



# BRANDON SCHOOL DIVISION

## Education Committee Minutes

Monday, April 15, 2013, 11:30 a.m.

Board Room, Administration Office

Present: P. Bartlette (Chairperson), P. Bowslaugh, M. Snelling  
M. Sefton (Alternate), Dr. D. Michaels, Superintendent

Guests: Marnie Wilson, Division Research and Evaluation Specialist

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### 1. **CALL TO ORDER:**

The Education Committee Meeting was called to order at 11:45 a.m. by the Committee Chairperson, Mr. Bartlette.

### 2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda was approved.

### 3. **PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY**

The Committee minutes from February 26, 2013 were received as information.

### 4. **COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE GOAL ITEMS**

#### **A) Governance Goals – Human Rights**

Superintendent, Dr. Michaels reviewed for the Committee the history and background regarding this matter which had cumulated in the report being provided to the Committee today. She noted the Board will now need to consider policy development which will include the Human Rights as required. Dr. Michaels introduced Ms. Wilson, Division Research and Evaluation Specialist who would review the information contained in her report. (Appendix “A”).

Research and Evaluation Specialist, Ms. Wilson spoke to her “Report of Grade 7 – 12 Student Input Sessions on ‘Equity of Inclusion and Protection of Human Rights for Individual Differences’”. She began her report by providing a brief review of the legal context; the background and local context; and the consultation method and student participants. She confirmed from her review of the feedback that discussions could be clustered around five areas of responsibility as follows:

- i) teach students about their rights and responsibilities;
- ii) foster group work skills;
- iii) provide a variety of learning opportunities in order to respond to student individuality within a diverse student population;
- iv) expand students’ awareness, appreciation, and respect of individual differences;
- v) provide for students’ safety and security in environments which are free of harassment and bullying.

Ms. Wilson spoke to each of the five identified areas, noting the student feedback received.

Following this review, Ms. Wilson reviewed eight recommendations regarding divisional activities as well as possible next steps in the review of inclusion and the protection of human rights.

Superintendent, Dr. Michaels, concluded the presentation by noting Ms. Wilson's report had been reviewed in detail at Senior Administration on April 12, 2013.

Trustees discussed the information provided in Ms. Wilson's report, highlighting what students were saying. Trustees discussed the report in relation to Bill 18 and whether or not to reference Bill 18 in any future policy given the comments received from the local MP that Bill 18 may be challenged through the court system. The Committee agreed that this project had been undertaken by the Brandon School Division in 2011 and they should continue to address the matter for the sake of Division students. It would support for Bill 18 but it would also show support for students and the issues they have brought forward through the consultation process. Trustees agreed to move forward on this matter.

Superintendent, Dr. Michaels, spoke to Policy 1001 – "Foundations and Commitment" noting the Division established a Mission Statement several years ago, a Vision statement within the last ten years, and that now it may be time for the Board to establish a statement to the policy which addresses the core values of the Board and Division. The Committee agreed this matter should be discussed in detail at a Board level. The Committee agreed to propose a Board Retreat for the week of August, 26, 2013 to discuss the matter in detail and begin work on developing a statement with respect to core values.

The Committee thanked Ms. Wilson for her work in putting together a comprehensive document collating the data received from student consultations.

**5. OTHER COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE MATTERS**

NIL

**6. BRIEFINGS ON DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION**

NIL

**7. OPERATIONS INFORMATION**

**8. NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Wednesday, May 22, 2013, 11:30 a.m. Board Room.**

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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P. Bartlette, Chair

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P. Bowslaugh

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M. Snelling

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M. Sefton (Alternate)



# BRANDON SCHOOL DIVISION

## Senior Administration Reporting to The Education Committee

To: The Education Committee of the Board of Trustees

From: Senior Administration, Dr. Donna M. Michaels, Superintendent/CEO &  
Marnie Wilson, Research and Evaluation Services Specialist

Date: April 15, 2013

Re: Report of Grade 7 – 12 Student Input sessions on “EQUITY of INCLUSION and  
PROTECTION of HUMAN RIGHTS for INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES”

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### I. Legal Context

The Brandon School Division has many responsibilities pertaining to the protection of the human rights and individual differences of its students. These responsibilities exist within the context of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Relevant articles from these two documents are listed below.

Relevant articles in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non- self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.
3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
7. All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.
- 26(1). Everyone has the right to education ...
- 26(2). Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Relevant articles in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms:

2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:
  - (a) freedom of conscience and religion;
  - (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
  - (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
  - (d) freedom of association.
7. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.
12. Everyone has the right not to be subjected to any cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.
- 15(1). Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Furthermore, the Public Schools Act 41(1) b.1 states that every school board shall “ensure that each pupil enrolled in a school within the jurisdiction of the school board is provided with a safe and caring school environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours.”

Most recently, Bill 18: The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools) has been approved which requires school boards to establish a Respect for Human Diversity Policy to “promote the acceptance of and respect for others in a safe, caring and inclusive school environment.”

## II. Background and Local Context

The Brandon School Division is committed to and places paramount importance on its responsibility towards equitable treatment and educational opportunities for all students. A focus on the human rights listed above is embedded into the Division’s Mission Statement, part of which states that the Division “recognizes students as unique individuals requiring a safe and positive learning environment.” Various Board Policies and Procedures exist in order to uphold this standard of delivery of education; these include 1001.1 – “Equity”, 1001.2 – “Educational Sustainability in Student Achievement”, 4044 – “Appropriate Educational Programming”, 4052 – “Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting of Student Learning and Achievement”, 5026 – “Harassment”, and 7004 – “Student Conduct”.

Further to this established emphasis on equity, on October 24, 2011, the Board of Trustees established an additional Governance Goal to include an emphasis on the human rights of all students to learn and work in school environments that respect, honour, protect, and celebrate individual differences and that provide equitable learning opportunities in inclusive settings.

An integral part of the actions resulting from this goal is a comprehensive review on all corresponding Board policies and procedures related to the human rights and responsibilities of students. It was decided that, as part of this review, student input sessions should be held in order to gather students’ perspectives related to their human rights and responsibilities.

### III. Consultation Method and Student Participants

Four student input sessions were held in the fall of 2012 in order to gather Grade 7-12 students' perspectives related to their human rights and responsibilities. In small cross-school groups, students discussed and provided their perspectives by answering and reporting on these questions:

1. How effective is your education in teaching you how to work and learn individually? With others?
2. How effective is your school in providing for your safety and security; free of harassment and bullying?
3. How effective is your education in honouring, recognizing, and protecting your individual differences and that of other students?
4. How effective is your education in teaching you the important relationship of "rights with responsibilities?"
5. How effective is your education in providing you with a variety of learning opportunities?

In total, 60 high school students and 150 Grade 7 and 8 students from all schools in the Brandon School Division participated in the sessions. Each school chose their own student participants. Comments from all student groups at all four sessions were recorded.

What follows is a comprehensive analysis of the combined student comments from all sessions.

### IV. Analysis of Student Feedback

Taken together, the feedback received throughout the student input sessions answers the question: "How effective are our schools at protecting students' human rights?" The Brandon School Division has many responsibilities pertaining to the protection of human rights and individual differences of its students. After compiling all student input, the feedback could be clustered into discussions around five such responsibilities; it is the Division's responsibility to:

- 1) teach students about their rights and responsibilities;
- 2) foster group work skills;
- 3) provide a variety of learning opportunities in order to respond to student individuality within a diverse student population;
- 4) expand students' awareness, appreciation, and respect of individual differences; and
- 5) provide for students' safety and security in environments which are free of harassment and bullying.

Thus, this analysis and report is organized into these five topics.

#### 1. Rights and responsibilities

As stated, the Division has a responsibility to teach students about their own rights and responsibilities. There is some indication that students are being taught about their rights and responsibilities, but that this topic could be covered more thoroughly. Senior high school and middle school students alike were

able to identify a small number of their rights such as having a right to an education and having freedom of speech. Others mentioned responsibilities such as the responsibility to learn, to be respectful, to listen to peers, to follow rules, and to share. A number of table groups revealed the ways in which they learn about rights and responsibilities, and these include:

- 1) Youth Revolution
- 2) guest speakers
- 3) behaviour matrix
- 4) school banners
- 5) video presentations; and
- 6) through doing chores and looking after siblings at home.

However, some table groups felt that more information is required on the topic and some suggested presentations or videos as a means of becoming more informed.

## **2. Group work skills**

Schools have a responsibility to teach students to work collaboratively with others. The ability to work with others is a necessary life skill, one that requires people in the pursuit of a collective goal to uphold individual rights and freedoms, without infringing on those of other members.

Across all four input sessions, only two table groups mentioned possible benefits of group work, saying that it “provides discipline” and “teaches (students) how to work with others.” The majority of students, however, offered cautionary notes regarding the use of group work or revealed concerns about its impact. First, some students perceived group (or team) work to be more appropriate for certain subject areas such as sports, drama, and music. Others expressed that the success of group work depends partly on having a teacher who uses it effectively. For example, at least one table group of Grade 7 and 8 students felt that teachers needed to “be more involved and aware of what’s going on in group work,” while another table group of high school students believed that teachers need to be mindful of not ‘dominating’ the process.

Although never stated outright, an underlying theme in the students’ comments around group work was the tenuous balance between the work of a collective and the rights of its individual members, especially with regard to assessment of the group’s product. They stated, for example, that there is “some uneven efforts in group work” and that “students who work are affected by those students who do not work well in a group.” One table group suggested that we “should have two parts to project work – one for individual work and one as a group for fair assessment.” Other students simply expressed a preference for individual work. Clearly, students have concerns regarding the current use and assessment of group work.

### 3. Variety of learning opportunities

School divisions are responsible for providing a variety of learning opportunities in order to respond to student individuality within a diverse student population. According to students, key factors in providing the variety necessary to accommodate student diversity and individuality include:

- 1) extra-curricular activities (sports teams, major productions, student leadership, clubs);
- 2) opportunities with, and learning the effective use of, technology (iPads, laptops, smartboards);
- 3) availability of programming (HALEP, band, after school programs);
- 4) field trips;
- 5) teaching methods that include choice, hands-on and currently relevant activities; and
- 6) opportunities for more individualized attention (both through small class sizes and organized peer tutoring).

There were mixed opinions about how effectively schools are currently responding to student individuality. Whether students were satisfied with the variety of learning opportunities offered in their schools depended on their perception of the six key factors noted above. In other words, a table group that stated, “We need more choices in class, more hands on opportunities and need to relate things more to the real world,” stated that “HALEP is good for this but we need more of it.” Also, some high school students mentioned the benefits of peer tutoring, while a grade 7 and 8 group identified a need for organized tutoring in their school(s).

### 4. Student awareness, appreciation, and respect of differences

All schools have the responsibility to expand students’ awareness, appreciation, and respect of individual differences. Students who participated in the input sessions identified many current divisional or school activities and programs that they believe help them appreciate individual differences. These include:

- Heritage Days
- Multi-cultural Days
- Finding My Way
- EAL programs and teachers
- HALEP and enrichment clusters

Despite the activities already offered, some high school students expressed the desire for “cultural pavilions” and more language courses. One grade 7 and 8 group felt they needed a “Heritage Project that teaches everyone about other cultures” and another said that “in-class translation is needed.”

Interestingly, the vast majority of the student comments focussed on race and cultural differences. This could be interpreted in a variety of ways. For example, perhaps racial and cultural differences are most evident and relevant for students; perhaps racial and cultural awareness is viewed as a focus of the Division; or perhaps students are not as comfortable discussing other sources of difference such as sexual orientation.

In covert ways, students seemed to be hinting that awareness of other types of issues is perhaps needed. For example, students expressed concern that “some students are alone which could lead to depression.” Another table suggested that the schools should focus more on “health matters such as addiction, obesity, and eating disorders.” Another group suggested that high schools needed “gender neutral bathrooms.” At present, it is unclear whether these comments suggest a need for more awareness building or more effective interventions, and whether such issues are a source of harassment.

## 5. Safety, security, harassment, bullying

The Division has a responsibility to provide for students’ safety and security in environments which are free of harassment and bullying. According to students, some of the factors that are helping students feel safe and/or are helping to deter or reduce harassment and bullying include:

- 1) social workers and guidance counsellors;
- 2) Youth Revolution;
- 3) safety measures such as lock-down.

However, the majority opinion was that harassment and bullying continue to be a problem in our schools. Many table groups stated that current methods of handling these situations are not effective. Students revealed that, in their view, bullying is sometimes ignored, or that the problem continues to exist even after school intervention has taken place. There is a sense that while presentations, assemblies, and selling bracelets build awareness, these activities are not curbing the problem. A consistent message from these students is that bullying is more covert or “not always apparent” and not “in the open.” Specific suggestions students made to help address harassment and bullying include:

- 1) clearer and more consistently enforced rules and consequences
- 2) having “more confidential ways of reporting bullying;”
- 3) having increased supervision during unstructured times and activities (lunch hour and after school); and
- 4) targeted support for “low-confidence people” especially regarding “self-mutilation and suicide.”

Students were not asked and did not reveal the *sources* of harassment or bullying. While both high school and grade 7 and 8 students mentioned that “racial/ethnic cliques exist,” it is not clear whether such cliques were a source of harassment. Even if this comment about racial cliques indeed indicates the presence of harassment based on race, we cannot conclude from these student input sessions whether harassment of other kinds is present. Thus, the extent of harassment based specifically on gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, or race is unknown.



## **V. Recommendations**

Manitoba's Bill 18, Safe and Inclusive Schools, directs that School Boards establish local human rights policies. The above analysis provides considerations for this policy development with accompanying implementation procedures. Based on this analysis, the following recommendations are made regarding divisional activities as well as possible next steps in the review of inclusion and the protection of human rights.

1. Consider ways to place a greater emphasis on educating students about their rights and responsibilities, especially as they pertain to the educational environment. Given the ubiquitous presence of social media, such teaching should include students' rights and responsibilities as they apply to the social media and social networking realms.
2. Investigate methods of improving students' perceptions of and experience with group work. This improvement might come, in part, from overtly teaching about students' rights and responsibilities in the context of group work specifically (an extension of recommendation #1). Additionally, however, teachers may benefit from concrete suggestions with regard to suggested practice around group product assessment.
3. Continue the support and development of those activities and programs which students believe provide a wide variety of learning opportunities. These include sports teams, drama productions, band, clubs, student leadership, HALEP, field trips and opportunities to use technology.
4. Continue the support and development of those activities and programs which students believe help raise awareness and garner an appreciation for individual differences. These include Heritage Days, Multi-cultural Days, Finding My Way, as well as HALEP and enrichment clusters.
5. Invest in further and more in-depth examinations of students' experiences and perceptions of equity of inclusion and protection of their rights. For instance, this investigation could include focus groups geared toward discussing focussed and perhaps sensitive questions with a stratified or proportionate student sample.
6. Analyze results available from the Tell Them From Me (TTFM) surveys with a view to extrapolating all data relevant to the protection of students' rights and equity of inclusion. Furthermore, TTFM offers an opportunity for the Division to include up to two tailored questions on the survey. This survey therefore provides an excellent opportunity to ask specified questions to a broader student population. Such questions could be asked as a more practical alternative or in addition to recommendation #5.
7. An extensive review of bullying is needed to not only understand its prevalence but to also further establish prevention programming and systematic guidelines for managing its occurrence. To be effective, this review should be profound in its study and comprehensive in its participants. Such an undertaking is vast, resource intensive, and might involve outside partners.

8. It is strongly recommended, that as part of the process of reviewing divisional policies and procedures in light of its most recent Governance Goal, the Board and Senior Administration also review the *Human Rights in the School Guidebook* published by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission. It is available at [http://www.manitobahumanrights.ca/publications/school/humanrightsschool\\_index.html](http://www.manitobahumanrights.ca/publications/school/humanrightsschool_index.html). Since printed versions of this guidebook are not available, a screenshot of the online guidebook's introduction is attached as an appendix to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Donna M. Michaels  
Superintendent of Schools/CEO


## Appendix

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### For Youth



- Manitoba Class Action
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### Frequently Asked Questions

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## Human Rights in the School

### Introduction

#### What Is The Purpose Of The Guide?

This guide is designed to assist individuals to review the extent to which their school meets human rights standards of school management as well as to facilitate enhancement of human rights practices in schools. Most importantly, this guide is intended to assist educators in establishing a learning environment in which students have equality in learning opportunities, in which students can fully participate, and in which fairness prevails.

Articles 26(1) and 26(2) of the [United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) state:

1. *Everyone has the right to education ...*
2. *Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.*

The drafters of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)<sup>1</sup>, as well as the countries which ratified it, recognized the importance of the education process in furthering the principles of human rights. Observance of human rights principles requires recognition of the worth of each individual and allows full and equal attainment of human potential. Human rights education is simply good education.

Because of the significant influence of the school in the socialization process, the education system is key to developing in young people a knowledge and understanding of the rights and responsibilities of both national and global citizenship. Human rights curriculum is one important component of human rights education. Another component, perhaps of equal if not greater importance however, may be that information which the school unintentionally transmits to students through its school management practices. A human rights education program will be most effective in a school environment which exemplifies respect for the dignity and worth of each individual and which makes the human rights principles of equality, justice, democracy, freedom and peace central to its philosophy and practice

#### Who Should Use The Guide?

This guide is intended as a resource for school administrators, students, teachers, parents and others involved in schooling who wish to examine human rights as they apply to the education process in a school setting.

It is anticipated that any school that decides to use this resource is already making efforts to operate in a manner which is consistent with human rights philosophy. This guidebook is primarily designed to assist those already committed schools to more systematically assess their operation and to make further progress, where needed and desired, in their commitment. The guide attempts to concentrate on practices which are within the management control of the school. Implementation of the suggested standards, however, requires the cooperation of school divisions and/or provincial departments of education.

Implementing this guide will also require the commitment of school resources something that many schools find in short supply. Hopefully, the school wishing to implement the guidebook will be able to access those necessary resources.

Although primarily of interest to those individuals who are active within the school, parts of the guide may also be of interest to school boards, textbook publishers, provincial departments of education and others whose work and decisions impact on the operation of the school.

#### What Is The Guide?

The guide contains eight chapters designed to take the reader step by step through an examination of human rights practices in the school. Chapter 1 contains a brief explanation of the guide. Chapter 2 is an introduction to human rights. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the process for implementing the guide. Chapters 4 through 8 deal with the heart of the guide, the diagnostic checklists. The checklists address standards for adherence to human rights principles throughout the school environment. The checklists are broken down into those human rights principles which might be considered most relevant to schools justice, democracy, fundamental freedoms and equality.