

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 161	
SECTION: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION	
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Contact	S.O. of Indigenous Education

SMUDGING IN SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND

The Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB) supports efforts to include Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Learning, and Being. As a District, we honour and show appreciation for Indigenous cultural practices and ceremonies. This fosters an atmosphere of reciprocity, respect, understanding, inclusivity, and upholds the Ontario Human Rights Code. Smudging is one of the most commonly shared practices among First Nations and Métis people.

PROCEDURE

1. Learning About Smudging: The District is committed to building intercultural understanding and awareness about the practice of smudging, in collaboration with and guided by Indigenous staff and community members. Education is critical to avoid misunderstanding and to mitigate insensitivity toward Indigenous peoples who choose to smudge at school.
 - 1.1. Staff and students will have opportunities to learn about smudging, facilitated by the Indigenous Education Team.

2. Smudging by Individuals: Students, staff, and community guests will have access to a space for personal smudging in all buildings of the RCDSB, for the purposes of well-being.
 - 2.1. Smudging will take place in designated spaces, identified by signage, whenever possible.
 - 2.2. Letters to families will be sent home annually to parents/guardians to notify them that RCDSB buildings are smudge-friendly spaces. This will be included in the start of year packages that are sent home.
 - 2.3. Students will be accompanied while smudging and will be supported by capable staff members or community members. For clarity, please refer to the Guidelines for Smudging at RCDSB.
 - 2.4. Materials for smudging can be accessed through the Indigenous Education Team.

Group Smudging Occasionally, there may be experiential opportunities where students are invited to participate in a smudge (e.g., class presentation with a guest). Group smudging is often a part of opening ceremonies, gatherings, and cultural celebrations.

- 2.5. During these learning opportunities, students always have the option not to participate, but to observe instead. The teacher and/or the guest will remind students of this option before smudging. Additionally, parents/guardians may elect not to have their child participate in a smudge by notifying the school in writing. This information will be communicated in the letter to home.
3. School Responsibilities School administrators/site managers will work with the Indigenous Education Team and custodial staff to test and designate safe smudging space(s) at board sites and to build awareness within the school community.
 - 3.1. These spaces will be identified with smudging signage provided within the Guidelines for Smudging at RCDSB.
 - 3.2. School administrators will work with office staff to ensure that the Smudging in Schools Letter to Families is included in the start of the school year package. This letter is provided within the Guidelines for Smudging at RCDSB.
 - 3.3. If parents/guardians notify the school in writing that their child cannot participate in smudging, the school will ensure that this information is shared with the appropriate staff.
 - 3.3.1. See the Guidelines for Smudging at RCDSB to learn more about smudging, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and who can support/lead a smudge.

LEGAL REFERENCES

Ontario Human Rights Code

Canadian Charter and Constitution Act, Section 25

Canadian Charter and Constitution Act, Section 35

[United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\), Article 12\(1\), Article 25, Article 34](#)

[Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada: Delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action](#)

[Smudging in the OHRC](#)

RCDSB REFERENCES

[F161 - RCDSB Smudging in Schools Guidelines](#)

[F161-1 - Letter to Families](#)

Approved:	
Reviewed:	
Revised:	