

Number:	<i>To be determined</i>
Topic:	Bullying Prevention and Intervention
Effective:	October 1, 2010.
Cross-Reference:	PPM 144 Bullying Prevention and Intervention PPM 128 Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Code of Conduct HDSB Behaviour, Discipline, and School Safety Policy Bullying Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and School Communities
Review/Revision Date:	February 2013
Responsibility:	Superintendent of Education – Safe Schools

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Halton District School Board is committed to the establishment and maintenance of safe, caring and inclusive school environments in order to maximize the learning potential of all students and to ensure a positive school climate for all members of the school community.

The Board recognizes that bullying:

- (a) adversely affects students' ability to learn and affects the dignity and self-esteem of students who are bullied;
- (b) adversely affects healthy relationships and the school climate;
- (c) adversely affects a school's ability to educate its students;
- (d) will not be accepted on school property, at school-related activities, on school buses, or in any other circumstances (e.g., online) where engaging in bullying will have a negative impact on the school climate.

Providing students with an opportunity to learn and develop in a safe and respectful society is a shared responsibility in which the board and our schools play an important role. Schools with bullying prevention and intervention strategies foster a positive learning and teaching environment that supports academic achievement for all students and that helps students reach their full potential. Bullying prevention and intervention strategies must be modelled by all members of the school community.

PROCEDURE:**Definitions:**

Bullying is typically a form of repeated, persistent and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.

Students may attain or maintain power over others in the school through real or perceived differences. Some areas of difference may be size, strength, age, intelligence, economic status, social status, and solidarity of peer group, religion, ethnicity, special needs, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender and race.

Bullying is a dynamic of unhealthy interaction that can take many forms. It can be physical (e.g., hitting, pushing, tripping), verbal (e.g., name calling, mocking, or making sexist, racist, or homophobic comments), or social (e.g., excluding others from a group, spreading gossip, or rumours). It may also occur through the use of technology (e.g., spreading rumours, images, or hurtful comments through the use of e-mail, cell phones, text messaging, Internet website, or other technology).

Children who suffer prolonged victimization through bullying, as well as children who use power and aggression as bullies, may experience a range of psycho-social problems that may extend into adolescence and adulthood. Both children who are bullied and children who bully are at risk for poor school functioning, in terms of poor attitudes towards school, low grades, and absenteeism (Rigby, 2003; Tremblay, 1999). In addition, there is new evidence to suggest that physiological changes may occur in the brain development of students who are bullied (Vaillancourt et al, in press).

Cyberbullying is the use of information and communication technologies, such as e-mail, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging, personal websites, online personal polling websites, and social networking sites to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended or perceived to harm others.

Bullying prevention is a whole school approach that heightens expectations for a safe, caring and inclusive school climate. It includes a shared understanding about the nature and underlying causes of bullying and its effects on the lives of individual students and the school community.

Bullying intervention is a comprehensive and effective response to the bullying incident that takes into consideration all parties involved in the bullying incident. It should provide specific supports for the student who has been bullied, intervention for the student who was bullying, and strategies for responding to students who were directly observing the bullying incident.

Positive school climate is the sum total of all the personal relationships within the school and is a critical component of bullying prevention. A positive school climate also includes the participation of the entire school community, including parents/guardians, as well as the broader community.

Safe Schools Action Team (SSAT). Each school must have in place a Safe Schools Action Team responsible for school safety that is composed of at least one student (where appropriate), one parent, one teacher, one member of the school's support staff, one community partner and the principal. The chair of this team must be a staff member. Member of the SAAT should be representative of the diversity of the student population, if possible.

Prevention and Awareness-Raising Strategies:

(a) Expectations for Appropriate Student Behaviour:

Students have the responsibility to:

- contribute positively to the climate of the school;
- respect the safety, property and rights of all members of the school community;
- respect the individual needs of others;
- give respect and cooperation to all persons in positions of responsibility in the school;
- comply with school expectations and regulations with respect to behaviour and take responsibility for his or her own actions;
- not bring anything to school that may compromise the safety of others;
- use language that is appropriate in a learning environment;
- respect the property of the school building, grounds, equipment and materials.

(b) Supporting Appropriate Student Behaviour

Schools will establish programs, such as bullying prevention and citizenship development, as well as provide positive activities designed to promote the building of healthy relationships and appropriate behaviour.

Schools will focus on prevention and early intervention as a key to maintaining a positive school environment in which students can learn.

Schools will develop prevention measures and initiatives that include the whole school and all aspects of school life.

(c) Teaching Strategies

Teaching strategies will support the school-wide and Ministry of Education bullying prevention policies. Included in this is the integration into the curriculum of bullying prevention and intervention strategies.

Teaching strategies will focus on developing healthy relationships by including bullying prevention throughout the curriculum in daily classroom teaching.

Teachers must promote inclusion, respect and empathy, all of which are important components of bullying prevention. Bullying prevention messages are reinforced through programs addressing discrimination based on such factors as age, race, sexual orientation, gender, faith, special needs, ethnicity, and family circumstances.

Through their own actions, all staff must model inclusion, respect, and empathy for all students.

Opportunities for Bullying Prevention Training

All students will have the opportunity to participate in bullying prevention training and leadership initiatives within their own school.

In addition to teachers and administrators, other staff, such as educational assistants, social workers, child and youth counsellors, psycho-educational consultants, youth settlement workers, and any other support staff all play an important role in supporting students and contributing to a positive learning and teaching environment.

A positive school climate also includes the participation of the entire school community, including parents/guardians, as well as the broader community (e.g., volunteers, non-board personnel).

Intervention Strategies and Support Strategies

All employees of the board must take seriously, all allegations of bullying behaviour and act in a timely, sensitive, and supportive manner when responding to students who disclose or report bullying incidents. **Bullying is an activity for which suspension must be considered under section 306(1) of the Education Act.**

Any employee of the board and transportation provider who becomes aware that a student at a school of the board may have engaged in an activity for which suspension or expulsion must be considered shall report the matter to the principal as soon as reasonably possible. The employee/transportation provider must consider the safety of others and the urgency of the situation in reporting the incident, but, in any case, must report it to the principal no later than the end of the school day or end of the transportation route.

In cases where an immediate action is required, a verbal report to the principal may be made. A written report must be made when it is safe to do so.

All employee/transportation provider reports made to the principal must be confirmed in writing, using the “Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form”.

Board employees who work directly with students – including administrators, teachers, and support staff (e.g., staff in social work, child and youth work, psychology, and related areas, and educational assistants) – must respond to any student behaviour that is likely to have a negative impact on the school climate. Such behaviour includes all inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour at any time at school and at any school-related event if, in the employee’s opinion, it is safe to respond to it. Such inappropriate behaviour may involve bullying.

The Halton District School Board “Behaviour, Discipline and School Safety” Policy provides further details regarding responding and reporting requirements.

Schools must put in place procedures to allow students to report bullying incidents safely and in a way that will minimize the possibility of reprisal.

Supports for Victims, Bystanders & Students Who Demonstrate Bullying Behaviors

Supports for students who have been bullied, intervention for students who have bullied others, and strategies for responding to students who have observed bullying must be provided.

Schools must support students, as well as their parents/guardians, regarding bullying issues, including bullying based on gender and on sexual orientation and must outline what they will do to support these students.

Schools will develop specific plans to protect students who have been bullied and must outline a process for parents/guardians to follow if they are not satisfied with the supports that their children receive.

Intervention for students who demonstrate bullying behaviours will be consistent with a progressive discipline approach that utilizes a continuum of supports and consequences to address inappropriate student behaviour and builds upon strategies that promote positive behaviour. Intervention strategies range from early interventions to more intensive interventions, in cases of persistent bullying, with possible referral to community or social service agencies.

Ongoing intervention may be necessary to sustain and promote positive student behaviour.

For a student with special education needs, interventions, supports, and consequences must be consistent with the student’s strengths, needs, goals, and expectations contained in his or her Individual Education Plan (IEP). Mitigating and other factors must be taken into consideration when determining discipline.

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal

In addressing bullying prevention and intervention, the principal will take a leadership role in the school by:

- ensuring a Safe Schools Action Team (SSAT) is established and sustained;
- demonstrating care for the school community and a commitment to academic excellence in a safe and inclusive teaching and learning environment;
- holding everyone under his or her authority accountable for his or her behaviour and actions;
- empowering students to be positive leaders in the school and community;
- communicating regularly and meaningfully with all members of their school community;
- ensuring the communication of local bullying prevention policies includes a communication plan that outlines how these provisions will be made clear to the entire school community, including school communities who have a significant number of parents/guardians whose first language is not English; and
- demonstrating respect for all members of the school community.

Teachers and Other School Staff Members

Under the leadership of their principals, teachers and other school staff members maintain order in the school and are expected to hold everyone to the highest standard of respectful and responsible behaviour. As role models, teachers and school staff uphold these high standards when they:

- help students work to their full potential and develop their sense of self-worth;
- empower students to be positive leaders in their classroom, school, and community;
- communicate regularly and meaningfully with parents/guardians;
- maintain consistent standards of behaviour for all students;
- demonstrate respect for all students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, and members of the school community.
- prepare students for the full responsibilities of citizenship.

Teachers and other school staff members shall also assist principals in maintaining close co-operation with the school community and in establishing and maintaining consistent disciplinary practices in the school. In addition, teachers and other school staff members must assist the principals by reporting incidents of bullying and assist the principal in conducting an investigation.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians play an important role in the education of their children and have a responsibility to support the efforts of school staff in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment for all students. Parents/guardians fulfil their role when they:

- show an active interest in their child's school work and progress;
- communicate regularly with the school;
- support the Board's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy and school rules;
- encourage and assist their child in following the rules of behaviour; and
- assist school staff in dealing with disciplinary issues involving their child.

Students

Students play a very important role in bullying prevention and intervention and have the responsibility to:

- contribute positively to the climate of the school;
- respect the safety, property and rights of all members of the school community;
- respect the individual needs of others;

- give respect and cooperation to all persons in positions of responsibility in the school;
- comply with school expectations and regulations with respect to behaviour and take responsibility for his or her own actions;
- not bring anything to school that may compromise the safety of others;
- use language that is appropriate in a learning environment;
- respect the property of the school building, grounds, equipment and materials.

Training Strategies for Administrators, Teachers, and Support Staff

The Board will put in place training strategies on bullying prevention and intervention for all administrators, teachers, and support staff (including staff in social work, child and youth work, psychology and related areas, and educational assistants).

The training strategies must include ways of responding to gender-based and homophobic bullying that are consistent with equity training on cultural proficiency, on respect for diversity, and on special education needs.

The training will be made available to other adults who have significant contact with students (e.g., school bus operators/drivers, volunteers).

The ongoing need to support training for new teachers will be recognized.

Communication and Outreach Strategies

Each member of the school community, including, but not limited to, principals, teachers, parents/guardians and students will be made aware of their roles and responsibilities under this policy.

The policy and procedures on bullying prevention and intervention will be communicated to students, parents/guardians, teachers and other school staff, the Special Education Advisory Committee, school councils, and school bus operators and drivers.

Every effort will be made to provide access to appropriate supports (e.g., interpreters, assistive technology) for all parents/guardians.

Monitoring and Review

The Board will monitor, review, and evaluate the effectiveness of board policies and procedures through indicators established in consultation with teachers, support staff, students, parents/guardians, school councils, the Special Education Advisory Committee, the Parent Involvement Committee, and service providers in the community.

The Board will also conduct a cyclical review of their policies and procedures in a timely manner.

School-Level Plans

All schools in the Halton District School Board will revise their existing school-wide bullying prevention and intervention plans as part of their School Improvement Plan. Components of these plans must include the following:

- definition of *bullying*
- prevention and awareness-raising strategies
- intervention and support strategies, including plans to protect students who have been bullied
- reporting requirements
- training strategies for members of the school community
- communication and outreach strategies
- monitoring and review processes

The school plans must be consistent with this policy of the Halton District School Board.