

**Adopted: April 8, 2024**

Revised: \_\_\_\_\_

## **SMUDGING**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to allow for students, staff, elders, and cultural teachers who identify as members of an American Indian tribe to conduct individual or group Smudging in school facilities and on school grounds owned and/or operated by the school and its agents. This policy also provides direction to the school community in engaging in these traditions while respecting all students, staff, and visitors of the District, as well as to comply with Minnesota State Statute 144.4167, 144.4165, and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act.

### **II. GENERAL STATEMENT**

Yellow Medicine East School is committed to creating an inclusive, open, and respectful environment for our diverse community members and guests. The district recognizes traditional tobacco, cansasa, kinikinik, sage, sweet grass, cedar, and/or other traditional plants as a part of American Indian culture.

According to [MN Statute 144.4167](#), it shall not violate policy for an American Indian adult to light tobacco in public as part of a traditional Indian spiritual or cultural ceremony, or to carry loose tobacco in a tobacco pouch intended for spiritual or cultural ceremonial support.

It shall not be a violation for an American Indian student to carry loose tobacco in a tobacco pouch intended for spiritual or cultural ceremonial support.

**NOTE:** The YME School District and its employees are not responsible for any adverse health result or injury from either direct or indirect exposure to Smudging.

To avoid concerns about air quality issues in the building and the impacts to nonparticipants, outdoor Smudging is encouraged to the extent possible.

### **III. DEFINITIONS**

Smudging is a cultural practice and tradition, common to many American Indian people that involves the burning of one or more traditional plants gathered from the earth. These traditional plants include tobacco, cansasa, kinikinik, sage, sweet grass, cedar, and/or other traditional plants as a part of American Indian culture.

Smudging is viewed as a way of cleansing a person and/or space based on individual practices and beliefs. Smudging is voluntary and people will never be forced or pressured to engage in the ceremony.

Authority - This policy is established in accordance with Minnesota's Clean Air Act (Minnesota Statutes 1997 144.4167 and 144.4165), and The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA).

Responsibility - The support of equality and this procedure is a shared responsibility at all levels of the Yellow Medicine East Public School District. The responsibility for implementing this procedure is assigned to the Indian Education Coordinator, Building Principals, and Superintendent.

#### **IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS AND MANAGER OF FACILITIES**

- A. Will evaluate the fire and ventilation systems in the requested space.
- B. Staff members will directly supervise throughout the Smudging.
- C. Supervising staff members will follow building protocols for events similar to field trips.
- D. Inform relevant staff.
- E. Students/staff who claim physical sensitivities to smoke or scent will be allowed to make alternate arrangements with the teacher for class participation or changes to office/space assignments.

#### **V. NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS:**

##### **A. Classroom Uses or Individual Uses in Offices or Workstations:**

An American Indian teacher, staff member, or member of the community, may conduct Smudging provided:

- 1. The space is pre-approved through the building or district administrator.
- 2. A notice is posted on the door(s) of the pre-approved space.
- 3. All attempts are made to ensure that all doors are closed during the Smudging to limit unnecessary spread.
- 4. Occupants of neighboring offices and classrooms are notified in advance to verify any allergies or irritations.
- 5. Consent forms have been completed and returned for all students.
- 6. Ventilation is enhanced to decrease lingering impacts.
- 7. An approved staff member (American Indian teacher or designee) must be present throughout.

##### **B. Outdoor Spaces:**

An American Indian teacher, staff member, member of the community, or other cultural/religious groups who plan to conduct Smudging in an outdoor space shall:

- 1. Ensure the area has been approved and/or designated as acceptable through the building or district administrator.
- 2. Inform participants/meeting attendees of the intention to use traditional tobacco, cansasa, kinikinik, sage, sweet grass, and cedar in the area.
- 3. Ensure consent forms have been completed and returned for all students who are participating.
- 4. An approved staff member or designee must be present throughout.

##### **C. Pre-approved Events and Events Spaces**

To conduct Smudging at events on school property, the event sponsors shall:

- 1. Ensure approval from the building administrator or superintendent.
- 2. Ensure the room or space is reserved through the Community Education or building office.

3. Inform participants/meeting attendees of the intention to use traditional tobacco, cansasa, kinikinik, sage, sweet grass, cedar, and/or other traditional plants in the space.
4. Specify in the event advertising and publicity that the event will include the intention to use traditional tobacco, cansasa, kinikinik, sage, sweet grass, and cedar.
5. The event coordinator will notify the building administrator via email at least 48 hours in advance of the event, including the room number/location and time.
6. An approved staff member (American Indian teacher or designee) must be present throughout.

## **VI. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- A. If there is an alarm during a ceremony all attendees will treat it as an actual fire alarm and take appropriate action.
- B. If there is an alarm, maintenance staff or building administration will clear the issue as soon as possible.
- C. If there is an alarm, the event organizers/managers will take accountability for the people attending and be responsible for deciding to wait to return to the building or allow participants to leave and cancel the event.
- D. Elementary students who wish to participate will be escorted to the designated area.
- E. Smudging embers may not be left unattended.
- F. All Smudging embers must be fully extinguished before discarding.
- G. Contents of the container should be discarded as traditionally expected (returned to Mother Earth).

**Legal References:** MN Statute 144.4167, Subd. 2. (Traditional Native American ceremonies)  
MN Statute 144.4165 (Tobacco Products Prohibited in Public Schools)  
Public Law 95-341 (American Indian Religious Freedom Act)

**Cross References:** YME Policy 419 (Tobacco-Free Environment)

**\*NOTE** - Before changes are made to this regulation, consultation will be held with the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee and the Yellow Medicine East School Board.

# SMUDGING CONSENT AGREEMENT

I/We hereby grant permission\* for my child(ren), as listed below to participate in Smudging as outlined in the **YME SMUDGING POLICY** following these provisions:

\*Students of majority age may provide their consent by signing this form.

- I/We understand that approved school supervisors must supervise all Smudging.
- I/We understand that this may include additional education regarding Smudging.
- I/We understand this permission remains in effect unless revoked by the parent (or signee) by contacting the student's school administrator.
- I/We understand that smudging includes the presence of smoke.
- I/we recognize that there may be health impacts and agree to hold harmless YME School District and its employees from liability for any damages related to Smudging
- I/We declare having read and understood the above Parental Consent Agreement and the policy associated with this agreement in its entirety and hereby consent to allow my/our child(ren to participate, acknowledging all of the foregoing.

_____	_____
(student's first and last name)	Grade
_____	_____
(student's first and last name)	Grade
_____	_____
(student's first and last name)	Grade
_____	_____
(student's first and last name)	Grade
_____	_____
Parent/Guardian* Signature	Date

\*Return this completed form to your child's school office.

Questions related to this form or policy may be directed to Rich Schneider, YME Superintendent at [rschneider@isd2190.org](mailto:rschneider@isd2190.org) or at 320-564-4081 x 106.