

Administrative Procedure 134

June 2018

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Background

Consistent with its mission and vision, the Board of Trustees of the Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 4 is committed to a welcoming, caring, respectful, safe, and inclusive learning and teaching environment for all students and staff, in accordance with *Policy 1: Board Mandate, Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals*.

Catholic schools share a foundational belief that all children are loved by God, are individually unique, and that the school has a mission to help each student to fulfill their God-given potential in all aspects of their persons: physically, academically, socially, morally, and spiritually.

To ensure that all members of the division's school communities work together in an atmosphere of respect for the dignity of all students, this Administrative Procedure is adopted for the safety, health and educational needs of all students, regardless of individual differences.

The Board will not tolerate harassment, bullying, intimidation, or discrimination on the basis of a student's actual or perceived differences. To achieve this goal, the Board requires that its schools, staff, and students promote an inclusive community that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging in accordance with the rights that are guaranteed under the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

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. Staff and students will not be discriminated against, as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* or the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Section 16.1 of the *School Act* outlines regulations for the creation of student groups. Student groups can serve as one means to create inclusive schools and Holy Spirit Catholic School Division supports their formation and operation.

Objectives

The objectives of such groups include the following:

- To support and affirm the dignity of all students in all aspects of school life, regardless of their immutable characteristics;
- To improve understandings of the lives of all students and find ways to increase respect for the dignity of each other in ways appropriate to the school setting;

- To clarify and give definition to appropriate terms, behaviours, and actions to promote greater awareness of, and responsiveness to, the deleterious effects of bullying, harassment, and hate-motivated violence;
- To promote timely and effective responses to prevent and respond to bullying, harassment, and hate-motivated violence to ensure the maximization of safety for all pupils;
- To provide support for all students, consistent with the Catholic Faith, with respect to bullying, harassment, and hate-motivated violence; and
- To encourage students to report incidents of bullying, harassment and bias, prejudice, or hate-motivated violence safely in a manner that minimizes the possibility of reprisal or breach of confidentiality.

Procedures

1. All staff of Holy Spirit Catholic School Division will act and teach as Jesus would do, rejecting and confronting behaviours that cause harm to the student, physically, verbally or by action, based on their 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.
2. The Principal, as the school leader, operating within a Catholic framework, is responsible for promoting/maintaining a safe and caring inclusive environment for all students/families regardless of their 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.
3. Support student organizations and activities in accordance with Section 16.1 of the *School Act*. These organizations and activities are dedicated to the inclusive nature of our schools, which serve to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe school community, and are informed by the processes created by the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta's (2018) *Life Framework* (see Appendix A). Among other things, these student groups:
 - 3.1 Are sensitive to the safety of those students who may be at-risk.
 - 3.2 Are comprehensive and holistic in their approach to inclusion and open to discussion of a variety of issues, including, but not limited to, bullying, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, gender identity, discrimination, justice, and respectful relationships and language.
 - 3.3 If one or more students attending a school operated by the 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:

- 3.3.1 Immediately grant permission for the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school.
- 3.3.2 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.
 - 3.3.2.1 The principal shall immediately inform the Board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison 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.
- 3.3.3 Provide in-service for staff advisor(s) regarding the purpose for the student group, how the group can be supported and to increase their knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes in respecting diversity and understanding issues related to gender identity and/or gender expression.
- 3.3.4 Ensure that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in subsection (3), is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity, and is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations and activities.
- 3.4 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.
 - 3.4.1 For greater certainty, the principal shall not prohibit or discourage students from choosing a name that includes “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”.
- 3.5 The staff advisor must be present for each group meeting or activity in its entirety.
- 3.6 All materials for use in a group, including materials for school/community awareness must be reviewed and approved by the staff liaison and administration.
- 3.7 All outside speakers invited to participate in a group must be approved by the principal.
- 3.8 Holy Spirit Catholic School Division 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. School staff will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations that are inclusive, respectful and acceptable to the student, while maintaining the student's right to privacy and confidentiality at all times.
 - 4.1 Safe access to a washroom and/or change room shall be provided to any student who desires increased privacy for any reason. Where possible private washrooms shall be made available.
 - 4.2 With respect to athletics, overnight trips, change rooms and locker rooms, etc., the safety and confidentiality of all students will be paramount. All students will be afforded the necessary consideration and accommodations to meet individual needs and rights to privacy.

Legal References: Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta (CCSSA):
LIFE Framework "Living Inclusion Faithfully for Everyone"
School Act, Sections 16.1 and 45.1(1)
Board Policy 1: Mandate, Mission, Vision, Values and Goals;
Board Policy 14: Appeals and Hearings on Student Matters
Administrative Procedure 104: Harassment
Administrative Procedure 119: Issues Management
Administrative Procedure 130: Public Civility in Schools
Administrative Procedure 314: Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and
Safe Learning Environments
Administrative Procedure 315: Student Code of Conduct
Canadian Teachers Federation: Supporting Transgender and
Transsexual Students in K-12 Schools "A Guide for
Educators."

Administrative Procedure 134 – APPENDIX A

Revised: May 24, 2018

CCSSA's LIFE Framework "Living Inclusion Faithfully for Everyone"

A. BACKGROUND

Catholic Schools share a foundational belief that all children are loved by God, are individually unique and that the school has a mission to help each student to fulfill their God-given potential in all aspects of their person: physically, academically, socially, morally and spiritually.

Alberta's Catholic school districts are responsible for creating a Catholic faith community, which provides education for all students within the Catholic tradition. The authenticity of each school's faith community is determined by its adherence to the faith under the collective leadership of the teachers, administrators, clerical advisors, and all other adults within the school. It is the task of those individuals to integrate the faith into every program and aspect of their Catholic school. Parents and guardians, the primary educators of children, entrust their children to Catholic schools so that they may flourish and be pastorally nurtured as they learn the subjects in the Alberta curriculum.

To provide guidance to the Catholic school faith community, in order that it may act in accord with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, Alberta's Catholic Bishops have provided the *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* in 2018 to support the faithfulness of the *LIFE Framework*. This Guideline provides an explanation in accordance with the episcopal teaching role described in Canon Law, Can. 806 §1, and is fundamental to the understanding and application of the *LIFE Framework*. The *Pastoral Guideline* consists of a thematic overview, followed by some practical and more specific guidance for the development of policy and administrative guidelines regarding the establishment of student-led organizations and activities in Catholic schools as well as information about discerning conflict resolution to further positive relationships between all partners in Catholic Education.

B. COMMITMENT TO THE LIFE FRAMEWORK

Catholic Schools are committed to using the *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* (2018) and the *LIFE Framework* (2015, revised 2018) to inform the creation and operation of student groups and activities which seek to promote student inclusion within the schools and, in fidelity to Catholic teachings, eliminates all forms of bullying including - but not restricted to - harassment and discrimination with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity; and to promote justice, respectful relationships and language within Catholic schools.

C. NAMING OF LIFE FRAMEWORK STUDENT GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

Students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the LIFE group or activity after consulting with the principal. The principal will adhere to the *School Act*, s.16.1 (3-3.1).

D. WHO MIGHT BE SERVED BY LIFE FRAMEWORK STUDENT GROUPS / ACTIVITIES

- All students

E. GUIDELINES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF STUDENTS GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

These Guidelines will be interpreted and applied so as to be in concert with the *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* (2018).

Some students, especially those with same sex attractions, and those who identify with different genders, as well as those who experience discrimination or isolation based on body image, race, culture, language, performance in school, social anxiety/lack of social connection, or other individual attributes, may be at-risk in schools. Therefore, every school is required to respond to establish student groups and/or activities when there is a student request.

When students wish to establish a group or hold an activity, it is important to determine the nature of the request and how best to meet the expressed needs. 'What are you looking for?' Through conversations with students, the purpose for the group needs to be identified, so it can be properly structured within the guidelines. Flexibility and responsiveness, based on needs, are critical. Student groups may be established for the following purposes:

Advocacy

- To support a faithful vision of an inclusive Catholic school

Peer support

- To foster and support the individual student and inclusion within the Catholic school

In each type of group, issues that result in discrimination and bullying may be addressed, including, but not limited to:

- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Gender
- Body image
- Race, culture or language
- Performance in school
- Social rejection, peer acceptance

General norms also govern all types of student groups. Groups shall:

- Support the mission, vision and core religious values of the school and the school jurisdiction
- Reflect the philosophy and theology of communion and emphasize inclusion, hospitality, respect, justice and religious fidelity.

Since each type of group addresses different needs (advocacy, peer support), specific guidelines and additional norms follow.

Advocacy Groups

Purpose

- To advocate in the Catholic tradition against all forms of discrimination and/or behaviours that cause students to feel isolated and not included.
- To provide students who experience discrimination and isolation, the opportunity to engage with other students so as to support them and to engage in anti-discriminatory activities.
- To empower students to use their unique God-given gifts for the benefit of furthering a more just community for everyone.
- To discuss issues that cause harm to young people in society.

Norms

- Ensure the student groups are led by trained Catholic facilitators and assisted, when possible, by counselors, chaplains or social workers.
- Be open to exploration of a variety of issues, including sexual orientation, gender identity, bullying, discrimination, justice, and respectful relationships and language from the Catholic tradition.
- Ensure advocacy efforts are directed against all forms of bullying and discrimination.

Activities

- Exploring how inclusive practices enhance the lives of all within the school's faith community.
- Sponsoring activities throughout the school year to address these areas (i.e. bullying awareness week activities, peer advocacy, guest speakers, and frequent liaison with the school principal).
- Promoting social justice activities to address needs locally, nationally or internationally.

Peer Support Groups

Purpose

- To provide students who experience discrimination, isolation, and a lack of feeling included in their school community or society an opportunity to meet with other students who offer their support through facilitated discussions. To support students experiencing a variety of challenges related to, but not restricted to, feelings of belonging, self-worth, identity, and friendship.
- To support marginalized students suffering from bullying, and/or social exclusion based on gender, sexual orientation, culture, size, physical or academic ability, or other criteria.
- To support students who may be experiencing challenges related to their sexuality (e.g. how to talk to parents, friends, etc.).

Norms

- Ensure that student groups are led by trained Catholic facilitators and assisted, when possible, by counselors, chaplains or social workers, as appropriate.
- Ensure boundaries, related to personal privacy and confidentiality, prior to the discussion of any topic, so members do not feel pressured to make personal disclosures.
- If a student discloses information to a staff member, regarding her or his sexual orientation or gender identity, it is important to respect the student's right to confidentiality subject to the necessity to protect the safety of the student and others.
- Be sensitive to the safety of all students who are at risk.
- Do not label or discuss students who are not members.
- Consider inviting students to develop additional norms and procedures with the facilitator carefully guiding this process.
- Ensure all normal group processes, as understood and practiced by Catholic school counselors, are followed.
- If individuals are experiencing mental health issues, and/or are 'at-risk', to provide individual counselling support, separate from the group, to best support this student and maintain privacy and confidentiality.

Activities

- Exploring those areas with staff facilitators where inclusion could be improved (e.g. student group discussions as per "norms" outlined through the leadership of the facilitator).

F. FACILITATION OF STUDENT GROUPS/ACTIVITIES:

- The principal shall designate a Catholic teacher(s) to facilitate all LIFE groups/activities.
- As faith guides, strengthening every aspect of Catholic education, facilitators integrate prayer, scripture, and Catholic teaching (e.g. 'the dignity of the human person' and 'a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable') into their discussions as appropriate. The groups will be permeated in a manner consistent with all Catholic school programming.
- The principal shall ensure the facilitator(s) receives in-service or information on both relevant Catholic teachings and the facilitation of group discussion.
- At the principal's discretion, if the school has a counsellor, social worker, Family School Liaison Worker (FSLW), chaplain or a staff member with a similar designation, that staff member should co-facilitate.
- The facilitator(s) shall attend every meeting.

G. INFORMING PARENTS ABOUT LIFE FRAMEWORK STUDENT GROUPS:

The *Alberta Bill of Rights*, s.1 (g) recognizes that parents have the right to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children. The second paragraph of the preamble to the *School Act*, recognizes parent's rights and responsibility to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children.

The following two step process is recommended to advise parents regarding the formation of student groups/organizations:

Step 1 – A general notice is provided to the school community (included in each school's student handbook) that students may be organizing groups or clubs at the school in the future based on interest or need.

Step 2 – If a new student group or club is established in a school, notification of the establishment of the group or club is sent to all parents (not naming any students involved in the group or club). This notification will include a statement that it is the parents who are responsible for discussing with their child the purpose and nature of the club, whether their child wishes to become a member, and their child's obligation to contribute to a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. Parents will be invited to discuss with the school administration all aspects of student groups, clubs, and activities excepting that the names of student members will not be provided.

Reference: Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta (CCSSA) www.ccssa.ca

Administrative Procedure 134 – APPENDIX B

June 2018

STUDENT GROUP AND/OR ACTIVITY PROPOSAL

Student Name:

Student Grade:

Request for Student Group

Please identify the nature of the group, its purpose, and its objectives:

Please identify the estimated number of participants:

Please identify the frequency with which the group wishes to meet: weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or once each semester.

Additional Information:

Student Name:

Student Grade:

Request for Student Activity

Please identify the nature of the activity, its purpose, and its objectives:

Please identify the estimated number of student organizers:

Please identify the estimated number of student participants (e.g. whole school; particular grade; etc.):

Please identify the frequency of the activity (e.g. once; once each semester; etc.):

Additional Information:
