



News Release

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Rigorous and consistent enforcement, hallmarks of proposed Surrey School Board safe schools policy

A comprehensive new "Safe and Caring Schools" policy and accompanying regulations have been tabled for consideration by the Surrey School Board. The proposed policy is aimed at providing more specific direction and expectations for district and school administrators, staff, students and parents to promote a safe school environment. The proposed policy would replace the current "Student Conduct, Discipline & Safety" policy if the board approves it in a vote expected at its next public board meeting on May 13.

"A safe school is everyone's responsibility," says Surrey School Board chair Shawn Wilson. "I strongly believe many initiatives and approaches in our new policy demonstrate leadership by the Surrey School District in its innovation and commitment to providing a safe, caring school environment. The policy is stronger in directing responses to threats and offences so action is taken consistently and appropriately."

The regulation includes a "District-Wide Code of Conduct Disciplinary Guide" that provides a detailed table of 31 offences accompanied by recommended and required responses by school administrators. Other key features of the new policy and regulations include:

- incorporation of a "District Threat Assessment Protocol" that provides information and direction to school administrators to assess student behaviors and respond in a consistent and appropriate manner
- requirement for school administrator completion of a new, online "Incident Report Form" for all serious incidents to improve district tracking and assessment
- authorization for random locker searches by board-approved designates as well as school administrators, and a commitment to training in search and seizure legalities
- a new "District-Wide Code of Conduct" and a directive to all schools to establish and communicate to students and parents/guardians a "School Code of Conduct"
- a list and description of responsibilities for the district, school, student and parents/guardians in promoting a safe school environment

.../2

- stronger wording (e.g. administrators “will” vs. “are expected”) regarding weapons and controlled substances, as well as students under the influence of an intoxicating substance
- a directive to all schools to adopt a dress code that attempts to balance individual liberty, social convention, functionality, community standards and that reflects school community values.

“Staff conducted substantial research into the implications of using drug-sniffing dogs in random locker searches, taking into account the fact that the RCMP is not able to provide dogs for such purposes,” says Wilson. “The proposed policy reflects staff’s conclusion that a strengthened, more comprehensive policy will be more effective in the long run in addressing drug issues.”

Information about the use of student lockers and the potential for random searches would be provided to students at the beginning of each school year, starting in September. While dogs wouldn’t be used for random searches, under the proposed policy, police dogs may be used in conducting searches where there is the possibility of prosecution.

The proposed “Safe and Caring Schools” policy also meets the student safety standards and guidelines recommended by the province’s Safe Schools Task Force and established by the Ministry of Education last month.

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