

*MEDICINE HAT PUBLIC BOARD OF EDUCATION OPERATES AS MEDICINE HAT PUBLIC SCHOOL DIVISION, AND FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE REFERRED TO AS "MHPSD" AND/OR "DIVISION"*

## SECTION 600 – Students

### **POLICY 614: SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY**

#### **BACKGROUND**

All members of the school community have the right to work and learn in an environment free of discrimination, prejudice, and harassment.

#### **POLICY**

The Board of Trustees is committed to establishing and maintaining a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning and teaching environment for all members of the school community. This includes but is not limited to those students, staff, and families who identify or are perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, queer, heterosexual or questioning their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The Board of Trustees expects all members of this diverse community to be welcomed, respected, accepted, and supported in every school.

As a public, inclusive school system, when planning for individual students the rights, needs and privacy of all students will be considered.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity rights, including self-identification and determination, will be protected under Division policy as is guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Alberta Human Rights Act, and Alberta School Act.

#### **GUIDELINES**

1. The Board of Trustees is committed to implementing measures that will:
  - 1.1. 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;
  - 1.2. ensure that all such discriminatory behaviours and complaints will be taken seriously, documented, and dealt with expeditiously and effectively, including complaints about vexatious or frivolous self-identification;
  - 1.3. foster understanding of the lives of sexual and gender minorities and their families, cultures, and communities;
  - 1.4. provide support, upon request, for the implementation of a gay-straight alliance, or similar club in their school in accordance with Section 16.1 of the *School Act*.

**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.



Notification, if any, is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations or activities.

Medicine Hat Public School Division is a public body under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Disclosure of any personal information must be in accordance with this Act.

- 1.5. develop, implement, and evaluate inclusive educational strategies, professional learning opportunities, and administrative procedures to ensure that sexual and gender minority students, as well as all members of the school community, are welcomed and treated with respect and dignity.
- 1.6. when a student discloses, staff will encourage without coercion, the student to communicate with their parents/guardians and seek their support
2. All future amendments to this policy shall be in accordance with our existing policy amendment procedures.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

[614 P 001 – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#)

#### ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE – EXHIBIT

[614 E 001 – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Basic Terms](#)

#### REFERENCES

Alberta Education – School Act

Alberta Human Rights Act

Alberta Teachers Association Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

**Approved:** March 29, 2016

**Revised:** June 26, 2018

