

Surrey Board of Education Statement



On behalf of all trustees, Chairperson Laurie Larsen read the following statement at the June 14, 2023, public Surrey Board of Education meeting.

The Surrey Board of Education encourages the public to attend our monthly meetings and we value the input and engagement of all members of our community, including staff, students, parents, and guardians. Open and constructive dialogue is essential for community engagement and critical for the success of our school district.

However, during the past few board meetings, it has become clear that certain members of our community are not interested in respectfully engaging with the board and are instead using our question period as a platform to spread hate or misinformation.

Our board has a responsibility in ensuring a safe environment for everyone present. We welcome diverse perspectives and encourage respectful and meaningful exchanges that contribute to the betterment of our schools. But continually having individuals share hateful rhetoric and spread misinformation will not be accepted.

We also ask that all individuals present show courtesy and respect. Disagreements are natural, but they should be expressed in a civil manner, free from personal attacks, threats, or harassment. We will not tolerate behaviour that violates our standards of conduct or compromises the safety and well-being of any individual present. Any instances of harmful behaviour or language, including inappropriate questions and comments at board meetings, will be halted promptly and with appropriate action.

This may include, but is not limited to, a warning, removal from the meeting, or involving appropriate authorities, if required. Individuals may also be restricted from attending future district and school events.

These expectations apply to these board meetings, and all school and district-based community events.

We firmly believe that a safe and respectful environment fosters an atmosphere where meaningful discussions can occur, benefiting all members of our school communities. We invite everyone to join us in upholding these principles and contributing to the success of our schools.

The Board would also like to specifically address SOGI.

Our board is united in promoting respect, empathy, and understanding for all individuals. We will not tolerate any form of hate speech, discrimination, or attempts to spread misinformation that undermines the rights and well-being of all members of our school communities, including members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression are protected under the BC Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter. These are also mandated in provincial legislation.

Our board, district staff, administrators, educators, and support staff will continue to ensure that our district is a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every member of our community, regardless of race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

And it is important that students see themselves reflected in the curriculum, and that the diversity of our community is reflected as well.

We have complete confidence in our staff – our educators are experts in child development and put a lot of care into selecting and reviewing age-appropriate materials that are consistent with our district’s values of equity and inclusion, as well as provincial curriculum.

There is a lot of misinformation being spread about the resources being used in our district and we encourage parents to talk to their school or the district about their concerns – if they have questions on why a resource was chosen, we are happy to discuss and answer any questions. Engaging with individuals who are focused on spreading misinformation about the district is not helpful.

It is our responsibility to ensure every school and district site is a safe space for students and staff. We prioritize the well-being of our community and will take appropriate steps against any form of harassment, discrimination, or bullying.

Thank you for your cooperation, understanding, and continued commitment to our shared goals.