

## APPENDIX 4: COMMON QUESTIONS

### **What are the legal responsibilities of a parent or guardian to provide his/her child with an education?**

*The Public Schools Act* states that every parent or guardian must ensure that a child of compulsory school age attends school.

Compulsory school age means any person over the age of 7 years and under the age of 16 years.

Exceptions whereby a child may be excluded from school on a yearly basis include:

- A child is 15 years of age and has approval from school authorities and the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) to enter the workforce, take apprenticeship or other training.
- A child is attending private school.
- A child is being home schooled; the Home Schooling Office of the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth is notified, and the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) provide the Home Schooling Office with a comprehensive education plan and submit two annual reports.

A child may be excused on a daily basis:

- If a child is unable to attend because of illness (or other unavoidable cause).
- On any day regarded as a holy day by the church or religious denomination with which the child is affiliated.

Parents or guardians can be fined for failing to comply with the legal responsibilities to have children attend school. Parents should consult with the school principal before removing a child from school for any reason.

### **At what age can a child begin school?**

In Manitoba, every person between the ages of 6 and 21 has the right to an education. There are no exceptions or qualifications to this right. Students who have special needs have the same right to education.

Children must begin school by the age of 7.

Under this section in *The Public Schools Act* (PSA), there are certain qualifications regarding age and time periods. For further and more specific information, check sections 258(2) and 259 of the PSA.

### **What if the school and parents do not agree on decisions that are made about the student or the programming that the school provides?**

Part of the parent's role includes advocating for her or his child. If parents are not satisfied with a school decision, they have the right and a responsibility to share their concerns with those involved with the decision.

The first step is communication between the teacher and the parent. Often, this will be enough to clarify the situation and reach a common understanding. Should this not be the case, however, the next step would be to involve the principal. Most issues are dealt with effectively at this level to the satisfaction of all. However, if an agreement is still not possible, concerns may be brought to the attention of senior school division administration. A parent has the right to address the elected board of trustees with his or her concerns. Parents can also contact the school division office if they would like to bring an issue to the attention of the board of trustees.

**Who determines the curriculum that is taught?**

The curriculum is developed by Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth and is approved by the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth. Implementation of the curriculum is the responsibility of the local school board.

For Early Years, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth mandates a core of required courses that includes language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, health, music, art, and physical education.

In the Middle Years, the mandated curriculum maintains the same core subjects. During these years, optional courses may be chosen by the student, such as music, industrial arts, home economics, and art.

The number of options available to the student expands in the Senior Years. This allows students to mature by exploring areas of interest, and provides students with curriculum options that will assist them in attaining the goals they have after they leave school. The Senior Years curriculum is divided between required and optional courses.

**Who represents parents in the public school system?**

Generally, parents are represented by their elected school official (i.e., school trustee). However, there are other organizations, such as home and school associations, that contribute significantly by lobbying for changes within the educational system.

**Who is responsible for determining a student's programming?**

Parents and teachers should work together to identify the child's learning needs and develop an appropriate plan. While the classroom teacher is responsible for a student's programming, parents have the opportunity to be meaningfully involved in the education of their child.

School divisions and districts are encouraged to make information about student services readily available to the community.

Parents should discuss any concerns about programming with the classroom teacher first. Most issues can be dealt with at this level. If discussion with school division staff is required beyond the level of the classroom teacher, please refer to the line of communication on pages 17 and 18.

**What safeguards exist regarding access to information about a student?**

Student files are strictly confidential and are protected by *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) and *The Personal Health Information Act* (PHIA). They are open only to parents/guardians and school personnel. If it is important that the information be shared with other professionals, such as a family doctor, written permission must be obtained from the child's parents.

**What rights do schools have to discipline students?**

It is the principal's responsibility to oversee the behaviour of each student from the time the student arrives at school until the time he or she leaves for the day.

Also, under *The Public Schools Act*, the principal must oversee the behaviour of students towards one another on their way to and from school and while being transported by the school system.

School divisions have local policies in place that parents/guardians should be aware of. Under *The Public Schools Act*, as well as supporting regulations, the school board, superintendents, principals, and teachers have the right to discipline students for behaviour deemed to be "injurious to the welfare of the school." Teachers and principals are required to maintain order and discipline.

The administration of discipline can come in the form of suspension, or, in extreme cases, expulsion. (A student can only be expelled by a motion of the school board.)

All disciplinary measures must be in compliance with the *Criminal Code of Canada* and existing child welfare acts.

**Who is responsible for student safety at school?**

The principal is responsible for the safety of all students in his or her school from the time of the student's arrival at the school until the student's departure for the day, including the noon hour for those students who are eligible to remain at school. As well, the principal is responsible for students for the period of time they enter in, ride on, and alight from a school bus (as the school bus is considered an extension of the classroom) and during approved field trips.

