

Title: Safe and Caring Student Groups Creation Policy

Policy Statement:

Trinity Christian School Association (TCSA) believes that all children are loved by God, are individually unique and that the school has a mission to help each student to fulfill their God-given potential in all aspects of their person: physically, academically, socially, morally and spiritually.

Approved: Lynn Gullackson
(Chair of the Board)

June 27, 2015
(Date)

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Review and Amendment Date(s): Amended June 29, 2018

Stakeholders Consulted (Date): April, 2015

A. Principles:

1. TCSA is committed to using the policy as a guideline for the creation and operation of student groups that are comprehensive in their approach to inclusion and open to the exploration in a Christian context of a variety of issues including bullying, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, gender identity, discrimination, justice and injustice, and respectful relationships and language.
2. TCSA will provide each enrolled student and every employed staff member with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment.
3. TCSA has established a code of conduct for students that addresses bullying behaviour called the ***TCSA Anti-Bullying Policy***.
4. TCSA 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 School Authority and each student enrolled in the school in the ***TCSA Bylaws, Article 7.2***.
5. ***Article 7.2*** of the ***TCSA Bylaws*** ensure that staff members employed by the TCSA and students enrolled in a school operated by TCSA will not be discriminated against as provided for in the ***Alberta Human Rights Act*** or the ***Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms***.

6. TCSA is bound by the precepts of the ***TCSA Privacy Policy***, The Privacy Information Protection Act Freedom of Information and the ***Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act of Alberta***, regarding the disclosure of personal information of staff and students.
7. Student conduct within a Safe & Caring Group will follow norms established in ***TCSA's General School Regulation, D. Student Conduct***. Violation of those norms may subject a student to disciplinary measures outlined in TCSA's ***Discipline Policy***.

B. School Legislation Applicable to this Policy:

This policy adheres to the following TCSA legislation.

1. TCSA Bylaws, Article 7 General 2.

The Association recognizes that all persons are equal in dignity, rights and responsibilities. In accordance with Christ's command in Matthew 7:12, in accordance with the statutes of the Alberta Human Rights Act RSA2000 and in accordance with the precepts of the Constitution, the Association will not discriminate or encourage discrimination in its policies and practices.

2. TCSA Anti-Bullying Policy

Policy statement:

The Board of TCSA is committed to providing a loving, caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students, so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere free from any form of abuse.

Principles:

All children and young people should be able to go about their daily lives without the fear of being threatened, assaulted or harassed. Bullying is ultimately an anti-Christian behaviour and affects everyone. All types of bullying are unacceptable at TCSA and will not be tolerated. Our students should feel able to notify us when being bullied, and when bullying behaviour is brought to our attention and identified as such, prompt and effective action will be taken.

3. Privacy Policy

Policy Statement:

Trinity Christian School Association is committed to protecting the privacy of individual employees, students and guardians. To that end, the Board has implemented a privacy program to meet its privacy goals.

Principles:

The Board is committed to protecting the confidentiality of personal information in its custody or under its control in compliance with the applicable federal or provincial legislation.

4. General School Regulations

Principles:

The Association is dedicated to maintaining an environment that supports trust, respect, honesty, civility, free inquiry, creativity, and an open exchange of ideas. Individual rights are best protected by a commitment to mutual respect. The procedures, rights, and safeguards outlined in this policy are indispensable to achieving the goals desired.

D. Student Conduct.

3. As per the Bullying Policy, bullying, mocking, fighting, and deliberately insulting or ostracising one's peer's is strictly forbidden.
4. A student will ensure that their personal conduct does not physically or emotionally harm others.

C. Applicable Federal and Provincial Legislation:

This policy adheres to the following Federal and Provincial legislation.

1. **Alberta Human Rights Act**
2. **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**
3. **Bill 10: An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect Our Children
Amendments to the School Act
Support for student organizations**

16.1(1) If a student requests a staff member employed by the board that operates the school attended by the student for support to establish or lead an activity or organization intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging and that staff member does not provide the requested support, that failure to support the student is deemed to be a decision that may be appealed to the board in accordance with section 123.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), an activity or organization includes an activity or organization that promotes equality and non-discrimination with respect to, without limitation, race, religious beliefs, color, gender, physical disability, mental disability, family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, including but not limited to organizations such as gay-straight alliances, diversity clubs and anti-bullying clubs.

(3) A decision of the board under section 123 with respect to an appeal relating to subsection (1) is final, subject to the right to judicial review set out in subsection (4).

(4) A decision of the board referred to in subsection (3) may be challenged on judicial review for jurisdictional error or unreasonableness.

4. Alberta School Act

Support for student organizations

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.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), an organization or activity includes an organization or activity that promotes equality and non-discrimination with respect to, without limitation, race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation, including but not limited to organizations such as gay-straight alliances, diversity clubs, anti-racism clubs and anti-bullying clubs.

(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 “gaystraight 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.

(5) If a staff member indicates to a principal a willingness to act as a staff liaison under subsection (1),

(a) a principal shall not inform a board or the Minister under subsection (4) that no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison, and

(b) that staff member shall be deemed to be available to serve as the staff liaison.

(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.

2015 c1 s3;2017 c30 s2

Application of investigation, inquiry provisions

16.11 For greater certainty, sections 40 and 41 apply in respect of a contravention of, or failure to comply with, section 16.1.

2017 c30 s3

Board responsibility

45.1(1) A board has the responsibility to ensure that each student enrolled in a school operated by the board and each staff member employed by the board is provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging.

(2) A board shall establish, implement and maintain a policy respecting the board's obligation under subsection (1) to provide a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that includes the establishment of a code of conduct for students that addresses bullying behaviour.

(3) A policy established under subsection (2) and a code of conduct established under subsection (2) must

(a) affirm 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 a school operated by the board, and

(b) contain one or more statements that staff members employed by the board and students enrolled in a school operated by the board will not be discriminated against as

provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

(4) A policy established under subsection (2) must contain a distinct portion that addresses the board's responsibilities under section 16.1, and the distinct portion of the policy

- (a) must not contain provisions that conflict with or are inconsistent with this section or section 16.1, and in particular must not contain provisions that would
 - (i) undermine the promotion of a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, or
 - (ii) require a principal to obtain the approval of the superintendent or board or to follow other administrative processes before carrying out functions under section 16.1,
- (b) must include the text of section 16.1(1), (3), (3.1), (4) and (6),
- (c) must 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)
 - (i) is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity, and
 - (ii) is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations and activities,and
- (d) must set out the name of the legislation that governs the disclosure of personal information by the board.

(5) A code of conduct established under subsection (2) must contain the following elements:

- (a) a statement of purpose that provides a rationale for the code of conduct, with a focus on welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments;
- (b) one or more statements about what is acceptable behaviour and what is unacceptable behaviour, whether or not it occurs within the school building, during the school day or by electronic means;
- (c) one or more statements about the consequences of unacceptable behaviour, which must take account of the student's age, maturity and individual circumstances, and which must ensure that support is provided for students who are impacted by inappropriate behaviour, as well as for students who engage in inappropriate behaviour.

(6) In addition to meeting the requirements under subsections (3), (4) and (5), a board shall do the following:

- (a) make the policy and code of conduct available throughout the year in a prominent location on a publicly accessible website maintained by or on behalf of the board;
- (b) display in a place clearly visible to students in each school the Uniform Resource Locator of the policy and code of conduct on the publicly accessible website;
- (c) on request, provide a copy of the policy or code of conduct to an individual;
- (d) by June 30 of each year, review the policy and code of conduct, confirm the review by a board resolution and post or repost the policy and code of conduct on the publicly accessible website after review;
- (e) comply with any further requirements respecting a policy or code of conduct established by the Minister by order.

(7) An order of the Minister under subsection (6)(e) must be made publicly available.

(8) If a board does not establish a policy or a code of conduct under subsection (2), or in the opinion of the Minister a policy or a code of conduct established under subsection (2) does not meet the requirements under subsections (3), (4), (5) or (6), as applicable, the Minister may, by order, do one or both of the following:

- (a) establish a policy or code of conduct for, or add to or replace a part of a policy or code of conduct of, a board;
- (b) impose any additional terms or conditions the Minister considers appropriate.

(9) An order of the Minister under subsection (8) must be made available in a timely manner by the board in a prominent location on a publicly accessible website maintained by or on behalf of the board.

(10) The Regulations Act does not apply to an order of the Minister under this section.

2015 c1 s3;2017 c30 s7
RSA

D. Naming of Safe and Caring student groups

1. The students may select respectful and inclusive names, such as those referenced in Section 16.1 of the School Act, after consulting with the principal.
2. Names for student groups seeking to further respect each individual will be approved by the principal, in consultation with the superintendent, will incorporate

language both in keeping with the teachings of Christianity and in accordance with Section 16.1, and will furthermore respect the intent of this policy.

E. Who might be served by Safe and Caring student groups?

1. All students registered with TCSA.

F. Guidelines for the formation of student groups

1. Because some students, those with behavioral difficulties, those with same sex attractions or differing gender identities, those who experience discrimination or isolation based on body image, those who exhibit social anxiety/lack of social connection, those who are of a minority race, culture or language, or other individual attributes, may be at-risk, it is advised that every school be well prepared to establish student groups to address these needs. Such groups should be formed when there is a student request.
2. Upon receiving the request the principal of the school shall immediately grant permission for the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and within a reasonable time 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. Flexibility and responsiveness, based on needs, is critical. Student groups may be formed for the following purposes:
 - a. Advocacy
 - b. Peer support
 - c. Counselling
4. In each type of group, issues that result in discrimination and bullying will be addressed.
5. General norms also govern all types of student groups. Groups shall:
 - a. Support the mission, vision and core values of the school and the school jurisdiction while upholding the sanctity of human life through discussions, acts of justice, and social action within the context of general Christian teaching on social relationships.
 - b. Reflect through name and action the philosophy and theology of communion and emphasize inclusion, hospitality, respect, justice and mercy.
 - c. All groups will respect privacy as per section F.8.b.ii of this policy.

Since each type of group addresses different needs (advocacy, peer support, counselling), specific guidelines and additional norms follow:

6. Advocacy Groups:
 - a. Purpose:
 - i. To advocate against all forms of discrimination and/or behaviours that cause students to feel isolated and not included.

- ii. To assemble students who experience discrimination, isolation, and a lack of feeling included in their school community or society with students who want to offer these students their support via initiatives designed to advocate against any and all forms of discrimination.
 - iii. To enable students to feel empowered to activate their unique God-given gifts for the benefit of furthering a more just community for everyone.
 - iv. To discuss issues that cause pervasive harm to young people in society.
- b. Norms:**
- i. Ensure the student groups are led by a trained Trinity Christian facilitator, who must be a TCSA teacher or staff member, and assisted, when necessary, by counselors, pastoral staff or social workers.
 - ii. Be open from a Christian perspective to exploration of a variety of issues, including racial or cultural discrimination, sexual orientation and gender identity, bullying, and respectful relationships and language.
 - iii. Ensure advocacy efforts are directed against all forms of bullying and discrimination in concordance with the TCSA Anti-Bullying policy.
- c. Activities:**
- i. Exploring how inclusive practices enhance the life of the school (e.g. celebrating a school's success annually through a variety of means).
 - ii. Sponsoring activities throughout the school year to address these areas (i.e. bullying awareness week activities, peer advocacy, guest speakers, and frequent liaison with the school principal).
 - iii. Promoting activities based around the concepts of Christian charity, mercy, justice and love in order to address needs locally, nationally or internationally.

7. Peer Support Groups:

- a. Purpose:**
- i. To assemble students who experience discrimination, isolation, and a lack of feeling included in their school community or society with students who want to offer these students their support via facilitated discussions.
- b. Norms:**
- i. Ensure the student groups are led by trained Trinity Christian teachers, facilitators or staff members and assisted, when necessary, by counselors, pastoral staff or social workers.
 - ii. Ensure boundaries prior to the discussion of any topic, so members do not feel pressured to make personal disclosures.
 - iii. Invite, but not pressure, other students to join them.
 - iv. Be sensitive to the safety of all students who are at risk.
 - v. Refrain from labeling or discussing students who are not members.
 - vi. Consider inviting students to develop additional norms and procedures with the facilitator carefully guiding this process.
- c. Activities:**
- i. Exploring those areas with staff facilitators where inclusion could be improved (e.g. student group discussions as per "norms" outlined through the leadership of the facilitator).

8. Counselling Groups:

a. Purpose:

- i.** To assemble students who experience discrimination, isolation, and a lack of feeling included in their school community or society with students who want to offer these students their support via facilitated discussions.
- ii.** To support students experiencing a variety of challenges related to feelings of belonging, self-worth, identity, friendship, etc.
- iii.** To support students who may be marginalized as a result of bullying or social exclusion based on gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, behavioral disorders, race, culture, size, physical or academic ability, etc.
- iv.** To support students in understanding their sexual identities who may be experiencing a variety of challenges related to their sexuality (e.g. how to talk to parents, friends, etc.).

b. Norms:

- i.** Ensure the student groups are led by trained Trinity Christian teachers, facilitators or staff members and assisted, when necessary, by counselors, pastoral staff or social workers.
- ii.** If a student discloses information to a staff member regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity, it is important to remember that they have a right to confidentiality, as per the precepts of the TCSA Privacy Policy, The Privacy Information Protection Act Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act of Alberta, unless there is a valid concern of immediate and perilous harm to the student by the group facilitator.
- iii.** Ensure all normal processes for group counselling are followed.
- iv.** Be sensitive to the safety of all students who are at risk.
- v.** Refrain from labeling or discussing students who are not members.

c. Activities:

- i.** Utilize counselling strategies to address group needs.

9. Facilitation of Student Groups:

- a.** As faith guides, strengthening every aspect of Christian education, facilitators integrate prayer, scripture, and Christian teaching (e.g. 'the dignity of the human person' and 'a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable') into their discussions as appropriate. The groups will be permeated in a manner consistent with all TCSA school programming.
- b.** Student groups shall be facilitated by a Trinity Christian teacher, facilitator or staff members and will be approved by the principal.
- c.** The principal shall ensure the facilitator(s) receives in-service or information on both relevant Christian teachings and the facilitation of group discussion.
- d.** At the principal's discretion, if the school has access to a counsellor, social worker, pastoral staff or a staff member with a similar designation, that staff member should co-facilitate.
- e.** The facilitator(s) shall attend every meeting.

10. Informing parents about a Safe and Caring student group:

- a.** Bill 10 recognizes that parents have both the right and responsibility to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children. (Alberta Bill of Rights, s.1 (g); School Act, preamble, par. 2; Education Act, preamble, par. 8 upon proclamation).
- b.** The following two step process will be used to advise parents regarding the formation of Safe and Caring student group in Trinity Christian:
 - i.** Step 1 – A general notice will be provided to the parents and guardians body in the form of a letter, that students may be organizing Safe and Caring student group at their school in the future.
 - ii.** Step 2 – If a Safe and Caring student group is formed in the school, notification of the formation of the group is sent to all TCSA parents, respecting privacy and not naming of any students involved in the formation of the group, in a parental notification letter. This notification includes the responsibility of parents to discuss with their child the purpose and nature of the group, whether their child wishes to become a member and their child's obligation to both refrain from bullying behavior and contribute to a safe learning school environment that respects diversity.