

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 340

Bullying/Harassment Prevention and Intervention

1. Purpose

Bullying adversely affects a student's ability to learn, healthy relationships, the school climate, and a school's ability to educate its students. Bullying 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 school climate.

Providing students with an opportunity to learn and develop in a safe, caring, included, accepted and respectful society is a shared responsibility in which the district and its schools play an important role. Schools that use bullying prevention and intervention strategies foster a positive learning and teaching environment that supports academic achievement for all students.

A positive school climate is a crucial component of prevention and includes the sum total of all of the personal relationships in the school. These relationships should be founded on mutual respect and inclusion, and modeled by all members of the school community. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. To help achieve positive climates, the Board and all schools must actively promote and support behaviours that reflect the district's common character virtues: caring, respect, responsibility, perseverance, initiative, honesty, optimism and courage. The Board and each school should also endeavour to involve parents and community members in the life of the school.

The Director of Education has developed this administrative procedure to provide direction to the system for the prevention of bullying and for intervention when inappropriate behaviour occurs.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 **Bullying:** means aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a pupil where,
 - 2.1.1 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 the effect of,
 - 2.1.1.1 Causing harm, fear or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm to the individual's reputation or harm to the individual's property or
 - 2.1.1.2 Creating a negative environment at a school for another individual, and;

- 2.1.2 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.

For the purposes of the definition of “bullying,” behaviour includes the use of any physical, verbal electronic, written or other means. “Bullying” by electronic means (commonly known as cyber-bullying) includes creating a web page or a blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person; impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the internet; and communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals.

Aggressive behaviour may be intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect. It can take many forms, including physical, verbal and social. If aggressive behaviour is physical, it may include hitting, pushing, slapping and tripping. If it is verbal, it may include name calling, mocking, insults, threats, and sexist, racist, homophobic, or transphobic comments. If it is social, or relational aggression, it is more subtle and may involve such behaviours as gossiping, spreading rumours, excluding others from a group, humiliating others with public gestures or graffiti, and shunning or ignoring. Social aggression may also occur through the use of technology (eg. spreading rumours, images, or hurtful comments through the use of e-mail, cell phones, text messaging, Internet websites, social networking, or other technology).

“Harm” means harm that can be experienced in a number of ways, including physical, mental, emotional and psychological.

Harassment: Harassment is words, conduct or action that is directed at an individual and serves no legitimate purpose and which annoys, alarms or causes that individual emotional distress. Harassment occurs when an individual is repeatedly singled out for serious mistreatment, which may include threats, bullying, verbal assault, taunting, ostracizing or violent gestures and actions.

The term “harassment” is used in human rights codes as one form of discrimination. Administrative Procedure 450 - Human Rights deals with harassment based on the enumerated grounds in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. AP 450 is to be consulted for any example of harassment based on the grounds of race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation or other human rights grounds, including any sexual harassment of a student by a student. However, the term of “harassment” is now used outside of the human rights context as well to describe types of inappropriate conduct that are not related to the *Code*.

- 2.2 Both bullying and harassment are related to real or perceived power over others. 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, solidarity of the peer group, religion, ethnicity, disability, need for special education, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender and race.

- 2.3 Bullying and harassment are dynamics of unhealthy interaction that can take many forms. Bullying or harassment 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., cyber bullying - spreading rumours, images, or hurtful comments through the use of email, cell phones, text messaging, Internet websites, or other technology).
- 2.4 For the purposes of this administrative procedure from this point on, the term “bullying” has been used throughout. The same prevention and intervention strategies apply equally to “harassment”.

A. PREVENTION STRATEGIES

3. Character Education

- 3.1 Schools, parents and the broader community in the Renfrew County District School Board are engaged in character development initiatives. The principles and attributes of character development are universal and transcend socio-economic status, racial, ethno-cultural, linguistic, religious, gender, physical and intellectual ability and other demographic factors.
- 3.2 The district believes that all stakeholders share in the responsibility to model the attributes of good character. Good character needs to be modelled, taught and practiced by all members of the district’s learning community.
- 3.3 Through the system-wide sharing of information, the district recognizes and honours best practice initiatives and programs and activities that contribute to character development. Character education provides a foundation of respect and positive behaviours upon which anti-bullying programs can thrive.

4. School-Wide Prevention Strategies

- 4.1 A positive school climate is essential to the prevention of bullying behaviour. A positive climate is developed when administrators, teachers and support staff:
 - 4.1.1 promote the development of healthy and inclusive relationships among the staff and student body and with parents and the broader community;
 - 4.1.2 know and follow administrative procedures related to safe, caring and respectful schools;

- 4.1.3 reinforce bullying prevention messages through programs addressing discrimination based on such factors as age, race, sexual orientation, gender, faith, disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic disadvantage;
 - 4.1.4 provide and support training for students and staff members that raises awareness in the areas of homophobia, gender-based violence, sexual harassment, inappropriate sexual behaviour, critical media literacy and safe internet use;
 - 4.1.5 post, communicate daily and enforce clear codes of student conduct;
 - 4.1.6 assess the awareness and scope of the bullying problem at the school through school climate surveys (every school must involve students in school climate surveys not less than once every two years);
 - 4.1.7 ensure that students are supervised in all areas of the school and on the school grounds, with particular attention being given to any areas where bullying has been identified as a problem in a particular school setting;
 - 4.1.8 find a variety of ways to reward students for positive, inclusive behaviour and to support them in being positive leaders in their school community;
 - 4.1.9 encourage parents to participate and become engaged in the life of the school and to volunteer to assist in school activities and projects; and
 - 4.1.10 involve school councils in the development of anti-bullying initiatives and the ongoing implementation of prevention programs.
- 4.2 When involving parents and school councils, staff members will provide information about bullying, including ways to support a child who reports being bullied or witnessing bullying. Administrators, teachers and support staff must inform parents about the dangers of encouraging their children to be aggressive or to strike back. They will also provide experienced advice to parents about how to avoid rescuing their children from every challenge and creating over-dependence. Parents and the school can work together to teach children to be assertive and to develop age-appropriate independence. This independence can contribute to self-confidence and may deter bullies who often seek out acquiescent victims.
 - 4.3 Administrators, teachers and support staff must regularly reinforce the message that bullying will not be tolerated in the school and that everyone must work together to create a positive learning environment.

5. Classroom Prevention Strategies

- 5.1 Teachers and support staff provide opportunities for students to talk about bullying and to define unacceptable behaviours. Teachers involve students in establishing classroom rules against bullying and peer harassment. Teachers and support staff engage students in classroom activities and discussions related to bullying and

violence, including awareness of the harm that they cause and strategies to reduce them.

- 5.2 Teachers provide and regularly reinforce clear expectations for appropriate student behaviour.
- 5.3 Teachers provide integrated programs that support bullying prevention strategies. Teachers and support staff focus on developing healthy relationships in classroom lessons and include books that deal with related issues in student reading materials.
- 5.4 Teachers promote cooperation by assigning projects that require collaboration. Such cooperation teaches students how to compromise and how to assert without demanding. Teachers vary the grouping of participants in these projects and monitor the treatment of participants in each group.
- 5.5 All staff ensure that students know what to do when they experience or observe a bullying confrontation. Knowing the process to follow gives the students confidence and a feeling of security.

B. INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

6. School-Wide Intervention Strategies

- 6.1 All employees of the Board must take seriously all allegations of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, inappropriate sexual behaviour and bullying behaviour and act in a timely, sensitive, and supportive manner when responding to students who disclose or report incidents. Board employees who work directly with students, including administrators, teachers, school support counsellors, and educational assistants, must respond to any student behaviour that is likely to have a negative impact on 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.
- 6.2 School administrators, teachers and support staff encourage students to make a confidential report if they are the victims of bullying or are aware of another victim or victims. Reporting methods are designed to minimize the possibility of reprisal. Details of incidents are carefully recorded and tracked. Such reports are investigated and resolved expeditiously, consistent with administrative procedures.
- 6.3 Parents who report bullying are given a receptive hearing, followed by investigation and resolution of the allegations.
- 6.4 Interventions are conducted in ways that are consistent with a progressive discipline approach. The strategies will range from early and ongoing interventions to more intensive interventions in cases of persistent bullying, with possible referral to community or social service agencies. A variety of early interventions, ongoing

interventions, supports and consequences are described in Administrative Procedure 350 - Student Conduct and Progressive Discipline.

- 6.5 Bullying is one of the infractions for which a principal may consider suspension from school. The principal will take into account any mitigating or other factors which may apply.
- 6.6 Board employees who work directly with students must provide victims of bullying and harassment identified in 6.1 with contact information about professional supports and make contact information readily available to students who wish to discuss issues of healthy relationships, gender-identity, and sexuality. For students who have been victimized by serious harassment or bullying, school staff must develop a specific safety plan to further protect the victim and this plan should be communicated to the parents of the student victim.

7. Classroom Intervention Strategies

- 7.1 All staff must take immediate action when bullying is observed or when aware of allegations of bullying and let students know that they care and will not allow anyone to be mistreated. By taking immediate action in dealing with the bully, educators support both the victim and the witness or witnesses.
- 7.2 Dealing with a bully does not necessarily mean confronting the bully in front of his or her peers. Staff will usually confront the bully in private. Challenging a bully in front of his or her peers may actually enhance the bully's status and lead to further aggression.
- 7.3 Teachers or the principal, as appropriate, will notify the parents of both victims and bullies when a confrontation occurs, and seek to resolve the problem quickly at school. They refer both victims and aggressors to counselling whenever appropriate.
- 7.4 School staff provides protection and support for bullying victims whenever necessary, including creating a buddy system whereby students have a particular friend or older buddy on whom they can depend.
- 7.5 Teachers and support staff listen receptively to parents who report bullying and teachers investigate reported circumstances so that immediate and appropriate action can be taken.
- 7.6 Staff avoid attempts to mediate a threatening bullying situation alone if they are uncomfortable. They will inform the principal who will address the situation as appropriate, including contacting police services.

8. Reporting to Principals

- 8.1 An employee of the Board who becomes aware that a student may have engaged in an activity for which suspension or expulsion must be considered shall report the matter to the principal using the Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form as soon as reasonably possible. This includes any incident of bullying as well as all inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour at any time at school and at any school-related event. The employee 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.
 - 8.1.1 A student of the Board who becomes aware of such an activity shall report the matter to a supervising Board employee (who will follow 8.1).
- 8.2 In addition to Board employees, school bus drivers and third-party service providers are also required to report to the principal, in writing, such incidents noted in 8.1. Third-party service providers include those providing before-and/or after-school programs for Full-Day Kindergarten on the school site.
- 8.3 In cases where an immediate action is required, a verbal report to the principal may be made. However, a written report must still be made when it is safe to do so.
- 8.4 In certain situations, members of the College of Psychologists of Ontario or the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers who are engaged in a clinical relationship with a student shall report incidents of behaviour for which suspension or expulsion must be considered to the principal as soon as it is, in their professional opinion, reasonably possible to do so without having a negative impact on the nature of the clinical relationship. They shall also report, in a manner that is consistent with the code of ethics and the standards of practice of their respective professions, matters that could result in the student's doing physical, emotional, or psychological harm to him -or herself or to others.
- 8.5 All employee reports, including those made to the principal verbally, must be confirmed in writing, using the Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form – Part I. Where the principal is the sole witness to an incident, the principal is similarly required to use the reporting form to confirm in writing what he or she witnessed. This form is to be completed in a timely manner.
- 8.6 The principal must investigate all reports submitted by board employees. Once the investigation is complete, the principal must communicate the results of the investigation to the teacher who made the report. If a board employee who is not a teacher made the report, the principal will communicate the results of the investigation to that employee if the principal considers it appropriate. Communication between the principal and school staff about the investigation and the results of the investigation is a shared responsibility, and is an important factor in meeting student needs and fostering collaboration in the school.

- 8.7 The principal must not disclose more personal information than is reasonably necessary for the purpose of communicating the results of the investigation. This information must be provided in a timely manner so that school staff can work with the principal to best meet the needs of students, support a positive school climate, and help prevent future inappropriate behaviour from taking place.
- 8.8 In all cases, the principal must provide the employee who reported the incident with written acknowledgement, using the Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form – Part II. If no further action is taken by the principal, the principal is not required to retain the report. Information that could identify the student(s) involved must not be part of the acknowledgement.
- 8.9 The principal must provide a written acknowledgement of receipt of the report to the employee submitting the report and must specify whether action was taken or not required.
- 8.10 Each report must be assigned a report number by the school for filing and retrieval purposes.
- 8.11 If the principal decides that action must be taken as a result of an incident of bullying, then the report and documentation of the action taken must be filed on the OSR(s) of the student(s) whose behaviour was inappropriate. Names of other students must be removed before being filed on the OSR. This form stays in the OSR for a minimum of one year. If no further action is taken, the report is to be destroyed.
- 8.12 No information is to be filed on the OSR of the student who has been harmed unless expressly requested by the parent of the victim. In situations where the student who has been harmed has also engaged in a serious student incident, information regarding that incident and the action taken will be placed in the student's OSR.
- 8.13 If the principal has identified the incident as violent and if the student engaged in the incident is a student of the school, the reporting form must be retained in that student's OSR for:
- One year, if the student's suspension was quashed or withdrawn and the record of suspension expunged. Documentation of any other action taken (other than suspension or expulsion) must also be retained for this period;
 - Three years, if the student was suspended for the violent incident
 - Five years, if the student was expelled for the violent incident

C. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

9. Supports for Students

Students affected by serious incidents, and those who engage in these types of incidents, benefit from assistance in developing healthy relationships, making choices that support

continuing their learning, and achieving success. Supports may be provided by employees of the board, through board programs and resource personnel, or through community-based service providers, including social agencies and mental health services.

In responding to any incident, board employees who work directly with students must act in a timely, sensitive and supportive manner. They will support students – including those who disclose or report incidents and those who wish to discuss issues of healthy relationships, gender identity, and sexuality – by providing them with contact information about professional supports (eg. public health units, community-based service providers, Help Phone lines or websites). If necessary, a case conference with supportive parties, potentially including parents, will be conducted by the principal to determine and record a specific plan to protect/support students who have been harmed. Parents that are unsatisfied with the supports their children receive will communicate that in writing to the principal of the school. A meeting to examine and potentially refine the plan will be conducted and will include parents, administrators, school support counsellors, teachers and other support personnel from the Board or outside agencies.

10. Notifying Parents

Principals are required to notify the parents of the students who have been harmed as a result of a serious incident and shall disclose:

- 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
- The supports that will be provided for the student in response to the harm that resulted from the activity

Principals are required to notify the parents of students who have engaged in serious student incidents and shall disclose:

- The nature of the activity that resulted in harm to the other student(s)
- The nature of the harm to the other student(s)
- The nature of any disciplinary measures taken in response to the activity
- The supports that will be provided for the student in response to his or her engagement in the activity

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

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. When principals decide not to notify the parents that their child was involved in a serious student incident, they must document the rationale for this decision and notify both the person 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 students to board resources or to a community-based service provider that can provide the appropriate type of confidential support when his or her parents are not called (eg. 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 Family and Childrens' Service according to the requirements of the Child and Family Services Act.

11. School Transfers

In cases where students are being transferred to another school in order to preserve school safety, the board will coordinate a "transfer meeting" between the school from which the student is being transferred and the receiving school. In cases where the transfer is necessary to protect a student, it is preferable that the student who has been harmed not be moved. The purpose of the transfer meeting is to put in place a transition strategy to identify any additional supports and resources that the student may require (eg. supports provided by school-based employees of the board, by board personnel, or through a community-based service provider, including mental health services).

The meeting must include the teachers and other school staff that will have regular direct contact with the student. The student that is being moved and his or her parents should also be invited to the transfer meeting. Schools must make reasonable efforts to accommodate parent participation at this meeting. The transfer meeting must occur prior to the day or on the day the student is transferred. When the meeting occurs on the day the student is transferred, it must occur before the student attends class. The receiving school must also be in possession of the student's OSR prior to the occurrence of the transfer meeting, and the OSR must be available to be consulted at the meeting. The principal must inform all staff in attendance that they must treat any information about the student and the incident disclosed at the meeting as confidential.

12. Training, Communication and Outreach

- 12.1 The district will provide training on character development and bullying prevention and intervention to administrators, teachers, school support counsellors and educational assistants. Training will include ways of responding to gender-based and homophobic bullying that are consistent with equity and cultural sensitivity, respect for diversity and special education needs. Training for teachers will be provided as part of, but not limited to, the New Teacher Induction Program.
- 12.2 The district will communicate expectations related to bullying to students, staff members, parents, school councils, SEAC, school bus operators and drivers and third-party service providers.
- 12.3 Each school is to work with and maintain an up-to-date contact list of agencies and organizations that have professional expertise in dealing with gender-based violence, sexual assault, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual

behaviour so that appropriate supports for students, parents and teachers can be provided to help address these issues.

13. Monitoring and Review

- 13.1 The district will monitor and review the prevention and intervention strategies to determine their effectiveness. This process will include a regular cycle of analysis of the school climate through anonymous surveys. In evaluating the effectiveness of Board procedures, indicators of success will be established in consultation with teachers, non-teaching staff, students, parents, school councils, SEAC, Parent Involvement Committee and community service providers.
- 13.2 All schools must revise existing bullying prevention and intervention plans as part of their School Improvement Plan. The school plans must include the definition of bullying, prevention and awareness raising strategies, intervention and support strategies (including plans to protect victims), reporting requirements, training strategies for members of the school community, communication and outreach strategies and monitoring and review processes.

14. Safe Schools Teams

- 14.1 Each school must have in place a safe schools team responsible for school safety. The team must be composed of at least one student, where appropriate, one parent, one teacher, one support staff member, one community partner, and the principal. The team must have a staff chair. An existing school committee may assume this role.
- 14.2 The safe school team is responsible for the ongoing implementation and monitoring of prevention and intervention programs and procedures related to bullying.

Legal References:

Ontario Human Rights Code

Education Act, subsection 1(1); subsection 300.4 of Part XIII, subsection 300.3(3), subsection 301(5.5)

Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act, 2009

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Child and Family Services Act

Ontario Regulation 472/07, Suspension and Expulsion of Pupils

Ontario Regulation 181/98, Identification and Placement of Exceptional Pupils

Ontario Regulation 221/11, Extended Day and Third Party Programs

Ontario Student Record Guideline

Violence-Free Schools Policy, 1994

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 – Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools, 2009

PPM No. 128 - The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct

PPM No. 144 - Bullying Prevention and Intervention (revised October 2009)

PPM No. 145 - Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour

Renfrew County District School Board References:

Administrative Procedure 140 - Code of Conduct

AP 141 - Computers: Network, Internet and Electronic Devices

AP 311 - Violence Prevention and Reporting of Incidents

AP 350 - Student Conduct and Progressive Discipline

AP 358 - Student Discipline: Suspension

AP 359 - Student Discipline: Expulsion

AP 450 - Human Rights

Form F350 – Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form