

PROCEDURE NO: 116.1**TITLE: Respect For Human Diversity****EFFECTIVE DATE: April 9, 2024****REVISED DATE:****REVIEW YEAR:**

RESPECT FOR HUMAN DIVERSITY

Background

Seine River School Division strives to create welcoming, safe, inclusive, and caring environments where students and staff can learn, grow, and experience well-being. The Division includes staff and students from diverse communities and remains committed to welcoming, respecting, accommodating, and supporting human diversity in all its forms, including transgender and gender-diverse students and staff.

Diversity encompasses all how human beings are both similar and different. It means understanding and accepting the uniqueness of individuals, as well as respecting their differences. Diversity may include, but is not limited to, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ethnic origin, ancestry, culture, socio-economic status, religion, family status, and mental and physical disability.

Some differences, such as physical features, race, gender, age, and some disabilities, may be more visible. Others may be less visible, such as the following:

- Intelligence or ability;
- Learning preferences;
- Culture;
- Ancestry or place of birth;
- First language or mother tongue;
- Religion or spirituality;
- Sexual orientation; and
- Socio-economic background or status.

The Division strives to accommodate student activities that promote the school environment as being inclusive of all students, based on the following values and beliefs:

- Schools provide environments to ensure all students feel safe, feel they belong, and are learning and growing;
- Commitments to equity and respect for human diversity are fundamental values of the public education system;
- Honouring and achieving the divisional values, beliefs, and priorities depends upon safe, inviting, and inclusive learning environments and workplaces that respect human diversity;
- Sexual orientation and gender equity form significant and integral aspects of the unique development and personality of every child and young person; and

- All students and employees have the right to learn and work in environments free of negative conduct or actions.

Procedures

1. Roles and Responsibilities

1.1 Superintendent or designate

- 1.1.1 Ensure the implementation of this procedure;
- 1.1.2 Ensure that all staff receive the appropriate professional development opportunities and support for curriculum implementation;
- 1.1.3 Provide inclusive resources; and
- 1.1.4 Provide support for 2SLGBTQ+ inclusiveness in the Division.

1.2 Principals and Supervisors

- 1.2.1 Provide a leadership role in promoting respect, safety, and inclusiveness;
- 1.2.2 Ensure the implementation of this procedure;
- 1.2.3 Support groups that promote gender equity, anti-racism, awareness of people with disabilities, and Gay-Straight Alliances;
- 1.2.4 Provide a support team for 2SLGBTQ+ that will act as an advocate. This support team may include the student, parent/guardian, principal, vice-principal, counselor, resource teacher, clinician, teacher, or education assistant; and
- 1.2.5 Provide direction and support for staff utilization of language, educational resources, and approaches that are inclusive and respectful of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.

1.3 Teachers and Support Staff

- 1.3.1 Model an inclusive approach in promoting respect, safety, and inclusiveness;
- 1.3.2 Model respect for human diversity and affirmation of diversity in working and learning environments;
- 1.3.3 Monitor and communicate the well-being of trans and gender-diverse students to the student support team; social-emotional, academic, attendance, presence, and other dimensions of well-being; and
- 1.3.4 Ensure classroom materials, library materials, and activities are inclusive and include
 - 1.3.4.1 Transpositive fiction and non-fiction materials;
 - 1.3.4.2 Reflect the accomplishments and contributions of the 2SLGBTQ+ community by providing positive themes, images, and accurate information about the history and culture; and
 - 1.3.4.3 Ensure the integration of 2SLGBTQ+ content throughout the curriculum and learning activities by policy and Manitoba Education curriculum.

1.4 Students

- 1.4.1 Respect the rights of all students regarding their gender identity and gender expression;
- 1.4.2 Monitor their interactions by the school Code of Conduct and ensure their actions support welcoming, safe, inclusive, and caring environments by respecting human diversity; and
- 1.4.3 Refrain from expressing negative comments or actions bullying (physically, sexually, or psychologically, verbally, in writing or through electronic communication/social media) or discriminating based on any characteristic set out in subsection 9 (2) of the Human Rights Code.

1.5 Parents/Guardians

- 1.5.1 Support their child's and other children's academic success and well-being;
- 1.5.2 Provide information about their child's beliefs, values, preferred learning styles, and other relevant aspects of the child's identity;
- 1.5.3 Provide information about their culture and family beliefs;
- 1.5.4 Contribute to creating safe and inclusive schools by volunteering at school activities and assisting school organizations;
- 1.5.5 Teach and learn as true partners in the educational process;
- 1.5.6 Provide suggestions for safe, inclusive, and successful schools;
- 1.5.7 Respect the rights of all members of the school community regarding their gender identity and gender expression; and
- 1.5.8 Celebrate the diversity of the student and community population.

2. Self-Identification

- 2.1 It is not appropriate to question or challenge another person's gender identity or expression. A person's self-identification is the sole measure of their gender. The protections provided under the Manitoba Human Rights Code include the right to determine one's gender.

3. Name and Pronoun Use

- 3.1 Staff and students have the right to be addressed by a name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity. A court-ordered name or sex change is not required, and the person does not need to change their official records for this right to be extended to them. Staff and students have the right to be addressed by their chosen name and to choose a pronoun that aligns with their gender identity and/or expression;
- 3.2 It is important to note that some individuals may not feel included in the use of the pronouns "she" or "he" and may prefer gender-neutral pronouns such as xe/xem; ze/zhe; hir/hirs; they/them or might wish to express themselves in other ways (ie. Mx instead of Mr., Mrs., Ms., Miss, or no prefix at all); and
- 3.3 Intentional or persistent refusal to acknowledge an individual's correct name, gender identity, and pronoun is disrespectful and creates an unwelcome

environment. Failure to respect the individual's gender identity, including name and pronoun use, once known, is a violation of this procedure.

4. Privacy and Confidentiality

- 4.1 The Division recognizes everyone's right to privacy and confidentiality. An individual's right to discuss and express their gender identity and/or expression openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much private information to share shall be respected; and
- 4.2 Informed staff must keep an individual's gender identity safeguarded appropriately. Staff are not permitted to disclose a student's or employee's gender identity or gender expression status to others unless previous permission has been provided or a situation occurs jeopardizing the safety of the individual.

5. Access to Washrooms and Change Rooms

- 5.1 Staff and students have a right to accommodations congruent with gender identity. This applies during school hours and school-related activities on and off school property (such as field trips and athletic events), including overnight trips and camps. If staff are concerned that travel to another site could pose issues of safety, the school should, in consultation and with the express permission of the individual, contact the other site in advance to ensure that the individual has access to facilities that are comfortable and safe by the individual's gender identity and expression; and
- 5.2 Although creating separate spaces may sometimes be necessary, emphasis should be on creating safe and inclusive spaces. This may require proactive strategies such as communicating clear behaviour expectations to all students, increasing adult presence and supervision, and monitoring key areas of the building and grounds. Where one exists, the use of an all-gender washroom is a matter of choice and is not mandatory.

6. Professional Development

- 6.1 Participation in training is essential for staff to have the necessary skills to deal with sensitive issues appropriately and effectively regarding bullying prevention and human diversity;
- 6.2 The Division is committed to providing resources and professional learning experiences that support all staff, students, and families to honor the provisions of this procedure, including responding to any students or parents whose need for information about gender identity or sexual orientation leads them to request support;
- 6.3 The Division will provide learning opportunities for all staff to participate in training for anti-bullying and strategies promoting respect for human diversity and a positive school environment. These opportunities may include topics of homo/transphobia, heterosexism, gender identity, gender expression, gender bias, sexual stereotyping, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, ethnicity, and or cultural practices; and

6.4 Support includes, but is not limited to, resource materials, counselling services, advocacy, or other support available through the school or divisional personnel.

7. Curriculum Integration

7.1 The Division supports all staff in delivering inclusive, provincially approved curricula so all members of society are represented. School divisions and school staff are expected to integrate gender-inclusive content into the teaching of all subject areas by any relevant provincial legislation. School division and school staff are expected to challenge gender bias and stereotypes. The omission of transgender and gender-diverse people from the curriculum creates a misconception among many students that gender diversity does not exist; and

7.2 Within the context of Manitoba's Physical Education and Health Education curriculum, teachers shall present a range of human diversity, including but not limited to a range of bodies, sexes, gender identities, and sexual orientation. Resources are to be developmentally appropriate and selected or updated to promote critical thinking and include materials in the health curriculum as approved. Sexual health education is considered a potentially sensitive outcome within the Physical/Health Education curriculum provided in grades 2-12. Student participation regarding potentially sensitive outcomes in Manitoba requires parental approval.

8. Gender Segregation/Sports Team Participation

8.1 Transgender and gender-diverse students have the right to participate in all activities (educational, recreational, and competitive). Schools should reduce gender-segregated activities to the extent possible. This increases opportunities to respect students' full expression and allows them to play, learn, dress, present, and express themselves in flexible and diverse ways. When there are segregated educational, recreational, or competitive activities, transgender and gender-diverse students have the right to participate in these activities in ways that are safe, comfortable, and congruent with their gender identity. This applies to students in all grade levels; and

8.2 The Division supports any transgender student athlete's participation in a sex-separated sports activity by their gender as identity in alignment with the Manitoba High School Athletics Association (MHSAA) Transgender Policy.

9. Dress Code

9.1 Staff and students must dress appropriately for classes, school, and work activities. Individuals have the right to dress in a manner consistent with their gender identity or gender expression; and

9.2 A flexible gender dress code will ensure staff and students feel included and respected. Respecting choice of appearance and expression is an important aspect of honouring a transgender or gender-diverse identity.

10. Gay-Straight Alliances

10.1 Per the Manitoba Public Schools Act (41)(1.8) and school division policy Respect for Human Diversity (116), the school division shall accommodate pupils who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that promote and support the establishment and continuity of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or other similar student support groups; and

10.2 Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)/Diversity Groups provide safe and inclusive spaces for students to talk about their experiences and to facilitate awareness of 2SLGBTQ+ issues in school. School GSAs can support actions, activities, and campaigns that celebrate gender diversity and create awareness of 2SLGBTQ+ issues.

11. Change of Identity, Expression or Transition

11.1 When a request is received either from a student or their parent/guardian or from a staff member, the Division will take reasonable steps to provide accommodation in a prompt and supportive manner; and

11.2 As the needs and concerns of individuals vary, all circumstances will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. An accommodation that works for one cannot be assumed appropriate for another. Conflicts that arise should be resolved in a manner that involves the individual and the designated support team to maximize inclusiveness and address the best interests of the individual.

12. Work with Parents/Guardians of Trans and Gender Diverse Students

12.1 The Division believes in working collaboratively with families/guardians and understands that student safety is the priority. The school shall work to engage parents/guardians in schooling matters involving their child unless the school determines it is objectively not in the best interests of the student to do so; and

12.2 Confidential information about a student shall not be shared even with the parents/guardians without the student's consent unless there are overarching safeguarding reasons for sharing this information.

References:

- [Winnipeg School Division Policy](#)
- [St. James School Division Policy](#)
- [Manitoba Human Rights Code](#)
- [Manitoba Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Manitoba High School Athletics Association Transgender Policy](#)
- [Rainbow Resource Centre](#)
- [Safe and Caring Schools: Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse Students in Manitoba Schools](#)
- [Safe and Caring Schools: A Resource for Equity and Inclusion in Manitoba School \(MB MYGSA\)](#)
- [The Anti-Oppression Network](#)