

Safe and Caring Learning Environment

POLICY TITLE	Safe and Caring Learning Environment
POLICY HOLDER	Board of Eastside Christian Academy
ORIGINAL DATE	April 30, 2018
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Policy Statement

Our school and board are committed to fostering a safe, welcoming, respectful, and caring, and Christian learning environment.

Being mindful of an even higher law, when asked about the most important commandment, Jesus answered first, to love God, and second to “Love your neighbour as you love yourself.” So, in light of this mandate, the Board believes that all students and staff have the right to learn and work in an environment that promotes equality of opportunity, dignity, respect and recognition of diversity.¹ Within our Christian environment, every person must be respected as being created by God with inherent human dignity. The Board is committed to providing an environment that supports the positive mental health of all students and staff. The Board is further committed to providing an environment free from harassment, bullying, and violence. It is the collective responsibility of all those involved with the school, including board members, employees, students, parents/guardians, volunteers and visitors, to create and maintain a positive culture within our school and other educational settings.

Student organizations and activities:

The Board is committed to supporting the establishment of student organizations and activities that promote a welcoming, caring, respectful, safe and Christian learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for students.

¹ The Board affirms the rights of students and staff members to not be discriminated against as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* to the extent applicable and subject to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the nature and character of Eastside Christian Academy as a private, voluntary religious association. See e.g. *H.S. v. The Private Academy*, 2017 HRTO 791; *Caldwell et al. v. Stuart et al.*, [1984] 2 S.C.R. 603; *Loyola High School v. Quebec (Attorney General)*, 2015 SCC 12.

For the past twenty years, Eastside Christian Academy Board has constructed policies for all manner of school related activities, and those policies were accepted by Alberta Education staff. However, this year the Board is being compelled under duress to list the following provisions of the *School Act*: Sections 16.1(1), (3), (3.1), (4) and (6) of the *School Act* currently state²:

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.

Section 45.1(4)(d) of the *School Act* requires this Policy to indicate what legislation governs the release of information by the Board. It is the position of Alberta Education that the *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)*³ governs the disclosure of personal information by the Board. In circumstances where the disclosure of personal information, including that of a student involved in a student organization or activity, is contemplated, the Principal shall be guided by the School’s statement, legal obligations and the following recognized rights:

² Sections 45.1 and 16.1 of the *School Act* are currently under Constitutional challenge before the Courts: The Board recognizes that the application of any provisions of the *School Act* are subject to the paramount provisions of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Alberta Bill of Rights*, protecting freedom of conscience, religion, expression, association and the right of parents to make informed decisions concerning the education of their children.

³ The interpretation and application of *PIPA* is subject to the paramount provisions of the *Alberta Bill of Rights*, including sections 1(c) and (g), and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, sections 2(a) and 7.

- * The School Act states that “parents have the right and a responsibility to make decisions respecting the education of their children.”
- * The Alberta Bill of Rights guarantees as a fundamental freedom “the right of parents to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children.”

Upon receiving a request for a student group or activity, the principal will determine whether the requested group or activity will promote a welcoming, caring, respectful, safe and Christian learning environment. Any group or activity or name selected must be in accordance with and supportive of the Statement of Faith, beliefs and policies of the School.

Further guidance for school staff in fulfilling the objectives of the above sections without violating Eastside Christian Academy’s legal responsibilities and the nature and character of Eastside Christian Academy, as a Christian school, is provided in the following policies and procedures:

- * Statement of Faith (See Appendix I)
- * School Club and Activity Policy (See Appendix II)
- * Parental Rights Policy Provisions (Appendix III)

Our own faith serves as a foundation for our safe and caring environment..

Nothing in this policy is to be interpreted so as to limit or be a waiver of the Board’s or school’s rights, powers and responsibilities pursuant to the *Alberta Bill of Rights* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. To the extent, provisions restated in this Policy conflict with the Board’s or school’s rights, powers and responsibilities pursuant to the *Alberta Bill of Rights* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the Board’s and school’s rights, powers, beliefs and policies pursuant to the *Alberta Bill of Rights* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* will govern.

Code of Conduct

Eastside Christian Academy, from its inception, has focused on letting love be the guiding factor for staff and student interaction. Historically, our school has ranked in the 90th percentile in the annual Accountability Survey for being a safe and caring environment. Since we cannot police students twenty-four seven, we stress the development of self-control and continually encourage students to value everyone that comes into their sphere of life.

Statement of Purpose

We are commanded to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. Thus, defining appropriate expectations, behaviours, language and actions, in order to prevent discrimination, prejudice and harassment, through greater awareness of and responsiveness to their harmful effects, is the purpose of our code of conduct. We will also remind all concerned that the way we treat

each other should be the same as we would treat the Lord Jesus, which would be caring and welcoming. We will one day give an account of how we lived and how we have treated others. In light of that fact, we train students and staff to hate that which is evil and to avoid it.

Acceptable Conduct

Students will be required to treat each other fairly and kindly, with dignity and respect. Therefore, verbal, written or electronic communication should be to build up and encourage other members of the ECA community, whether students or staff. "Let no corrupt communication proceed from your mouth, but that which is good for the use of building up",... "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and shouting, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all intention to do evil" (Ephesians 4:29, 31). All matters should be dealt with confidentially and appropriately in order to protect the speaker and listener.

We have established a "six-inch-rule" that provides protection from purposeful or accidental physical altercations, whether small or great. We are instructed, "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all people" (2 Timothy 2:24). Contact between students will only be permitted within the confines of physical education and sports that require such and then within the bounds of good sportsmanship.

The same attitudes of love and respect will be required from all students and staff where the internet is concerned.

Unacceptable Conduct

All rude, abusive or demeaning communication will not be allowed. Spreading rumours about students or staff will be dealt with as soon as the rumours are revealed.

All physical violence or abusive gestures will be considered a purposed attack on a person.

Any evidence of unacceptable communication whether in the form of notes or graffiti or by the many forms of internet venues, notwithstanding the time it was written, will be considered a violation of the spirit of acceptable code of behaviour.

Consequences of Unacceptable Conduct

The day we hear of the incidents of unacceptable conduct, it will be dealt with in the following manners:

Verbal, physical or written misbehaviour will be first investigated. Based on the result of those investigations, if it is established that there has been a violation, (1) violators will be asked to consider their actions and the consequences of their behaviour. We have a "five-second-rule" where (2) they are encouraged to have a change of mind, in other words - to repent. (3) they are asked to make a confession of wrong to the person they have wronged and seek that person's forgiveness. (We also teach students how to forgive those who have wronged them.) These steps are part of our students' character-focused education, since in this life it is almost certain that at times some offences will occur. Traditionally, we have required those who abuse others verbally in a private setting to make restitution by apologizing to the one they offended.

In line with that, if they committed the act publicly, we have required the restitution in the presence of all concerned.

For repeat offenders, we will consider the student's maturity level, and of course, the circumstances. Counselling will be in order, as well as a written analysis of the situation and plans of remediation by the student. If the offender refuses to change and continue in such behaviours, it will be required for parents and student to participate in an interview with the principal and any other staff responsible for that student, in hopes that increased pressure will help secure desired results. Any continuation in unacceptable behaviour would be met by suspensions of varying lengths, depending on the severity of the violations in question.

Support For Those Impacted by Misbehaviour

Support is provided for students who are impacted by inappropriate behaviour, as well as for students who engage in inappropriate behaviour.

Even as we encourage students to be quick to confess their wrongdoings and to take responsibility for their actions, we also teach students to be quick to forgive their offenders who seek forgiveness. As well, we teach young students to stand up and to speak to their authorities about the above mentioned offences. Ultimately, we seek to raise students who stand up for what is right for themselves and others, who speak up on their own and let their offenders know they will not put up with unacceptable behaviour.

However, while we want to strengthen students and hope for them to be able to live at peace with everyone, staff will continue to monitor sensitive situations.

This document is a revision and update of the previous "ECA - Safe and Caring Policy."
This revision is dated April 30, 2018

Mr. Todd Swisher, President

Mr. Rod Sikora - Treasurer

Dr. Frank Moody - Principal

APPENDICIES

I Statement of Fatih

1) We believe that the Bible, containing the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is the only inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God and is the final authority on the Christian faith and life. (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21).

2) We believe there is only one God, who exists eternally in three equal persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — and who created out of nothing the heavens and the earth and all that is in them by the power of His spoken word (Genesis 1:1; Genesis 1:26; Psalm 33:6; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-3; Mark 1:9-11; Hebrews 11:3).

3) We believe that Jesus Christ is both true God and true man (Exodus 3:13-15 and John 8:58-59; John 1:1- 18; John 10:30-33; Galatians 4:4-5; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:14-18). We believe in His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-35); His sinless life (Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26); His miracles (John 2:11); His substitutionary death (Romans 4:25; Romans 5:8; Galatians 3:13-14; Hebrews 2:9); His physical resurrection (Luke 24:39-43; I Corinthians 15:1-22); His ascension to the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-53); and His personal, visible, and bodily return in power and glory to judge the living and the dead (Acts 1:11; Revelation 20:11-15; Revelation 22:12).

4) We believe that men and women were created by God in His own image (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 9:6), that marriage was instituted by God whereby a man and a woman are joined together in lifelong commitment to faithful companionship, and that Biblical marriage is the only legitimate and acceptable context for sexual intimacy (Genesis 2:20-24; Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 7:2; I Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4). We believe that all men and women are born spiritually separated from God because of sin (Genesis 3:23-24; Romans 3:10-12; I John 1:8-10), and are incapable of being reconciled to God apart from the work of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:6-8; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:1-5).

5) We believe in the absolute necessity of rebirth by the Holy Spirit for salvation (John 3:1-3; I Peter 1:23). We believe that man is justified (declared righteous) by God on the single ground of the righteousness of Jesus Christ (namely, His sacrificial and atoning death on the cross to pay the penalty for sin, and His perfect obedience) freely given to all who believe in Him. We believe that this saving work and perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ can only be received by faith alone (Isaiah 53:1-12; Jeremiah 23:6; Matthew 20:28; John 3:16-19; John 5:24; Romans 3:21-26; Romans 4:1-3; Romans 5:8-19; Romans 10:1-10; I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 2:21; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:7-9; I John 4:10).

6) We believe in the physical resurrection of both the saved and the lost. Those who are saved will rise to eternal life, and those that are lost to eternal punishment (Matthew 16:27; John 5:28-29; Matthew 25:46; I Corinthians 15:12-17).

7) We believe that the Church is the body of born-again believers in fellowship with Christ and with fellow believers (I Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 2:19-21; Hebrews 10:25).

8) We believe in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who indwells believers enabling them to live a Godly life (Romans 8:13-14; I Corinthians 3:16; I Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10; Ephesians 5:15- 21).

II School Club and Activity Policy

Eastside Christian Academy recognizes the importance of positive and effective behaviour management strategies in promoting children's welfare, learning and enjoyment within school clubs and activities.

The aims of our Policy are to help students to:

- * Develop a sense of caring and respect for one another.
- * Build caring and co-operative relationships with other students and adults.
- * Develop a range of social skills and help them learn what constitutes acceptable behaviour.
- * Develop confidence, self-discipline and self-esteem in an atmosphere of mutual respect and encouragement.

We require all staff, volunteers and students to demonstrate a positive model of behaviour by treating children, parents/guardians and one another with friendliness, care and courtesy.

We familiarize new staff and volunteers and parents/guardians with the club or activity policy and its guidelines for behaviour.

Behaviour Management Strategies

The staff team will manage behaviour according to clear, consistent and positive strategies. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contribute to these strategies, raising any concerns or suggestions. Behaviour management in the clubs will be structured around the following principles:

- * Staff and students will work together to establish a clear set of 'ground rules' governing all behaviour in the club. These will be periodically reviewed so that new student have a say in how the rules of the club operate. They will be clearly displayed in the club.
- *The club's 'ground rules' will apply equally to all children and staff.
- * Positive behaviour will be reinforced with praise and encouragement.
- * Negative behaviour will be challenged in a calm but assertive manner. In the first instance, staff will try to re-direct children's energies by offering them alternative and positive options. Staff will be open in stating and explaining non-negotiable issues.
- * When dealing with negative behaviour, staff will always communicate in a clear, calm and positive manner.
- * Staff will make every effort to set a positive example to children by behaving in a friendly and tolerant manner themselves, promoting an atmosphere where students and adults respect and value one another.
- * Staff will avoid shouting at work.
- * Staff will facilitate regular and open discussions with students about their behaviour. This will help them to understand the negative aspects of their behaviour and enable them to have their say and to think through the causes and effects of their actions.
- * Staff will work as a team by discussing incidents and resolving to act collectively and consistently.

- * Staff will try to discuss concerns with parents/guardians at the earliest possible opportunity in an attempt to help identify the causes of negative behaviour and share strategies for dealing with it.
- * Children who experience bullying, racism or other unacceptable behaviour will be given the confidence to speak out.
- * Staff will encourage and facilitate mediation between children to try to resolve conflicts by discussion and negotiation.
- * Activities will be varied and well planned so that children are not easily bored or distracted.

Dealing with Negative Behaviour

We require all staff, volunteers and students to use positive strategies for handling any negative behaviour, by helping children find solutions in ways, which are appropriate for the students' ages and stages of development.

When confronted with negative behaviour, staff will be clear to distinguish between 'disengaged', 'disruptive' and 'unacceptable' behaviour.

'Disengaged' behaviour may indicate that a student is bored, unsettled or unhappy. With sensitive interventions, staff will often be able to re-engage a student in purposeful activity.

'Disruptive' behaviour describes a student whose behaviour prevents other students from enjoying themselves. Staff will collectively discuss incidents and agree on the best way to deal with them.

'Unacceptable' behaviour refers to non-negotiable actions and may include discriminatory remarks, violence, bullying or destruction of equipment. Staff will be clear that consequences will follow from such behaviour, including in the first instance, temporarily removing a student from the activity session.

When an incidence of negative behaviour occurs, staff will listen to the child or children concerned and hear their reasons for their actions. Staff will then explain to the student or students what was negative about their behaviour and that such actions have consequences for both themselves and for other people.

Staff will make every attempt to ensure that students understand what is being said to them. Students will always be given the opportunity to make amends for their behaviour and, unless it is judged inappropriate, will be able to rejoin the activity.

Staff will use all possible non-physical intervention with students to try to gain acceptable behaviour outcomes. However, in the rare case that these have been exhausted, acceptable physical intervention with minimum force, such as diverting a student or leading them away by a hand or an arm around their shoulder may be used.

If a staff member commits any act of abuse towards a child at the club or activity, disciplinary action will be implemented, according to the provisions of the disciplinary procedures within the Staffing Policy. We will also have regard to our School Policy.

Reviewed October 2018

III Parental Rights Policy

Eastside Christian Academy Board works hand in hand with parents to support their vision for the education of their children. Thus, to encourage that partnership and have all involved make informed decisions, the Board will require school and staff to communicate regularly with parents regarding all aspects of student development - spiritual, social and academic. There is great Biblical foundation for this partnership. As well, there are provisions in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Education Act* to give parents rights over their child's education.

Bill 44, Section 11 expresses recognition of parents' rights by giving them the discretion to choose what kind of education their child will receive on a class by class basis independent from the overall education environment and supports the concept that parents be able to raise their children in conformity with their own convictions.

Section 32

EDUCATION ACT

Part 3 Responsibilities and Dispute Resolution

Division 1 Responsibilities

Parent responsibilities

32 A parent has the prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be provided to the parent's child, and as a partner in education, has the responsibility to

- (a) act as the primary guide and decision-maker with respect to the child's education,
- (b) take an active role in the child's educational success, including assisting the child in complying with section 31,
- (c) ensure that the child attends school regularly,
- (d) ensure that the parent's conduct contributes to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment,
- (e) co-operate and collaborate with school staff to support the delivery of specialized supports and services to the child,
- (f) encourage, foster and advance collaborative, positive and respectful relationships with teachers, principals, other school staff and professionals providing supports and services in the school, and
- (g) engage in the child's school community.