POLICY 10 WELCOMING, SAFE, CARING, AND

RESPECTFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

POLICY STATEMENT

The Board of STEM Innovation Academy believes everyone in the school community shares in the responsibility of creating, maintaining and promoting a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity, equity and human rights and fosters a sense of inclusion and belonging. Federal (i.e. Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms) and provincial (i.e. Education Act, Alberta Human Rights Act) legislation, policy and directives are in place to recognize, support and protect the fundamental human rights of all members of the school community.

The Board believes in creating an inclusive learning environment that is welcoming, caring, respectful and safe which respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for all students, staff and families. This means that each and every person, regardless 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 of that person or class of persons, has the relevant learning opportunities and appropriate supports needed to feel valued andto be successful in school.

DEFINITIONS

Harassment: Any conduct, comment, gesture or physical contact that a reasonable person should know would be unwelcome, inappropriate or otherwise offensive to an individual or group of individuals. Alberta law explicitly protects Albertans from discrimination for a wide variety of reasons under the Alberta Human Rights Act.

Bullying: Bullying means repeated and hostile or demeaning behaviour by an individual in the school community where the behaviour is intended to cause harm, fear or distress to one or more other individuals in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to an individual's reputation.

Bullying behaviours are a form of aggression and can be:

- Physical – For example: poking, elbowing, hitting
- Verbal – For example: name calling, insults, racist, sexist or homophobic comments, put-downs or threats
- Social – For example: gossiping, spreading rumours, excluding someone from the group, isolating, ganging up
- Cyber – For example: social or verbal bullying through the use of email, text messages, social media, including the sharing of intimate images.

GUIDELINES

STEM Innovation Academy is committed to:

1. Ensure that staff, students and visitors have a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging; and will not tolerate harassment, bullying, intimidation, or discrimination on the basis of a person's actual or perceived characteristics as outlined in the Alberta Human Rights Act.
2. Provide professional learning opportunities that build the capacity of staff to understand and support our diverse student population regardless of the person's actual or perceived characteristics (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 of that person or class of persons) as outlined in the Alberta Human Rights Act.
3. Ensure that discriminatory behaviours and complaints, whether concerning students, staff orvisitors, when reported will be taken seriously, documented, and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through the school Code of Conduct.
4. Ensure that all students and staff have equitable access to supports, services and protections.Staff members employed by the Board and students enrolled in the school operated will not be discriminated against as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act and Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
5. Establish a Student Code of Conduct that addresses bullying behavior, discriminatory or prejudicial, language or behaviours and an explanation of possible interventions, actions and/or discipline that will occur as a result.
6. Use a progressive discipline approach using proactive and preventative approaches to build healthy relationships and reduce the occurrence of unacceptable behaviour such as bullying and maintain an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Intervention must also consider the age, maturity and the individual circumstances of the students involved and must ensure that support is provided to the student impacted by the behaviour as well as students who engage in inappropriate behavior.

Support for Student Organizations

1. If one or more students attending STEM Innovation Academy 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:

    1.1. immediately grant permission for the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and

    1.2. 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.

    1.3. 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. For greater certainty, the Principal shall not prohibit or discourage students from

choosing a name that includes “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”.

1.4. The Principal shall immediately inform the Board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison, 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.

1.5. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity. Notification, if any, must be consistent with the usual practices relating to other student organizations and activities.

The Principal shall ensure all legislation such as The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act which governs the disclosure of personal information is adhered to by staff.

Approved: April 2022

Reviewed: April 2025