

Handbook for Students and Parents

2019-2020

Elementary
Junior High School
Grades K to 9

Higher Ground Christian School

1 Shirley Street SE, Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada, T1A 8N5

Phone: (403) 527-2714 Fax: (403) 528-8964

E-mail: principal@highergroundchristianschool.ca

Fully Accredited

Alberta Approved
Curriculum

Free Tuition

Respect and
acceptance
of all children
encouraged;
disregarding
ethnicity, religious
beliefs
or gender

Teaching biblical
principles common
to all Christian
denominations



Adventist Education

A JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE

Educating Children and Youth for Time and Eternity

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Higher Ground Christian School (HGCS) is a school with a difference. Certainly, we are like other schools in the subjects we teach, but Higher Ground Christian School has several distinctive qualities that set us apart:

- It is a Christian School, which is in keeping with the Biblical philosophy followed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- We are a private Christian school, supported by the members of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Medicine Hat.
- As a Christian school we firmly believe this kind of education, when integrated with our Christian faith to develop the whole person, is the very best preparation for students to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world and the soon return of our Saviour.
- HGCS believes in a personal God who governs an orderly universe in love and desires a relation of trust with His creatures.
- HGCS views each student as unique and capable of developing a personal friendship with Christ and reflecting the image of the Creator.
- HGCS promotes healthful living because the human body is the handiwork of God.
- HGCS believes Christian education encourages principled decision-making skills and critical thinking in students.
- HGCS believes that each student is capable of learning. Because learning occurs in stages and in a variety of ways, the curriculum has been logically developed grade by grade from concrete to abstract to coincide with the intellectual maturity of students.
- HGCS believes that all students, regardless of physical appearance, ethnic origin, gender, socio-economic level, intelligence, or performance, are by virtue of their creation and redemption, deserving of respect and seen as being of infinite worth.
- HGCS endorses a redemptive, systematic process of discipline that seeks to build and reinforce positive choices and discourage negative ones. In addition to a teacher's own disciplinary methods, the Student Code of Conduct offers a systematic process for handling discipline problems which insure that parents are informed when there is a problem with their child.
- HGCS believes in the command of Jesus, *"You should love your neighbor as yourself."* By experiencing service to others within the school and community, students learn that service to God and community helps realize a personal fulfillment. Also, the joy of giving builds a healthy sense of personal worth in each child and is a basis for teaching respect for others.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission is . . .
For students to attain *Academic Excellence*
while gaining a personal *Friendship with Jesus Christ*.

VISION STATEMENT

Our name, "Higher Ground," reflects our vision. It is our purpose to provide an attractive, well-equipped, and functional school facility. Moreover, we are committed to providing a safe and cheerful environment where our students can thrive. We are dedicated to meet the educational needs of families throughout the greater Medicine Hat area. Our standard of education is "high", and we are committed to academic excellence and to radiate the love of Jesus to all our students and to prepare them for heaven - the highest ground of all.

ACCREDITATION

Higher Ground Christian School is accredited by the Board of Regents of the General Conference of the SDA Church and certified by the Ministry of Education of the Province of Alberta.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

To help you understand the operation of our school, we have prepared the Student/Parent Handbook, which outlines the expectations our school has of its supportive families.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- **Religious Objective:** To provide a religious study program designed to prepare students to accept Jesus as their Saviour in preparation for citizenship in heaven.
- **Intellectual Objective:** To provide an academic program designed to prepare students to enter college, technical, or vocational schools.
- **Social Objective:** To provide an opportunity for students to socialize together in a Christian atmosphere.
- **Physical Objective:** To provide an opportunity for students to practice practical Christianity and to use skills needed in everyday life.

HISTORY

Our school had its beginnings in 1976 in the basement of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church on Dunmore Road in Medicine Hat, AB. In 1977 Mr. Harry Veiner donated a parcel of land, situated in Veinerville, on which the school presently stands. In 1978 a full-size gymnasium, kitchen and storage areas were added and the school was moved out of the church basement to Veinerville.

The present facility recently underwent a name change from, Veinerville Christian Academy to, Higher Ground Christian School, to better reflect our goals. The gymnasium has been named, Harry Veiner Memorial Gymnasium. The school is situated off the 41A highway in the small hamlet of Veinerville. There is a school sign along the highway.

CHAPTER II - BUSINESS

CURRICULUM

Higher Ground Christian School presently offers Kindergarten through to grades 9. The school follows curriculum guidelines established by the Alberta Conference of the SDA, and is in harmony with the requirements set by the Alberta Ministry of Education.

Further, it is the goal of the teaching staff of HGCS to integrate spiritual lessons/applications to the curriculum content areas assigned to them.

STAFFING

The Department of Education of the Alberta Conference of the SDA Church in consultation with the school board has the responsibility of selecting teachers.

Appointments are made using the following criteria:

- All of the faculty must be members in good standing of a local SDA Church.
- Each appointee must make an affirmation of the philosophy of the school, and agree to, and support, the objectives of Christian Education.
- Teachers must hold a valid Alberta Teaching Certificate, as well as certification from the SDA Church in Canada.
- Teachers will make every effort to apply the principles of God's Word to all areas of study.

SCHOOL BOARD

The School Board is elected by the Church constituency: The School Board is responsible for the operation of the school within the guidelines and policies adopted by the Education Department of the Alberta Conference of the SDA Church and by the Alberta Ministry of Education.

The principal and all staff through him/her are directly responsible to the School Board. The School Board, in turn, is accountable to the Alberta Conference Department of Education. Of course it is never to be forgotten that each person involved in the structure is finally and ultimately accountable to God for the way in which they conduct their affairs and discharge their duties. (See the Appendix for Organizational Chart).

HOME & SCHOOL

The Home & School Association is a parent led group that:

- Plans meetings to advance the cause of Christian Education in the home and at school.
- Co-ordinates volunteer programs such as Room Volunteers, with the assistance of the teachers.
- Organizes fundraisers for school projects.
- Assists with Field Trips and other school-sponsored outings or events.

VOLUNTEERS

Parents, church members, and other volunteers from the community are welcome and their time helping out at the school is greatly appreciated. However, there are several requirements that need to be met in order to be a regular volunteer at the school.

Those wishing to volunteer need to contact the school principal or classroom teacher they would like to volunteer for and make arrangements with them to fit a time and task that best fits the needs of the school and the skills of the volunteer.

The following forms need to be completed for any volunteers working directly with students or around the school during the school hours:

- **Police Check with vulnerable sector search** (every 3 years – receipts may be submitted to the school for reimbursement)
- **AB children services intervention record check** (every year - This is free at the Provincial Building in downtown Medicine Hat - first floor)

Volunteers must sign in and out at the office when volunteering during school hours.

COMMUNICATION

Parents are encouraged to call the school for information or to arrange an interview. Parents dissatisfied with any specific happening are asked to speak first with the teacher involved. Attempt to work through the problem with the teacher at least a couple of times, allowing enough time to pass for appropriate steps to be taken. Contact the Principal if an agreement cannot be reached with the teacher. This follows the Dispute Resolution Procedure adopted by our school. Parents are encouraged to discuss any general concern, observation, or suggestion for improvement at any time. We also appreciate hearing positive comments.

Teachers are concerned for the wellbeing of each and every student. Students are encouraged to discuss matters of concern with their teachers. Your Principal is always happy to listen and help. Staff are not always aware of students' problems, please feel free to approach us.

Contact with parents regarding their children's progress and performance is an important part of our program. Apart from formal reports, teachers communicate with parents verbally, through phone calls, interviews and letters.

From time to time, as the need arises, there will be letters from the Principal, informing about special activities or events.

NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY

HGCS admits students of any race, religion, colour, nationality or ethnic origin. However, being a Christian school, based on Christian principles, the school will only accept students whose parents consent to and support them being trained in accordance with Biblical principles. We welcome any young person who desires a character-building education and is willing to support the standards of the school and comply with its regulations.

PARENTS AND STUDENTS

- Are asked to study this Handbook carefully.
- **THIS HANDBOOK IS SUBJECT TO ONGOING REVIEW**
- **Parents** are encouraged to be involved in our school activities by:
 - a. Completing and signing the Student Application Form and accompanying forms, indicating they have read, understood and are in agreement with the policies and regulations of Higher Ground Christian School.
 - b. Accepting responsibility for conferences with teachers and students when a situation warrants it.
 - c. **Volunteering** in the classroom, helping with school cleaning/maintenance bees, or chaperoning students on field trips as they are able.
- **Students** must be willing to support the school by:
 - d. Agreeing to adhere to the standards and regulations of the school as outlined in the School Handbook, and other publications by the school.
 - e. Demonstrating their commitment by effort and conduct in and out of school.

Note: While we believe that Christian Education should be available to all children of Christian parents, we realize our resources are limited. Students will only be accepted when it is felt that the school can meet their educational needs.

CHAPTER III - ADMISSION PROTOCOL

ADMISSION POLICY

- To be admitted to Kindergarten, students must be a minimum of five (5) years of age on or before December 31st of the school year.
- To be admitted to Grade 1, students must be a minimum of six (6) years of age on or before December 31st of the school year.

Admission Procedures for New Students

The following procedures are normally followed:

- Families making inquiry receive an information package. Normally interviews will not be held before the information package has been received and studied.
- The student registration form is completed and returned. Parents who have questions may request an interview at this time. The receipt of all registrations will be acknowledged.
- Families applying for the first time will be asked to attend an interview. Both parents/guardians should be present at the interview whenever possible.
- Kindergarten and Grade 1 students should attend the orientation day held in the spring.
- Students who have not been in a regular day school previously to enrolling, or are from another country, may be required to take a series of placement and achievement tests. Grade placement will be determined from the tests results.
- All applicants (new and returning) will be brought before the Admissions Committee each year and submitted to the School Board for approval.

READINESS

All children do not mature at the same rate; therefore, readiness is a factor in accepting the child into the school program.

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS

As a basic aspect of education, evaluation: addresses the diagnosis of the learner's needs and their current educational status, prescribes learning activities, and measures learning outcomes. The growth of the learner is its primary concern.

WAITING LIST

At the request of the parents, a student's name will be placed on the waiting list if classes are full. Families on the waiting list will be notified whenever a vacancy arises.

CHAPTER IV - ACADEMICS

REPORT CARDS

The goal of the teacher(s) at this school is to keep parents informed of their child's progress. If you have any concerns about your child's progress, please contact your child's teacher at any time throughout the school year. The school year consists of three Terms. Report Cards will be sent home at the end of each term.

STUDENT-TEACHER-PARENT (STP) CONFERENCE

Twice a year Higher Ground Christian School has STP conferences. This is a time for parents to receive a more in-depth explanation of their child's progress. The students are asked to attend these conferences with their parents. It is of great value for students to know how they are doing and then set goals for improvement with teachers and parents.

PROVINCIAL ACHEIVEMENT TESTS

In May and June, all Alberta students in Grades Six and Nine are expected to write provincial tests for their grade levels. The tests are designed to show how well students are meeting the provincial standards. Grades 6 and 9 students write tests in Mathematics, Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. Grade 9 students may write in January in some cases.

HOMEWORK

Throughout the year students will periodically have homework. Most often it will consist of incomplete class assignments, although there may be assigned homework at times during the year. Students will be held accountable for completing tasks. This develops personal responsibility in the child for his/her school success.

COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS

In order for a student to learn and be successful, he/she must complete assignments accurately and on time. A student who falls behind is rarely able to catch up adequately. Any student, who has incomplete or poorly done assignments or homework, may be required to stay in and complete or redo the required assignments at recess and lunch hour.

CHAPTER V - FINANCIAL INFORMATION

REGISTRATION AND TUITION FEES

A registration fee of \$100 will be charged each year per student to help cover registration, activity, and material fees. The breakdown is as follows: \$10 registration fee, \$60 activity fee, and \$30 material fees. The activity fees will help to provide basic field trips and activities that add to the curriculum. The material fees will help to cover costs for basic classroom supplies such as paper, notebooks, pencils, erasers, rulers, and math sets, as well as basic art supplies.

In an effort to make Christian education affordable to as many families as possible, we charge a low tuition fee as follows:

Kindergarten – Free

Grades 1-9

1st child in a household - \$50 per month (\$500 for full year)

2nd child in a household - \$25 per month (\$250 for full year)

3rd child in a household – Free

Tuition assistance is also available through an application process.

Note: Tuition fees for education are tax deductible and all tuition paid to HGCS will have tax deductible receipts issued after the year end for Income Tax Purposes.

OPERATING COSTS

In order to have a sound operating budget; Higher Ground Christian School receives income from several sources:

- Under the Independent School Support Act we receive a grant on a per-student basis from the Provincial Government of Alberta. This does not include capital expenditure. We are very thankful for this grant.
- The majority of remaining operating costs are provided by the strong financial support from local members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- Alberta Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church - Contributes some teacher benefits and other grants.
- HGCS Fundraisers - the school holds fundraisers throughout the year. NOTE: These fundraisers need to be parent supported.
- Direct contributions - Individuals also make contributions through the Medicine Hat Seventh-day Adventist church, allocating it specifically to HGCS.

GIFTS

- Any monetary gift made to Higher Ground Christian School should be written to Medicine Hat Seventh-day Adventist Church, with a notation to the effect that such funds are intended for the school. An official receipt will then be given at the end of the year for Income Tax Purposes.
- In-kind donations (equipment or school supplies, other) of less than \$1,000 and more than \$20, will receive a tax-deductible receipt. When an in-kind donation is worth more than \$1,000, you'll need a fair market value appraisal to be made by a third-party. A written letter by that third party must accompany your in-kind donation. You will receive a tax deductible, receipt for any donations.

CHARGES

Will be made for:

- Damage to school property and school equipment.
- Loss of textbooks, library materials.

BAND FEES

Parents/guardians are asked to pay a \$50/year fee to help cover the costs of instrument rentals and music purchases. This is only applicable for grades 4 to 9 in the years that we run a band program.

STUDENT ACCIDENT INSURANCE

Each child is covered by a 24 hour, 365 days a year insurance policy. This policy covers students for illness and injury. More information is available from the school office.

NOTE: This is also provided at no extra cost.

Financing Christian Education is a cooperative effort, involving teamwork from many individuals.

CHAPTER VI - GENERAL SCHOOL POLICIES

GENERAL RULES OF STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

School regulations are designed not only for the safety and welfare of the students and the care of the school facility, but primarily to maximize learning, self-respect, respect for others, and ultimately respect for God's authority over our lives.

SCHOOL VALUES

School rules are based on the following core values:

- Personal responsibility
- Respect
- Fairness

SAFETY RULES

- Walk carefully and quietly (NO RUNNING) through the hallways and keep to the right.
- Students are not permitted to throw snowballs, rocks or water on the school premises, or objects in classrooms or hallways.
- Teasing, fighting and bullying are strictly forbidden.

PROPERTY RULES

- Students must play in only approved areas. Trees, shrubbery, fixtures and other landscaping are not to be damaged in any way. We do not allow tree climbing.
- Junior High students (grades 7 to 9) may be expected to eat lunch in their classroom or kitchen; no food is to be eaten in the gym, foyer, or hallways.
- It is the student's responsibility to clean up after themselves; use appropriate recycling or garbage containers provided.
- Students are responsible for keeping classrooms, desks, lockers and counters tidy. Please keep the floor free of books, clothing and other equipment.
- Writing or defacing furniture or walls is a serious offence with severe consequences.
- Anyone responsible for willful damage to school property or equipment may be assessed for the full replacement or repair cost.

CONDUCT RULES

- Students are not permitted to use personal electronics such as: iPods, cell phones, MP3's, etc. at school or during school hours. They may be used on the bus as the bus driver sees fit. They are to be placed in your lockers or given to the teacher during school hours. Their safety is the student's responsibility.
- Students are not permitted to bring skateboards, rollerblades or other distracting articles to school.
- Gum chewing is not permitted in the school or on the bus at any time.
- Caps, hats, and hoods can be used only in the gym or outdoors.
- Students should not distract others from learning during class time by doing things like seeking to strike up a conversation or by passing notes.
- Students are expected to refrain from dancing, singing, playing, listening to, or participating in any music whose lyrics or rhythm detracts from the Christian values we uphold and support.
- Abstinence from tobacco, alcoholic beverages and non-prescribed drugs is expected of every student.
- Students must avoid the use of coarse, questionable language.
- Good, wholesome friendships between boys and girls are encouraged. Bodily contact is to be avoided.
- Students in Kindergarten to grade 9 are not allowed to leave the school grounds during the school day without written permission.
- Students are expected to show courtesy and respect to all staff members, adults, volunteers and other students within the school.
- Hallways provide convenient ways of getting from place to place. Because doors open into them and students enter the hallways in various locations, running in the hallways is dangerous and not allowed.
- Washrooms are designated for special purposes and are not roomy enough for extensive discussions, so please do not loiter in them. One student at a time is allowed in the washroom. A student must obtain a Washroom Pass from the teacher prior to leaving their present activity.

- Accidents will happen with a large number of people crowded into relatively small places. Please report these and any breakage to the office immediately.
- Every year many articles are lost or misplaced. Often owners of these articles are difficult to find, so these articles are then given to the Salvation Army. Please label clothing, footwear, backpacks, cases and kits so that they can be returned to you. Any unidentified articles will be kept in the office or in a Lost & Found box in the Janitors closet, for a period of time.
- Our school is a place for learning. As teachers, we will try to make it as interesting and meaningful as we know how. The facilities have been built for your use. Please use them appropriately.
- A lot of hard work has gone into making the school clean and attractive. Let's keep the school and grounds looking nice by keeping them clean. Use the labeled boxes for recycling and garbage cans for garbage.
- Please use proper exits for entering and exiting the building. All students must enter using the main entrance unless instructed otherwise by a teacher.

SCHOOL DRESS CODE

Attention to outward appearance is an important part of an individual's social development. Personal clothing is basically a matter of individual taste. However, students dress reveals much about their attitude toward themselves, their peers and to God. Calling attention to oneself unnecessarily through dress is not an acceptable part of the Christian life.

Note the Following Guidelines:

- Clothing and accessories should reflect what is considered "conservatively" normal in our culture and not representative of radical or fringe elements of society.
- Clothes should be clean, in good taste, modest, and properly fastened.
- Any clothing or accessories with slogans or pictures must be in good Christian character. Clothing bearing symbols of illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco products, music groups, having sexual connotations, or vulgar language is not to be worn.
- Clothes that reveal a bare stomach, full shoulders, chest, or back are not appropriate.
- If make-up is used, it should have a natural appearance.
- Shorts must be of modest length ie. No Short-shorts. Cutoffs should be hemmed neatly.
- Skirts must be of modest length, to the top of the knees unless shorts or leggings are worn underneath. When they are worn appropriate behavior must be modeled.

A good general policy regarding the dress code is: if there is **ANY QUESTION** about an item being inappropriate, **DO NOT WEAR IT**. It is the prerogative of the faculty to interpret styles of dress and grooming, consistent with the standards of the school. Those who violate these guidelines will have their parents called and asked to return home to change or be provided with alternative clothing for the day.

Clothing also needs to be appropriate for the weather and activities of the day. For instance, proper running shoes and clothing needs to be worn for PE classes and warm jackets, snow pants, gloves, hats and winter boots should be worn to school each day during the winter months.

The cooperation of the parents/guardians in guiding their child/children in these areas is greatly appreciated.

HALL LOCKERS AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS

The care of personal equipment and belongings are the responsibility of the student. Lockers are provided for this purpose.

- Only combination locks are to be used on school lockers. All lock combinations **MUST** be registered with the office. Non-registered locks will be cut from the locker.
- All pictures must be in good taste.
- All items must be removed from the locker by the end of the school year.
- The school reserves the right to inspect lockers at any time. Usually this is done with the student present, unless there is reasonable suspicion of illegal items being stored in the locker.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Education is shared responsibility among students, staff, parents, and the community. We are all responsible for making our school safe. The staff, students, and parents of Higher Ground Christian School believe we are all responsible for ensuring the emotional, spiritual, and physical safety of all our students and staff. We must treat one another with dignity, respect, fairness, and we need to work within the framework of rights and responsibilities.

Student are entitled to rights when they behave responsibly.

- **Students have the right to LEARN in this school.** They have the responsibility to listen to instructions, work quietly, and complete their assignments.
- **Students have the right to HEAR AND BE HEARD.** It is their responsibility to listen when others are speaking and to present their thoughts and opinions in a thoughtful, courteous manner.
- **Students have the right to be RESPECTED in school.** It is their responsibility to treat others the way they would like to be treated.
- **Students have the right to be SAFE in school.** It is their responsibility to treat others the way they would like to be treated.
- **Students have a right to PRIVACY and to their own PERSONAL SPACE.** It is their responsibility to respect the personal property of others, and their right to privacy.

When one person violates the rights of another, the environment is marred, and school becomes an unhappy place for everyone.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

When there is inappropriate behaviour there will be consequences. In discerning the appropriate consequences, a staff member will use discretion. In doing so, one will consider the relevance, severity, intensity, duration, and frequency of the inappropriate behaviour.

The procedure for establishing appropriate consequences may include the following:

- 1. Warning:** A teacher will remind the student of the school rules. (Incident may be documented on an *Incidence Report*.)
- 2. Parent Contact:** If a student has chosen not to follow the rules of the school, a phone call will be made to the parents, and disciplinary action will be taken. The incident will be documented on an Incidence Report if a phone call needs to be made.
- 3. Meeting:** The principal/teacher will meet with the student and parents to discuss a future plan. This may include detention, suspension, or attendance at a different school. This will also be documented on the Incidence Report.

DETENTION

Detentions will be used as a consequence for inappropriate behaviour. Students will stay in at recess and/or lunch recess for the allotted time specified by the teacher.

SUSPENSION

If the previous discipline procedures have not changed a students' behaviour, or the incident is serious enough consequences may be a 1 day, 2 day, or 1 week suspension.

EXPULSION

When from all indications, a student is not benefiting from, or continuously disrupting, the program provided by HGCS, the school board might consider an expulsion. If a student is expelled, the board will offer the student the option of teacher directed home schooling, or for the remainder of the school year the student may enroll in another school of the parents choosing.

PROBATION

Probation gives the student an opportunity to correct a serious problem. If he/she does not improve to a satisfactory level, the consequences could be expulsion from the school.

Reasons for Probation:

- Insufficient academic progress.
- Continued, deliberate disobedience, as evidenced by multiple Incidence Reports.
- A rebellious spirit, which is unchanged after counseling and prayer by the teachers.
- A continued negative attitude and bad influence upon other students
- Committing a serious breach of conduct inside or outside of the school, as this has an adverse effect upon the testimony of the school.
- Failure of the parents to comply with the disciplinary procedures of the school.

RIGHT TO APPEAL

Parents/students have the right to appeal any board disciplinary action. A written appeal must be presented to the Principal within one week of the decision. The school board will then set a date to meet with the student and his/her parents to discuss the matter. The board's decision after that meeting is final.

CHAPTER VII - THE SCHOOL WEEK

THE SCHOOL WEEK AND HOURS OF OPERATION

Classes run Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. and Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Please see the attached school calendar.

ATTENDANCE

The goal for all students should be perfect attendance, but, sometimes emergencies occur and it is not always possible to be in school. However, every day missed poses a problem. It is impossible to miss class and not miss instruction.

The school calendar has been designed so that students have substantial breaks throughout the year. Please use these breaks as a guide when planning your family vacations.

Please write a note if you know that your child is not going to be in school on a given day. If the absence is unforeseen e.g. illness, please call the school by 8:00 am to let us know that your child will not be coming. Messages are listened to daily. When the student returns to school, please send a written excuse.

TARDINESS

- Students are expected to be in their classes on time with the appropriate materials. Being on time is an important characteristic in the world of work. Students should begin to practice this important habit at an early age.
- Students should arrive on time, but not prior to 8:15 a.m. Any exceptions to this rule should be arranged in advance with the principal and his/her teacher. Students are expected to go directly home after dismissal each school day.
- Teacher supervision begins 15 minutes before school opens and ends 15 minutes after school dismissal each school day.
- Those who ride the bus are expected to be on time to meet their bus in the morning, and on the bus by 10 minutes after dismissal (see Bussing Contract).

ILLNESS

If your child becomes ill during the day, you will be notified. Please do not send a sick child to school as there are limited facilities for care or comfort, and illness may spread to other children.

NOTE: This means that if your child has a fever or throws up, we ask that you keep them home until 24 hrs after the fever and vomiting have stopped. Please call the school and the bus driver to inform us of their absence (see Bussing Contract).

BICYCLES AT SCHOOL

Children who ride bicycles to school should park them in the yard upon arrival. Students are not allowed to ride bicycles during the school day.

AFTER SCHOOL

The safety of students is of the utmost importance. To make sure that all students are safe and accounted for, we would ask for the cooperation of parents and students on the following matters:

- Students should be picked up from school between 3:00 and 3:15 pm. **We are unable to provide supervised care beyond this time.**
- If you are taking the bus, please be on the bus by 3:25 so that the driver may leave promptly.
- Students who are walking home are to go directly home.

- **NOTE:** A note or a phone call from the parents/guardian is required for any students who are going home with friends.

We want to develop a system so that the whereabouts of students is known at all times. These requirements are meant to keep your child safe.

SCHOOL CLOSURE

- In the event of a blizzard or other severe weather, Higher Ground Christian School will not be open. Listen to **CHAT**, **PraiseFM**, or **My96** radio for information on school closures. Families will also be notified with a phone call by 7:00 a.m. if there is a school closure with Higher Ground Christian School.
- If there is a school closure once classes have begun for the day parents will be contacted. This could be due to water or power outages lasting longer than 2 hours. The bus will then pick the children up and deliver them home, or to their alternate authorized guardians.

SPECIAL EVENTS / FIELD TRIPS

Education occurs both inside and outside the classroom. Special events are times for students to learn, have fun and experience new things. These activities are part of the school day and all students are asked to participate. Parents will be notified of any such event(s) via letter and Permission Form, which will be sent home with the student prior to each event.

PERMISSION FORMS

Whenever students go off school grounds for a field trip or other special event, the school needs to have a permission slip signed by the parent/guardian of the child(ren). Please make sure that your slip is in by the day of the trip. Unfortunately, students without signed permission slips WILL NOT be permitted to participate in these events; this will be strictly enforced.

CHAPTER VIII - ZERO TOLERANCE FOR VIOLENCE

Violence is defined as an act, word, or look with intent to hurt or injure another person.

Children learn most effectively when they feel safe, secure, and free from fear. This is the kind of environment that we want at Higher Ground Christian School. But sometimes, incidents occur that interfere with work and learning and have disturbing effects on both students and staff. Such incidents must not be allowed to happen. The school board and staff of HGCS endeavor to make our school violence and bully free.

WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

- If two students are calling each other or staff members names.
- If they are yelling at one another or a staff member.
- If they are shoving each other or a staff member.
- If they are making threats towards anyone.

These are all forms of violence.

Once bullying may have been dismissed as "fooling around", today we recognize it for what it is - threatening and intimidating behaviour.

Once, name calling may have been seen as "kids being kids", today we recognize it as being cruel and damaging. **These violent behaviours will not be acceptable in our school.**

WHAT DOES ZERO TOLERANCE AT OUR SCHOOL MEAN?

Any act of violence committed at Higher Ground Christian School is unacceptable and will have immediate consequences. The consequences can range from restitution to the injured person, to loss of privileges and extra work. If the behaviour continues or is severe enough it may result in expulsion and/or criminal charges being laid.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO MAKE HGCS VIOLENCE FREE?

1. Explain violence to your children.
2. Support our school in the effort to be violence-free.
3. Understand that violence begins with small things.

VIOLENCE INCLUDES

- Name calling
- Bullying
- Threats
- Swearing
- Hitting
- Intimidation
- Willful damage
- Other forms of violence/sexual harassment
- Pornographic material

CHAPTER IX - CONFLICT RESOLUTION

PARENT/TEACHER CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

STEP 1: Visit with the teacher

If there is a problem, which arises that you are concerned about, please take time to inform the teacher regarding your concerns. Our staff is dedicated to assisting in meeting the needs of our students. We are more than willing to listen, and to assist in making the necessary changes to ensure the successful educational performance of your child. If the teacher is not aware that there is a problem, then he/she cannot take the appropriate steps to address the issue.

At the conclusion of the meeting, parent and teacher need to fill out the appropriate ***Parent/Teacher Resolution Form***, identifying the concerns discussed, the resolution needs to be agreed to by both parties. If no resolution is reached, the reasons need to be listed as to why there is an impasse. Signed copies of this form are to be retained by both the teacher and the parent, with the original to be given to the Principal to be filed in the Principal's office. If no resolution is agreed upon, both parties should meet with the Principal to discuss the situation. We do request you make at least two attempts to resolve the situation with the teacher.

STEP 2: Visit with the Principal

The Principal will undertake to meet individually with the parent and the teacher to listen to their concerns. He will review the documentation provided to him through the resolution process and will call a meeting with the parent and teacher. At this meeting an agreement will be reached to resolve the issue, a ***Principal's Resolution Form***, will be filled out; indicating the steps taken previously, identifying the concerns discussed, and the resolution which is agreed to by both parties. If no resolution is reached, the reasons need to be listed as to why there is an impasse. Signed copies of this form are to be retained by all parties involved, with the original being filed in the Principal's office.

STEP 3: Meet with the Disciplinary Committee

If no resolution is reached, or there is a recurrence, the Principal will make the necessary arrangements for the parent to take their concerns to the members of the Disciplinary Committee.

The Disciplinary Committee will consist of: Principal, School Board Chair, Head Elder and one Parent who is a member in good standing of the SDA Church.

It is important to follow the steps of this procedure to give administration ample opportunity to resolve the situation in an appropriate manner, to provide a teacher time to make any necessary changes, and the parent time to fully evaluate the situation in a reasonable manner.

STEP 4: Meet with the School Board

If no resolution results after meeting with the Disciplinary Committee, arrangements will be made for the student and parents to meet with the School Board.

Tips for a Good Meeting with a Teacher

1. If you are angry or upset about an issue, wait until you have calmed down. "Striking while the iron is hot" may make you feel better at the time by getting it off your chest, but could also cause more damage and make the situation worse.
2. Make an appointment to meet with the teacher outside of regular school hours. The teacher has a responsibility to be teaching or supervising students, and it is in your best interest to have the teacher's full attention, and there will be less restrictions on the amount of time the teacher will be able to meet with you.
3. Do not engage in an argument or shouting match with the teacher. If you feel the teacher is being unreasonable, simply say you are going to speak to the Principal about it. In the reverse situation, where a parent is being unreasonable, the teacher will do the same thing in seeking the Principal to mediate.
4. Try to see the other person's point of view. Taking some time to walk in the other person's shoes can bring a new perspective to the issue, and new solutions may result.
5. Be reasonable in your approach and expectations.

6. Treat the other person the way you would want to be treated under similar circumstances.
7. Avoid the use of over generalizations like "You always pick on my child" and "You - never punish that child," because they are seldom correct.
8. Don't accuse.
9. Listen to what the teacher has to say.
10. Come with a positive attitude to help make our school a better place by working with the teacher.

ORDER OF PROTOCOL

Teacher - Principal - Disciplinary Committee - School Board
Present problems to the person involved and proceed through the process.

CHAPTER X - EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

FIRE DRILLS AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

1. When the fire bell sounds, walk calmly, in single file to the assigned exit. Don't talk. Listen.
2. The first student through a hall and exit door will hold the door open until all students have passed.
3. All classroom windows and doors are to be closed and lights turned off.
4. All students are to assemble outside in class groupings with the teacher at a designated location facing away from the school. Teachers will take attendance, so each student will be accounted for.
5. All students are to be quiet (no talking) so directions may be heard as given.

TORNADO DRILLS

Several times in recent years schools have been hit by tornadoes. In most instances, fortunately, classes were not in session. In some instances where students were present, school officials familiar with twisters safeguarded the children by taking prompt action just before the tornadoes hit. **Tornado drills require different actions than fire drills.**

Remember that a tornado "Watch" is issued when the possibility of tornadoes exists, and a tornado "Warning" is issued when a tornado has been spotted or indicated on radar. Remember also there may not be time for a tornado Warning before a twister strikes. Tornadoes form suddenly. Teachers and students should know the difference between a "Watch" and a "Warning".

School officials have a plan for rapid dissemination of tornado Watches and Warnings to all the classrooms in the school.

Our school has designated our basement as a shelter area. We may also use the interior hallways on the ground floor that are not parallel to the tornado's path, which is usually from the southwest. We are not to use gymnasiums, auditoriums, or other rooms with wide free-span roofs. Your teachers will conduct drills for you to learn your designated shelter areas.

School Administrators have established procedures governing use or non-use of school buses during tornado Watches and Warnings. Generally speaking, school buses should continue to operate during tornado Watches, but not during tornado Warnings. School buses are easily rolled by tornado winds.

During a tornado Watch, specific teachers or other school staff members should be designated to monitor commercial radio or TV for tornado Warnings. Weather spotters also should keep an eye on the sky for dark, rolling clouds, hail, driving rain, or a sudden increase in wind, in addition to the telltale funnel. Tornadoes are often obscured by precipitation or darkness. Other public agencies will report tornado sightings.

If you are outside, one of the teachers will round up all the children in the playground or other outdoor area during a tornado Warning. The Teacher will grab the emergency preparedness kit and take the children to the designated SAFE ZONE.

Most tornado deaths are caused by head injuries.

When you are assembled in the school basement or interior hallways during a tornado drill or Warning, you will be instructed to respond to a specific command to assume protective postures facing interior walls, when the danger is imminent. Such a command might be: "Everybody down!" It is essential that this command be instantly understood and obeyed.

If our school bus is caught in the open when a tornado is approaching, the bus driver will escort you to a nearby ditch or ravine and ask you to lie face down, hands over your head. You will be far enough away so the bus cannot topple on you.

EARTHQUAKE DRILLS AND PROCEDURES

The following plan has been developed in the event of an earthquake.

1. During the first two hours after an earthquake, short-term care and long-term care (up to 24 hours) will be provided for children whose parents may be unable to reach the school.
2. No student will be dismissed from school unless a parent/guardian comes for him/her.
3. No child will be allowed to leave with another person, even a relative or babysitter, unless we have written permission to that effect, or that particular person is listed as the individual to be notified in the event of an emergency on the **Application Form** on file in the office. For this reason, **it is very important that this is updated during registration each year.**
4. All parents/guardians, who come for students, must have them signed out at the office or at the alternative Student Release Station, this will be at the entrance gate of the school.
5. We are prepared to care for children in the event of a critical situation, or if parents are not able to reach the school. We have various people with first aid training and will be in communication with local emergency services. We do ask for your help in the following areas:
 - Please do not call the school; we must have the lines open for emergency calls.
 - Following an earthquake or other emergency, do not immediately drive to the school; streets and access to our school may be cluttered with debris; the school access route and street entrance areas must remain clear for emergency vehicles.
 - Listen to the radio, in particular CHAT 94.5 information and directions will be given over the radio.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS BEFORE/DURING/AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE

Before

- **Be aware** of the school's earthquake policy and procedures.
- Provide the school with the name of an alternate guardian.

During - Take cover under a table or in a doorway away from windows in the "CRASH" position.

After

- **Do not** phone the school - they may be trying to reach you or emergency response services.
- When safe to travel, go to the school to collect your child.
- NOTE: Your child will not be released otherwise.
- If you are unable to reach the school, contact the designated guardian to collect your child.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENTS IN THE EVENT OF AN EARTHQUAKE

Before

- Learn what to expect and what to do during an earthquake
- Identify hazards in the classroom, school, and home.
- Know the name, address and phone number of your guardian, if designated by your parents.

During

- Follow the teacher's instructions.
- **TAKE COVER** under a desk or table.
- Assume the **CRASH** position and **COUNT** to 60.
- If out of the classroom, take cover in a doorway in the **CRASH** position; count to 60, join the nearest class when the shaking stops.

After

- If outdoors, **DO NOT** re-enter the school without permission - it may not be safe to do so.
- **DO NOT** leave the school grounds without permission; be aware that your parent/guardian may be delayed in coming. Follow the evacuation instructions from the teacher or designated monitor.
- Wear shoes.
- Comfort and reassure other students.

What is the "CRASH" position?

One should assume the **CRASH** position on their knees, head down, hands clasped on the back of the neck or head, covered with a book or jacket if possible. Count aloud to 60 - earthquakes rarely last longer than 60 seconds, and counting is calming.

Student Code of Conduct

Purpose

In keeping with its mission and Alberta legislation, and its Safe and Caring Policy, the Alberta Conference of SDA Church is committed to:

- Providing all students with a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment;
- Establishing a reasonable and caring balance between individual and collective rights, freedoms and responsibilities within the school community; and,
- Publishing as part of student registration, school start information and other forms, writing expectations for student behaviour (to students and their parents) while at school, at school-related activities, or while engaging in activities that may have an impact on others in the school.

Expected Conduct

Consistent with Section 13 of the School Act and in keeping with the mission and vision of Alberta Conference of SDA Church each student is responsible for acting positively in support of a welcoming and caring learning environment by:

- Acting at all times in keeping with the vision and mission underlying the school;
- Respecting oneself and the rights of others in the school;
- Conducting oneself in a manner that contributes to a welcoming, caring and respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging;
- Refrain from and refuse to tolerate bullying whether in or outside of the school or school hours or electronically;
- Inform a responsible, trusted and caring adult in a timely manner of incidents of bullying, harassment, intimidation or other unwelcoming or uncaring acts;
- Attend school regularly and punctually;
- Diligently and actively being prepared to learn and actively pursue learning;
- Being accountable for individual behaviours to teachers and school staff;
- Cooperating with school staff to make the school a positive learning environment for all; and,
- Knowing and following the rules of the school;

Unacceptable Conduct

Unacceptable behaviours that may negatively affect a member of the Alberta Conference of SDA Church community or the school's learning environment, whether in or outside of the school or school hours or electronically, include, but are not limited to:

- *Discrimination.* In keeping with the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, no student or person may discriminate against a student on the basis of an individual student's race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religious beliefs, gender (including pregnancy, sexual harassment, and gender identity) physical disability, mental disability, marital status, family status, source of income or sexual orientation.
- *Acts of bullying, harassment or intimidation.* As defined by the School Act, Section 1.1(b.1) bullying is defined as the "repeated and hostile or demeaning behaviour by an individual in the school community where the behaviour is intended to cause harm, fear or distress to one more individuals in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to an individual's reputation.
- Physical violence.
- *Acts of retribution* against an individual who has intervened to prevent bullying or informed about bullying or other unacceptable behavior.
- *Illegal activities* including, those involving illegal or restricted substances, possession or use or threat of use of weapons, and theft or damage to property.

Consequences

Students are expected to conduct themselves in keeping with their responsibilities as students.

The school will investigate each instance of unacceptable conduct and pursue disciplinary action in a matter consistent with the principles of fundamental justice and the school's student discipline policy. In grave circumstances, an individual found to have engaged in unacceptable conduct may be subject to possible suspension or expulsion.

Remediation and Support

In order to foster a positive learning environment, the Alberta Conference of SDA Church will engage in reasonable and caring efforts to support both the individual(s) who may have been the subject or victim(s) of unacceptable behaviour(s) and to support perpetrators of unacceptable conduct to improve their conduct.

Supportive actions the Alberta Conference of SDA Church may include, but are not limited to:

- Mentoring of individual students by older students;
- More focused attention to individual students;
- Regular follow-up meetings of specific teachers with individual students;
- Student Peer Support Groups, including GSA's as appropriate;
- Counseling; and Restorative justice processes.

Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Teaching and Learning Environment Policy

[Alberta Conference of SDA K-12 Board, June 17, 2015]

PART I

Consistent with its mission and vision, Alberta Conference of SDA K-12 Board is committed to a safe, inclusive, equitable, and welcoming learning and teaching environment for all students.

All students have the right to learn and work in an environment free of discrimination, prejudice, and harassment. This right is guaranteed under the

- *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*;
- The *Alberta Human Rights Act* as amended March 10, 2015, and the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, including the right not to be discriminated against by reason of race, national origin, colour, religion or gender identity or gender expression. Legislation also provides as a fundamental right the “right of parents to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children;” and,
- Requirements of the *Alberta School Act* (and upon Proclamation the *Education Act, Section 35.1*) that provide for support measures that support the equality and non-discrimination of dignity of students who may belong to minority groups, including sexual orientation.

PART II

The Alberta Conference of SDA K-12 Board will not tolerate harassment, bullying, intimidation, or discrimination on the basis of a person's actual or perceived differences or gender identity or gender expression.

The Alberta Conference of SDA K-12 Board believes that all students have the right to:

- be treated fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect;
- have their confidentiality protected and respected;
- self-identification and determination;
- freedom of conscience, expression, and association;
- be fully included and represented in an inclusive, positive, and respectful manner by all school personnel;
- have equitable access to the same supports, services, and protections provided to heterosexual students and their families;
- have avenues of recourse (without fear of reprisal) available to them when they are victims of harassment, prejudice, discrimination, intimidation, bullying, and/or violence; and
- Have their unique identities, families, cultures, and communities included, valued and respected within the school environment.

PART III

The Alberta Conference of SDA K-12 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 such discriminatory behaviours and complaints will be taken seriously, documented, and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policy and procedures.
- Improve students’ understanding of the individual lives of minorities, including sexual and gender minorities, and their families, cultures, and communities.
- Develop, implement, and evaluate inclusive educational strategies, professional development opportunities, and administrative guidelines to ensure that minorities including gender minorities and

their families are treated with respect and dignity in all aspects of the school community in a manner consistent with the school's mission and vision.

To assist teachers and school leaders with implementation measures, the following Alberta Education resources may be used by school staff to assist with implementation of 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

PART IV

When implementing the above policy directions, the Alberta Conference of SDA K-12 Board will act reasonably in the best interests of the student in keeping with the guidelines outlined by the Supreme Court of Canada (*Loyola College vs. Quebec*, 2015). In that case, the Court outlined the obligations of teachers in a private religious school in respect to delivering a prescribed provincial curriculum related to other religions and worldviews and at the same time teach the school's faith tradition.

- Loyola's teachers must be permitted to describe and explain Catholic doctrine and ethical beliefs from the Catholic perspective, and cannot be required to adopt a neutral position.
- Loyola's teachers must describe and explain the ethical beliefs and doctrines of other religions in an objective and respectful way.
- Loyola's teachers 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, Loyola's teachers may identify what Catholic beliefs are, why Catholics follow those beliefs, 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.
- Loyola's teachers cannot be expected to teach ethics or religious doctrines that are contrary to the Catholic faith in a way that portrays them as equally credible or worthy of belief. Respect, tolerance, and understanding are all properly required, and the highlighting of differences must not give rise to denigration or derision. However, ensuring that all viewpoints are regarded as equally credible or worthy of belief would require a degree of disconnect from, and suppression of, Loyola's own religious perspective that is incompatible with freedom of religion.