Media Release

BOARD OF EDUCATION BURNABY SCHOOL DISTRICT 41

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For immediate release

Burnaby Board of Education Approves Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity Policy

Burnaby BC… Tonight at its public meeting, the Burnaby Board of Education unanimously approved Policy # 5.45 Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity. This policy is a revised version of the draft policy, originally entitled "Homophobia/Heterosexism," that was circulated as a Notice of Motion after the February 22, 2011 public board meeting.

The policy was developed over a two-year period to help address homophobic harassment and bullying in Burnaby Schools and to support the School District's commitment to provide safe and caring educational environments.

Policy # 5.45 Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity is "to ensure that all members of the school community work together in an atmosphere of respect and safety regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity."

"Our schools reflect the increasing diversity in our rapidly changing communities," says Board Chair, Larry Hayes. "We may differ in our language, culture, national origin, religion or sexual orientation but we all want to feel safe and welcome. We believe this policy will help to foster respect, acceptance and understanding in our schools – and our community."

The approved policy contains a number of revisions to the wording of the original draft policy. These revisions do not alter the intent of the policy but improve clarity and understanding. These changes were informed by the extensive public input received by the Burnaby School District over a 14-week public input period and by the detailed work done by the LGBTQ Ad Hoc Advisory Committee.

Hayes says, "We thank everyone who provided thoughtful input into this policy including all members of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee and the many community members who responded during the input period."

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Highlights of the revisions include:

- Changing the policy title to better reflect the content and objectives of the policy and to parallel existing District policies.
- Editing language for consistency, clarity and alignment with existing policies. This includes removing language that could be perceived as subjective.
- Providing clarification of how the policy regulations and procedures align with Ministry of Education standards and prescribed learning outcomes particularly in those sections of the policy that referenced "curriculum."
- Removing the definitions from the body of the policy to an appendix glossary. And replacing some definitions, including that of "Heterosexism," with more commonly accepted definitions.

Specific revisions include:
Under Administrative Regulations, Student Programs

- Further clarity on some of the curriculum connections to BC Ministry of Education prescribed learning outcomes and standards.
- Reinforcement that the curriculum implementation will meet BC Ministry of Education prescribed learning outcomes and be age-appropriate.
- Reference to Board Policy # 6.31 Alternate Delivery – Health and Career Education, i.e.: In the case of potentially sensitive topics in the Health and Career Education curricula, students and their parents/guardians may arrange with the school for alternative instruction… ."

Under Administrative Regulations, Learning Resources

- Further clarity that resources will meet BC Ministry of Education standards.

Under Administrative Regulations, Counseling and Student Support

- Clarification that volunteer clubs that may exist for intermediate elementary students would respect and celebrate all forms of diversity.

For more information on Policy # 5.45:

- Superintendent's Report on Public Input to Policy # 5.45
- Draft Homophobia/Heterosexism Policy - Background
- 督學的報告 公眾對政策 #5.45(同性戀恐懼/異性戀主義)的意見
- 背景資料

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Note: Please find Policy # 5.45 as approved at the Burnaby Board of Education public meeting of June 14, 2011 attached to the email containing this media release.