

HALIFAX REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD

Update on Diversity Management Policy Procedures D.009

PURPOSE:

This report is provided for the information of the Board.

BACKGROUND:

The Diversity Management Policy is a tool used by Senior Staff to achieve objectives. On February 28, 2007 the Board approved the Diversity Management Policy. Section 5.2 of the Policy indicates that: *“Overall implementation of this policy will be a joint responsibility of the Board Services and Human Resource Services Departments.”* The Board requested an update, on the implementation of the Diversity Management Policy Procedures at the September, 2007 meeting.

In an effort to move forward with the implementation of the Policy procedures, the board recruited a Diversity Management Consultant in November, 2007.

CONTENT:

Current and Accurate Data

The collection of this data is on-going, new employees are expected to complete the Workforce Survey. As reported by Mike Christie, Director of Human Resources (Report No. 07-10-1082) *“Workforce Survey data is limited in its application in that, in order to respect employee’s rights, it has to be based on voluntary self-identification. We cannot, therefore, know precisely the composition of our workforce. We can, however, track trends. If the numbers of underrepresented groups increase, we know that either more employees are self-identifying or more employees are being hired, or some combination of the two. Both would be success indicators.”*

Strategic Planning and Management

In November, 2007 Senior Staff started the diversity management planning process. Sessions are planned with Senior Staff during February, March and April to continue the process in concert with the budget planning process.

Staff of Board Services have implemented phase one of the Employment Systems review. Phase one of the Review will involve central staff work groups. Focus groups are planned for February, 2008.

Regular Reporting and Monitoring

Semi-annual updates are presented to the Board.

On-going Training and Development

Cultural competence and human rights professional development is ongoing. In November 2007, Senior Staff, School Admin Supervisors and Program Staff attended a two-day cultural competence workshop provided by the Department of Education. The Diversity Management Coordinator has completed the first round of the Harassment Policy professional development sessions, as indicated in Update on Implementation of Policy A.008 Harassment (Report #07 09 1063). Workshops are planned for the County and Halifax Locals of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. Staff will continue to deliver follow-up workshops on the Harassment Policy as requested.

Board Services staff are preparing a one-day professional development session on cultural competence for Principal and Vice Principals that is scheduled for May 7 through May 9, 2008.

A consultant has been retained to create the board's diversity management WebPages that will contain information about the board's policies, practices and procedures that come under the heading of Diversity Management.

COST: N/A

FUNDING: Within the current budget.

TIMELINE: From March 28, 2007 to June 2008.

APPENDICES: N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Board receives this Report for information.

COMMUNICATIONS: N/A

From: Heather Chandler,
Coordinator – Diversity Management
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To: Senior Staff, January 21, 2008
Board, January 30, 2008

Confidentiality

All complaints and documents related to the complaints process will be kept confidential.

During the informal and/or formal complaint process, all files will remain with the investigator and will be stored in a locked cabinet.

When the informal and/or formal complaint processes have ended, all documents will be kept by the board with the Director of Human Resource Services, who will maintain Complaint and Investigation Files in a secure location.

If a respondent is found to have acted in a harassing or discriminatory manner that results in disciplinary action, documents provided to the respondent and information regarding discipline will be held in the respondent's personnel file and retained in a way that is consistent with collective agreements.

For additional information please contact:
Diversity Management Coordinator
464-2000 ext. 2006

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Every Student Can Learn.
Every School Can Improve.

Harassment Policy

Working Together for Respectful Workplaces

Preventing & Responding to Workplace Harassment

Halifax Regional School Board Harassment Policy

Adopted in 2007, the board's Harassment Policy includes procedures for addressing harassment of employees by other employees, students, parents, or other members of the school board community (e.g., volunteers or board members). This new policy includes sections formerly included in the board's *Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understandings and Human Rights (RCH) Policy* and the *Sexual Harassment Policy*. Procedures have been updated and aligned to make sure that the rights of employees, students, parents, and other community members are protected through consistent steps for addressing all reports of harassment, sexual harassment, or discrimination.

A copy of the board's
Harassment Policy is available online at:
<http://www.hrsb.ns.ca/files/downloads/pdf/board/policy/sectiona/a.008-harassment.pdf>

"As professionals working in education, we, more than any group in society, have a responsibility for modelling the values we are teaching students in our schools. I hope this resource will provide employees with another source of information as they continue to learn how to create workplaces that respect our right to live and work in a society free of harassment and discrimination."

– Carole Olsen

Your Rights in a Respectful Workplace

In a respectful workplace, all employees have the right to work in an environment that allows them to get their work done effectively. As an employee, you have the right to speak out against harassment and discrimination, and to receive a respectful response.

If you experience harassment or discrimination based on prohibited grounds of the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*, and it is not resolved to your satisfaction, you have a right to file a complaint with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission.

While all employees in supervisory roles have specific duties in responding to reports of harassment or discrimination, they also have the same rights as other employees to be free of harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

Your Responsibilities in a Respectful Workplace

As an employee, you are responsible for acting in a professional manner at all times.

If you see incidents of harassment or discrimination — even if the behaviour is not directed toward you — you have a responsibility to call attention to the behaviour, and to offer suggestions for more respectful behaviour. If the behaviour does not change as a result of your suggestions, you are encouraged to report the incident to the appropriate supervisor in the workplace.

If a colleague approaches you about your behaviour, you have a responsibility to listen to his or her concerns, offer an apology, and change the behaviour. Diminishing your colleague's concerns (e.g., saying "I was just joking") is never an appropriate response in such circumstances.

Scope

The rights and responsibilities outlined in Harassment Policy apply to the following:

- Employees of the Halifax Regional School Board, including part-time, term, and casual employees.
- All Halifax Regional School Board students.
- Non-Employees, including: parents and guardians; board members; community groups; school parental organizations; volunteers; individuals who do business with the board on a contract basis.

These rights and responsibilities apply to *all* forms of communication (e.g., telephone, fax, e-mail, Internet or intranet) and all work-related activities, including those outside of schools or school board offices (e.g., conferences, meetings, training events, work-related social events).

The board will take immediate action if it receives any reports of harassment or discrimination against an employee by other employees.

The Harassment Policy applies to all forms of harassment including, but not limited to, those involving any of the prohibited grounds

of harassment and discrimination as defined in the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*. These are:

- age
- race
- colour
- religion
- creed
- sex [gender, including pregnancy]
- sexual orientation
- physical disability or mental disability
- an irrational fear of contracting an illness or disease
- ethnic, national or aboriginal origin
- family status
- marital status
- source of income
- political belief, affiliation, or activity
- association with another individual or class of individuals having any of the characteristics named above.

Resources

The *Harassment Policy* and the *Working Together for Respectful Workplaces Handbook* are resource tools with information about dealing with discrimination and all the types of harassment. You can find more information in the handbook about:

- Policy Framework for Preventing and Responding to Workplace Harassment
- Types of Discrimination
- Types of Harassment (*Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Harassment*)
- Options for Complainants

- Strategies for Respecting the Rights of All Parties in a Complaint Procedure
- Managed Conflict vs. Out-of-Control Conflict
- Signs of Out-of-Control Conflict
- Steps for Resolving Conflict Constructively and Respectfully

Options for Responding to Harassment or Discrimination



Complaints

The purpose of human rights complaint procedures, whether informal or formal, is to gather the necessary facts in a fair and professional way. When implementing complaint procedures, supervisory staff must follow defined procedures closely, and must consult with their supervisors or the Diversity Management Coordinator if they have questions at any point during the process.

An appropriate response to a human rights complaint can only be determined when the

investigation is complete and all the facts have been documented. If any steps need to be taken in the interest of student or staff safety during the course of the investigation, these will be determined by the Director of Human Resource Services and the Superintendent or designate.

Advice for Complainants

If you experience harassment or discrimination, do not ignore it and do not assume that you need to deal with it alone.

You have a right to speak up and to expect support from school board staff, your union, or your professional association.

There are many options for addressing harassment and discrimination. Decisions about which option to choose are completely up to you and depend on your particular situation and what you feel you are ready to do.

Advice for Respondents

If you have been accused of harassment or discrimination, you have the right to be treated in a professional manner.

It is in your best interest to cooperate with any actions taken to remedy the situation. However, with the exception of a formal investigation (where you must participate), you are not required to participate in any actions if you feel you are being pressured into doing something that does not feel right to you. Like the complainant, you have the right to seek the advice of a colleague, a supervisor, or a union representative at any time.