



## **Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Teaching and Learning Environment Policy**

### **Principles**

The Montessori School of Calgary provides a safe environment for all members of the school community to work and learn, free from fear, discrimination and harassment, while also promoting pro-active strategies and establishing guidelines to ensure that sexual and gender minority students, employees and families are welcomed and included in all aspects of education and school life and are treated with respect and dignity. The staff of Montessori School of Calgary is dedicated to developing a safe, effective learning environment, based on the philosophy and principles of Dr. Maria Montessori which:

- Challenges all learners to strive to reach their personal learning potential;
- Encourages each learner to be independent, yet responsible for learning choices;
- Supports and nourishes the development of a caring, inclusive community with dignity and respect for all;
- Encourages effective partnerships among educators, learners and parents;
- Fosters development of self-esteem, self-control resiliency and personal responsibility;
- Nurtures learner creativity, risk-taking, reflection and joy of lifelong learning;
- Facilitates the development of a broad repertoire of strategies and problem-solving abilities through the use of the prepared Montessori environment and Montessori materials; and
- Incorporates the element of intrinsic satisfaction into the learning process.

The relationship between school and home, as well as the family and staff commitment to the Montessori philosophy, is the key to fostering growth in our students.

The school is committed to:

- Supporting inclusion of all students and staff in all aspects of school life, irrespective of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Supporting transgender and gender non-conforming students and staff based on their human rights to enable the free and full expression of their gender identity.
- Improving understanding of the lives and experiences of sexual or gender minority individuals, communities, and cultures.
- Defining appropriate terms, behaviours and actions to promote greater awareness of, and responsiveness to, the harmful effects of homophobia, transphobia, anti-LGBTQ+ harassment and exclusion.
- Addressing acts of harassment, bullying, intimidation or discrimination on the basis of a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

**Definition** In this policy, all references to “sexual or gender minority” persons or LGBTQ+ persons will include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, intersex, queer or questioning

persons, persons who are labeled as such, whether they are or not, and persons with immediate family members who identify as a sexual or gender minority.

## **Purpose**

Montessori School of Calgary is committed to a safe, caring, respectful, inclusive, equitable and welcoming learning and teaching environment for all students. This environment shall be one that recognizes and respects student diversity, equity of learning opportunity for all students, respect for human rights and that fosters a sense of belonging of all students within a respectful school community.

This policy does not define one set of human needs as greater than another. This school policy supports and respects the individuality of all students and aims to create a positive and supportive environment focused on providing the best possible learning opportunity for each student.

## **Legislative Contexts**

The *School Act*, Sections 2, 3 and 16.1, *Alberta Human Rights Act*, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and Article 5 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990) all serve to inform Montessori School of Calgary's policies and practices as we maintain a welcoming, safe, caring learning environment for all.

## **Policy Statement**

In accordance with the current School Act Section 45.1(2) and 45.1(3), Montessori School of Calgary establishes and implements the following policies and practices.

This policy recognizes that all students and employees have the right to learn and work in an environment free of discrimination, prejudice and harassment. This policy affirms these rights under the

- *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*;
- The *Alberta Human Rights Act*, as amended March 10, 2015, which includes the right not to be discriminated against by reason of race, national origin, colour, religion, gender identity or gender expression.
- Requirements of the *School Act*, that provide for measures that support the equality and non-discrimination of students who may belong to minority groups including sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Montessori School of Calgary will not tolerate harassment, bullying, intimidation, or discrimination on the basis of a person's actual or perceived differences in sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Montessori School of Calgary is committed to implementing measures that will:

- Define appropriate expectations, behaviours, language and actions in order to prevent discrimination, prejudice and harassment through greater awareness of, and responsiveness to, their harmful effects.
- Ensure that LGBTQ+ members of the school community and their families are welcomed, accepted and included in all aspects of education and school life.
- Ensure learning, curriculum and resources shall reflect and value the diversity in the school, so that all students, including LGBTQ+ students see themselves and their lives positively reflected.
- Consistently use respectful and inclusive language in communication to students, staff, families and the community.
- Maintain the right of LGBTQ+ students and staff to privacy and confidentiality regarding their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. This includes all student and employee records, forms, and processes.
- Regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, sanction student participation in physical education classes and extracurricular activities, including in ways that are safe and comfortable and consistent with their lived gender identity.
- Ensure that all discriminatory behaviours and complaints will be taken seriously, documented and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policy and procedures.
- Develop, implement and evaluate inclusive educational strategies, professional development opportunities and administrative guidelines to ensure that minorities, including gender minorities and their families, are treated with respect and dignity in all aspects of the school community in a manner consistent with the school's mission and vision.
- Make resources and support services available for LGBTQ+ students and staff.
- Ensure transgender students shall have the right to be addressed by their preferred name(s) and pronoun(s) that correspond to their lived gender identities. This is true whether or not the student has obtained documentation of a legal change of name or sex designation. Student records will be changed when a parent or guardian requests a change in name and/or gender. Confidentiality of a student's records will be maintained at all times.

Consistent with Section 12 of the School Act, and in keeping with the mission and vision of Montessori School of Calgary, each employee and student is responsible for acting positively in support of a welcoming and caring learning environment by:

- Acting at all times in keeping with the vision and mission of our school;
- Respecting oneself and the rights of others in our school;
- Conducting oneself in a manner that contributes to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging
- Refraining from and refusing to tolerate bullying whether in or outside of the school or school hours or electronically;
- Informing a responsible, trusted and caring adult in a timely manner of incidents of bullying, harassment, intimidation or other unwelcoming or uncaring acts;
- Attending school regularly and punctually;
- Diligently and actively being prepared to learn and actively pursuing learning;
- Being accountable for individual behaviours to students, teachers and school staff;

- Cooperating with school staff to make our school a positive learning environment for all; and
- Knowing and following the rules and expectations of our school.

### **Unacceptable Conduct**

Unacceptable behaviours that may negatively affect a member of our Montessori School of Calgary community or the school's learning environment, whether in or outside of the school or school hours or electronically, include, but are not limited to:

- *Discrimination*
  - In keeping with the *Alberta Human Rights Act* no student or person may discriminate against a student on the basis of an individual student's race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religious beliefs, gender (including pregnancy, sexual harassment and gender identity), gender expression, age, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, family status, source of income or sexual orientation.
- *Acts of bullying harassment or intimidation*
  - As defined by the School Act, Section 1.1(b.1) bullying is defined as the "repeated and hostile or demeaning behaviour by an individual in the school community where the behaviour is intended to cause harm, fear or distress to one or more individuals in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to an individual's reputation.
- *Physical violence*
- *Acts of retribution*
  - An act against an individual who has intervened to prevent bullying or informed about bullying or other unacceptable behaviour
- *Illegal activities*
  - Activities including those involving illegal or restricted substance, possession or use or threat of use of weapons and theft or damage to property.

### **Compliance**

Students are expected to conduct themselves in keeping with their responsibilities as students of the school. Taking into consideration the student's age, maturity and individual circumstances, the Montessori School of Calgary will investigate each instance of unacceptable conduct and pursue disciplinary action in a matter consistent with the principles of fundamental justice and the school's student discipline policy. In grave circumstances, an individual found to have engaged in unacceptable conduct may be subject to possible suspension or expulsion.

Any language or behaviour that deliberately incites hatred, prejudice, discrimination or harassment towards student or staff on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will not be tolerated. Allegations of homophobic or

transphobic language, behavior, or discrimination will be reported to the principal in the case of both students and employees.

All employees are responsible for knowing, understanding and complying with this Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Teaching and Learning Environment Policy. Failure to comply with this Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Teaching and Learning Environment Policy, will result in disciplinary action.

Parent and community member conduct that fails to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment, free from discrimination, harassment or bullying will not be tolerated and will be addressed by the principal in accordance with the School Act.

### **Remediation and Support**

In order to foster a positive learning environment, Montessori School of Calgary will engage in reasonable and caring efforts to support both the individual(s) who may have been the subject or victim(s) of unacceptable behaviour(s) and to support perpetrators of unacceptable conduct to improve their conduct.

Supportive actions of Montessori School of Calgary may include, but are not limited to:

- Mentoring of individual students by older students;
- More focused attention to individual students;
- Regular follow-up meetings by specific teachers with individual students;
- Student/peer support groups, including Gay Straight Alliances, as requested;
- Counselling; and
- Restorative justice processes.

### **Support for Student Organizations**

All student organizations and activities approved by the school will support the mission, vision and core values of the school and will seek to strengthen every aspect of the school's inclusive perspective. Staff facilitators of student organizations will integrate teaching that supports understanding and harmony into discussions and activities. All student organizations and activities will be supported in a manner consistent with the vision, mission, and programming of Montessori School of Calgary.

As stated in Section 16.1 of the School Act, if one or more students request a staff member for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the principal of the school shall:

- a) immediately grant permission for the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and

b) within a reasonable time from the date that the principal receives the request designate a staff member to serve as the staff liaison to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization or to assist in organizing the activity.

The principal shall immediately inform the board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison and if so informed, the Minister shall appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization at the school.

### **Naming of Student Activities and Organizations**

The students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the organization or activity, including the name “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”, after consulting with the principal. The principal shall not prohibit or discourage students from choosing a name that includes “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”.

The principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or activity referred to in this policy is

- limited to the establishment of the activity or the holding of the activity;
- is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations and activities; and
- is consistent with the *School Act* and the *Personal Information Protection Act* governing disclosure of personal information.

For greater certainty, parents may receive notification of the establishment of a GSA or QSA but will not receive notification of any students’ participation in the activity or organization.