

## School Leadership Guidelines for the LIFE (Lived Inclusion for Everyone) Framework

### Creating and Implementing Student Support Structures and Groups

All schools must activate the establishment of student groups proactively as part of regular school start up each year. These groups will be another resource to address the needs of students who may be *at-risk*, especially those with same sex attractions, and those who may identify with different genders, as well as those who experience discrimination or isolation based on body image, race, culture, language, performance in school, social anxiety/lack of social connection, or other individual attributes.

### When Students Request an Inclusive Catholic Community Group

Principals along with other appropriately trained staff respond immediately by expressing their desire to work with the students to meet their needs in ensuring a safe and caring, inclusive Catholic learning environment.

Set up a meeting with the students to talk about the purpose for the requested group and how the various supports and pre-established groups can support their needs.

**Staff should be thorough in their approach. Taking the time necessary to talk with the students is the most important step in building a strong relationship with the students and ensuring that everyone is heard and served through the supports provided.**

### What Kind of Group?

At the meeting(s), principal, staff, and students together should answer a series of questions in order to determine the purpose of the student group. Identifying the purpose of the group or required supports will help meet the desired needs of the student(s) as outlined in the Life Framework. There may be singular or multiple purposes for the group depending on the conversation.

**Once the purpose of group is determined, the principal – in consultation with the superintendent – again need to take the necessary time to review and discuss the terms of reference around the formation of the student group.**

Please note: All student groups must:

- Support the mission, vision and core values of the school and the school division while upholding the sanctity of human life through discussions, acts of justice, and social action within the context of Catholic teaching on social relationships.
- Reflect through name and action the philosophy and theology of communion and emphasize inclusion, hospitality, respect and justice.

### **Naming of the Student Group**

All students should agree to the name of the group and the name should reflect its purpose. Some all-inclusive names already being used in schools throughout Canada include: Spectrum, St. Pride or ARK – to reflect Noah’s Ark and that “we are all in the same boat together.” Encourage students to use their creativity to come up with a meaningful, respectful, and inclusive name.

### **Upon Formation of a Life Framework Group**

- **Include as a general notice in newsletter or similar regular communication with parents/guardians the following:**

*Section 35 of the Education Act states that if one or more students attending a school operated by a board request a staff member employed by the board for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging that a school must support this request.*

This organization will be another resource to address the needs of students who may be at-risk, especially those with same sex attractions, and those who may identify with different genders, as well as those who experience discrimination or isolation based on body image, race, culture, language, performance in school, social anxiety/lack of social connection, or other individual attributes.

Our school has proactively established a new student group to support our inclusive Catholic community culture. Among other diversity and justice issues, this group will be engaged in activities which support students belonging to sexual minorities. In particular, within our Religious Education program, students will provide leadership and receive support to continue to build inclusive communities, aligned with our Catholic social teachings.

In order to promote inclusion and a safe and caring environment, the group may:

1. Provide leadership in building up our inclusive Catholic community, providing for safe, caring and inclusive environments— where everyone belongs.

2. Promote social justice through education and awareness about diversity.
3. Promote inclusion to effect positive social change, aligned with Catholic social teachings.
4. Engage in counseling and peer support, understanding that students belonging to sexual minorities are often part of an “at risk” group that deserves special care and attention. Address other discrimination and align supports as necessary to support students who may feel isolated based on body image, race, culture, language, performance in school, social anxiety/lack of social connection, or other individual attributes.
5. The level of support will vary depending on individual needs.

This student group will include a member of the staff as facilitator, have clear guidelines for students, include a structure for safety and confidentiality, and focus on advocacy and support.

It is the responsibility of parents to discuss with their child the purpose and nature of the club, whether their child wishes to become a member or not, and their child’s obligation to both refrain from bullying behavior and contribute to a safe learning school environment that respects diversity.