

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)



PASTORAL GUIDELINE FOR THE LIFE FRAMEWORK

“Living Inclusion Faithfully for Everyone”

Alberta Catholic Bishops
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Contents

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT	4
FIVE ESSENTIAL MARKS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS	5
THE GOSPEL: WHO IS YOUR NEIGHBOUR?	5
THE ROLE OF PARENTS.....	7
INFORMING PARENTS ABOUT STUDENT GROUPS	7
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PASTORAL GUIDELINE FOR THE LIFE FRAMEWORK WITH RESPECT TO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.....	8
USING THIS PASTORAL GUIDELINE	9
OBJECTIVES FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS.....	10
COMMITMENT TO THE <i>PASTORAL GUIDELINE FOR THE LIFE FRAMEWORK</i>	11
ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE <i>PASTORAL GUIDELINE FOR THE LIFE FRAMEWORK</i>	11
VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS OF BULLYING.....	12
RESPECTING EACH OTHER.....	13
REASONS FOR BULLYING.....	13
DIALOGUE AND RESPECTFUL CONVERSATION.....	14
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH’S TEACHING REGARDING HUMAN DIGNITY, MORALITY, AND SEXUALITY	14
THE CATHOLIC FAITH REJECTS INJUSTICE AND AFFIRMS HUMAN DIGNITY.....	14
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND MORALITY.....	15
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND HUMAN SEXUALITY	15
STUDENT LED GROUPS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.....	16
OBJECTIVES.....	17
TYPES OF STUDENT GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES.....	17
ADVOCACY GROUPS	18
Purpose	18
Norms	18
Activities.....	18
PEER SUPPORT	19
Purpose	19
Norms	19
Activities.....	19
COUNSELLING.....	19

PROCEDURE FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A STUDENT GROUP OR ACTIVITY..... 19

NAMING OF LIFE FRAMEWORK STUDENT GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES..... 20

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT LED GROUPS 21

 STUDENT ACTIVITIES OR ORGANIZATIONS..... 21

 General Procedures..... 21

 Limitations 22

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ROLES OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF 22

 THE PRINCIPAL..... 22

 THE TEACHER-FACILITATOR..... 23

CONFLICT RESOLUTION 24

THE DAILY EXAMEN..... 28

SOLUTION DETERMINATION 30

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... 31

REFERENCES 32

 Catholic Education Resources 32

 Chastity 32

 Homosexuality 32

 Legislation 33

 Prayer 33

 Respectful Communication..... 33

 Roman Catholic Church Teaching..... 33

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Catholic Schools share a foundational belief 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.

The Catholic religion respects all people. Individuals who are experiencing same sex attraction or issues of gender identity are treated with sensitivity, respect and compassion. The Catholic faith supports affording students the opportunity to exercise leadership in dealing with social issues in the school. It is certainly very appropriate for students to take the lead in identifying the need for initiatives that address concerns related to the life of the whole school community and are in harmony with the faith foundation of a Catholic school.

Some forms of education are based on distinct religious beliefs. Respect for a variety of beliefs is an aspect of the fundamental freedoms of conscience and religion in Section 2(a), equality in Section 15 and multiculturalism and pluralism in Section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Respect for religious beliefs does not mean that the Catholic school teaches religious relativism but rather that the religious beliefs of non-Catholic religions are seen of spiritual value to their adherents and as contributing to the common good in Canadian society. The statutory provision of a variety of religious and non-religious faith-based schools is further evidence of diversity in fact, and not just in theory. Respect for difference in the form and substance of education is, therefore, recognized in the varied forms that exist in Albertan society and is acknowledged in this *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework, 2018*, itself.

Persistent concern regarding bullying and its highly detrimental effects on students is shared by the Catholic Church and Catholic School Districts. The Catholic education system rejects bullying in all its forms and stands firmly for the respect due to all persons.

For some years, the provincial government, educators, various members of the community and associations, including Roman Catholic education authorities and the Roman Catholic Bishops, have been involved in efforts to promote equity and to expressly reject bullying in schools. The Catholic Community supports these government initiatives because they are just and important, and because they have so far respected the integrity of the Catholic School system.

This *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE (Living Inclusion Faithfully for Everyone) Framework* provides guidance from Alberta's Catholic Bishops for the province's Catholic School Districts to implement the CCSSA's *LIFE Framework (Living Inclusion Faithfully for Everyone, 2018)* and to shape school communities in which all students feel safe from bullying.

FIVE ESSENTIAL MARKS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The features of a Catholic school are described in the article, *Five Essential Marks of Catholic Schools* by Archbishop J. Michael Miller. This theological framework articulates five major identifiable characteristics for a Catholic school:

1. Inspired by a Supernatural Vision: the faith of the Catholic school is Christ-centred
2. Founded on a Christian Anthropology: the anthropology is incarnational
3. Animated by Communion and Community: the sense of the Catholic educational community is ecclesial
4. Imbued with a Catholic Worldview throughout its Curriculum: the worldview for learning in a Catholic school is sacramental
5. Sustained by Gospel Witness: its mission is to love Christ and work for His Kingdom on earth

With these five essential marks in mind, it is important to articulate the ways in which new legislation and current initiatives need to align with the theological framework referenced above.

As Catholic school districts, we are responsible for creating an environment which promotes an authentic Catholic education in which everyone belongs. We are entrusted with the care of students, whose parents/guardians, as primary educators, expect that we embrace all with the love of Jesus Christ and minister to all in a pastoral way. The Catholic identity of our schools is largely dependent on the collective leadership within Catholic schools; our Catholic faith is integrated into every program and every aspect of school life, and we are called by baptism to live our faith every moment of every day.

The entire aim of a Catholic School is to create a loving and positive learning environment consistent with Catholic teaching which demonstrates the five essential marks of a Catholic school enumerated above. Student activities and leadership can play an important role in making this happen.

THE GOSPEL: WHO IS YOUR NEIGHBOUR?

Increasingly in our culture and in our times, the issue of bullying in its many manifestations has become a great concern for parents, for teachers and for all those involved in the education of our young. Students are being victimized, shunned, harmed and need to be helped. This is a matter of concern for students, both those who themselves experience bullying and those who see their fellow students being mistreated. It is also a concern for parents and for teachers and all involved with the school community.

The Catholic school community, like all school communities, has an obligation to ensure a safe environment for all students by vigilant and steadfast efforts to eradicate all forms of bullying as well as to provide personal and pastoral care for every individual whose worth as a child of God has been attacked by acts of bullying. The Catholic school must continue to be a safe, inclusive community for all young people entrusted to our care.

In keeping with its Christo-centric foundation, the Catholic school community seeks to root its understanding and mission in the Gospel. The Gospel of Luke tells the story of the Good Samaritan, (Luke 10:25-37). Jesus, in response to the question “Who is my neighbour?”, tells a parable about a traveller who is beaten, robbed, and left to die on the road to Jericho.

Some who came upon this victim of violence passed by on the other side of the road. We are told of two passers-by who ignore the seriously wounded traveller by crossing to the other side of the road so as to avoid an encounter with him. This reminds us of the “bystanders” who witness bullying, or who are aware of its effects, and do nothing. The Gospel calls us to respond to others, especially those in need, and as students and staff in a Catholic school, we ought not to turn our backs on those who suffer bullying in any form and for any reason. Those who report bullying must be accorded all protections so that they themselves are not threatened for exposing what is unjust and inappropriate.

It was a Samaritan, coming upon the traveller, who was moved with compassion. He did not ask whether the victim had brought the violence upon himself, or if he was good and therefore worthy of being helped. He invested his resources and more importantly, his time, to care for this wounded person. When he had done all that he could do, he asked the innkeeper to continue caring for the person until his return

Following this example, we need to extend pastoral care to those who bully, exploit or demean others so that they may turn away from a behaviour which is not only destructive to their victims, but which also frequently masks or reflects serious problems in their own lives.

Although the gospel context and the activities in this Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework apply to situations where students experience bullying for any reason, there are specific references to cases of bullying arising from age, ancestry, body image, citizenship, colour, creed, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender, gender identity, performance in school, place of origin, race, culture or language, religion, sex, sexual orientation, social rejection, or peer acceptance in this Pastoral Guideline.

These initiatives are but one dimension of the whole effort to provide a safe and accepting learning environment which enhances the many existing ways in which Catholic schools provide pastoral care for students according to the principles of the Gospel. Paramount to the success of this process is the adequate training of all school personnel, teachers in particular, regarding all aspects of this effort to eliminate bullying.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents are the primary educators of their children and may choose to entrust this authority to the educational systems that are available in Alberta. These include various forms of education; religious, non-religious, public or private, classroom or home, whether publicly or privately funded. This accords with *Canon Law*.

Can. 797 Parents must possess a true freedom in choosing schools; therefore, the Christian faithful must be concerned that civil society recognizes this freedom for parents and even supports it with subsidies; distributive justice is to be observed.

Can. 798 Parents are to entrust their children to those schools which provide a Catholic education. If they are unable to do this, they are obliged to take care that suitable Catholic education is provided for their children outside the schools.

Additionally, *Canon Law* affirms a close collaboration between parents and schools which serves to strengthen the collaboration and harmony in the Catholic community.

Can. 796 §2. Parents must cooperate closely with the teachers of the schools to which they entrust their children to be educated; moreover, teachers in fulfilling their duty are to collaborate very closely with parents, who are to be heard willingly and for whom associations or meetings are to be established and highly esteemed.

INFORMING PARENTS ABOUT STUDENT GROUPS

20. Parents have a particularly important part to play in the educating community, since it is to them that primary and natural responsibility for their children's education belongs. Unfortunately in our day there is a widespread tendency to delegate this unique role. Therefore it is necessary to foster initiatives which encourage commitment, but which provide at the same time the right sort of concrete support which the family needs and which involve it in the Catholic school's educational project. The constant aim of the school therefore, should be contact and dialogue with the students' families, which should also be encouraged through the promotion of parents' associations, in order to clarify with their indispensable collaboration that personalised approach which is needed for an educational project to be efficacious. (Congregation For Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 1997)

Catholic Church Teaching and more recently, the Alberta Bill of Rights, s.1 (g) recognizes that parents have the right to make informed decisions respecting the

education of their children. It is the parent's right and responsibility to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children.

The following two step process is recommended to advise parents regarding the formation of student groups/organizations (*School Act*, s.16.1 (6))

Step 1 – A general notice is provided to the school community that students may be organizing groups or clubs at the school in the future based on interest or need.

Step 2 – If a new student group or club is established in a school, notification of the establishment of the group or club is sent to all parents without naming any students involved in the group or club. This notification includes the suggestion for parents to discuss with their child the purpose and nature of the club, whether their child wishes to become a member and their child's obligation to contribute to a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. At all times, parents are invited to talk with the school regarding the student groups, clubs, and activities.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PASTORAL GUIDELINE FOR THE LIFE FRAMEWORK WITH RESPECT TO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Coinciding with the introduction of Bill 10: *An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children* and preceding the introduction of Bill 24 *An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances* in Alberta and subsequent policy requirements, the Catholic School Districts developed the *LIFE (Lived Inclusion For Everyone) Framework* in 2015.

These resources provided the background for the *LIFE Framework: Lived Inclusion For Everyone* by the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta (2015):

Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, *Safe and Caring Learning Environments for Students*
Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta, *Commitment to Inclusive Communities*
Calgary Catholic School District, *Supporting Inclusive Communities*

The passage of Bill 24 changes the legislative context in which the original *LIFE Framework* is implemented and necessitated the development of the *Pastoral Guidelines for the LIFE Framework* and the revision of the CCSSA's *LIFE Framework*. The *Pastoral Guidelines for the LIFE Framework* have been developed by the Catholic Bishops of Alberta, who, in accordance with Canon Law, work with Alberta's Catholic educational organizations and School Districts.

Can. 806 §1. The diocesan bishop has the right to watch over and visit the Catholic schools in his territory, even those which members of religious institutes have founded or direct. He also issues prescripts which pertain to the general regulation of Catholic schools;

The Bishops emphasize the need to ensure that the five marks of a Catholic school are reflected in every aspect of the way legislation is implemented. From that foundational perspective, respect for students in Catholic Schools continues to be promoted with a faithful perspective. It is that pursuit and perspective that is articulated in the *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* that follows.

USING THIS PASTORAL GUIDELINE

This *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* consists of information that provides a thematic overview, followed by some practical and more specific guidance for the development of policy and administrative guidelines in conjunction with the CCSSA's *LIFE Framework* regarding the establishment of student-led organizations and activities in Catholic schools as well as discerning conflict resolution to further positive relationships between all partners in Catholic Education.

The impetus for this *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* arises from the desire to inform and support the Catholic School Districts' equity and inclusive education policies, as well as their responses to initiatives outlined in Bill 24, with relevant teachings of the Church and good pastoral practice. The *Pastoral Guideline* recognizes that groups formed in Catholic Schools to address the care and safety needs of all students will be supported by school administration and staff.

To ensure that all members of Catholic school communities work together in an atmosphere of safety and respect for the dignity of one another regardless of age, ancestry, body image, citizenship, colour, creed, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender, gender identity, performance in school, place of origin, race, culture or language, religion, sex, sexual orientation, social rejection, or peer acceptance, this *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* and the CCSSA's *LIFE Framework* supports Catholic school districts to develop and adopt policies, administrative guidelines, strategies, and programs that promote Catholic Church teaching, respect human rights, support diversity, combat discrimination and further student-led activities or organizations. The *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* is intended to be both of general and specific assistance to all Catholic Schools in Alberta and to prompt a review, where necessary, of existing policies, programs or initiatives already in place.

OBJECTIVES FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

This *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* has been developed by the Alberta Catholic Bishops to assist Catholic school districts to:

- Pastorally and faithfully interpret the CCSSA's *LIFE Framework* in order to support and affirm the dignity of each student and staff member in all aspects of school life;
- Ensure the intentional consideration and reflection of the five essential marks of a Catholic School in its policies, procedures and programs;
- Explain the Catholic faith, tradition, and teachings related to understanding the lives of all students and finding ways to increase respect for the dignity of each other in ways appropriate to the Catholic school setting;
- Support the clarification and definition of appropriate terms, behaviours and actions to promote greater awareness of and responsiveness to, the effects of bullying;
- Promote timely and effective rules and procedures against bullying to ensure the maximization of safety for all students;
- Assist with the provision of training consistent with the Catholic faith for all teachers and other staff with respect to bullying prevention and intervention in schools;
- Prompt the acquisition of resources consistent with the Catholic faith to support students who are impacted by bullying;
- Encourage personal, one-on-one opportunities for pastoral and spiritual guidance for young people (in addition to any group activities);
- Inform the development of procedures that allow students to report incidents of bullying safely and in a way that minimizes the possibility of reprisal or breach of confidentiality and that conforms to best practices in relation to counselling and/or chaplaincy involvement;
- Foster the development of effective procedures to respond to complaints of bullying and support students in schools who wish to establish and lead activities or organizations that promote, among other things, gender equity, anti-racism, understanding of and respect for all people irrespective of their disability, gender identity or sexual orientation; and
- Promote student led/teacher facilitated activities or organizations supervised appropriately and aligned with and consistent with the teachings of the Catholic

faith;

- Enhance the potential for positive relationship outcomes related to discerning processes for conflict resolution and effective collaboration.

COMMITMENT TO THE *PASTORAL GUIDELINE FOR THE LIFE FRAMEWORK*

The Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE (Living Inclusion Faithfully for Everyone) Framework is the accompanying document for the CCSSA's *LIFE Framework (Living Inclusion Faithfully for Everyone, 2018)*. The two resource documents need to be received and presented together. Catholic Schools will use the *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* and the CCSSA's *LIFE Framework* for the creation and operation of student groups and activities that are comprehensive in their approach to inclusion and open to the exploration, in a Catholic context, of a variety of issues including bullying, discrimination, gender identity, justice, respectful relationships & language, sexual harassment and sexual orientation.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE *PASTORAL GUIDELINE FOR THE LIFE FRAMEWORK*

Catholic School Districts are encouraged to provide professional learning in these areas which are described as follows:

- Integrated learning about bullying through the lens of the Catholic Faith with an intentional focus upon the sacredness of the person; the call to live a Gospel witness and the pursuit of the good, the true and the beautiful.
- Knowledge of the ways in which the five essential marks of a Catholic school position it as a community to respond positively and effectively to restore wholesome relationships among its members;
- Learning sessions for staff to increase their knowledge and skills in promoting a faithful vision of the human person; increasing their awareness and understanding of the scope and impact of bullying on a person; respecting human rights, and understanding diversity as presented in the teachings of the Catholic faith to address and to eliminate discrimination, bullying and violence in Catholic schools.

VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS OF BULLYING

People are bullied for many reasons—none of which are justified. Individuals may be bullied, for example, because of their poor social skills, because of weight or physical appearance, because they lack skills in sports or academics, because of nationality, because of perceived sexual orientation, because of race or religion, or even because of a physical disability or illness. There are many things that can lead to a young person suffering the torment of being bullied. A Catholic School cares for all who suffer at the hands of bullies and the perpetrators. Each and every student is a child of God who is to be treated with love and respect. Whatever excuse may be given for bullying, it is always wrong and needs to be dealt with by the entire community.

Bullies use their physical size, strength or status and support within their peer group to intentionally hurt or cause discomfort to another. Bullying can express itself physically, verbally or socially.

Form	Description	Examples
Physical	When a person is harmed or damage is done to their property	Slapping, hitting, pinching, kicking, confining to a space, unwelcome touching, vandalism, theft, extortion or threats.
Verbal	When a person is victimized through hurtful words and gestures	Slurs, insults and name calling, unwelcome teasing, taunting, gossiping, spreading false rumours, racial or sexually derogatory comments.
Social	When a person is shunned or excluded from groups or events	Insulting graffiti, threatening notes, letters, e-mails, telephone calls, intimidation using threats, confrontations and weapons, shunning, (the systematic exclusion from normal conversation, etc.)

Cyber -bullying	When a person is harassed or intimidated through use of technology such as computer or mobile phones	Social media (Facebook, twitter or other social-networking sites, emails or SMS texting) are used to pass malicious gossip, hurtful innuendo or racist, sexist or other slurs against a person to shun, harass, demean, intimidate, threaten or otherwise harm a person.
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When a school community stands united against all forms of bullying, the bully fails to secure the enablement that generally feeds the aggressive behaviour that, in turn, selectively preys on those who have been identified as most vulnerable or easiest to marginalize within the group. Bullying of any kind does not build community. It attacks a person’s dignity, and by extension exploits and destroys community. Bullying is enabled by silence and by looking the other way.

RESPECTING EACH OTHER

REASONS FOR BULLYING

A great deal of the current discussion around bullying and respect centres on the perception of power imbalance and the impact of personal identity. Students in schools are not immune to the pressures of the social currents that often seek to focus solely on one’s sexual identity rather than the integral development of the whole person. The social pressure for a one dimensional focus, however, should not deflect the school from viewing the root causes of bullying in relation to its general and deeper causes; they are much wider than issues exclusively related to sexual identity and sexuality.

Often disputes and disagreements among students that result in bullying stem from fears of rejection, lack of acceptance, lack of support and lack of affirmation. Properly understood, difference is something to be recognized in a society that honours diversity, multiculturalism and human rights. From the perspective of the Catholic faith, the unique attributes of the individual human person are to be recognized, honoured and supported.

Being respectful and understanding of another person does not necessarily mean or imply that we must accept what the other person believes or states to be right based on our conscience. Neither does a respectful critique of their position from a moral or ethical viewpoint, as well as from religious tradition and teaching mean that one shows a lack of respect or acceptance of the person.

DIALOGUE AND RESPECTFUL CONVERSATION

Beliefs across a whole number of areas, including religion and cultural practices and more personal matters such as the appropriateness of sexual conduct, will differ among citizens in a free and democratic pluralistic society. In a Catholic school, these matters will be discussed by teachers with students at an age appropriate level.

It is possible to respect, affirm and support the dignity of another person while at the same time disagreeing with their viewpoint on sexual morality. This understanding is important in society generally but with respect to differences based upon conscience and religious beliefs, it is essential to restate the importance of respect for different perspectives and to reaffirm the beliefs of the Catholic Church within the Catholic school.

The Catholic faith has an understanding and explanation of the nature of the human person and how we relate to each other which is found in Scripture and Tradition, and thus based on revelation and human reason.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S TEACHING REGARDING HUMAN DIGNITY, MORALITY, AND SEXUALITY

The following section articulates the Church's position on human dignity and sexual morality, especially as it pertains to same-sex attraction.

THE CATHOLIC FAITH REJECTS INJUSTICE AND AFFIRMS HUMAN DIGNITY

The Roman Catholic faith views all people as children of God. Thus, respect is due to everyone irrespective of their race, gender, age, stage of development, disability, sexual orientation (same-sex or opposite-sex attraction), gender identity, class or religion. The Catholic faith stands resolutely against injustice including injustice in interpersonal relationships such as those typified by bullying. The scourge of bullying in education and in society must be resisted in Catholic schools who see bullying as completely unacceptable.

Catholics ought to be exemplary in treating persons with same-sex inclinations first and foremost as human beings created by God and worthy of respect.

10. It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church's pastors wherever it occurs. It reveals a kind of disregard for others which endangers the most fundamental principles of a healthy society. The intrinsic dignity of each person must

always be respected in word, in action and in law. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, October, 1986.)

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND MORALITY

The basic and primary teaching resource of the Catholic Church is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC). The discussion of homosexuality is found in Part 3: Life in Christ. This is the section of the catechism that concerns morality. In order to fully comprehend the Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality accurately, it is necessary to situate the discussion within the broader context of the meaning and purpose of human sexuality.

CCC 2358. The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

This is a section of the Catechism which is often misunderstood. Human sexuality expressed between a man and a woman united in marriage is ordered to its proper end when it is open and directed to mutual love and procreation. Human sexuality is described as "disordered" when these two ends are not naturally united and properly directed to the two ends which give meaning and purpose to the sexual act. The use of the language and terms of "ordered" and "disordered" refers to the two types of inclinations to act sexually, not to the person who always has dignity as a person and a child of God.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

The Church invites every person to develop the virtue of chastity. All people, whatever their state in life, single and/or married, are called to live a life of chastity, and that involves for each person a growth in human integration, holiness, and an inner peace that is made evident in a truly joyful life of generous love for others.

CCC 2349 "People should cultivate [chastity] in the way that is suited to their state of life. Some profess virginity or consecrated celibacy which enables them to give themselves to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner. Others live in the way prescribed for all by the moral

law, whether they are married or single." Married people are called to live conjugal chastity; others practice chastity in continence:

There are three forms of the virtue of chastity: the first is that of spouses, the second that of widows, and the third that of virgins. We do not praise any one of them to the exclusion of the others. . . . This is what makes for the richness of the discipline of the Church.

All actions involving human sexuality are morally assessed in reference to its two-fold meaning and purpose, mutual love of the spouses and an openness to life. If a person acts in a way that goes against this meaning it is also viewed as an act against the virtue of chastity.

2343 Chastity has laws of growth which progress through stages marked by imperfection and too often by sin. "Man . . . day by day builds himself up through his many free decisions; and so he knows, loves, and accomplishes moral good by stages of growth."

This assessment is the same for all people, whether heterosexual or those with same-sex attraction.

See *Pastoral Letter to Young People on Chastity*, From the Episcopal Commission for Doctrine, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011:

http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/chastity_en.pdf



STUDENT LED GROUPS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

This *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* for Catholic Schools has been developed by the Alberta Catholic Bishops for Catholic School Districts to ensure unity with Roman Catholic Church teaching as well as in recognition of fundamental rights

and freedoms including those set out in Section 17 of the *Alberta Act*, Section 93 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Constitution Act, 1982*.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of students groups and activities to promote a positive, loving, learning environment consistent with Catholic teachings and free from bullying, harassment and bias, prejudice or hate motivated violence are as follows:

- To support and affirm the dignity of all students in all aspects of school life;
- To improve understandings of the lives of all students and find ways to increase respect for the dignity of each other in ways appropriate to the school setting;
- To use appropriate definitions for terms, behaviours and actions to promote greater awareness of and responsiveness to, the deleterious effects of bullying, harassment and violence;
- To promote timely and effective responses to prevent and respond to bullying, harassment and violence to ensure the maximization of safety for all students;
- To guide the provision of education for all students consistent with the Catholic faith with respect to bullying, harassment and violence prevention in schools;
- To encourage the availability of resources consistent with the Catholic faith to support students who are impacted by bullying, harassment and violence;
- To further the provision of opportunities for pastoral and spiritual guidance for young people; and
- To encourage the expanded availability of ways for students to report incidents of bullying, harassment and bias, prejudice or hate motivated violence safely in a manner that minimizes the possibility of reprisal or breach of confidentiality and is consistent with best practices in relation to counselling and/or Chaplaincy involvement where available in the school.

TYPES OF STUDENT GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

Because some students who experience discrimination or isolation based on body image, race, culture, language, performance in school, social anxiety/lack of social connection, or other individual attributes, especially those with same sex attractions, and those who identify with different genders, may be at-risk, it is important that every

school be well prepared to establish student groups or hold activities to address these needs. Such groups should be established and/or activities held when there is one student request.

When students wish to establish a group or hold an activity, it is important to determine the nature of the request and how best to meet the expressed needs. Through conversations with students, the purpose for the group needs to be identified, so it can be properly structured in accordance with this *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework*.

Student groups may be established for the following purposes:

- Advocacy to support a faithful vision of an inclusive Catholic School
- Peer support to foster growth in virtues that support the individual student and inclusion within the Catholic School

ADVOCACY GROUPS

Advocacy to support a faithful vision of an inclusive Catholic School

Purpose

To advocate against discrimination and/or behaviours that cause students to feel isolated and not included.

To assemble students who experience discrimination, isolation, and a lack of feeling included in their school or society with students who want to offer these students their support via initiatives designed to advocate against all forms of discrimination.

To enable students to feel empowered to activate their unique God-given gifts for the benefit of furthering a community for everyone which reflects the common good.

To discuss issues that cause pervasive harm to young people in society.

Norms

Ensure the student groups are led by trained Catholic facilitators and assisted, when possible, by counselors, chaplains or social workers.

Be open to examining a variety of issues, including age, ancestry, body image, citizenship, colour, creed, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender, gender identity, performance in school, place of origin, race, culture or language, religion, sex, sexual orientation, social rejection, or peer acceptance in light of the Catholic Tradition.

Ensure advocacy efforts are directed against all forms of bullying and discrimination.

Activities

Exploring how inclusive practices enhance the life of the school (e.g. celebrating a school's success annually through a variety of means).

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).

Promoting whole school social justice activities to address needs locally, nationally or internationally.

PEER SUPPORT

Purpose

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.

Norms

Ensure the student groups are led by trained Catholic facilitators and assisted, when possible, by counselors, chaplains or social workers.

Ensure boundaries related to personal privacy and confidentiality prior to the discussion of any topic, so members do not feel pressured to make personal disclosures.

Invite, but not pressure, other students to join them.

Be sensitive to the safety of all students who are at risk.

Refrain from labeling or discussing students who are not members.

Consider inviting students to develop additional norms and procedures with the facilitator carefully guiding this process.

Activities

Exploring those areas with staff facilitators where inclusion could be improved

COUNSELLING

Where necessary, parents of students exhibiting extreme needs or distress will be contacted to discuss the benefits which some counselling by a licensed professional (Psychologist, Psychiatrist or Social Worker) might offer.

PROCEDURE FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A STUDENT GROUP OR ACTIVITY

One or more students who desire to establish a student group or to organize a specific student activity will meet with the Principal to discuss their proposal and the development of a written proposal. The nature, purpose and mandate of the student initiated group or activity shall be discussed and clearly articulated.

Student groups shall:

- Support the mission, vision and core values of the Catholic school and the school district and uphold Catholic teaching.

- Reflect through name and action the philosophy and theology of communion and emphasize inclusion, hospitality, respect and justice.

Issues that result in discrimination and bullying which may be addressed in student groups include but are not limited to:

- Age
- Ancestry
- Body image
- Citizenship
- Colour
- Creed
- Disability
- Ethnic origin
- Family status
- Gender
- Gender identity
- Performance in school
- Place of origin
- Race
- Culture or language
- Religion
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Social rejection or peer acceptance

The principal, in consultation with other school administration and staff, as appropriate, shall review and consider the written proposal and grant permission for the establishment of the student-led group with respect to the following:

- The purpose and goal(s) of the activity or group;
- The allocation of student supervision, school space, and other resources needed; and
- Ensure that the proposal is consistent with the guidelines provided in this *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* and the CCSSA's *LIFE Framework*.

NAMING OF LIFE FRAMEWORK STUDENT GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

In every case, the mandate, purpose and activities of the student group will align with Catholic Church teaching and tradition as well as this *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework*.

Names for student groups will incorporate language in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the group or

activity which reflects this *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework*. Two general guidelines should be followed. Firstly, the name should be inclusive not dualistic or divisive, or limiting. Secondly, the name should promote the dignity of the human person and avoid potential stereotypical descriptions or labels that are based on only one dimension or aspect of the human person.

The Alberta legislation allows for the permissive direction for the naming of student-led groups in consultation with the Principal. Specifically, Bill 24 states that the Principal will not prohibit or discourage the students' initial choice for the name of their group.

Although the provisions of the legislation permit the students' initial choice of name for their group, nevertheless the name may evolve over time. As the students deepen their awareness and learning under the guidance of the teacher-facilitator, they may eventually consider a respectful and inclusive name, which, in accord with the principle of permeation, will reflect the fullness of Catholic Church teaching and tradition, and the two general guidelines outlined in this section of the *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework*.

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT LED GROUPS

STUDENT ACTIVITIES OR ORGANIZATIONS

Students may request the establishment of activities or organizations within the school, aligned with this *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* and the CCSSA's *LIFE Framework*, that help to promote welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments.

General Procedures

- The activities and organization of all groups or organizations formed within Catholic schools must be respectful of and consistent with Catholic teaching.
- Activities and organizations are open to all students who wish to participate. The best practice is always to engage parents in the education of their children. Open lines of communication between parents and their children and the school are important and the school can serve as a bridge or a guide. The role of parents as the first educators in the faith is critically important for the well-being of the child at school. (*Canon Law 796, 797, and 798*)
- Speakers or presentations by outside groups must be pre-approved by the teacher facilitator and/or the principal.
- There shall be no visitors, including parents, to the student led groups without

the permission of the principal prior to the visit.

Limitations

- Student issues can be complex, delicate and highly personal. Students struggling with personal issues related to age, ancestry, body image, citizenship, colour, creed, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender, gender identity, performance in school, place of origin, race, culture or language, religion, sex, sexual orientation, social rejection, or peer acceptance may be in a vulnerable psychological or spiritual condition. For this reason, sensitive personal matters are best dealt with privately and confidentially with proper counselling and chaplaincy staff. “Peer counselling” in such a forum as a student-led group is inappropriate for this type of support and could, in fact, put students at greater risk. Professional confidentiality and respect limit what can appropriately be discussed in a group setting and supervisors should carefully limit discussions of a highly personal and sensitive nature.
- Student-led groups are not intended as a forum for activism, protest, or advocacy that is not in accord with the Catholic faith, teaching and tradition.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ROLES OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

THE PRINCIPAL

Prior to an initial meeting of the student group, the principal will:

- Designate staff facilitators who live their Catholic faith, understand its teachings and proclaim its Truth in the school.
- Provide training and learning as necessary for the staff facilitator in matters of the faith and/or the nature of the student-led organization.
- Ensure that vulnerable students have access to support from Social Workers, Child and Youth Workers, and/or Chaplaincy staff members, where deemed necessary by the principal or staff advisor. If a matter arises that requires the involvement and/or intervention of outside agencies (such as Children’s Services or law enforcement) these services should be sought at the earliest opportunity. Follow district procedures for the appropriate protocol.
- Outline a process for all materials for group use to be reviewed and approved by the staff advisor and all materials for school/community awareness to be reviewed and approved by the staff supervisor and administration.

- Establish that teacher facilitators ensure that students' privacy and confidentiality are respected. Students should not be required to disclose personal information at any time.
- Given the personal and at times potentially sensitive matters being discussed, carefully outline restrictions on the use of personal electronic devices during meetings, the posting of personal information on social media sites or the disclosure of personal information in any other manner.
- Assure that groups established under this Framework be named in accord with the direction provided in the section of this document entitled *Naming of Life Framework Student Groups and Activities*.
- Redirect and ensure that all student led groups align with the provisions of The *Pastoral Guideline for the LIFE Framework* and the CCSSA's *LIFE Framework*.

THE TEACHER-FACILITATOR

The teacher-facilitator will:

- Work with a counsellor, social worker, Family School Liaison Worker (FSLW), chaplain or a staff member with a similar designation as a co-facilitator if so designated by the Principal.
- Participate in professional learning or information sessions on both relevant Catholic teachings and the facilitation of group discussion.
- Know, be committed to, and uphold Catholic teachings.
- Integrate prayer, scripture, and Catholic 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 facilitated in a manner consistent with all Catholic school programming.
- Review and approve all materials for group use and ensure that materials for school/community awareness are reviewed and approved by the Principal prior to viewing or distribution.
- As in all school settings, personal devices and social media must be used appropriately. Enforce the expectation of privacy and establish privacy guidelines regarding the use of personal electronic devices during meetings, posting on social media sites or confidentiality breach of any discussion held in meetings. Where there is misconduct in this area, the teacher-facilitator will report the student to the Principal.
- Be present for all meetings from beginning to end.
- Provide appropriate adult guidance with respect to the creation of a safe, encouraging and positive environment of fellowship in the school mindful of what matters should be discussed privately and with qualified staff.
- Ensure immediate follow up action in compliance with legislation and district policies, procedures and protocols when matters arise requiring the involvement and perhaps intervention of outside agencies, such as Children's Services or local

- law enforcement.
- Report inappropriate incidents and misconduct to the Principal.

Quote taken from *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion*,

The world, in all its diversity, is eager to be guided towards the great values of mankind, truth, good and beauty; now more than ever. This is the approach Catholic schools should have towards young people, through dialogue, in order to present them with a view regarding the Other and others that is open, peaceful and enticing.

Sometimes, when relating to young people, asymmetry creates a distance between educators and learners. Today, the circular character of communication between teachers and students is being appreciated a lot more: its greater openness is remarkably more favorable to mutual listening. This does not mean that adults must relinquish their role as authority figures, but a differentiation must be introduced between the kind of authority that is only linked to a specific role or institutional function, and the authority that comes from credible testimony.

Schools are communities that learn how to improve, thanks to constant dialogue among educators, between teachers and their students and amongst students in their relations.

Congregation
for
Catholic
Education
,
2014

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Despite good intentions and well-researched guidelines, conflicts can arise – particularly when the issues are personally meaningful and the perspectives are

heartfelt. It is very easy for misunderstandings to occur and the ensuing turmoil can be very hurtful.

Ask yourself what it is you don't know yet. Keep in mind that you don't know what story is foremost in other people's minds. Each individual has his or her own story about what is important and why. Insight into these different stories can make a great difference for how you and other people handle the conflict. Take on conflict situations with an intention to understand more about what is going on. Ask open-ended questions, questions that help you to understand the background of the conflict better. People's images of what is significant in specific situations are important reasons for their actions. These images can change, thereby changing the parties' attitudes and actions. Remember also to remain open to learning new things about yourself and how other people perceive you. Maybe other parties feel that you have contributed more to the problems than you are aware.

Make a distinction between the problem and the person. Formulate the conflict issues as shared problems that you have to solve cooperatively. Abstain from blaming and voicing negative opinions about others. State clearly what you feel and want and invite your counterpart to help in finding solutions. Opinions and emotions should be expressed in ways that facilitate the process of achieving satisfying outcomes. Keep in mind that there is always some kind of positive intention behind people's actions, even if unskillfully expressed.

Be clear, straightforward and concrete in your communication. State clearly what you have seen, heard and experienced that influenced your views in the matter at hand. Tell the other person what is important to you, why you find it important, what you feel and what you hope for. Express your own emotions and frustrated needs in clear and concrete words that are not loaded with judgement. It might be good to think about the words you will use before you actually have the conversation. Be humble about the presentation of your own views – that is not all there is to the story. Ask about the other person's fears and needs in a way that conveys that their perspective is part of the story and that you need to understand it.

Maintain the contact with your counterpart. Breaking off the contact with the counterpart in a conflict often leads to a rapid conflict escalation. Do what you can to keep the communication going. Work to improve your relationship even if there are conflict issues that seem impossible to resolve. Offer to do something small that meets one of your counterpart's wishes and suggest small things your counterpart can do to meet your own needs and wishes. Even if marginal, such acts can strengthen the hope that it will be possible to change the nature of the relationship in a positive direction. If

things begin to escalate – stop talking until you can say – “I can help you with that – I can”

Look for the needs and interests that lie behind concrete

positions. Bargaining about positions often leads to stalemates or unsatisfying solutions. Inquire into what needs and interests would be satisfied by certain concrete demands and explore if there are alternative and mutually acceptable ways of satisfying those needs and interests. Regard blaming, accusations and negative opinions as unskillful ways of expressing emotions. Show understanding for the feelings of the other party without letting yourself be provoked by their attacks. Inquire into what is really important and significant for yourself and keep those values and needs in mind during the course of the conflict. Ask the person to be patient with you as you explore some options which might help to bring things to a better place than they are in the middle of a conflict. “I don’t want to frustrate you. Please be patient with me. I want to explore some options to see if any of them might be a starting point for some actions that will be helpful in resolving this issue.”

Make it easy for your counterpart to be constructive. Avoid triggering the defensiveness of your counterpart by blaming, accusing, criticizing and diagnosing. Extend appreciation and respect for the counterpart where you can do so sincerely. Show your counterpart that you care about the issues and needs that are important to him or her. Take responsibility for your own contributions to the conflict events. “I know you have not found me helpful up until now. I am hoping that I can do better and that you will give me a chance.”

Develop your ability to look at the conflict from the outside. Review the conflict history in its entirety. Notice what kinds of actions influence the tensions of the conflict in positive and negative directions. Take care to develop your awareness of how you can influence the further course of events in the conflict in a constructive direction. Test your own image of what is going on by talking with impartial persons. Assume responsibility for what happens. Take on problems you see as early as possible, before they have a chance to develop into major conflict issues. Write in a journal and learn from each conflict. “This time, I learned....” “Next time, I will”

Adapted from *Seven Guidelines for Handling Conflicts Constructively* by Thomas Jordan

DAILY EXAMEN PRAYER: Take your review of the conflict to prayer and offer a Daily Examen Prayer in the tradition of St. Ignatius of Loyola.





THE DAILY EXAMEN

PRESENCE.

Remember that you're in the presence of God in a special way when you pray. Ask God to be with you as you pray. You want to review your day with God's eyes, not merely your own.

GRATITUDE.

The day you have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it. Recall two or three things that happened today for which you are especially grateful. Savor them. Then thank God for these gifts.

REVIEW.

Carefully look back on the day just completed – being guided by the Holy Spirit. Review your day from start to finish, noticing where you experienced God's presence. Notice everything from large to small: from an enjoyable interaction with a friend to the feel of the sun on your face. When did you love? When were you loved?

SORROW.

You may have done something you regret or you may be feeling upset about something that happened. You face up to what is wrong – in your life and in you. Express your sorrow to God and ask for forgiveness. Pray about seeking forgiveness from the person offended, or the sacrament of reconciliation.

GRACE.

Talk with God about how you are feeling as you review your day. You ask where and how you need God to help you in the day to come. At the close of the prayer, ask for God's grace for the following day.

SOLUTION DETERMINATION

Sometimes, conflicts will elude resolution. Despite the best efforts of all parties, the matters in dispute remain unresolved. When this happens, there are a few considerations to assist each school district in developing a process for solution determination:

- Needs of the individual child and family
- Input from the student's teacher(s), school support staff, parish priest
- School Guidelines
- Common good
- Catholic Church Teaching
- School District Policy and Administrative Procedures
- Legislated requirements and responsibilities
- Short-term view
- Intermediary steps
- Long-term view
- Due process with the provision for Appeal
- Professional guidance or reports from treating medical or mental health practitioners
- Objective view of persons not directly involved
- Communication process

Each Catholic School District has in place Policies and Procedures for the resolution of conflicts at schools. It is suggested that these Policies and Procedures be reviewed in light of the foregoing considerations.

Once a solution is determined, it should be communicated to the family and supports should be put in place to ease the imposition of the solution. This is never a desirable outcome so if there is the opportunity for a more shared resolution with the passage of time, every attempt should be made to achieve a better outcome. As people of faith and prayer, we live in hope and carry these moments in prayer trusting in the love and wisdom of God.

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