

Revisions to Policy 622 – Response from District Council of School Councils  
April 4, 2017

**Background:**

The PC government passed Bill 10 in March 2015. Subsequently, the NDP government gave a directive for School Jurisdictions across the province to design policies and procedures that “create learning environments that respect diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions”.

In response to this government legislation, in March 2016, the Board of Trustees of SD 76, in collaboration with stakeholders (including staff and parents through School Council and Special Meetings), passed the following policies:

Policy 621: Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environment

Policy 622: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

On May 24, 2016, the Board hosted a special “Town Hall” meeting to seek input from the public regarding the development of Administrative Procedures for the implementation of Policies 621 and 622. This meeting was facilitated using a collaborative model to engage all participants in the conversation.

Since then, the Board of Trustees continued to receive a number of indications that parents would like to have their role explicitly defined in the policy.

At the Public Board Meeting on December 13, 2016, Mr. Riley noted that the Board had made a commitment to review Policy 622. It was noted that the key issue was to find the appropriate role of parents/guardians without violating the rights of the students. In response to this, Mr. Riley moved:

“THAT the Board of Trustees directs the Coordinating Committee to initiate the review of Policy 622. Such review should include a discussion of the role parents and/or guardians in the service of student needs without infringing on student rights as prescribed by law. The review process should include discussion of the issue at School Council meetings and at Coordinating Committee. The review should prepare recommendations to Policy 622 that are to be presented to the Board for their consideration no later than the April 2017 public general meeting.”

With this in mind, amendments were made to Policy 622 by the Coordinating Committee to include the following clause:

*(f) when a student discloses, staff will encourage, without coercion, the student to communicate with their parents/guardians and seek their support*

It was also recommended by Coordinating Committee that:

*All future amendments to this policy shall be in accordance with the existing policy amendment procedures.*

### ***Response from School Councils:***

Throughout February and March 2017, members of the Board of Trustees attended School Council meetings to hear feedback regarding the amendments made to Policy 622 and answer any questions or concerns that arose from these discussions. Council chairs gathered information from their respective school council meetings and this Parent/Guardian input was shared at the District Council of School Councils meeting on April 3, 2017. The following is a summary of this information:

- Overall, the general consensus is that Policy 622 is welcoming and ensures the safety and confidentiality of students
- The new amendment is welcomed and includes parents and guardians, while maintaining and respecting the safety, privacy and rights of the students
- There is a very strong feeling that this matter is over and councils would not like to revisit it anytime soon.
- Communication skills of teachers, administrators, trustees is excellent
- There is an excellent sense of community in district
- There were questions regarding PD for teachers for students coming-out or disclosing
- Parents/guardians were assured that if students were referred to outside agencies, parental/guardian consent was necessary
- Although there is overall support of Policy 622, there needs to be very thoughtful and mindful implementation of the policy, specifically related to ensuring the privacy and safety of ALL students while using washrooms and change rooms in the schools. For example, have "family washrooms" in the school, rather than only gender specific washrooms.
- Questions arose as to whether parents would be involved in future revisions. This is always the case through School councils, District Council of School Councils and a School Council representative on the District Coordinating Committee.
- It was observed that the policy is general, but agreed that this was necessary as all students are unique, and each situation is different. It was suggested, "When you make a list, there may have been something that is missed."
- Feedback regarding this policy as amended was positive from all schools. This being said, there are still a few parents with specific concerns. These include:
  - Parents have not and do not have an adequate say in policy writing or decision-making. There continues to be a view that parents have the *right* to know if their child has joined a GSA or has disclosed to a staff member. The provincial legislation and the law do not support this.
  - This does not address potential for students' mental/emotional distress
  - What type of training will teachers have in order to support students?
- Parents/Guardians throughout the District have expressed their appreciation for are the work and dedication of the Board in creating and revising this policy and always putting the care and safety of students first. This is a place "Where Kids Count"

Respectfully submitted,  
Carolyn Freeman