

Policy 20

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Purpose

To reflect the Board's responsibility and expectation for providing students and staff a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning and working environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging (Section 33, the *Education Act*).

To advocate for staff and student wellness and bring awareness of the importance of mental and emotional well-being, thus contributing to overall organizational and system health.

To assist students and staff in reaching their full potential by providing policy direction to create learning and working environments that supports a Division culture of wellness.

- The Board of Trustees believe that GYPSD staff have the right to disconnect from email in the evenings and weekends unless in the case of an emergency or emergent issue that requires immediate action to ensure student and/or staff safety.
- The Board of Trustees believe that GYPSD staff have the right to be protected from harassment and bullying in their workplace.

Positive and supportive social and physical learning and working environments address and respect the diversity within our student and staff population and are a key contributor to health for individuals. A wellness policy supports the Board in meeting its responsibility to establish and maintain governance and organizational structures that promote student and staff well-being and success, and monitor and evaluate their effectiveness.

Alberta Education's *Framework for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Wellness Education*, (2009), defines the five dimensions of wellness as:

- Emotional wellness
- Intellectual wellness
- Physical wellness
- Social wellness
- Spiritual wellness

These dimensions do not exist in isolation; it is the balance and interplay of these elements that constitute wellness. For example, all wellness curricula, including topics considered controversial or sensitive, such as those related to issues of sexual and mental health, are approached through the lens of this holistic definition of wellness. This provides opportunities for students to accept and appreciate diversity and the uniqueness of self and others.

The Board recognizes that wellness is both an individual and collective responsibility. The Board believes that a state of personal wellness enables students and staff to reach their full potential and to contribute in an increasingly interdependent world. The Board acknowledges that only by working in partnership with students, staff, parents, community members, organizations, and government can it promote and foster lifelong habits that support wellness.

The Board recognizes that it is subject to different legislative requirements when supporting student and staff wellness. Fundamentally, the Board embraces a *Comprehensive School Health* (CSH) approach and is committed to ensuring that students and staff are provided with the supports they need to learn about, create, and maintain a Division culture of wellness. The Board is further committed to providing safe, healthy learning and working environments through prevention of personal and occupational injuries and illnesses, and a proactive approach to creating positive and supportive environments that contribute to the well-being of self and others.

CSH is an internationally recognized, evidence-based approach for building healthy school communities based on collaboration between home, school, and community partners. A CSH approach to effective school health initiatives uses strategies from all four pillars of CSH as defined by the *Joint Consortium for School Health*:

- Social and Physical Environments
- Teaching and Learning
- Healthy School Policy
- Partnerships and Services

EXPECTATIONS

1. Each school and the central office will work towards creating and maintaining learning and working environments that support a Division culture of wellness using a CSH approach
2. The Division will:
 - a. consider student and staff health and safety in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of Division services;
 - b. implement a program of support for student and staff wellness based on research, informed best practice and a balanced approach to delivery; and
 - c. meet or exceed all legislated *Occupational Health and Safety* (OHS) requirements through a Division OHS program.
3. School staff will work collaboratively with Division services, parents, government agencies, and community partners to provide awareness of available professional guidance and counselling services for students.
4. Curricular instruction and the development, implementation, and monitoring of strategies to create and maintain a culture of wellness for students will be in accordance with the *Education Act*, regulations and the *Guide to Education*.
5. Staff, and their dependents, will be provided access to professional employee and family assistance services which offer assessment, referral, consultation, and counselling services. These services shall be confidential except where limited by law.
6. Assessment tools will be identified to measure and monitor the effectiveness of the wellness strategies implemented by schools and the central office for the purpose of local and Division-wide planning and delivery of supports.
7. The Superintendent of Schools will implement this policy through the establishment of administrative regulations and the assignment of responsibilities as needed.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Administration reports on progress in relation to the supports provided to create a culture of health and wellness for students and staff.

Legal Reference: Section 33 Education Act
Guide to Education ESC to Grade 12
Framework for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Wellness Education

Approved: February 18, 2015

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