



January 21, 2016

Dear Chinook's Edge School Community:

At the January 13 regular Board Meeting, the Chinook's Edge Board passed Policy 2-18 titled 'Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environments'. This policy (available [here](#)) simply provides expectations and requirements for schools to support an environment where students and staff are treated with respect and dignity. Although the policy is new, the work of ensuring respectful and caring environments has long been enshrined in our schools.

Over the coming months, Chinook's Edge will be researching and developing an administrative procedure pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity to support Policy 2-18. The senior staff developing this procedure are confident it will achieve the effective supports that our LGBTQ population deserves, while being respectful to the rest of our students and without creating controversy in our schools. We know that LGBTQ children and youth have statistically higher incidence of depression, self-harm, and suicide rates. This is alarming to us and we are responding to the growing awareness of supports this minority population of students requires from us.

Chinook's Edge and all school divisions have been directed by Alberta Education to have procedures specific to supporting LGBTQ students and staff in place by the end of March. They provided supports for this effort in the document *Guidelines for Best Practices: Creating Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions*. (available [here](#)) Contact information for Alberta Education is also available on this website link, if there are any questions or concerns.

There has been a wide range of media coverage on this subject and this is adding confusion to an already complex topic. Chinook's Edge has responded without incident to the washroom and change-room requirements of the handful of students we are currently supporting who are transgender, while being respectful and thoughtful of our entire student population. We are confident any future considerations around this, such as involvement on sports teams, will also be successful. These situations are being addressed on a case by case basis very successfully, because of our supportive safe and caring culture. Be confident that your child's safety and developmental needs are being met in Chinook's Edge.

Certainly this is a new topic for many of us as staff, and for some of our student population. We have found our students are supportive of these differences among their peers, and each situation that a student presents is considered and handled individually by staff in our schools. The intent of our work is to respect the dignity of all students, and support our number one priority of safety for all students. Chinook's Edge has a strong history of providing a safe and caring culture, and we will retain those strong values moving forward.

Yours truly,

Kurt Sacher, Superintendent of Schools