



Policy

No. 302

Respectful Workplace

POLICY STATEMENT

The Board of Education is committed to creating and maintaining a learning and working environment where people are treated and treat each other professionally and respectfully in their interactions. When personal conflict occurs, processes are in place to allow the conflict to be effectively resolved.

1. The Board is committed to a learning and working environment that supports the following objectives:
 - 1.1 A consistent understanding is developed regarding the proper and appropriate behaviour in dealing with others, including the ability to speak or act without offending;
 - 1.2 Interactions between people are fair, professional and respectful;
 - 1.3 Conflict, when it occurs, is resolved in a timely and effective manner.
2. The Superintendent is responsible for ensuring that the provisions of this policy are communicated and understood.
3. All participants engaged in School District activities are to conduct themselves in a manner that is courteous, respectful of and responsive to the needs of others. They can expect to be free from objectionable or abusive behaviour that is contrary to this policy.
4. Individuals involved in the learning and working environment are responsible for their actions and are accountable for their consequences. Individuals are responsible for ensuring that their actions and communication with others (including electronic communication) adheres to the spirit and intent of this policy.
5. To assist in the achievement of these objectives, the Board will provide volunteer Facilitators to provide assistance in the resolution of conflict when it occurs. These individuals will be selected from the partner groups.

Application

1. This policy covers all adults involved in the learning or working environment regardless of their role for function. This includes School District employees, parents, volunteers, third parties doing business with the School District and members of the general public who interface with the School District.
2. For District employees, this policy does not supersede any provision of an applicable Collective Agreement.
3. Students are not covered under this policy. Standards for student behaviour are addressed in each school's Code of Conduct.
4. Inappropriate behaviour by an adult toward a student is not covered by this policy. The School Act, BC Teachers Regulation Branch and the District's Collective Agreements will define and govern the standard of behaviour required by adults when dealing with students.

Examples of Policy Breaches

In order to provide further guidance, the Board considers the examples listed below to be breaches of this policy:

1. Unprofessional or Disrespectful Comments or Actions

When people come together to perform an activity, there may be incidents when an individual behaves inappropriately. Some examples of behaviour in the learning or working environment that would be inappropriate include:

- an action by any person which humiliates, insults or degrades another person;
- verbal abuse in any form, such as swearing at or displaying unnecessary shows of temper or anger toward another person;
- physical abuse/intimidation.

These actions are often not intended to harm another person. They may have occurred in the "heat of the moment" or with a lack of forethought regarding their consequence. But they still have a detrimental impact on an individual or group.

2. Workplace Bullying

Bullying is defined as acts or verbal comments that could mentally or physically hurt or isolate a person in the learning or working environment. Bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behaviour that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people. Some common examples would include:

- spreading malicious rumours, gossip or innuendo that is not true;
- personal insults and name calling;
- excluding or isolating someone socially;
- intimidating a person;
- physically abusing or threatening someone;
- undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work;
- withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information;
- making jokes that a reasonable person would find offensive by spoken word, gestures, on paper, or through electronic communication;
- intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking;
- criticizing another person persistently or constantly;
- tampering with a person's personal belongings or work equipment.

These actions can be overt and obvious or subtle, and would be considered by a "reasonable person" to be unacceptable.

3. Abuse of Authority

Individuals involved in District activities can be given responsibility and authority for the management of resources, including people, financial and/or material resources. People in these positions are held to a higher standard of performance and are expected to exercise their authority in a fair and consistent manner. Examples of abuse of authority include:

- any of the behaviours noted previously in this section;
- addressing individual work performance issues in a public setting where others may hear;
- setting impossible deadlines that will set up the individual to fail;
- unfairly assigning unpleasant or undesirable tasks to one person.

People in positions of authority have difficult tasks to perform including assigning work, setting performance expectations, providing feedback and taking corrective or disciplinary action when necessary. These activities can create tension, but the legitimate exercise of this authority is expected.

REGULATIONS

1. Conflict Resolution Process

The intent of this process is to resolve conflict between people. The process offers the individuals involved in the conflict the opportunity to resolve the conflict directly with the other party, voluntarily through the assistance of Facilitators, or through a formal complaint.

Option 1 Speak with the offending person directly

- 1.1 The offended party is encouraged to speak directly with the offending person and try to resolve the conflict. In many cases, the person may not have realized their actions

or comments were creating an issue for the individual. Most reasonable people will change their behaviour when they discover it is creating issues for others.

Option 2 Mediated Resolutions

- 1.2 The second option offers an opportunity for either party to talk to a Facilitator of their choice to help resolve the conflict. The Facilitator will speak with the other party to determine if they are interested in participating in this process.
- 1.3 Participation in this process is voluntary.
- 1.4 Discussions with Facilitators are to be considered confidential by all participants. However, the parties need to be aware that confidentiality cannot be maintained in extreme cases where criminal activity may be involved.
- 1.5 The Facilitator will help the parties explore options to resolve the issue. They may offer suggestions or alternatives for the parties to consider, but it is up to the individuals involved in the conflict to reach their own resolution.
- 1.6 No written records of the mediation will be maintained.
- 1.7 No person will be disciplined as a result of participating in this option.

- 1.8 While a supervisor may be a Facilitator, if the supervisor may be involved in disciplinary or performance issues concerning the same parties, it is not appropriate for that supervisor to act as a Facilitator. The conflict will be referred to another Facilitator.

Option 3 Formal Complaint

- 1.9 If options 1 and 2 have not been successful in resolving the conflict, or the parties have decided to not make use of them, a formal complaint can be directed to the Supervisor who has responsibility for the area (e.g. Principal, Director, Supervisor, etc.).
- 1.10 If the Supervisor is the cause of the conflict, the complaint would be directed to that person's Manager/Director.
- 1.11 If the Superintendent is the cause of the conflict, the complaint would be directed to the Chairperson of the Board of Education.
- 1.12 The Superintendent or designate will conduct a confidential investigation of the complaint in order to determine the facts and assess whether this policy has been breached.
- 1.13 The time taken to investigate the complaint will not normally exceed 4 weeks from the date of filing of the formal complaint.
- 1.14 The Superintendent or designate may choose to retain an outside investigator to conduct the investigation.
- 1.15 The Complainant and the Respondent(s) will have a right to representation during the investigation process.

Remedial Action Under Option 3

Where a formal complaint under Option 3 is substantiated, an appropriate remedy will be provided to the person who has been subjected to inappropriate behaviour and corrective action will be taken against the person(s) who has breached this policy. This may include education or training, denying access to School District facilities and activities, and/or in the case of District employees, discipline up to and including termination of employment.

2. Retaliation

It is also considered to be a breach of this Policy to take retaliatory action against a person who raises a concern or files a complaint under this Policy.

3. Further Information

Any questions regarding the Respectful Workplace Policy or its accompanying regulations can be referred to the Secretary Treasurer.