

Parent eBulletin – *Bringing School Home* May 2011



The Simcoe County District School Board produces this e-bulletin to help parents support children on their journey of lifelong learning. We know positive connections between home and school support student achievement. In each edition you'll find practical tips and strategies to help your child achieve success in those important years of learning from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

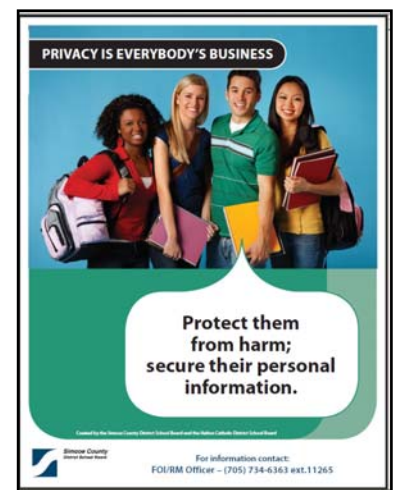
Bringing School Home is available through the Simcoe County District School Board website (www.scdsb.on.ca). As well, parents, guardians and other interested members of our school communities may [subscribe through our website](#) and have the bulletin emailed directly to their email accounts (readers may also unsubscribe at any time). Please click [here](#) to submit your comments and feedback.

This month's topic suggestion came from a *Bringing School Home* reader concerned about bullying. To share your topic ideas and feedback on this publication, please fill out our short survey by clicking [here](#). We want to hear from you!

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: What is bullying?

Bullying among young people is understood as repeated negative actions committed by one or more individuals against another. Visit the [SCDSB's website page on Bullying](#), under "Safe & Healthy Schools", "Parents' Corner".

Bullying is a serious problem for the young people who are bullied, for those who bully, for those who are bystanders and for everyone in the communities in which they live. Bullying behaviour negatively affects all children and is a significant obstacle to their healthy social, emotional, physical and educational growth and development. The actions may be of a physical, verbal, emotional or sexual nature or may span a multitude of behaviours. These include teasing, name calling, taunting, threatening, exclusion, ostracism, extortion, harassment, manipulating friendships and physical violence. Implicit is the imbalance in real or perceived power between bully and victim.



Does the SCDSB have standards of student behaviour?

The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) [Code of Conduct](#), which is included in SCDSB school agendas, supports and enhances the Ontario Code of Conduct by setting clear standards of behaviour. It is recognized that discipline works best when viewed as a positive learning process and when integrated with effective teaching practices. This [Code of Conduct](#) is just one of a number of initiatives designed to create and maintain inviting and supportive school environments. It sets clear standards and specifies consequences for student actions that do not comply with these standards. These standards apply on school property, on school buses and at all school related activities. The board [Code of Conduct](#) has been developed in accordance with the guiding principles of the Education Act, Part XIII in order to create a common philosophy and understanding upon which safe learning and working environments can be maintained for all school community members.

The SCDSB also has a [Student Discipline Policy](#) which sets direction for how schools deal with incidents of bullying. These policies and procedures were created to keep all students and staff safe in SCDSB schools.

Does the SCDSB have character development strategies?

The SCDSB works collaboratively to provide safe supportive environments for positive learning and working experiences for all students and staff. Board and school initiatives are designed to teach and encourage students to be positive, productive members of our community. Character Development is the intentional modeling, teaching, and practicing of positive character traits and is an integral part of each day. Character Development includes respecting others by listening, promoting responsibility and honesty, trusting and respecting the ideas of others, encouraging honest/responsible actions, respecting individual differences, as well as being responsible in learning.

SCDSB Commit to Character Traits



<i>Integrity</i>	We act justly and honourably in all that we do
<i>Responsibility</i>	We are accountable for our actions and we follow through on our commitments
<i>Cooperation</i>	We work together towards shared goals and purposes
<i>Caring</i>	We show kindness towards others
<i>Respect</i>	We treat ourselves, others and the environment with consideration and dignity
<i>Optimism</i>	We maintain a positive attitude and have hope for the future
<i>Honesty</i>	We behave in a sincere, trustworthy and truthful manner
<i>Empathy</i>	We strive to understand and appreciate the feelings and actions of others
<i>Courage</i>	We do the right thing, even when it's difficult
<i>Inclusiveness</i>	We include everyone in what we do and value their unique contributions

What steps are taken when bullying is reported?

In February 2010, new legislation came into effect that affected how all school board employees handle incidents at schools. It requires all school staff to report, and those who work directly with students to respond, to incidents that happen in schools. School staff who work directly with students must respond to inappropriate or disrespectful behaviour that has a negative impact on the school climate. All school staff must report to the principal incidents that can lead to suspension, such as bullying, or more serious incidents that can lead to expulsion.

The Ministry of Education document, [“Keeping Our Kids Safe at School: Reporting and Responding to Incidents”](#), outlines how incidents are reported, what happens when incidents are reported, and steps taken. As well, this Ministry document, [“Making Ontario’s Schools Safer: What Parents need to know”](#), outlines what schools are doing to prevent bullying and how it is dealt with at the school level.

What about cyber-bullying?

As young people embrace new communication technologies, bullying has manifested itself in a new and potentially more dangerous way - through cyber bullying. Cyber bullying can generally be defined as sending or posting harmful or malicious messages or images through email, instant messages, cell phones and websites. It is emerging as one of the more challenging issues facing educators, since it has a direct impact on students but often occurs away from school property.

No action is foolproof, but there are steps students can take to protect themselves online and lessen the chance of becoming the victim of unsolicited messages:

1. Never give out personal information, passwords, PIN numbers etc.
2. Tell your children not to submit or post pictures of themselves to any website. These can easily be copied and posted to any other website.
3. Discourage children from responding to, or engaging in, cyber abuse or bullying.
4. Report the incident!



Visit the SCDSB web page on [Cyber Bullying](#) for more information.

What should I do if my child is the bully?

It's important to tell your children what bullying is – they may not know that what they're doing is bullying. You should describe the different types of bullying and explain it is hurtful and harmful. Let your child know that bullying is wrong and is not acceptable behaviour under any circumstances.

Children who physically bully other students may also come home with bruises, scrapes and torn clothing. They may suddenly have more money to spend than usual or new possessions that they would normally not be able to afford. They may also talk negatively about other students. Children who bully sometimes do so at home as well as at school. Look and listen within your own household. Are there signs that one of your children is being bullied by a sibling?

Bullying behaviour can develop over a long period of time or as a result of major changes, losses or upsets in a child's life, or even peer pressure. Think about how problems and conflicts are dealt with in your home. Do you talk through issues positively as a family? An important way to discourage bullying is to be a good role model and show your kids how to sort out difficulties without using power or aggression.

Your child needs to talk to someone about why they are bullying – if they want to speak with someone other than you, suggest they talk to someone else they trust. Encourage your child to be a leader without hurting others by getting involved in sports, school groups and community activities.

If your child has been bullying others online, remind them of the following:

- If you wouldn't say it in person, do not say it online
- Use 'netiquette': treat others online how you would want to be treated.

If your child is facing disciplinary action, the SCDSB [Student Discipline](#) policy contains information on positive practices and progressive discipline. Progressive discipline is the SCDSB's approach that makes use of a continuum of prevention programs, preventative actions, interventions, supports, and consequences, building upon strategies that promote positive behaviours.

The Ministry of Education also has a helpful information sheet on [Suspension and Expulsion: What Parents Need to Know](#).

How do I keep my children safe and be proactive?

Here are tips from some of the resources in the "Links" section:

At school

- Talk to your child! Keep the lines of communication open.
- Report any incidents of bullying immediately to the school principal.
- Ask about your school's bullying prevention and intervention plans. The plans outline what the school staff can do to solve the problem.
- Encourage your child to walk away from bullying situations – don't hit back, don't talk back, don't reply back.

Online

- Make sure your children understand how vast and public the Internet is. Remind them that anything they post on social media sites or send in a message is virtually available to be seen or read by anyone in the world.
- Talk to your children about cyber bullying. Make sure they understand what it is. Let them know that cyber bullying is no less serious and unacceptable than other forms of bullying.
- Set up the family computer in an open, common area so that you can monitor what your child is sending and receiving. Inform your Internet Service Provider (ISP) or cell phone service provider of any abuse. Although it can take a lot of time and effort to get providers to respond and deal with your complaints about cyber bullying, it is necessary in order to try to stop it from re-occurring.
- Purchase software that can help track activity. There are parental controls that filter both instant messaging (IM) and chat rooms. Be aware!



LINKS

We invite you to visit www.scdsb.on.ca often for news, facts, school information, Board highlights and hundreds of other pages about Simcoe County's public education system. This month we are featuring our [School Calendars](#) link. Here you will find the current school year calendar, as well as the approved 2011-2012 calendar. The calendars outline important school dates such as professional activity (PA) Days, holidays, and evaluation days (for secondary students).

Here are additional resources for anti-bullying information. There are a lot of helpful links on the web for both parents and children!

- Ministry of Education's section on [Safe Schools](#) and the "[Bullying: We can all help stop it](#)" publication
- Ontario Provincial Police [tip sheet on bullying](#)
- Media Awareness Network's "[Be Web Aware](#)" website
- [NetSmartz: A Program of the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children](#)
- [DEAL.org](#) – RCMP website on cyberbullying
- Ontario Physical & Health Education Association (OPHEA) has created *CyberCops*, which offers free, educational, computer-based programs that teach students in Grades 7 and 8 about the risks and safety issues associated with Internet use. The programs are available for free download [here](#).
- The world's largest Internet safety, help and education resource – a wealth of information on children and online issues: <http://www.wiredsafety.org/>
- A site for students to share ideas about school violence prevention and to write about their personal experiences with bullying: www.bullying.org

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"A positive school climate, with a safe learning and teaching environment, is essential for students to succeed in school. All of us – staff, students, parents and community agencies – have a part to play in making schools safer."

~ From the Ministry of Education's 2009 document "[Keeping Our Kids Safe at School](#)"

NEW! We want your feedback on the Parent eBulletin!

Please click [here](#) to access a short survey on the value of this publication, and share your suggestions and feedback for future issues.

About the SCDSB

The Simcoe County District School Board is deeply committed to ensuring all learners have the opportunity to realize their dreams within a vibrant and successful public education system. We are very proud of our 50,000 students who are learning and achieving in more than 100 schools and seven adult learning centres throughout our urban and rural communities. Working with school communities, our dedicated and skilled staff members provide quality programs to help students develop lifelong learning skills in safe, caring environments. Our schools are located in the Huronia and Georgian Bay regions of south-central Ontario.