

Strait Regional School Board

16 Cemetery Road, Port Hastings, Nova Scotia, B9A 1K6

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COMPLAINT FORM

RACE RELATIONS, CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY

(TO BE COMPLETED DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS)

PROCEDURES FOR RECEIVING COMPLAINTS

The following steps should be taken when a student, member of staff, parent/guardian, or visitor to the school wishes to file a complaint.

1. Take all reports seriously.
2. The person to whom the complaint is made must record the statements made.
3. The recorder must present the complaint to the principal for further investigation.
4. The principal must notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the complaint before the investigation proceeds.
 - A. Tell them what happened.
 - B. Tell them how you will conduct the investigation.
 - C. Give the parent(s)/guardian(s) the option of sitting in during the interview process with the complainant.

REMEMBER TO RECORD ALL CONVERSATIONS WITH DATES!

5. Interview the complainant, inform the complainant of their legal rights.
6. Fill out the complaint form, recording all the basic facts.
7. Have the complainant and parent(s)/guardian(s), if present, sign the complaint form after reviewing it together.
8. Speak to as many witnesses as possible and record their statements. Have them sign their statements.
9. Collect any physical evidence - notes, graffiti, photograph evidence if necessary and date the photographs.
10. Classify the complaint as substantiated, unsubstantiated, or unable to substantiate.
11. Store the complaint form and evidence in a secure place.
12. Notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) and complainant of the outcome and the disciplinary action you will take and any follow-up that will be required.

Disciplinary or Corrective Actions:

For first time violators, the goal should not simply be to punish, but to educate so the attitudes which caused the actions are changed, if so warranted. Such corrective actions may include:

1. Awareness educational sessions where material about the problem are studied. (books, videos, tapes, brochures)
2. Discuss what the student has learned as a follow-up. An apology may be expected to the victim.
3. An outside professional counsellor may be brought in with the permission of the parent(s)/guardian(s).

COMPLAINT FORM

Use this form to report an incident when you have reason to believe the policy has been violated. Please forward a copy to the Superintendent of Schools, Human Resources, and the Co-ordinator of RCH.

PROCEDURES FOR RECEIVING COMPLAINTS

1. This form is designed to be used to record instances of **racial, sexual, physical or emotional harassment, and discrimination**.
2. It is the duty of the principal to notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the complainant and the offender before this form is completed.
3. Parent(s)/guardian(s) of the complainant **may** be present while this form is being completed.
4. After the completion of this form, the principal or designate, an investigation must be conducted to determine if the complaint can be substantiated.
5. A copy of this form must be retained by the principal and a copy mailed to the Superintendent of Schools, Human Resources, and the Co-ordinator of RCH. All forms are confidential. Please do **not** fax this form. (see Protection of Information Act)
6. Parent(s)/guardian(s) of the complainant must be informed of the disciplinary action taken.

PART I

Date of incident: _____ **Time:** _____ **Place:** _____

1. Complainant: _____ **Grade:** _____

2. Name of person(s) allegedly violating the policy:

Name: _____ **Grade:** _____

Name: _____ **Grade:** _____

Name: _____ **Grade:** _____

3. Witness: (Those who saw or heard the incident, those who talked about the incident, those who experienced the same treatment)

Name	Grade	Role
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

4. Type of violation:

5. To whom was the violation first reported

6. Physical evidence: (Notes, photographs, graffiti, clothing, hair, etc.)

7. Describe the incident. Be exact as possible.

8. Has it happened before? _____

Are there records to check? _____

I hereby state that the information I have provided is true, correct and complete, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature of complainant

Date

PART II

(CONFIDENTIAL)

1. Parent(s)/guardian(s) of any student(s) involved were notified? How?

Names of Parent(s)/guardian(s) Notified	Method of Contact
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. Classification of Complaint:

' Substantiated: Unsubstantiated: ' Unable to substantiate: '

3. Corrective or Disciplinary Actions:

First time offender: '	Offended before: '

4. Complaint was resolved at the school level to the satisfaction of all?

Yes ' No '

5. This complaint requires further investigation: Yes ' No '

By Whom? _____

Signature of Principal

Date

GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH RACIAL INCIDENTS

(for internal use only)

Highly disruptive or noticeable racial incidents are awkward, embarrassing and actually potentially explosive. An instinctive response in such a situation may be to freeze and do nothing or to hastily improvise action to deal with it. A lack of response or a hasty response is not always effective.

Students and staff need to know how to recognize racism - in all its forms and what the consequences will be. Students must be reassured that staff are prepared to deal with racial incidents, and that they will react firmly, consistently and equitably.

A racial incident is defined as:

“an expression, verbal or physical, of racial or ethnic bias; that is, any behavior, rather or not consciously motivated, which expresses a negative attitude, disparagement or hatred towards an individual or a group’s race, colour, or ethnocultural heritage.

A list of occurrences, though certainly not exhaustive, that can be defined as racial incidents include:

- ▶ racial/ethnic stereotyping
- ▶ racial/ethnic slurs
- ▶ racial/ethnic name-calling
- ▶ racist jokes
- ▶ threats
- ▶ verbal abuse
- ▶ racist graffiti
- ▶ intimidation
- ▶ physical assault
- ▶ repeated minor teasing or annoyances
- ▶ discriminatory decisions with respect to evaluation and placement
- ▶ different treatment of students from different racial or ethnic backgrounds
- ▶ use of materials that degrade, humiliate, or bring to ridicule students because of their race, colour or ethnocultural heritage.

A racial incident is defined quite broadly here to include not only individual behaviors but also individual participation in more systemic forms of racism. Systemic forms of racism can be described as using one's power quietly to bring about negative change, either individual or institution.

HANDLING A RACIAL INCIDENT BETWEEN STUDENTS

All school staff witnessing or informed of a racial incident must intervene immediately and inform those involved of the school and Board policy.

Record the details of the incident on the Strait Regional School Board's Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH) "**Complaint Form**".

Racism requires action. It is critical that staff overcome the reluctance and discomfort many feel in dealing with race and racism. Failure to act is not a neutral response- its effect is to condone discriminatory behavior. Staff expressions of disapproval of such behavior serves as an important model from which students can learn.

At the time of intervention and with every incident, both parties must be informed as to the action to be undertaken, according to school policy.

Let students know how the incident will be dealt with and that you are following a set of specific and consistent rules. Students who display racist behavior should know the consequences of further incidents. At the same time, students who have been the targets of that behavior should know that the school and the Board supports them and is taking steps to ensure that the experience is not repeated.

Your consultation with the students should also have a personal focus. A racial incident can be a traumatic experience for the victim. Your support, reassurance and encouragement will help them survive the incident without a loss of self-esteem. The perpetrator, too, may need help. Often, racist behavior is born out of anger and frustration that may have nothing to do with the targeted individual. Your willingness to listen could help the student learn to interact in a more positive way.

Encourage students to inform staff about racial incidents that occur when no staff is present.

The principal has the responsibility to notify both sets of parent(s)/ guardian(s) of the incident before an investigation occurs.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) have the right to be present with their child during the interview process. They must be told how and when the interview will be conducted.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Seize the opportunity to explore and educate students about race relations issues. Students who witnessed or were peripherally involved in a racial incidents should be involved in the discussion of it.

Such an experience can develop the sense of responsibility for eradicating racism and assist in helping others who are victimized by it.

Help students to see why the behavior is hurtful and where such attitudes have come from. Discuss -

Stereotyping: Attributing a particular characteristic, either positive or negative, to all members of a group.

Theories of Racial Superiority: The belief that the Caucasian race is biologically superior to other races. Remind students that in all races there are those who are more gifted or accomplished than others. Be able to give examples or have students do some research.

Bias: A positive or negative feeling towards a group. A sense of ones' own group as being "normal" while others are exotic or somehow substandard because they are different.

Prejudice: An unfavorable opinion or judgement or hostility based on stereotypes or bias.

Discrimination: When prejudice is combined with action, the result is discrimination. Discrimination excludes individuals of another group from opportunities open to members of their own group.

Encouraging students who have been victimized by racism to talk about its impact on them and their feelings of embarrassment or anxiety can increase their recovery of self-esteem and help them develop skills and confidence for responding as peer supporters for other victims.

HELPFUL HINTS

The following suggestions are helpful when responding to racial incidents.

- ▶ **Be clear about how racism affects you and why you are challenging it.** The impact of racism is economic, social and political. Racism promotes a false sense of importance, encourages a limited view of history and current life, limits possible learning from other cultures, and creates social tension. In challenging racism, one must be aware of their own reasons for doing so.
- ▶ **Use clear, unambiguous and unself-conscious language.** Become familiar with the terminology and use it to clarify what has happened.
- ▶ **Distinguish between the person and the behaviour.** Laying blame merely backs students into a corner. Challenge behaviors without putting the person down.
- ▶ **Allow for discussion.** Telling students what they should be thinking breeds resistance. Explain your position, encourage questions and an atmosphere of trust in which students can explore their ideas and feelings.
- ▶ **Respect cultural pride.** Respect and encourage pride in one's culture as long as it does not put anyone else down or instils feelings of superiority. Provide a variety of learning opportunities for students to learn about cultural diversity.
- ▶ **Believe that students will change.** Much racist behavior is unconscious and unintentional. Helping students to understand the assumptions that underlie their behaviours and the harmful consequences of their actions will often lead to changed attitudes and therefore new behaviour.
- ▶ **Talk about similarities as well as differences.** While it is important to understand and appreciate the differences between and among people, it is crucial to understand similarities. Sharing those common beliefs, values and experiences can help us appreciate each other as human beings.
- ▶ **Keep a sense of humour.** Discrimination and prejudice are not funny, however a sense of humour or "fun" activities like role-playing and games can relieve tension and contribute to a more positive learning environment.
- ▶ **Be persistent.** "If at first you don't succeed, try again!" You are dealing with a very complex and sensitive issue and you should expect anxieties, resistance and even a setback or two. Keep trying because each time you will gain courage, experience and allies!

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