

Topic:	Bullying Prevention and Intervention
Effective:	February 2013
Cross-Reference:	Ontario Human Rights Code Bill 13: Accepting Schools Act; Education Act, Part XIII Behaviour; Discipline and Safety Policy and Program Memoranda: PPM 119 (Equity and Inclusive Education); PPM 120 (Reporting Violent Incidents); PPM 128 (Provincial/Board/School Code of Conduct); PPM 141 (Programs for Students on Long-term Suspension); PPM 142 (Expulsion Programs); PPM 144 (Bullying Prevention and Intervention); PPM 145 (Progressive Discipline); Ontario Regulation 472/07 (Behaviour, Discipline and Safety of Pupils); Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations; HDSB Policy: Safe Schools; HDSB Administrative Procedures: Positive School Climate-Progressive Discipline Suspension and Expulsions Violence Threat Risk Assessment Discrimination & Harassment Managing Violent and Aggressive Behaviour of Students with Special Needs Exclusion HDSB Code of Conduct Halton Police – School Board Protocol
Review Date:	September 2020, February 2023
Revision Date:	February 2027
Responsibility:	Superintendent of Education – Safe Schools

INTENDED PURPOSE:

The Halton District School Board is committed to the establishment and maintenance of safe, caring, equitable, 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 bullying behaviour:

- (a) adversely affects students' ability to learn, and the dignity and self-esteem of students who are bullied;
- (b) adversely impacts students who engage in bullying behaviour and those who witness bullying;
- (c) adversely affects healthy relationships and the school climate for students, staff, and community members;
- (d) adversely affects a school's ability to educate its students, and
- (e) 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.

This procedure has been developed to implement provincial legislation and the Safe and Inclusive Schools Policy of Halton District School Board. It serves to ensure that building healthy relationships

within the context of a whole-school approach to bullying prevention and intervention are supported. This procedure supports a continuum of bullying prevention and intervention strategies.

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* has primacy over provincial legislation and policies, as well as school board policies and procedures, such that the *Education Act*, regulations, Ministry of Education Program Policy Memoranda, and Board policies and procedures are subject to, and shall be interpreted and applied in accordance with the *Human Rights Code of Ontario*.

PROCEDURE

Providing students with an opportunity to learn and develop in a safe, equitable 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. All members of the school community must model bullying prevention and intervention strategies.

Children who suffer prolonged victimization through bullying, as well as children who use power and aggression through bullying others, 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*). Children who witness bullying are also faced with social emotional costs including erosion of self-confidence and self-respect (*Coloroso, 2002*). 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, 2011*).

1) Definitions

Bullying is defined as aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a student where,

- a) the behaviour is intended by the pupil to have the effect of, or the pupil ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to have that effect of:
 - i) causing harm, fear or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm, harm to the person's reputation or property, or
 - ii) creating a negative environment at the school for another individual, **and**
- b) the behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance based on factors such as size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability or the receipt of special education.

Cyberbullying is the use of information and communication technologies to bully, as defined above. Cyberbullying includes but is not limited to:

- a) creating an on-line or social media presence in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;
- b) impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted online or sent digitally;
- c) communicating material electronically to more than one person or posting material that may be accessed by one or more individuals; or
- d) inappropriate digital communication (e.g., posted on-line or social media).

Aggressive behaviour may be intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect. It can take many forms including physical (e.g., hitting, pushing, tripping), verbal (e.g., name calling, mocking, or making sexist, racist, or homophobic comments), or social/relational (e.g., shunning, ignoring, excluding others from a group, spreading gossip, humiliating others with public gestures or graffiti, or rumours). Social aggression may also occur through the use of technology (e.g., spreading

rumours, images, or hurtful comments through the use of email, cell phones, text messaging, websites, social networking, and/or other technology).

Harm, as used in the Administrative Procedure and as defined by the Supreme Court of Canada, means harm that can be experienced in a number of ways, including physical, mental, emotional, and psychological.

Bullying prevention is a whole school approach that builds capacity for a safe, caring, equitable 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. Building and maintaining a positive school climate requires a whole school approach involving all members of the school community. The principles of equity and inclusive education must be embedded in all aspects of the learning environment to support the well-being and achievement of all students.

Well-Being Teams: Each school must have in place a Well-Being Team (formerly Safe School Action Team). Well-Being Teams must ensure the composition, roles, and responsibilities of Safe Schools Action Teams are fulfilled as required by the Ministry of Education. The Well-Being Team is responsible for school safety and must include but is not limited to at least one student (grade 7 and up), one parent/guardian, one teacher, one member of the school's support staff, one community partner, and the principal and/or vice-principal. The chair of this team must be a staff member. Well-Being Teams should strive to be representative of the diversity of the student population.

2) **Board Level Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

The Halton District School Board shall establish a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan based on the model developed by the Ministry. During development and review of the plan, the Board will solicit the views of the pupils, teachers/Board staff, parents/guardians, school council members and the public. The plan will serve as a model for the development of school-based Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plans and will be made available to the public through the Board website and through school websites. The plan will include training and suggestions for embedding principles of equity and inclusion in the school curriculum.

3) **School Level Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plans**

All schools in Halton District School Board will review/revise their existing school-wide Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plans (see Appendix A) annually as part of the work of the Well-Being Team.

Plans must reflect the uniqueness of each school and align with the Board's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Admin Procedure. Components of these plans must include the following:

- i) definition of bullying;
- ii) prevention and awareness-raising strategies;
- iii) intervention and support strategies, including plans to support students who have been bullied;
- iv) reporting requirements;
- v) training strategies for members of the school community;
- vi) communication and outreach strategies;
- vii) monitoring and review processes.

The school plans must be consistent with this procedure and be communicated to students, staff, parents/guardians, the community, and posted on the school website.

4) **Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week**

The Halton District School Board supports the promotion of Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in all schools. During the third week in November, each school is encouraged to promote awareness and understanding of bullying and its consequences in the school community.

5) **School Climate Surveys**

The Halton District School Board will conduct surveys to elicit input from students, staff and parent/guardians with respect to positive school climate and bullying prevention and intervention.

Schools may choose to conduct their own internal surveys or focus groups throughout the year in addition to the HDSB Have Your Say Survey conducted by the Board each year.

Schools may provide accommodations for students with special needs where appropriate.

Participation in all surveys is voluntary and anonymous, parents may choose not to have their child participate. Results of surveys are to be shared with the Well-Being Team and used to build strategies into the School Improvement Plan and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan regarding issues identified in the climate surveys.

6) **Prevention and Awareness-Raising Strategies**

In the course of a day, there are many “teachable moments” when issues appear to arise. Prompt intervention with a few moments of coaching and support at these critical times can help all children and youth, including those who may be at risk, to develop the skills and understanding that they need to maintain positive relationships with others. Such interactions that students have with their teachers, other school staff, and fellow students as well as with principals, vice-principals, their parents/caregivers, and others can be used to help them improve their social skills.

- a) *Supporting Appropriate Student Behaviour:* Schools will implement evidence informed bullying prevention and intervention programs, 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.
- b) *Teaching Strategies:* Teaching strategies will support the integration of bullying prevention and intervention strategies into the curriculum. 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, gender identity and expression, creed, disability, place of origin, ethnicity, and family circumstances and other immutable characteristics. Through their own actions, all staff must model inclusion, respect, and empathy for all students.
- c) *Opportunities for Bullying Awareness and Prevention Training:* Through each school’s Well-Being Team initiatives, students may have opportunities to participate in bullying awareness and prevention training and leadership initiatives within their own schools. Staff will be provided with bullying awareness, prevention and intervention training opportunities to build capacity in order to support students and contribute to a positive learning and teaching environment.
- d) *Intervention Strategies and Responding Strategies:* Board employees who work directly with students – including administrators, teachers, and support staff (e.g., social workers, child and youth work, psychology, and educational assistants) must respond to any student behaviour that is likely to have a negative impact on the school climate. Such inappropriate behaviour may involve bullying.

All employees of the Board must respond to all allegations of bullying behaviour and act in a timely, sensitive, and supportive manner when responding to students who disclose or report bullying incidents.

- e) *Rough Play vs. Conflict vs. Bullying*: Interactions between students are often difficult to classify. The following chart provides an assessment tool to help schools with positive interventions and supports. Even where conduct is not necessarily bullying, staff should consider what appropriate responses may be used to support students and to encourage positive student behaviour. Staff are reminded that, in resolving issues in a healthy manner, students often need adult assistance to resolve rough play or conflict situations. Rough play or conflicts resolved in a timely and healthy manner is much less likely to result in bullying.

Rough Play	Conflict	Bullying
Usually friends or friendly towards each other. Often repeated. Same players.	Acquaintances or friends. Can be occasional or ongoing. Usually issue-centred, until resolved; could centre around misunderstanding, misinformation or no common ground.	Typically not friends; however may have had a relationship previously. Intentional target. Repeated and persistent.
Balance of power	Power relatively equal	Unequal power
Equal, consensual reaction.	Equal or near equal emotional reaction.	Bully's reaction meets their own intrinsic need for power and control (consciously or unconsciously). Strong emotional, mental and physical reaction for the target.
Not seeking power or attention	Not seeking power or attention.	Attempt to gain power and control, possessions or popularity
No intention to harm.	No intent to harm; conflict is centred around disagreement or dispute.	Intentionally harm-doing. Threats of physical or emotional harm; intent to humiliate, exclude or victimize.
Intent is fun. If it goes wrong, then remorseful.	Remorse – takes responsibility.	Bully may or may not show remorse. May or may not know what they are doing is wrong. May blame the target or believe the target deserves it.
Not regarded as a problem.	Effort to solve problems. Can be resolved on their own or with the aid of a third party.	Requires active intervention and support by a third party. Bully may deny there is a problem. Target may not be able to articulate. Mandatory consultation with police in all cases of bullying age 12 and up (see below).

7) Reporting Incidents of Bullying

Any employee of the Board, before and after school service provider, 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, such as bullying, shall report the matter to the principal as soon as reasonably possible. That individual 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 such reports made to the principal must be reported online, using the *Safe Schools Incident Reporting Tool (Appendix B)* - Appendix B in Positive School Climate AP.

The Halton District School Board expects all employees, before and after school service providers and transportation providers, to take into consideration any mitigating or other circumstances which may explain and excuse the behaviour before deciding whether or not to report the behaviour for students with known special education needs, or students who require alternative education as per direction of the principal. The duty to report and subsequent filling out of the Safe Schools Incident Report Form would not be necessary or appropriate for an incident that is the result of a student's special education needs, or where mitigating circumstances reasonably excuse the student's behaviour. These incidents still require appropriate follow up by the individual with notice to the principal, and completion of Employee Incident Reports if a safety risk occurs.

The Halton District School Board Administrative Procedure: *Positive School Climate* provides further details regarding responding and reporting requirements. Schools must have procedures to allow students and parents/guardians to report bullying incidents safely and in a way that will minimize the possibility of reprisal (i.e. verbal reporting, confidential electronic reporting).

All schools must have the "Report Bullying" tool posted in a prominent, conspicuous, and easily accessible location on their school websites. Principals are required to follow up on all reports of bullying made through this tool and other sources.

Section 300.3 of the Education Act specifies when principals are required to notify the parents of students who have been harmed as the result of a serious student incident. Harm, as used in this procedure, means harm that can be experienced in a number of ways, including physical, mental, emotional, and psychological. Serious student incidents are activities for which suspension or expulsion must be considered, as set out in subsections 306(1) and 310(1) of the Education Act, and include bullying in all its forms.

Principals shall disclose the following information:

- the nature of the activity that resulted in harm to the student;
- the nature of the harm to the student;
- the steps taken to protect the student's safety, including the nature of any disciplinary measures taken in response to the activity; and
- the supports that will be provided for the student in response to the harm that resulted from the activity

This section of the act also specifies that principals are required to notify the parents of students who have engaged in serious student incidents. Principals shall disclose the following information:

- the nature of the activity that resulted in harm to the other student;
- the nature of the harm to the other student;
- the nature of any disciplinary measures taken in response to the activity; and
- the supports that will be provided for the student in response to their engagement in the activity

When notifying parents of these incidents, the principal must invite parents to have a discussion with them about the supports that will be provided for their child.

See the **Administrative Procedure: Positive School Climate – Progressive Discipline** for a more detailed summary of notification of parents/guardians.

Under subsection 300.3(3) of the Education Act, a principal shall not notify a parent of a student if, in the opinion of the principal, doing so would put the student at risk of harm from a parent of the student, such that notification is not in the student's best interest.

Under subsection 301(5.5) of the Education Act, when principals have decided not to notify the parents that their child was involved in a serious student incident, as described above, they must, in accordance with Ontario Regulation 472/07, document the rationale for this decision and notify both the teacher who reported the incident and the appropriate supervisory officer of this decision. Principals shall also, if they determine it is appropriate to do so, inform other board employees of this decision. In addition, principals should refer the student to board resources or to a community-based service provider that can provide the appropriate type of confidential support when the student's parents are not called (e.g., counselling, a sexual assault centre, Kids Help Phone, LGBT Youth Line).

In circumstances where board employees have reason to believe that a student may be in need of protection, board employees must call a children's aid society according to the requirements of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017.

In the Halton District School Board, all incidents of bullying (age 12 and up) must be reported by the school to the Halton Regional Police Service (see below).

8) Reporting to the Halton Regional Police Service

As per the Halton Police – School Board Protocol, and reflecting the need for early intervention and support, all incidents of bullying occurring at school or having a nexus to the school community must be reported by the Principal (or designate) to the Halton Regional Police Service for students 12 and up.

The following principles serve to guide this dialogue with the police:

- a coordinated course of action should be decided upon in partnership with the Halton Regional Police Service;
- the school's subsequent course of action must take into consideration all mitigating and other factors as outlined in *O.Reg. 472/07*;
- the police may have additional details about the family that could provide some context that might be unknown to the school (e.g., previous visits to the home, siblings they've had dealings with, incidents of domestic violence, etc.);

For students under the age of 12, Principals have the discretion to refrain from notifying the police but must first consider the following:

- the impact of the bullying behaviour on the victim;
- the impact of the bullying behaviour on the school community;
- the mandate to support victims of bullying and those who have engaged in bullying behaviour as per PPM 144;
- the availability and likely effectiveness of school and/or community supports for the victim
- the availability and likely effectiveness of school and/or community supports for the student(s) who has engaged in the bullying behaviour;
- the need for earlier intervention and prevention in matters involving bullying;
- all mitigating and other factors under *O. Reg. 472/07*; and
- the need to ensure proper documentation relating to the incident.

9) **Supports for Victims, Bystanders and Students Who Demonstrate Bullying Behaviours**

Supports for students who have been bullied and intervention and support for students who have bullied others must be provided. Schools must also provide students who have witnessed bullying with supportive and responsive strategies. Schools must supply students, as well as their parents/guardians, with information regarding bullying issues, including bullying based on gender, gender identity and expression and on sexual orientation and must outline what they can 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. Schools must document circumstances when supports are offered and declined by the student or parent/guardians.

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 their Individual Education Plan (IEP). Mitigating and other factors must be taken into consideration when determining discipline.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.0 Principal:

In addressing bullying prevention and intervention, the principal will:

- ensure a Well-Being Team is established and sustained;
- investigate all reported incidents of bullying;
- report the results of investigations to the teacher or other employee;
- notify the Halton Regional Police Service (if student is 12 years of age or older)
- notify the parent(s)/guardians of students who have been harmed by bullying or who have caused harm as a result of bullying (See Administrative Procedure: *Positive School Climate*);
- provide support for students who have been harmed by bullying or who have caused harm as a result of bullying; and
- consult with parent(s)/guardian(s) about the supports and/or discipline applicable to their child.

2.0 Teachers and Other School Staff Members:

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;
- teach and model positive behaviour and good citizenship; and
- respond to and report incidents of bullying.

3.0 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;

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

4.0 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, caring, equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students. Parents/guardians fulfil their role when they:

- demonstrate an active interest in their child's school work and progress;
- communicate regularly with the school;
- support the Board's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Administrative Procedure 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.

HDSB Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

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From the Halton District School Board [Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#):

Definition of Bullying:

Bullying means aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a student where,

- a) the behaviour is intended, or the student ought to know the behaviour would be likely to have that effect of,
 - i) causing fear or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm, harm to the person's reputation or property, or
 - ii) creating a negative environment at the school for another individual, and
- b) the behaviour occurs in a context where there is **a real or perceived power imbalance between the pupil and the individual** based on factors such as size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability or the receipt of special education.

Bullying behaviour includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written or other means. For the purposes of the definition of bullying, bullying by electronic means (commonly known as cyber-bullying), including digital communications or social media postings in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the internet; communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material that may be accessed by one or more individuals.

Resources/Reference:

- HDSB Administrative Procedure: Bullying Prevention and Intervention
- HDSB Administrative Procedure: Positive School Climate – Progressive Discipline
- Safe Schools portal on myHDSB
- Have Your Say survey data
- School Council
- Student voice (student leadership, focus groups, etc.)
- Safe and Accepting Schools (SAS) Team
- School-based staff (social workers, child and youth counsellors, educational assistants, early childhood educators, and others)
- Public Health nurses
- Halton Regional Police Service

Revised November 2022:

[Copy of Well-Being and Bullying Prevention/Intervention Action Plan](#)