



Division Office

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www.fsd38.ab.ca

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Dear School Community:

Every person has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to learn/work in a safe and caring environment that is welcoming and respectful. Foothills School Division No. 38 was the first school division in Canada to implement the “Respect in School” and “Respect in Sport” programs, demonstrating our commitment to treating everyone with respect and dignity. Furthermore, we believe:

- We are here to improve learning for ALL students and to develop the WHOLE child. Our student body reflects the communities we serve and we offer a rich variety of innovative programs and services to meet the needs and interests of a broad spectrum of learners.
- We are committed to academic excellence in all areas of education: academics, the arts, athletics, and career and technology instruction. Together with strong character education, we believe these are all equally important contributors to the development and future employability of our students.
- We have safe, caring, respectful, welcoming and inclusive learning environments for our students and focus on developing healthy, respectful relationships at all levels – with our students, school families and employees.

Our schools work hard to promote and build positive character traits such as respect and compassion in our students as part of a concerted focus on bullying prevention. Our staff care about students and their welfare. We partner with parents to help their child(ren) develop into motivated, independent learners who contribute positively to society. .

Last week Alberta Education released the “Guidelines for Best Practices: Creating Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions”, which you may view at

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/1626737/91383-attachment-1-guidelines-final.pdf>.

The document outlines 12 legislative and policy requirements and associated best practices that must be incorporated in divisional policies and administrative procedures to ensure safe, caring, welcoming and inclusive learning environments that respect all.

As a public body, our school board must follow provincial direction and ensure our policies and administrative procedures comply with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and key pieces of Alberta legislation including the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *School Act*.

Our work in revising and developing our administrative procedures and policy in this regard will be focused on maintaining school environments that are safe, caring, welcoming, respectful and inclusive for all students and staff. We believe that everyone has the right to learn and work in environments that are free from discrimination, prejudice, and harassment and bullying.

We will provide the opportunity for public feedback on these new/revised policies/administrative procedures, particularly as it relates to the implementation of guidelines from Alberta Education. We will present drafts to our Board of Trustees on February 10, and will then send the drafts out to staff and school councils for further feedback. The public will also be able to view the drafts on our website at <http://www.fsd38.ab.ca/board-of-trustees/policies-admin-procedures/>. All feedback received will be shared with the Board of Trustees and considered within the scope of provincial legislative requirements and the direction from Alberta Education. A recommendation will be made to the Board of Trustees, and ultimately they will make the final decision.

School boards are required to submit policy and administrative procedure documents to Alberta Education by March 31, 2016. As such, we will be seeking final approval from our Trustees at the March 16 Board meeting.

Please understand that Foothills School Division is not setting the policy direction on this matter. As a public body, our school board must follow provincial direction. You may wish to share your concerns with the Education Minister and your local MLA. We have already shared parent feedback with the Education Ministry on this matter and will continue to do so.

If you would like to provide comments to Foothills School Division, please submit them to FSDInformation@fsd38.ab.ca.

Thank you,

John Bailey
Superintendent of Schools