



Palliser Regional Schools

Palliser Centre

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New legislation about ensuring all students feel safe

There has been a flurry of questions raised about changes to provincial legislation and new requirements of school boards related to ensuring safe and caring learning environments that respect diverse sexual orientation, gender identities and gender expressions. I can appreciate that this is new to many of us and change naturally raises questions of what, how and why.



Palliser Regional Schools considers the new guidelines and legislation as an extension of the important work our principals, teachers, counsellors and support staff have always done to ensure our students feel safe, cared for and respected. The premise that all students need to feel safe at school is not new. What's changed is that legislation is now specific to gender diversity and sexual orientation and it applies to all schools, public, separate, charter or private.

Our school division has been awaiting release of Alberta Education's Guidelines for Best Practices on this issue as we work toward creating our own policy and procedures to align with new legislation. That document was made public Jan. 13, 2016, and you can read it online at <https://education.alberta.ca/topic-search/?language=English>

Soon, we expect to be able to share our draft policy and procedure to reflect the new legislation and our continued commitment to ensure all students feel safe at school.

Our schools already offer a wide range of opportunities for students to explore leadership, develop character and build empathy for each other. That ongoing work to nurture caring, empathetic individuals is beneficial to every student and all of society.

We know there is stigma faced by students based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. When students are hurting for whatever reason, they need our support. A student who feels insecure, unsafe or fearful can't be a fully engaged learner.

Our goal is not to make some students feel safe at the expense of others. The goal is inclusion and safety for all, an ideal I believe we can all share.

Kevin Gietz, Superintendent
Palliser Regional Schools

*Together we will ensure learning success for all students
to develop their unique potential as caring citizens in a changing world.*