

## **INCLUSIVE CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES: PROVIDING SAFE AND CARING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

### **Introduction**

The mission of our District speaks to “providing a student-centred, innovative Catholic education for our communities” so each student to learn, live fully, and serve others. As further outlined in Board Policy 1, every effort to realize this Mission is guided by beliefs and values that place the well-being of students as being at the forefront of the operation of our schools. Most importantly, our passion in this regard is motivated by our core belief that every student is a “gift from God.” As inclusive communities supporting our mission, we provide safe and caring learning environments to students, families, and educational partners in the mission of Catholic Education.

We believe:

- a. In the inherent dignity of all people, the richness of our humanity, the importance of developing school communities that are welcome to all, and our call to live out the radical love embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. By openly supporting inclusive communities we must remember that we are an inclusive community.
- b. In the eyes of the Church, every human person is a unique and irreplaceable gift created by our loving God and called to be his son or daughter. Created in the image and likeness of God every person possesses an intrinsic dignity which must always be respected.
- c. We model care and compassion and are pastoral in our actions.
- d. We grow as caring and compassionate communities by choosing strategies and tools that best meet the needs of our students within each of our unique Catholic school communities.
- e. That each student enrolled in our schools shall be provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful, safe, and Catholic environment that promotes the well-being of all students and fosters community support for achieving this goal.
- f. All efforts to further the safe and caring environment of a school must be in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church teaches that:

1. Respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from their dignity as a person.  
*n. 1930 Catechism of the Catholic Church*

2. Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that everyone should look upon their neighbour (without any exception) as 'another self,' above all bearing in mind their life and the means necessary for living it with dignity.  
*n. 1931 Catechism of the Catholic Church*
3. With respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent.  
*n. 1935 Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Given these teachings and given the requirements of the:

- Alberta Human Rights Act,
- Alberta School Act,
- Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act,
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the
- Catechism of the Catholic Church

Grande Prairie & District Catholic Schools is committed to ensuring that all students and staff members employed in our schools will be provided with:

- a fully inclusive school community;
- a welcoming, caring, respectful, safe learning environment
- a fully permeated Catholic environment
- a supportive environment that is free from discrimination of any type including but not limited to discrimination based on 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

## **Student Organizations**

**We agree to adhere to the School Act which states,**

- a. 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), 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.

16. 1(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.

16.1(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”;

16.1(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

16.1(6) The Principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in subsection (1) is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity

In addition, the principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in section 16.1(1) of the School Act is limited:

- (a) to the fact that the establishment of the organization, or the holding of the activity and
- (b) is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notification of their student organizations and activities.

In addition, the Board expects the schools to offer learning experiences that will enhance the concept of a Catholic Christian community, that will help ensure that all students will be made to feel welcomed and included, and that will help ensure that all students will be given a full opportunity to benefit from their Catholic education.

Legal Reference:

Section 1, 8, 12, 16.1, 18, 20, 22, 24, 27, 45, 60, 61, 113, 123, 124, 125 School Act  
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms  
Alberta Human Rights Act

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act  
Catechism of the Catholic Church  
Supporting Safe, Secure and Caring Schools in Alberta (1999)  
CCSSA LIFE Framework: Lived Inclusion for Everyone  
CCSSA Resource for a Pastoral Approach to Supporting and Guiding Students in Inclusive Communities – Gender Identity and Expression  
Episcopal Commission for Doctrine (2011) – Pastoral Letter to Young People on Chastity

Created: February, 2016  
Revised: March 2016  
Revised March 2018  
Approved May 2018