

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Steinbach, MB. April 20, 2016 - The Hanover School Division Board of Trustees has issued the following statement in response to recent media coverage concerning HSD and the topic of sexual orientation.

As per our *Respect for Human Diversity Policy (adopted May 6, 2014)*, the Hanover School Division is committed to creating and maintaining a positive and inclusive environment in which students, staff and parents are aware of and respect the human rights, diversity and dignity of others. Students and staff deserve and depend upon safe, inviting and inclusive learning environments. They are entitled to respect, dignity of person, and the protections afforded to them under all laws and statutes - including the Manitoba Human Rights Code. All Hanover students and their families are welcome and respected in our schools. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable irrespective of who, or why. All incidents of bullying are investigated and dealt with as per divisional protocols.

The Hanover School Division teaches the Manitoba Provincial Physical Education / Health Curriculum for Grades 5 & 7, which includes Sensitive Content units. Instruction on human sexuality is a topic within this curriculum for this age group, but based upon current provincial guidelines - sexual orientation is not a Specific Learning Outcome (SLO). The term sexual orientation is not mentioned in the Grades 5 & 7 Phys. Ed. / Health Curriculum.

The Grades 5 & 7 Sensitive Content units are taught by teachers who have received special training on how to deliver sensitive curricular content. Our Sensitive Content teachers have all been instructed to answer factually when asked any questions about sexual orientation - using the following options:

- a. This is not a part of our lesson today, but if you have questions that you would like me to respond to, please see me after class.
- b. If you need to talk to someone about the feelings you are having related to sexual orientation, is there someone you feel comfortable discussing it with? If you can't think of anyone, you could speak with the resource teacher/counselor, or you can contact either the Kids Help Phone Line at 1-800-668-6868 or Teen Touch at 204-783-1116.
- c. Provide the following explanation: We live in a diverse world and why a person likes or is attracted to one person and not the other, is one of life's great mysteries. We should always be respectful of every person's human rights, diversity, and dignity.

The teacher is also required to inform the student's parent/guardian, letting them know that during a discussion their child had inquired about sexual orientation.

Teacher guidelines require that answers given, are appropriate to the grade level of students - with emphasis placed on communicating that we all need to be respectful of every person's human rights, diversity, and dignity.

The Hanover School Division also teaches the Manitoba Provincial Phys. Ed. / Health Curriculum for Grades 9 & 10. Sexual orientation is indeed mentioned albeit very briefly within this curriculum, and only referred to as an example in the Grades 5-10 curriculum. See examples below.

- a. Grade 8: Personal Development Self-Awareness/Self-Esteem K.4.8.A.1 - Examine the effects of stereotyping based on a variety of factors (e.g., gender, age, race, roles, media influences, body type, sexual orientation, source of income ...), and ways (e.g., set/review personal and group norms, standards ...) to promote acceptance of self and others.
- b. Grade 9: Human Sexuality Sociological Factors K.5.S1.E.3a - Describe social factors affecting human sexuality (e.g., cultural, religious values, stereotyping, role models, media influence, body image, sexual orientation ...)

Teachers are instructed to give factual and reliable answers to honest and appropriate questions that arise in class through these discussions. Answers are to exclude personal bias.

The Teacher's Guides for Sensitive Content (Grades 5 & 7 and Grades 9 & 10) were first written eleven years ago, and included parent and community voices in the development. The guides were reviewed and updated in 2015, and approved by the Board of Trustees. Adjustments included a glossary of terms and instructions for teachers on how to respond when asked by students about sexual orientation. More recently in April 2016, revisions were made to improve the phrasing and grammar of the document to better clarify intended guidelines. The guides are working documents and will be revised on an on-going basis to reflect feedback from teachers, parents and school communities in the course of implementation.

Hanover School Division respects the role of the parents or guardians as the primary educators of their children, especially in the areas pertaining to family life. Parents are always informed in advance of the teaching of potentially Sensitive Content, and they do have the choice of opting out of the Sensitive Content Curriculum.

-30-

Source: Hanover School Division
Media Inquiries - Bob Wiebe, Communications Manager
Tel. 204-326-6471 ext. 2240 / bobwiebe@hsd.ca