



COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

## Catholic schools approve gender dysphoria policy

### *Policy will be 'practical basis for accommodating students': superintendent*

VANCOUVER, July 16, 2014 – In a joint statement today, the Catholic Independent Schools of the Vancouver Archdiocese (CISVA), and the family of Tracey Wilson, an 11-year-old diagnosed with gender dysphoria who had attended a Catholic school, announced the CISVA approval of a new policy that accommodates gender expression and students with gender dysphoria.

The Wilson family is applauding the CISVA for paving the way towards accommodating gender expression and gender dysphoria in youth. It will be the first Catholic school district in Canada to have such a policy.

"I am so glad that the kids in the Vancouver Catholic schools won't have to go through what I went through," says Tracey Wilson. "It was really hard for me because I did not feel accepted at school. Now kids like me will hopefully be supported."

Doug Lauson, CISVA superintendent, said that Catholic teaching does not recognize that a student can change his or her sex/gender. However, the CISVA is committed to providing an inclusive school environment for its students and reasonable accommodation of students' forms of gender expression.

"We expect that this policy will be a practical basis for accommodating students with gender dysphoria, or who express their gender in ways that are different from prevailing stereotypes," said Lauson. "This policy will ensure that Catholic schools are a safe and accepting place for all students."

Lauson said that Tracey's request for accommodation was a new issue for the CISVA. "Had this policy been in place at that time, there would have been a framework to provide Tracey and her family with appropriate support," he said. "We have apologized to Tracey and her family for not being in a position to meet her needs," he said. "This policy will ensure her experience is not repeated."

The new policy covers the same issues dealt with in the policy adopted last month by the Vancouver School Board. It directs that schools accommodate gender variant students and that an accommodation plan for gender dysphoric students be developed in collaboration with the family, educators, pastors, and medical professionals. "The focus of the Individual Accommodation Plan is always the best interests of the child, spiritually, intellectually and physically; which is the mission of Catholic schools," Lauson said.

The policy also addresses the broader staff and student body, through education and policy aimed at recognizing and understanding the individuality of all students and their various ways of expressing their gender.



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Recognizing diversity in gender expression and the needs of gender dysphoric students is essential, according to Tracey's mother, Michelle Wilson. "This policy is a very important step towards acceptance of gender variant youth in Catholic schools," she said.

"The process of arriving at this policy was very collaborative and the CISVA took our suggestions very seriously. In the end though it will depend on how well Catholic schools are educated about gender variant students and how the policy is implemented."

The new policy was developed after Tracey, who was diagnosed with gender dysphoria, filed a human rights complaint because her school did not accommodate her request to be treated as a girl.

The human rights complaint was resolved after the CISVA approved the Gender Dysphoria and Gender Expression policy and paid to the Wilsons a sum that both parties have agreed will remain undisclosed.

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A copy of the CISVA's policy is available online at  
[http://www.cisva.bc.ca/policy\\_manual/CISVA\\_Gender\\_Dysphoria\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.cisva.bc.ca/policy_manual/CISVA_Gender_Dysphoria_Policy.pdf)

Comment after 12 p.m. on July 16

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