

POLICY IHF – Safe and Caring Learning Environment (Diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression)

The Board is committed to creating a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment for students, staff and all members of the school community. The Board affirms the rights, as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, of each staff member employed by the Board and each student enrolled in a school operated by the Board. Students and staff members will not be discriminated against as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* or the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

PURPOSE

That the Board will provide an environment in which students with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression feel welcome.

The Board is committed to:

- supporting inclusion of all students and staff in all aspects of school life, irrespective of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity;
- supporting students and staff regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression based on their human rights;
- improving understanding of sexual or gender minority individuals, communities and cultures;
- defining appropriate terms, behaviours and actions to promote greater awareness of, and responsiveness to, the harmful effects of harassment and exclusion;
- addressing acts of harassment, bullying, intimidation or discrimination on the basis of a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

DEFINITIONS

In this policy, all references to persons with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression will include, but are not limited to, “sexual or gender minority” persons or LGBTQ+ persons including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited, intersex, queer or questioning persons, persons who are labeled as such (whether they are or not), and persons with immediate family members who identify as a sexual or gender minority.

Discrimination is the denial of individual rights and freedoms in a manner which contravenes the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

No person shall discriminate “because of the race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation of that person...” according to the *Alberta Human Rights Act* (Section 4). (Code A)

Harassment refers to unwelcome and offensive behaviour that consists of objectionable conduct, comment, material or display that demeans, belittles, intimidates or humiliates another person. Harassment may include, but is not limited to, references related to race, religious

beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation. It may involve abuse of authority, but does not include the legitimate exercise of an individual's supervisory or administrative authority.

Sexual Harassment is any unwelcome behaviour that is sexual in nature. It includes, but is not limited to, behaviours such as unwanted touching (e.g. pinching, patting, rubbing), leering, sexist jokes, the display of sexually suggestive material, derogatory, or degrading comments, sexually suggestive gestures and unwelcome propositions, innuendoes, demands or inquiries of a sexual nature. Unwanted sexual advances, unwanted requests for sexual acts, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment.

Consistently asserted gender identity refers to lived gender. This is the gender that the student expresses publicly while at school, socializing, accessing services, and in the broader community.

GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES

1. Leadership

- a) The Principal
 - i) will provide a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging;
 - ii) shall ensure discriminatory behaviours and complaints will be taken seriously, documented and dealt with in a timely manner.

2. Staff

- a) PWPSD is a safe and respectful working environment where diversity is valued and accepted. All staff are responsible for creating and maintaining a work environment that is free of discrimination and harassment. Complaints of discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity shall be promptly investigated and resolved as stated in policies including *GBE – Health and Safety*; *GBEA – Protection of Staff* and *JAB – Conflict Resolution*.
- b) PWPSD engages in employment practices which:
 - i) are free of bias resulting from any prejudice, including prejudice related to sexual orientation and gender identity;
 - ii) ensure equal opportunity for employment and advancement.

3. Professional Learning

- a) The Board supports professional learning opportunities that assist adults to be informed regarding diversity and how to nurture a sense of belonging and a positive sense of self.

4. Gender Identity and Gender Expression

- a) To support the safety, health and educational needs of students who identify as, or are perceived to be of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, district staff shall adhere to the following recommended practices wherever possible and appropriate:
 - i) Names and Pronouns –Students or staff members have the right to be addressed by their preferred name and pronoun.
 - ii) Communication and Official Records

- (1) The student's personal information and privacy will be protected, including, wherever possible, having a student's explicit permission before disclosing information related to the student's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
 - (2) When requested by an independent student, or the parent/guardian, the student's official records will be changed to reflect their preferred name, sex, or gender. School forms and records may be changed to ensure that a student's preferred name and sex or gender are current on class lists, timetables, student files, identification card, etc.
 - (3) Students will be informed of limitations regarding their chosen name and gender identity or gender expression in relation to official school records that require legal name and designation;
 - (4) Students should be advised that a legal name change is required if they desire their official Alberta Education documents to reflect their new name;
 - iii) Gender-Segregated Activities – In classroom activities or school programs where students are segregated by gender, all students should be given the option to be included in the group that corresponds to their consistently asserted gender identity.
 - iv) Restroom/Change room Accessibility – All individuals in the school community shall have access to the restroom/change rooms that allow for appropriate privacy and that do not significantly disrupt the school environment. Staff shall consistently demonstrate sensitivity to the needs and safety of all students with respect to restroom/change room access. The Principal shall ensure individual solutions to restroom/change room access are implemented with respect and discretion.
 - v) Activities – All students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, shall be able to participate in physical education classes and extracurricular activities, including sex-separated competitive and recreational activities in ways that are safe and comfortable and in keeping with their consistently asserted gender identity.
 - vi) Dress Code – All students have the right to dress in a manner consistent with their gender identity or gender expression in compliance with division policy and school dress codes.
 - vii) Resolving Conflict – At the school level, the Principal shall make the final decision on disputes that may arise with regard to transgender or transsexual student's participation in educational or athletic activities. The Principal shall ensure that the resolution of any conflict ensures reasonable accommodation and inclusiveness.
5. As required by the *Education Act*, the Board supports student organizations as outlined in sections 35.1(1), (3), (3.1), (4) and (6):
- Support for student organizations:**
- 35.1(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) permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and

(b) 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.

(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), 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.

Participation in a GSA is not included in the student records and is protected under privacy law, so it cannot be disclosed without careful consideration of privacy legislation. Peace Wapiti Public School Division is a public body as defined by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and is bound by the provisions of that Act.

REFERENCES

Cross References:

[Policy BBA](#) – School Board Powers and Duties

[Policy GBE](#) – Health and Safety

[Policy GBEA](#) – Protection of Staff

[Policy IFC](#) – Student Code of Conduct

[Policy IFCA](#) – Student Dress and Grooming

[Policy IGD](#) – Student Suspension and Expulsion

[Policy IGH](#) – Anti-Bullying

[Policy JAB](#) – School Dispute Resolution

[Policy EEABA](#) – Cross Boundary Transportation

[Government of Alberta: The Education Act – GSA Fact Sheet](#)

[Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta: Advisory on Disclosing a Student's Participation in a School Club](#)

More information about the bullying prevention resources is available on the [Respect in School](#) website and at the following Alberta.ca pages:

- [Bullying prevention for educators](#)
- [Safe and caring schools](#)
- [Mental health in schools](#)

Legal References:

[Alberta Human Rights Act](#)

[Canadian Multiculturalism Act](#)

[Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)

[Education Act](#) – Section 35.1, 197, 33

[Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

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