

Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environment Policy [Aurora Learning Foundation, Edmonton]

PART I

School Ethos

At this School, students are encouraged to develop their full potential and acquire the discipline of learning how to learn, while upholding Christian teachings and beliefs.

The authority of the Holy Bible and strong family values underpin the commitment of the School to provide quality in every facet of education - curriculum, teachers, facilities, management and discipline - in a safe and caring environment.

Values

In coming to this school each student, parent and staff member shall uphold the values of the school which include:

- Integrity — uprightness, honesty and decorous conduct, governed by the Holy Bible;
- Care & Compassion — kindness, consideration and generosity to all;
- Respect — for all people, property, opinions and authority;
- Responsibility — for our actions, progress and the environment; and
- Commitment — to self-discipline and the pursuit of excellence.

Section 45.1(3) School Act Statutory Requirements

As legislatively mandated in section 45.1(3) of the *School Act*, this policy and the Student Code of Conduct:

- Affirm 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 Foundation and each student enrolled in a school operated by the Foundation;
- State that staff members employed by the Foundation and students enrolled in schools operated by the Foundation will not be discriminated against as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* or the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to the degree that the same applies in law to the schools operated by the Foundation.
- Establish, implement and maintain a policy respecting the obligation under section 45.1 (l) of the *School Act* to protect each enrolled student and every employed staff member with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment.

PART II

The Aurora Learning Foundation, Edmonton believes that all students have the right under the Charter, or otherwise to:

- be treated fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect;
- have their confidentiality protected and respected;
- self-identification and determination;

- freedom of conscience, expression, and association;
- be fully included and represented in an inclusive, positive, and respectful manner by all school personnel;
- have avenues of recourse (without fear of reprisal) available to them when they are victims of harassment, prejudice, discrimination, intimidation, bullying, and/or violence;
- have their unique identities, families, cultures, and communities included, valued and respected within the school environment;
- be free from discrimination on the basis of 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; and,
- to have equitable access to support, services and protections, regardless of their identity, background or character protected under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*.

The Aurora Learning Foundation, Edmonton will not tolerate harassment, bullying, intimidation, or discrimination on the basis of a person's actual or perceived differences or gender identity or gender expression.

PART III

The Aurora Learning Foundation, Edmonton is committed to implementing measures that will:

- define appropriate expectations, behaviours, language, and actions in order to prevent discrimination, prejudice, and harassment through greater awareness of, and responsiveness to, their harmful effects;
- ensure that all such discriminatory behaviours and complaints will be taken seriously, documented, and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policy and procedures, that are applied in a manner that takes into account the age, maturity and individual circumstances of the student;
- improve students' understanding of the individual lives of minorities, their families, cultures, and communities;
- develop, implement, and evaluate inclusive educational strategies, professional development opportunities, and administrative guidelines to ensure that minorities including gender minorities and their families are treated with respect and dignity in all aspects of the school community in a manner consistent with the school's mission and vision; and,
- support individual students through initiatives that may include, but are not limited to,
 - mentoring of individual students by older students,
 - more focused attention to individual students,
 - regular follow-up meetings of specific teachers with individual students,
 - student Peer Support Groups, and,
 - counseling and restorative justice processes.

To assist teachers and school leaders with implementation measures, the following Alberta Education resources may be used by school staff to assist with implementation of this policy:

The Walk Around: A School Leader's Observation Guide.

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/3114867/the-walk-around-school-leader-revised.pdf>

The Walk Around: Teacher's Companion Tool. https://education.alberta.ca/media/142742/the-walk-around_teacher.pdf

PART IV

When implementing the above policy directions, the Aurora Learning Foundation, Edmonton will act reasonably in the best interests of the student in keeping with the guidelines outlined by the Supreme Court of Canada (*Loyola v. Quebec*, 2015). In that case, the Court outlined the obligations of teachers in a private religious school in respect to delivering a prescribed provincial curriculum related to other religions and worldviews and at the same time teach the school's faith tradition.

Some of the principles established by *Loyola v. Quebec* include:

- Christian teachers must be permitted to describe and explain Christian doctrine and ethical beliefs from the Christian perspective, and cannot be required to adopt a neutral position;
- Christian teachers must describe and explain the ethical beliefs and doctrines of other religions in an objective and respectful way;
- Christian teachers must maintain a respectful tone of debate — both by conveying their own contributions in a respectful way, and by ensuring the classroom dialogue proceeds in accordance with respect, tolerance and understanding for those with different beliefs and practices;
- Where the context of the classroom discussion requires it, Christian teachers may identify what Christian beliefs are, why Christians follow those beliefs, and the ways in which another specific ethical or doctrinal proposition does not accord with those beliefs, be it in the context of a particular different religion or an ethical position considered in the abstract.

PART V

The text of Section 16.1 of the *School Act*, as legislated provincially is as follows:

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.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), an organization or activity includes an organization or activity that promotes equality and non-discrimination with respect to, without limitation, race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation, including but not limited to organizations such as gay- straight alliances, diversity clubs, anti-racism clubs and anti-bullying clubs.

(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.

(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”.

(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.

(5) If a staff member indicates to a principal a willingness to act as a staff liaison under subsection (1),

(a) a principal shall not inform a board or the Minister under subsection (4) that no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison, and

(b) that staff member shall be deemed to be available to serve as the staff liaison.

(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.

As legislatively mandated by section **45.1(4)(c)** of the *School Act*, 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*,

(a) Is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity, and

(b) Is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations or activities.

Section **45.1(4)(d)** of the *School Act* requires this Policy to indicate that the *Personal Information Protection Act* governs the disclosure of personal information by the Board.