
Policy 22: Hate Speech, Symbols & Discrimination

Background

All members of the school community have the right to learn and work in an environment free of discrimination and racism. This right is guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Alberta Human Rights Act and Education Act. The Division confirms its commitment and role in creating schools that are free from hate symbols, hate speech and discrimination, and recognizes that working toward this vision is for the benefit of all students, staff and the community at large.

Although not all incidents of discrimination, exclusion, displaying hate symbols, or using hate speech may be intended to cause harm, their impact is hostile and detrimental nonetheless. Viewing symbols such as symbols of neo-Nazi ideology or the battle flag of the Confederacy, and hearing hate speech and racial slurs can cause physiological and psychological stress and emotional pain. In addition, they serve as catalysts for rekindling intergenerational and historical trauma as well as race-based traumatic stress.

A symbol is a visual image or sign representing an idea. Symbols are powerful because within a cultural context they convey complex messages, ideologies, and history in a compact, recognizable form. Tragically, symbols have been used to send messages of hate, division, derision, and intimidation.

Hate speech, which includes words, conversations, old sayings, analogies, “jokes”, “othering” will not be tolerated. When hate speech becomes commonplace language and is passed down from generation to generation, it can cause irreparable harm to individuals, families and communities.

The presence of hate symbols or use of hate speech on school grounds, school property, during school-sponsored activities and/or on the property of any affiliated contractors or partnering agencies will be addressed by Wild Rose School Division. Failure to condemn hate symbols or hate speech potentially normalizes or affirms the intended message and ideology of the symbol and speech. Wild Rose School Division requires school staff and students to be educated about the impacts and consequences of hate symbols and hate speech.

The Division acknowledges that discrimination and racism exists and the important role of public education in reflecting, influencing, and driving positive systemic change. Proactive action is required to create discrimination free environments. The Division further acknowledges that individuals subjected to discrimination or racism at any level experience barriers to positive relationships, learning, academic success, personal fulfilment and well-being. The Division recognizes the complexity of how discrimination is experienced by students and staff, and

commits to addressing incidents of discrimination and racism through responsive and transparent processes.

The Division recognizes that respect for diverse cultural perspectives, traditions, languages, beliefs and values enriches the learning and working environment for everyone and is important to student and staff well-being as well as their personal growth. The Division is committed to supporting systemic change and acknowledges that respect, empathy, compassion and learning are critical for achieving equity.

1. The Division is committed to:
 - 1.1. Providing human, material and financial resources to support anti-discrimination;
 - 1.2. Eliminating ethnocentrism, prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, hate, sexism, ableism and racism in any form;
 - 1.3. Ensuring individuals who are targets of ethnocentrism, prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, hate, sexism, ableism and racism are offered support following an incident;
 - 1.4. Developing and supporting an environment that affirms, respects, reflects and celebrates the racial, ethno-cultural, gender, ability, sexual orientation and religious diversity of our society;
 - 1.5. Supporting employment equity to recruit, retain and develop all staff regardless of race, gender, ethno-cultural origin, sexual orientation or religion;
 - 1.6. Supporting educational equity through the provision of quality programs for all learners regardless of race, ethno-cultural, gender, ability, sexual orientation or religion;
 - 1.7. Creating a workplace environment that values and welcomes diversity.
2. The Division will select, develop and deliver curriculum resources and activities, which reflect in an equitable way the experiences, values, achievements and perspectives of a widely diverse society.
3. The Division will not tolerate acts of hate or discrimination including the display or distribution of discriminatory material, hate speech or hate symbols. The use of hate speech or the presence of hate symbols on the basis of race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or national origin create a substantial disruption in the learning and working environment by creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation that interferes with the rights of students and staff.
4. All expressions of racism, discrimination or harassment by employees, volunteers, students, parents, contractors and visitors will be dealt with promptly and effectively. The Division will ensure that administrative procedures dealing with matters of racism, hate, harassment and discrimination are followed when allegations arise including keeping a record of incidents and steps taken in response to an incident. This includes a

commitment to transparency, clear communication with all involved and a path to resolution for impacted students and staff.

5. The Division will provide leadership for anti-discrimination education by assisting Trustees, administrators, staff, students, volunteers and parents with the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours necessary to implement anti-discrimination practices, and to be conscious of issues of inclusion and acceptance.

This policy is supported by [Policy 20: Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning and Working Environments](#), [AP170 Harassment](#), [AP 171 Workplace Violence](#), [AP 175 Protection of Staff](#) and [AP 350 Student Behaviour and Conduct](#)