

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 14, 2010

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee K. Shipka, Chair, Planning and Policy Committee
Trustee S. Huff, Planning and Policy Committee
Trustee C. Ripley, Planning and Policy Committee

SUBJECT: Policy Review – IF.BP - Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning Environments

ORIGINATOR: T. Parker, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE
STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Elisa Rawe

RECOMMENDATION

1. That new Board Policy IF.BP - Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning Environments be considered for the first time.
2. That new Board Policy IF.BP - Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning Environments be considered for the second time.
3. That, in accordance with Board Policy CH.BP – Policy Development and Review, the new Board Policy – IF.BP Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning Environments be considered for the third time at this meeting (unanimous approval is required).
4. That new Board Policy IF.BP - Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning Environments be considered for the third time and approved.

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Background

The Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning Environments Policy is part of a comprehensive and responsive approach to the inclusive school environment necessary for all students to have the opportunity to learn effectively and achieve high academic standards. This policy supports the Board's commitment, as stated in their strategic plan, to ensuring that the District provides a learning culture that is respectful, responsive and inclusive of all students.

Rationale

Combined with Board Policy IG.BP - Student Behaviour and Conduct, the Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning Environments Policy will assist in addressing issues of student safety related to discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying. This policy complements Board Policy GBCA.BP – Respectful Working Environments that deals with respectful working environments for staff, and Board Policy GAA.BP - Human Resources Framework.

The Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning Environments Policy was created with reference to the existing Aboriginal Education and Multicultural Education policies. It is aligned with the language and intentions of those policies. In addition, it is aligned to the protections ensured by the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. The proposed policy was also informed by a review of existing policies from several jurisdictions across Canada and consultation with internal and external stakeholders.

The draft policy was available for feedback from the public on the District Web Survey from May 20 to June 17, 2010. Sixty-three responses were received. The majority of the responses were very positive; some felt the policy did not adequately protect young people from discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying; and a very small number did not agree that the school board should be addressing these concerns with a policy.

Two changes were made to the draft policy in response to the public input.

The first change emphasizes the responsibility of the school to create a safe environment where students and their families would be empowered to exercise the right and responsibility to bring issues and concerns related to discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying to the attention of the school staff.

The second change clarifies the intent of this policy to promote proactive actions to create safe, caring and respectful learning environments. Respondents recognized the crucial role that a well informed staff would play in creating a safe, caring and respectful learning environment.

Responses also indicated the need for a clear set of regulations to ensure that the policy statement is effectively implemented across the District. Upon approval of the policy by the Board of Trustees, the Superintendent will develop administrative regulations. These regulations will address the need for proactive actions in areas such as: respect and recognition, leadership, staff development, achievement and assessment, curriculum, enhanced supports for learning, and programs and programming. The public feedback will help to inform the development of these regulations.

In summary, the Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning Environments Policy reflects the Board's desire to be a leaders in responding to the needs of an diverse community of learners and to support the creation of learning environments where all students can create their own pathway to a bright future.

TP:er

APPENDIX I Board Policy IF.BP - Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning Environments

Edmonton Public Schools

Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: IF.BP

TOPIC: Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning
Environments

EFFECTIVE DATE:

ISSUE DATE:

REVIEW DATE:

Edmonton Public School Board is committed to creating welcoming learning environments which promote understanding and respect among all members of the school community.

The Board believes that a responsive, safe, caring and inclusive school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. It believes that equity of opportunity, and equity of access to programs, services, and resources are critical to supporting all students in realizing their full potential. The Board expects these beliefs to be reflected in District programs, operations and practices.

The Board recognizes that individual and systemic biases related to race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religious beliefs, gender, gender identity, physical or mental disability, marital status, family status, source of income, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation exist in society. Therefore, the Board acknowledges that such biases may exist within our schools. The Board believes that such biases are intolerable. Biases result in behaviours that damage the physical, mental and emotional well-being of students and negatively impact their educational, social and career outcomes. Further, they damage relationships with peers, families and community partners. The Board believes staff play a central role in creating environments which acknowledge and promote understanding, respect and recognition of the diversity of students and families within the school community. As students learn by example, all members of the school community are expected to model respectful conduct, inclusive behaviour and an understanding and appreciation of diversity.

The Board is committed to acknowledging, addressing, and eradicating discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying. The Board believes schools have the responsibility to ensure that students and their families feel safe to share these issues and concerns. Within a safe and caring environment, students and their families have the right and responsibility to bring these concerns to the attention of the school staff. The Board expects that school and District staff will be respectful of the concerns of students and their families and will work with them to provide appropriate supports to address and resolve the issues in a timely manner.

Reference(s):

GBCA.BP - Respectful Working Environments

GBCA.AR - Respectful Working Environments

GAA.BP – Human Resources Framework

HGAB.BP - Multicultural Education

HGAB.AR - Multicultural Education
IAA.BP - Aboriginal Education
IAA.AR - Aboriginal Education
IG.BP - Student Behaviour and Conduct
IG.AR - Student Behaviour and Conduct
IGD.BP - Student Suspension and Expulsion
IGD.AR - Student Suspension and Expulsion
Alberta Human Rights Act
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child