of informal intervention is not a pre-requisite to seeking a formal resolution.

17. Formal Complaint

17.1. A formal complaint may proceed in the following instances:

17.1.1. if the complaint has not been resolved at the informal level;

17.1.2. should the harassment continue; or

17.1.3. the complainant, complainant's supervisor, or the Managing Director of Human Resources believes the formal process is more appropriate.

17.2. Filing a Formal Complaint

17.2.1. If the harassment or unfair treatment resulting from any form of harassment does not stop after speaking to the alleged harasser, or if the individual believes there are reasonable grounds, the immediate supervisor is to be contacted immediately.

17.2.2. If the supervisor is the alleged harasser, his/her immediate supervisor or, alternatively, the Managing Director of Human Resources is to be contacted.

17.3. When reasonable grounds exist, the individual is to make a full written and signed complaint.

17.3.1. Complaints are to be filed as soon as possible to ensure witnesses are available, details are not forgotten, and the situation is resolved without delay.

17.3.2. A union or association representative may accompany an employee for consultative purposes.

17.4. A complainant is to report the complaint through a formal statement to one of the following individuals:

17.4.1. Director or Supervisor, or

17.4.2. the Managing Director of Human Resources.

17.5. A complaint against the Superintendent is to be made in writing to the Board Chair who shall, in conjunction with legal advice, determine the appropriate procedure to be followed in the circumstances.

17.6. It is the responsibility of any person supervising one or more individuals to take immediate and appropriate action to report or deal with incidents of harassment of any type, whether brought to their attention or personally observed.

17.7. Under no circumstances is a legitimate complaint to be dismissed or downplayed nor is the complainant to be told to deal with it personally. In the event of any form of harassment, the

matter may proceed through either an informal or formal resolution. The Managing Director of Human Resources may make the decision to pursue either an informal or formal resolution.

- 17.8. Individuals, including employees, volunteers, or visitors wishing to file a formal harassment complaint, are to:
 - 17.8.1. document the nature of the alleged harassment, the name of the alleged offender and the date(s), time(s), and location(s) of the harassment;
 - 17.8.2. meet with the Managing Director of Human Resources to review the information; and
 - 17.8.3. file a written signed statement of complaint with the Managing Director of Human Resources.
- 17.9. All parties concerned shall treat these matters in strict confidence. Information relating to the complaint shall only be disclosed to the extent necessary to investigate the complaint. The Managing Director of Human Resources and the complainant may access legal counsel.
- 17.10. Formal Complaint Resolution Process
 - 17.10.1. Upon receipt of a formal harassment complaint, and where the Managing Director of Human Resources determines the complaint shall be resolved formally, the Managing Director of Human Resources or designate shall:
 - 17.10.1.1. notify the alleged harasser in writing of the complaint, provide the alleged harasser with a copy of the complaint, and inform the alleged harasser an investigation has been initiated;
 - 17.10.1.2. notify the immediate supervisor(s) of the name of the alleged harasser and the name of the complainant, and that a formal complaint has been filed and an investigation is underway;
 - 17.10.1.3. conduct the investigation by interviewing the complainant and the alleged harasser, and, where appropriate, by interviewing witnesses;
 - 17.10.1.4. consider all pertinent information; and
 - 17.10.1.5. prepare an investigation report that shall be provided to the Superintendent, the complainant, the respondent, and the Managing Director of Human Resources.
 - 17.10.2. The Managing Director of Human Resources shall make a decision to dismiss or act upon the investigation report within 30 working days of receiving the report.
 - 17.10.3. If an investigation resulting from an informal or formal complaint finds sufficient evidence to support that harassment occurred, the Managing Director of Human Resources may determine the appropriate course of action which may include, but is not limited to:
 - 17.10.3.1. discipline of an employee found to have committed an act of harassment, which may range from a reprimand up to and including termination;
 - 17.10.3.2. referral of the matter to the appropriate legal authority with a recommendation for formal charges against the individual found to have committed an act of any form of harassment;

- 17.10.3.3. referral of the victim and alleged harasser, if an employee, to the Division's Employee Assistance Program for counselling and support;
 - 17.10.3.4. recommendation to the victim that they seek legal advice about personal protection and/or compensation from the individual found to have committed an act of harassment;
 - 17.10.3.5. referral of the matter to Division legal representatives to assist in obtaining protection of employees, volunteers, parents, and Division representatives; or
 - 17.10.3.6. any combination of the above or any other action deemed appropriate to ensure the safety and well-being of affiliated personnel and the Division's interests.
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- 17.11. The investigation report may be discussed with the immediate supervisor prior to a final decision being made.
 - 17.12. The Managing Director of Human Resources or designate shall provide a written summary of the investigation to the complainant and the harasser or alleged harasser.
 - 17.13. All records of harassment or retaliation investigation must be kept separate from the harasser's personnel file except where the complaint is determined to be true.
 - 17.14. If the complaint is found to be true, the record of investigation and final disposition shall be kept on the harasser's personnel file.
 - 17.15. If the investigation fails to disclose evidence to support the complaint, no record of the complaint can be kept in the alleged harasser's employee personnel file and the Managing Director of Human Resources or designate shall provide a formal letter to the alleged harasser confirming the complaint has been dismissed.
 - 17.16. Whether an investigation finds sufficient or insufficient evidence to support the complaint that harassment occurred, the investigation report and supporting documentation will be sealed and maintained in a locked and secure file by the Managing Director of Human Resources.

References

Section 20, 45.1, 61, 96, *School Act*

Alberta Human Rights Act

Employment Standards Code

Occupational Health and Safety Act

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Canadian Human Rights Act

Criminal Code

Individual's Rights Protection Act

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