

Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Teaching and Learning Environment Policy
Revised March, 2018

School Vision and Mission Statement

We exist because our kids have great potential.

New Heights School and Learning Services educates children and youth (age 2.5 to 20) who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or a diagnosis similar to ASD; empowers families with the tools they need to raise a child with special needs; and equips students for their transition into mainstream society.

We are committed to creating a family centered community that equips our students to flourish in life.

Legal References

Alberta School Act, RSA 2000, c S-3: preamble, sections 2, 3, 16, 28

Alberta Bill of Rights, RSA 2000, c A-14: preamble, sections 1 and 2

Alberta Human Rights Act, RSA 2000, c A-25.5: sections 7, 8 and 11

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

2017 Bill 24, Third Session, 29th Legislature, 66 Elizabeth II ("Bill 24")

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), article 5

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, article 18(4) (which protects the rights of parents to guide their children's religious upbringing)

Alberta's Personal Information Protection Act

PART I

Consistent with its mission and vision, the New Heights School and Learning Services Board is committed to a safe, caring, respectful, inclusive, equitable, and welcoming learning and teaching environment for all students. This environment shall be one that recognizes and respects student diversity; equity of learning opportunity for all students; and a respect for human rights that fosters a sense of belonging of all students within a respectful school community.

This policy recognizes that all students have the right to learn and work 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, which includes the right not to be discriminated against by reason of race, national origin, colour, religion or gender identity or gender expression; and
- Requirements of the *School Act* (and upon Proclamation the *Education Act*,) that provide for measures that support the equality and non-discrimination of students.

Parents' Role at New Heights

Acknowledging that the preamble of the School Act specifically states that “parents have a right and a responsibility to make decisions respecting the education of their children” parents choose to enrol their students at New Heights for a variety of reasons.

- New Heights is a safe and caring environment for their children.
- Parents and teachers have frequent communication regarding their child, the issues with which they are dealing, and the strategies being implemented to help them to succeed.
- New Heights' staff understands the diverse nature of our students.
- New Heights offers support to families in their homes and community.
- New Heights offers an opportunity for students to learn how to be supported by a community, and learn how to contribute responsibly to a community.
- New Heights uses a family-centred approach to collaboratively develop, review, and monitor each student's plan and progress.

PART II

The New Heights School and Learning Services Board supports the ongoing growth of inclusive communities by involving our parents, staff, students, and school community in a wide range of opportunities to learn about, support and be part of the diversity that reflects our society. In this way the school can focus on building true inclusion and support for its students.

This policy does not define one set of human needs as greater than another. This school policy supports and respects the individuality of all students and aims to create a positive and supportive environment focused on providing the best possible learning opportunity for each student.

The New Heights School and Learning Services Board believes that all students have the right to:

- be treated fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect;
- have matters of confidentiality dealt with in a respectful and careful manner;
- freedom of conscience, expression, and association;
- be welcomed in a positive, and respectful manner by all school personnel;
- have access to appropriate supports, services, and protections

- have avenues of recourse, without fear of reprisal, available to them when they are victims of harassment, intimidation, bullying, and/or violence.

PART III

The New Heights School and Learning Services Board is committed to implementing measures that will:

- Based on developmental age, 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 discriminatory behaviours and complaints will be taken seriously, documented, and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policies and procedures.
- Develop, implement, and evaluate inclusive educational strategies, professional development opportunities, and administrative guidelines to ensure that minorities and their families, are treated with respect and dignity in all aspects of the school community in a manner consistent with the school’s mission and vision.

PART IV

The New Heights School and Learning Services Board will promote a welcoming, caring and respectful, safe learning environment that respects diversity, and fosters a sense of belonging.

If one or more students attending a school operated by the Board request a staff member employed by the Board for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity (collectively the “Requested 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, in addition to the other duties set out in this Policy, ensure that the Requested Activity promotes at the School a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging

In accordance with section 45(4)(b) of the School Act which legislatively mandates the Board to include the text of section 16.1(1), (3) (3.1) (4) and (6)” of the School Act in this Policy, if one or more students attending the School 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 School principal shall:

- immediately permit permission for the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the School, and
- 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.

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”.

The principal shall immediately inform the Board and the Minister of Education (“Minister”) if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison referred to above at subsection 2(b) 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.

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.

Additional Legislatively Mandated Principal Responsibilities

As legislatively mandated by section 45(4)(c) of the School Act, 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 students.

Section 45.1(3) School Act Statutory Requirements

As legislatively mandated in section 45.1(3) of the School Act, this Policy and the Student Code of Conduct set out in this Policy (“Code of Conduct”):

- herein affirms the rights, as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, of each staff member employed by the Board and each student enrolled in the School;
- herein states that staff members employed by the Board and students enrolled in the School will not be discriminated against as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to the degree the same applies in law to the School.

Code of Conduct

As legislatively mandated by section 45(5) of the School Act, the Code of Conduct herein set out has the following purpose:

To ensure that New Heights has a safe, caring, respectful, inclusive, equitable, and welcoming learning and teaching environment for all students.

In order to ensure that students conduct themselves in an appropriate manner at all times, the students attending New Heights School shall be subject to this Code of Conduct.

Students shall conduct themselves so as to reasonably comply with the following Code of Conduct:

- be diligent in pursuing their studies;
- attend school regularly and punctually;
- co-operate fully with everyone authorized by the board to provide education programs and other services;
- comply with school rules;
- be accountable to their teachers for their conduct;
- respect the rights of others;
- ensure that they contribute positively to the environment and culture of the School;
- refrain from, report and not tolerate bullying or bullying behaviour directed to others in the school, whether or not it occurs within the school building, during the school day, or by electronic means.

Activities that may constitute a violation of this Code of Conduct include, but are not limited to, bullying whether in person during the school day or by electronic means, physical harm or assault upon self or others, harassment, hazing, gang activities, weapons in school, drug and alcohol use, and improper conduct on busses or on field trips.

Unacceptable behaviour may be grounds for disciplinary action, and provides the student with an opportunity for critical learning and reflection in the areas of personal accountability and responsibility, the development of empathy, as well as communication, conflict resolution, and social skills development.

In the assessment of the potential consequences of unacceptable behaviour, the School shall also consider a student's age, maturity, individual circumstances, and frequency of the misconduct. In addition, the specific circumstances of the situation and of the student must be taken into account when determining appropriate responses to unacceptable behaviour.

When a student engages in unacceptable behaviour, consequences may include, but are not limited to:

- temporary assignment of a student to an alternate supervised area within the school;
- temporary assignment of a student to an alternate learning location;

- interventions such as positive behaviour supports, contracts, counselling, restorative practices;
- replacement or retribution for loss of or damage to property in-school or out-of-school suspension; and/or a recommendation for expulsion.

New Heights will ensure that support is provided for students who are impacted by inappropriate behaviour, as well as for students who engage in inappropriate behaviour

This Code of Conduct shall be made publically available on the New Heights website and shall be provided to all staff, students, and parents.

This Code of Conduct shall be reviewed each school year.

Section 45(4)(d) of the School Act requires this Policy to indicate that the Personal Information Protection Act governs the disclosure of personal information by the Board.