

Safe and Caring School Policy

March 8, 2016

Updated May 8, 2018

Updated Oct 4, 2018

POLICY'S CONTEXT

School Vision and Mission Statement

It is the mission of St. Matthew Lutheran Christian Academy (SML) to offer a quality academic education with the Gospel of Jesus Christ as its foundation.

Statement of Faith

As a Lutheran Organization we believe:

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God. It is His message to all people. The entire Bible points to Jesus as the Saviour.
2. There is only one true God. He has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. God is the Creator of everything that exists.
4. People were originally created by God pure and holy.
5. Adam and Eve, the man and woman God created in the beginning, went against God's will and brought sin into the world. Since that time, all people have been conceived and born in sin.
6. Sin is living out of relationship with God, not living according to God's will, and thus transgressing His holy will in thought, word and deed.
7. People cannot save themselves by their good works or restore themselves to a right relationship with God.
8. God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world. He is both true God and true man. He lived to fulfill God's law for us, died on the cross to pay the penalty our sins deserved, and rose from the dead so that we might have eternal life. He ascended into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us.
9. Because of Jesus' death on the cross, God declares a person just or righteous and forgiven. This happens not because of human effort, but because the justification won by Jesus is applied to the one who believes in Jesus as Saviour.
10. Faith in Jesus is a gift of God, given by the power of the Holy Spirit; thus, all the glory belongs to God.

11. The means of grace are the Word, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. By these means, God applies the merits of Jesus' atoning death to all who believe in Jesus as their Saviour.
12. Jesus will come again to take all believers to Himself. On the final day, the dead will be raised. Those who are still alive will be bodily transformed. After this, the final judgment will take place. Unbelievers will go into eternal damnation and believers into eternal life.
13. The true Christian church is made up of all believers of all times who believe in the Triune God and in Jesus Christ as their only Saviour.
14. The true visible church is the church which correctly preaches and teaches God's Word and administers Holy Baptism and Holy Communion according to the teachings of Scripture.
15. Christians are called to tell others that the only way of salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ, and to show their faith by their deeds of love toward others.

Legislative Contexts

School Act, especially 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)

PART I

Consistent with its mission and vision, the School Board of St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church (SML Board) is committed to a safe, caring, respectful, and welcoming learning and teaching environment for all students. The school looks to the words of Christ who said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34–35)

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

The *School Act* also provides as a fundamental right the "right of parents to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children."

The SML Board affirms the rights of students and staff members to not be discriminated against as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act to the extent applicable and subject to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the nature and character of SML school as a private, voluntary religious association. See e.g. *H.S. v. The Private Academy*, 2017 HRTO 719; *Caldwell et al. v. Stuart et al.*, (1984) 2 S.C.R 603; *Loyola High School v. Quebec (Attorney General)*, 2015 SCC12.

PART II

The SML Board supports the ongoing growth of inclusive communities by involving our parents, staff, students, and school community in a wide range of opportunities to learn about, support and be part of the diversity that reflects our society. In this way the school can focus on building true inclusion and support for its students.

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.

The SML Board believes that all students have the right to:

- be treated fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect;
- be welcomed in a positive, and respectful manner by all school personnel;
- have access to appropriate supports, services, and protections
- have avenues of recourse (without fear of reprisal) available to them when they are victims of harassment, intimidation, bullying, and/or violence;

PART III

The SML Board 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 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 all students are treated with respect and dignity in all aspects of the school community in a manner consistent with the school's mission and vision.

PART IV

The SML Board will promote a welcoming, caring and respectful, safe learning environment that respects diversity, and fosters a sense of belonging.

When a student request for assistance, support, and/or an accommodation is received, the school, through the principal, will respond in a caring, respectful and timely manner.

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 faith perspective. Staff facilitators of student organizations will integrate prayer, scripture, and faith/value-based teaching into discussions and activities as appropriate. All student organizations and activities will be permeated in a manner consistent with the vision, mission, and programming of the school.

The school will create and support a program which will consist of a voluntary group or club of interested students and at least one staff member that would facilitate open discussions about sexuality, identity, pornography, marriage, sexual abuse and other sex and gender-based issues.

Schools in Alberta are required by law to include section 16.1 of the School act. We do this under duress, and we recognize that it is under Constitutional challenge:

[Section 16.1 of the School Act](#) (page 24)

We post this hyperlink under duress, and we recognize that this section of the School Act is under Constitutional challenge.

PART V

When implementing this policy (Parts I to IV), the SML Board will act reasonably in the best interests of the student in keeping with the guidelines outlined by the Supreme Court of Canada. Consistent with the Court's guidelines, the school, the principal, teachers and other staff are free to act and communicate the school's animating faith and/or values in a respectful manner:

- *The School's teachers and staff may describe and explain the school's faith and/or value community beliefs, doctrines and ethical beliefs from the faith/perspective, and need not be required to adopt a neutral position.*
- *The School's teachers and staff must describe and explain the ethical beliefs and doctrines of other faith/value communities and other members of Alberta's pluralistic society in a respectful manner.*
- *The School's teachers and staff must maintain a respectful tone of debate — both by conveying their own contributions in a respectful way, and by ensuring the classroom dialogue proceeds in accordance with respect, tolerance and understanding for those with different beliefs and practices.*
- *Where the context of the classroom discussion requires it, the School's teachers may identify the School community's animating beliefs and/or values beliefs, why the school community follow those beliefs and/or values, and the ways in which another specific ethical or doctrinal proposition does not accord with those beliefs, be it in the context of a particular different religion or an ethical position considered in the abstract.*

Parent notification of student participation in student organizations or activities:

- Parent notification shall be consistent with the usual practices relating to notification of other voluntary student organizations or activities.
- In this regard, the Principal may provide a general notice to the school community that students may be organizing groups or clubs at the school in the future based on interest or need, for example by including a notice in the annual registration package.
- In the event that a new student organization or activity is undertaken in a school, notification of the establishment of the student organization or activity may be sent to all parents. This notice should not include the names of students participating in the student organization or activity. This notification may include a statement regarding the responsibility of parents to discuss with their child the purpose and nature of the club, whether their child wishes to become a member and their child's obligation to contribute to a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. At all times, parents are invited to converse with the school regarding the intention of student organizations, clubs, and activities.
- Section 45.1(4)(d) of the *School Act* requires this Policy to indicate what legislation governs the release of information by the Board. We have been advised that the *Alberta Bill of Rights* governs the disclosure of personal information by the Board. It is the position of Alberta Education that the *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)* governs the disclosure of personal information by the Board. That issue is currently the subject of litigation in Court of Queen's Bench Action No. 1808-00144.
- In circumstances where the disclosure of personal information, including that of a student involved in a student organization or activity, is contemplated, the Principal shall be guided by law and the school's policies for supporting vulnerable students and the child abuse policy.

The Role of Students and Families:

As part of the SML Christian Academy community, the expectations for students and their families in all interactions that pertain to the school are that they:

- Are aware of the expectations, policies, and procedures regulating conduct and work cooperatively with the school to create and maintain a positive and respectful learning environment for all;
- Conduct themselves in a manner which upholds the dignity and worth of all members of the school community;
- Report instances of language or behaviour that is in contravention of this Policy to the Principal immediately.

Nothing in this Policy is to be interpreted so as to limit or be a waiver of the Board's or school's rights, powers, and responsibilities pursuant to the *Alberta Bill of Rights* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. To the extent, provisions restated in this Policy conflict with the Board's or school's rights, powers, and responsibilities pursuant to the *Alberta Bill of Rights*, *Family Law Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the Board's and school's rights, powers, beliefs and policies pursuant to the *Alberta Bill of Rights* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* will govern.

Attachments to the Policy

SML Christian Academy Parent Agreement

Additional Materials

To assist teachers and school leaders with implementation measures, the following Alberta Education resources may be useful to school staff when implementing this policy:

The Walk Around: A School Leader's Observation Guide.

https://education.alberta.ca/media/14273824/the%20walk%20around_school%20leader.pdf

The Walk Around: Teacher's Companion Tool.

https://education.alberta.ca/media/14274234/the%20walk%20around_teacher.pdf