Swan Valley School Division
Ready to Succeed

Administrative Procedure Manual
Safe Schools
Respect for Human Diversity
AP: 209

RESPECT FOR HUMAN DIVERSITY

I. Guiding Principles

The Swan Valley School Division affirms that the underlying tenet of human rights is the recognition of the individual worth and dignity of every person.

Therefore, the following principles are recognized and valued in ensuring safe and inclusive school environments for all:

> ➢ positive school cultures,
> ➢ respect, inclusion, fairness and equity,
> ➢ clear and consistent communication regarding expectations of conduct,
> ➢ social responsibility,
> ➢ peaceful problem solving that respects value for human diversity and human rights,
> ➢ understanding issues such as bullying, harassment and discrimination,
> ➢ fair and reasoned responses to incidents involving discrimination, harassment and bullying,
> ➢ interventions that repair harm, strengthen relationships and restore a sense of belonging,
> ➢ continuous improvement of policies, procedures and practices that promote, monitor and evaluate safe and inclusive school environments, and
> ➢ celebrating progress and achievements.

II. Definitions

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

Equity refers to the provision of equitable opportunity, equitable access to programming, services and resources critical to the achievement of outcomes for all students and the staff who serve them.

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School Community can be understood to include the group of interacting people and organizations that come together with the operation of a particular school. This includes but is not limited to students and their families, teaching and support staff, administration, parent organizations, government departments, non-government organizations, volunteers, local businesses etc. In school communities intent, belief, resources, preferences, needs, risks and a number of other conditions may be present and common, affecting the identity of the participants and their degree of cohesiveness.

Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued and safe. An inclusive community consistently evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship. (*Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning – Provincial Code of Conduct*)

Bullying is behaviour that is intended to cause, or should be known to cause, fear, intimidation, humiliation, distress or other forms of harm to another person's feelings, self-esteem, body or reputation and is to create a negative school/work environment for another person.

Bullying takes place in a context of real or perceived power imbalance between people involved and is typically, but need not be, repeated behaviour.

Bullying may be direct (face to face) or indirect (through others) and it may take place through any form of expression – including written, verbal, physical – or by means of any form of electronic communication (referred to as cyberbullying), including social media, text messaging, instant messaging, websites or email etc. (Manitoba *Public Schools Act)*

Discrimination occurs when people are not treated based on their individual worth but instead are treated differently based on stereotypes and prejudices and this results is a real disadvantage or barrier to equal opportunity.

- Discrimination often involves treating someone differently on the basis of a protected characteristic such as ancestry, age or religion.

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- Discrimination may include failure to make reasonable accommodations for the special needs of any individual/group based on the protected characteristics under *The Code. (Human Rights Code of Manitoba)*

Harassment involves vexatious comment or conduct which is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome and which is linked to a protected ground under the Human Rights Code. *The Code* refers to harassment as a course of abusive and unwelcome conduct or comment made on the basis of any protected characteristic. *(Human Rights Code of Manitoba)*

Harassment normally involves persistent comments or conduct, but may include a single act. Supervision, evaluations and corrective actions in the normal course will not usually be found to be harassment. The two most common forms of harassment are racial harassment and sexual harassment. *(Human Rights Code of Manitoba)*

Prejudice is a preconceived negative opinion and/or hostile belief about an individual or group formed beforehand or without knowledge, often on the basis of stereotypes. *(Human Rights Code of Manitoba)*

Stereotypes are a simple or fixed belief (often exaggerated) that people have about what members of a group are like, without allowing for individual differences. *(Human Rights Code of Manitoba)*

Gender Identity refers to an individual's sense of self as "male", "female", or an identity between or outside of those categories (*Public Health Agency of Canada).*

Sexual Orientation is a term used to describe an individual's sexual, psychological and emotional feelings of attraction towards another person (Public Health Agency of Canada).

Reasonable Accommodation is the school's obligation to address the special needs of students where these needs stem from the protected characteristics specified in *The Human Rights Code of Manitoba* and affect the individual's ability to access educational/school services or facilities; the measures to accommodate special needs will be reasonable and required unless they cause undue hardship due to cost, risk to safety, impact on others or other factors. (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning)

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Undue Hardship refers to a situation where accommodation becomes so difficult that it becomes unreasonable. Some factors that determine whether reasonable accommodation to the point of undue hardship has been made include: financial costs, health and safety concerns, impact on other employees and service users and the impact on other protected rights. *(Human Rights Code of Manitoba)*

III.   **Policy statements**

A. **Respect for Human Diversity**
   All members of the school community have the right to learn and work in a safe and inclusive environment where human diversity is respected and bullying, discrimination and harassment are not tolerated.

B. **Training for Administrators, Teachers and Other Staff**

   Swan Valley School Division administrators, teachers and other staff will be provided opportunities for training and professional development that increases their capacity to teach and support students on issues regarding human diversity, including age, ethnic origin, ancestry, culture, socio-economic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, family status, and mental and physical disability.

C. **Accommodation of Student Activities and Organizations**
   The Swan Valley School Division will accommodate students who seek to establish and lead activities and organizations that promote areas of human diversity by ensuring all activities/organizations:

   ➢ Operate with a teacher advisor.
   ➢ Are considered by Administration for approval following a written proposal developed by students in conjunction with a Teacher Advisor where the following process has been completed:
       1. assessment of the school climate including consideration of the rationale and possible obstacles;
       2. stated purpose and goals;

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      3. Procedures, frequency of meetings, group rules and guidelines.

      4. Space requirements and other resources.

➢ Are conducted in compliance with School and Divisional Codes of Conduct.

➢ Are open to all students who wish to participate in an appropriate and respectful manner.

IV.   Roles and Responsibilities

Department of Education and Advanced Learning:

➢ Provide information, training and feedback to school boards and school division staff to support them in the development and implementation of human diversity policies.

School Boards:

➢ Model inclusiveness and respect for human diversity.

➢ Are responsible for establishing a respect for human diversity policy, in consultation with its communities and stakeholders, which complies with the legislation.

➢ Responsible to ensure regular policy review.

School Divisions:

➢ Model inclusiveness and respect for human diversity.

➢ Play a leading role in overall policy implementation, promoting respect for human diversity and communicating policy expectations to staff, students, parents and community.

➢ Provide professional development and training to Trustees and Senior Administration designed to ensure appropriate and effective responses to sensitive issues regarding human diversity.

➢ Assume responsibility for enhancing divisional materials and resources and providing division-wide training and professional development for teachers and other staff in areas of human diversity.

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> Set standards for student conduct.
> Develop division-wide procedures and protocols for addressing unacceptable conduct or discrimination.

Principals:

> Model inclusiveness and respect for human diversity.
> Play a leadership role at the school level in promoting safety and acceptance so as to ensure a safe and inclusive school environment.
> Participate in professional development and training designed to equip school administrators to respond appropriately and effectively to sensitive issues regarding human diversity.
> Are responsible for communicating and reinforcing expectations of respecting human diversity policy to teachers, other school staff, students and the school community.
> Are responsible for encouraging professional development, enhancing divisional materials and resources within the school and for providing on-going support to teachers, other staff, students and the school community in areas of respecting human diversity.
> Set standards for student conduct
> Develop in-school procedures and protocols for addressing unacceptable conduct or discrimination.
> Maintain appropriate records at the school.
> Ensure that volunteers are made aware of divisional policy regarding respect for human diversity and support volunteers in modelling inclusiveness and respect for human diversity.

Teachers and other Staff:

> Model inclusiveness and respect for human diversity.
> Are responsible for communicating and reinforcing expectations of respecting human diversity policy to students and families.
> Support students on issues of human diversity.
> Empower children and youth to treat each other with dignity and acceptance.

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> ➢ Have a duty to report matters of cyberbullying to the principal whether it is believed to be happening in the school or outside of regular school hours.
> ➢ Participate in professional development and training aimed to equip teachers and other staff to respond appropriately and effectively to sensitive issues regarding human diversity.

Students:

> ➢ Are responsible for monitoring their own interactions and conduct in ways that ensure a welcoming, safe and inclusive school environment, particularly toward those previously identified as being at higher risk for bullying or discrimination.

Parents and Guardians:

> ➢ Model inclusiveness and respect for human diversity as a member of the school community.
> ➢ Play an important role in their children's understanding and respect for human diversity.
> ➢ Are to be aware of divisional policy regarding respect for human diversity.
> ➢ Have a responsibility to encourage their children to conduct themselves in ways that contribute to a safe and inclusive school environment.
> ➢ Have a responsibility to cooperate fully with teachers and other school/division employees to ensure their child complies with school/division discipline and behaviour management Policies and the school Code of Conduct.

Volunteers:

> ➢ Are to be aware of divisional policy regarding respect for human diversity.
> ➢ Model inclusiveness and respect for human diversity.

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V. **Dealing with Bullying, Discrimination and/or Harassment**

Depending on the nature of an incident of bullying, discrimination and/or harassment the Swan Valley School Division and/or school will respond to the incident under the appropriate authority.

If the incident originates with a student or students, the appropriate Provincial, Divisional and/or School Code of Conduct will apply.

If the incident involves School or Divisional staff, or is a complaint from the public, Swan Valley School Division Policy will apply.

VI. **Policy Review and Evaluation**

Individual school and Division-wide data will be identified and collected using a variety of methods including electronic data bases so as to monitor implementation of this policy and to inform future policy refinements.

Annual opportunity for employees, through surveys, written submissions or presentations, to bring forward Policy issues for review.