

STUDENT WELFARE 4200

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION 4255

1. Rationale

The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) recognizes that providing students with a safe, welcoming, inclusive and respectful environment is a shared responsibility in which the school board and schools play an important role. Schools that incorporate bullying prevention and intervention strategies foster a positive learning and teaching environment that supports all students to reach their full potential. A positive school climate is a crucial component of bullying prevention. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. A whole-school approach involving all education and community partners is needed to bring about necessary systemic change. Schools are well positioned to respond to all forms of bullying, educate students on bullying prevention, promote healthy relationships and address incidents of bullying in a timely manner.

The Provincial Code of Conduct, the SCDSB Code of Conduct, the *Education Act*, and the board's discipline policies and procedures create expectations for conduct and behaviour for all persons on school property, and outline strategies to be taken to reduce incidents and impose appropriate consequences for students. The board recognizes the primacy of the Human Rights Code of Ontario. Board policies and procedures are subject to and shall be interpreted and applied in accordance with the Human Rights Code of Ontario when addressing issues of discipline with respect to bullying.

2. Policy

It is the policy of the SCDSB that bullying will not be tolerated on school property, at school-related activities, on school buses, or in any other circumstances (e.g. online). Bullying adversely affects a student's well-being and ability to learn, and impacts the overall school climate, including healthy relationships. Bullying, which includes cyberbullying, is a serious issue and is not acceptable in the school environment (including virtual), in any school related activity or in any other circumstances that will have an impact on the school climate.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 Bullying - aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a student where:
- 3.1.1 the behaviour is intended by the student to have the effect of, or the student ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to have the effect of, causing harm, fear, intimidation, or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm, harm to the individual's reputation or harm to the individual's property, or creating a negative environment at a school for another individual; and,

- 3.1.2 the behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived imbalance of power between the students 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.
- 3.2 Conflict - in contrast to bullying, conflict is generally a disagreement or difference in opinion between peers who typically have equal power in their relationships. It's usually an inevitable part of a group dynamic and both parties have the power to influence the situation.
- 3.3 Cyberbullying - includes bullying by electronic means, such as social media platforms, email, text, direct messaging, digital gaming and/or communication applications:
- 3.3.1 sending or sharing hateful, insulting, offensive and/or intimidating electronic communication or images via text messages, emails and direct messages;
- 3.3.2 revealing information/images considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent; and,
- 3.3.3 making and/or engaging and/or participating in fake accounts on social networking sites to impersonate, humiliate and/or exclude others.
- 3.4 Positive school climate is the sum total of all the personal relationships within a school. When these relationships are founded in mutual acceptance and inclusion, and modeled by all, a culture of respect and belonging becomes the norm. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable and accepted, allowing learners to achieve their full potential.

4. Guidelines

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Strategies

The board and schools shall develop bullying prevention and intervention plans that include teaching strategies that support school-wide bullying prevention policies. These plans shall take into account local needs and circumstances, such as geographic considerations, demographics, cultural needs, and availability of board and community supports and resources. The board will review the bullying prevention and intervention plans at least once every two years.

4.1 Prevention Strategies

All students should participate in bullying prevention training and leadership initiatives within their own school. These may include but are not limited to:

- 4.1.1 classroom instruction that promotes diversity, equity and inclusion with curriculum links;
- 4.1.2 character education initiatives;
- 4.1.3 mentorship programs;
- 4.1.4 citizenship development;
- 4.1.5 student voice and student leadership;
- 4.1.6 student success strategies;
- 4.1.7 healthy lifestyles initiatives; and,
- 4.1.8 pro-social skills development.

4.2 Intervention Strategies

It is the expectation of the board that, provided that there is no immediate risk of physical harm to any individual, staff members who work directly with students on a regular basis, shall respond to any incidents of bullying.

Further, incidents of bullying that a board staff member or a transportation provider becomes aware of must be reported to the principal or designate in accordance with SCDSB procedures at the earliest safe opportunity, and no later than the end of the school day or transportation run, if reported by a transportation provider. A written report in accordance with the board's Student Discipline APM A7635, using the Safe Schools Reporting Form must be made when it is safe to do so.

- 4.2.1 Responses by staff members who work directly with students on a regular basis might include:
 - 4.2.1.1 asking the student to stop the behaviour;
 - 4.2.1.2 identifying the behaviour as inappropriate and disrespectful and explaining why, including if it offends the dignity of the person targeted and/or is contrary to the Ontario Human Rights Code;
 - 4.2.1.3 explaining the impact of the behaviour on others and on school climate;
 - 4.2.1.4 modeling appropriate communication;
 - 4.2.1.5 asking the student for a correction of their behaviour by restating or rephrasing their comments;
 - 4.2.1.6 asking the student to apologize for their behaviour; and,
 - 4.2.1.7 asking the student to explain why or how a different choice with respect to their behaviour would have been more appropriate and respectful.

- 4.2.2 Intervention requires appropriate and timely responses and should be done in ways that are consistent with a progressive discipline approach and may include early and/or ongoing intervention strategies, such as:
 - 4.2.2.1 contact with parents/guardians;
 - 4.2.2.2 review of expectations;
 - 4.2.2.3 co-created contract with expectations;
 - 4.2.2.4 an assignment with a learning component appropriate to that student's abilities;
 - 4.2.2.5 referral to counselling; and,
 - 4.2.2.6 consultation.
- 4.2.3 Progressive discipline may also include a range of interventions, supports and consequences when bullying behaviour has occurred, with a focus on improving behaviour including:
 - 4.2.3.1 meeting with parents/guardians, student and principal;
 - 4.2.3.2 detentions;
 - 4.2.3.3 withdrawal of privileges; and,
 - 4.2.3.4 school, board and community support programs.

4.3 Suspension

In recognition of the importance of addressing bullying, which can have a significant impact on student safety, learning and the school climate, bullying is included in the list of infractions for which suspension must be considered.

4.4 School Level Plans

Schools are required to develop and implement school-wide bullying prevention and intervention plans as part of their annual improvement planning. Components of these plans must be consistent with the policies and procedures of the board and must include:

- 4.4.1 the definition of bullying;
- 4.4.2 analysis of the school climate survey (completed every two years);
- 4.4.3 prevention strategies;
- 4.4.4 intervention strategies;
- 4.4.5 procedures to allow students to report bullying incidents safely;
- 4.4.6 training strategies for members of the school community;
- 4.4.7 professional learning opportunities for staff members;
- 4.4.8 communication and outreach strategies; and,
- 4.4.9 monitoring and review processes.

Boards are required to establish and provide annual professional development programs to educate teachers and other school staff about bullying prevention and strategies for promoting an inclusive, equitable and positive school climate.

4.5 Supports for Those Impacted

The board supports students who are victims of serious incidents of bullying causing harm which are contrary to the provincial, board, and/or school Codes of Conduct. The principal or designate is required to provide information, in accordance with board procedures, to the parents/guardians of a student who has been harmed, if that student is not an adult student and provided the principal is of the opinion that informing the parent/guardian would NOT put the student at risk of harm. The principal may inform a parent/guardian of an adult student with consent.

The school shall develop appropriate plans to protect the victim. The school shall communicate those plans to the victim and to the victim's parents/guardians, as well as communicating a method of identifying dissatisfaction with steps taken to provide support to the victim. Communication with the victim's parents/guardians shall only take place in circumstances where to do so would, in the principal or designate's opinion, NOT put the student at risk of harm.

While the focus is on prevention, when bullying occurs schools shall offer support for students who are victims of bullying. These supports include:

- 4.5.1 taking immediate action. Intervene immediately with an appropriate response and/or consequences;
- 4.5.2 offering the victim a safe place. Provide for proximity to an adult or the ability to avoid areas where bullying has occurred;
- 4.5.3 finding the victim a mentor or a buddy. New or existing friendships may help build self-esteem and resiliency;
- 4.5.4 providing the victim with resources. These might include referral to a social worker or child and youth worker, professional supports such as public health units, community agencies, websites or Kids Help Phone for additional help, if needed; and,
- 4.5.5 monitoring the situation. It may take multiple interventions and increasing consequences before behaviour changes. Planned check-ins with the victim and connecting the victim to an identified support adult to determine how things are progressing are expected.

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4.6 Safe and Accepting Schools Teams

Each school must have a safe and accepting schools team that is composed of at least one student (where appropriate), one parent/guardian, one teacher, one non-teaching staff member, one community partner and the principal. The team must have a staff chair. An existing school committee can assume this role.

The team shall be responsible for revising their existing school wide bullying prevention and intervention plan to include awareness raising strategies, support strategies that shall include the requirement to create plans to protect victims and reporting requirements when a student has been harmed.

5. Administrative Procedures

The Director of Education is authorized to establish administrative procedures to implement this policy, which shall be considered guidelines pursuant to the *Education Act*.

- [APM A1300](#)
- [APM A7230](#)
- [APM A7601](#)
- [APM A7605](#)
- [APM A7630](#)
- [APM A7633](#)
- [APM A7634](#)
- [APM A7635](#)

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