

**RENFREW EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
SOCIETY POLICY BOOK
FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENT**

SAFE AND CARING ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN/STUDENTS, STAFF AND VISITORS	POLICY NUMBER: 1.14
APPROVED: MAY 2005 REVIEWED: JUNE 2017, MAY 2018, JUNE 2019, MAY 2020, MAY 2021, MAY 2022	RELATED POLICIES: HEALTH AND SAFETY MANUAL, POLICIES 1.1.1, 1.1.5, 1.1.6, 1.1.7

POLICY:	Renfrew Educational Services Board is committed to a safe, caring, respectful, inclusive, equitable, and welcoming working and learning environment for all children/students, staff and visitors.
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Procedures:

- The *Safe and Caring Environments for Children/Students, Staff and Visitors* policy will be reviewed by the Board of Directors by June 30th of each year.
- The *Safe and Caring Environments for Children/Students, Staff and Visitors* policy will be provided to all staff, children/students and parents and is publicly available.

At Renfrew all children/students, staff and visitors have the right to work and learn in an environment free of discrimination, prejudice, and harassment. This right is guaranteed under the

- *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*;
- The *Alberta Human Rights Act* as amended March 10, 2015. In addition, the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, includes the right not to be discriminated against by reason of race, national origin, colour, religion or gender identity or gender expression. Legislation also provides as a fundamental right the “right of parents to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children;” and,
- Requirements of the *Alberta School Act* (and upon Proclamation the *Education Act*, Section 35.1) that provide for measures that support the equality and non-discrimination of students who may belong to minority groups, including sexual orientation.

Renfrew Educational Services Board will not tolerate harassment, bullying, intimidation, or discrimination on the basis of a person’s actual or perceived differences or gender identity or gender expression.

As defined by the *School Act*, Section 1.1(b.1) bullying is defined as the “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 more individuals in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to an individual’s reputation.”

At Renfrew we believe that all children/students, staff and visitors have the right to:

- be treated fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect;
- have their confidentiality protected and respected;
- self-identification and determination;
- freedom of conscience, expression, and association;
- be fully included and represented in an inclusive, positive, and respectful manner;

- have equitable access to the same supports, services, and protections provided to heterosexual children/students, their families, staff and visitors;
- have avenues of recourse (without fear of reprisal) available to them when they are victims of harassment, prejudice, discrimination, intimidation, bullying, and/or violence; and
- Have their unique identities, families, cultures, and communities included, valued and respected within the school environment.

Renfrew Educational Services Board is committed to:

- 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.
- Ensure that all such discriminatory behaviours and complaints will be taken seriously, documented, and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policy and procedures.
- Improve students' understanding of the individual lives of minorities, including sexual and gender minorities, and their families, cultures, and communities.
- Ensure children/students and parents, staff and visitors will conduct themselves in a way that contributes to learning environments that are welcoming, caring respectful and safe.

Renfrew Educational Services Board will ensure support for student organizations as per Government of Alberta *Bill 24 - An Act to Support Gay Straight Alliances*.

- 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.
- (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.
- (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.

- Provide that the principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in section 16.1(1) of the School Act:
 - is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity, and
 - is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations and activities.
 - Sets out the name of the legislation that governs the disclosure of personal information by the School Authority.
 - Boards, charter schools, and Regional authorities are public bodies under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and are bound by the provisions of that Act.
 - Accredited private schools must collect, use, and disclose personal information in accordance with the Personal Information Protection Act.
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As a Designated Special Education School the unique needs of our children/students are always in the forefront when developing programs and policies. We approach each situation with the utmost sensitivity ensuring our approach meets the developmental level of the child.