

Notes:

Bullying and Harassment

An Information Guide and

Protocol for Students



**Hamilton-Wentworth
Catholic District School Board**

Believing, Achieving, Serving

For more information please contact your School Principal and/or
School Social Worker.

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BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

AN INFORMATION GUIDE AND PROTOCOL FOR STUDENTS

Introduction

The spirit and intent of this protocol have been established in an effort to uphold the inherent right of all individuals to be treated with dignity and respect. For the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School System, the basis of this belief is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition and the Book of Genesis where it is written "*God created man in the image of himself... male and female he created them.*" In the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus talks about... "*loving the Lord God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength and all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.*" God, as our loving parent, has made us all brothers and sisters through his love.

It is a policy of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board that every individual has the right to freedom from bullying and harassment because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, record of offences, marital status, family status or exceptionality.

All members of the inclusive school community have a responsibility to play a part in ensuring that the learning and working environment is free from harassment and bullying. This responsibility is to be exercised by not engaging in conduct which may constitute harassment or bullying. Any student who believes that a fellow student has experienced or is experiencing bullying or harassment, or retaliation for having brought forward a complaint of harassment or bullying is encouraged to follow the procedures outlined herein.

The Board takes seriously its responsibility to ensure a learning and working environment of mutual trust and respect and wishes to make clear that harassment or bullying of any individual will not be tolerated and that there will be consequences to those who conduct themselves in a contrary manner.

The staff person has a responsibility of determining the appropriateness of proceeding directly to Step Three (below). Such a decision shall be based primarily upon the nature, frequency and severity of the incident(s) and/or availability of Parent/Guardian authorization.

- At the meeting the victim shall:
 - make objection, disapproval and/or unease known to the offending person in a clear manner
 - describe the behaviour verbally and/or refer to notes
 - firmly request that the offending behaviour stop.
- The staff person will then assist the involved parties in attempting to achieve a mutually agreed upon resolution.
- At any meeting, any party may be accompanied by another person of his/her choice with mutual agreement of the other parties.

RESOLUTION

If the parties agree, the matter is resolved and paperwork is filed by the Principal. If Resolution is not achieved, the process may then proceed to Step Three.

STEP THREE

This is the final stage in resolving an issue of Harassment/Bullying. Should unwanted behaviours continue to be evident and/or should previous attempts to resolve the issue have proven unsatisfactory, the victim, on his/her own or with the assistance of the staff person, shall refer the matter to the Principal to be dealt with according to the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.

An individual always has the right to pursue a solution through the legal system in the event the harassment/bullying continues or has not been resolved satisfactorily within the school system.

THE RESOLUTION PROCESS

The Resolution Process outlined below addresses the following forms of harassment/bullying:

- Student to Student
- Student to Staff
- Staff to Student

Should an individual feel intimidated or uncomfortable with Steps One or Two, he/she may proceed directly to Step Three.

STEP ONE

An informal approach to resolution is always recommended as a first step. Often this approach will be sufficient in ending the unwanted behaviour.

Procedure

- The victim should express directly to the offending party his/her displeasure at the unwanted behaviour and respectfully request that it end.

STEP TWO

Should the unwanted behaviour continue following resolution attempts as outlined in Step One, the victim should proceed as follows:

Procedure

- The victim should keep a personal record of the details which should include dates, times, places, nature of behaviour, witnesses (if any) and other relevant information.
- The victim should seek the assistance of a staff person of his/her choice.
- The victim requests that the staff person confidentially arrange a meeting between the two parties and the staff person, for the purpose of discussion, mutual understanding and agreement.
- The staff person shall seek parent/guardian authorization for students under 18 years of age for purposes of student participation in the meeting.

What is Harassment?

Harassment is defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code as “engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome”. (Subsection 10[1][e]).

Harassment can be, but is not limited to, misuse of power. It is unacceptable and unsolicited conduct, action, beliefs and attitudes which, intentionally or unintentionally, demean the victim and/or assert control and/or influence over the victim. It is behaviour that is not welcomed and may make you feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, offended or scared.

Harassment is expressed in different ways, including, but not limited to:

- something done to you and/or something done to someone else including unnecessary and unwelcome physical contact such as touching, petting or pinching, leering, suggestive staring and/or other gestures, unwanted sexual attention, remarks, behaviours, sexually degrading words and/or solicitation made by a person who knows or ought reasonably to know that such attention is unwanted (in some situations the behaviours as indicated may actually be assaultive in nature and could be reported to the Police).
- comments which hurt someone's feelings including insults, jokes, name-calling, slurs and teasing
- fighting and/or bullying
- graffiti, insulting words, messages, slogans, pictures and offensive posters, video or a form of electronics transmission
- lack of sensitivity to a person's gender, sexual orientation, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, age, record of offenses, marital status, family status, employment status and/or disability
- making and/or distributing material which contains biased or hateful ideas
- implied and/or expressed verbal threats
- a happening and/or a series of repeated happenings, but it only has to happen once, to affect you
- non-intentional occurrences (which could be construed as harassment)

What is Bullying?

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.

Effects of Harassment and Bullying

Harassment or bullying may cause:

- a loss of self-esteem and/or self-confidence
- humiliation, intimidation, anger and/or frustration
- poor health
- poor school performance and/or attendance
- a negative school climate

What To Do If Harassed or Bullied

1. Pay attention to your feelings!

Sometimes people being harassed or bullied are told they “lack a sense of humour” or “have a chip on their shoulder”. Harassment and bullying are not funny. They are harmful. They are not allowed. It is the person doing the harassing who is wrong.

2. Take action!

If you feel you are being harassed or bullied, speak up! Clearly indicate to the individual that the action is unwanted. If you don't say something, people may think that you accept the behaviour and it may continue. Should you feel you require support in approaching the offending person, you are encouraged to seek out the assistance of a staff person.

3. Continue to take action!

If you feel that the situation is continuing and/or unsatisfactorily resolved, express your concerns to a staff person immediately and follow the Resolution Process outlined on page 5.

What is the Role of the Staff Person?

The staff person is a member of the school staff chosen by the person feeling bullied or harassed. This individual will not take sides but will work together with the people involved to help them work out their differences. Should the chosen staff person feel uncomfortable in assuming this role, he/she will assist the student in selecting another staff person.

The role of the staff person is to

- be a role model
- use active listening and mediating skills
- advocate on behalf of the student(s)
- assist in any of the procedural steps as outlined
- take responsibility
- be unbiased
- provide support and direction
- confront inappropriate behaviour
- help resolve problems
- seek advice and support when appropriate
- provide ongoing supervision and direction as may be required
- be aware of the impact of your comments and behaviour
- understand the differences associated with bullying and harassment
- consult with Principal/Designate in the event of any uncertainty/doubt
- report complaints of a serious nature to the Principal/Designate

At all times a student is encouraged to inform his/her parent/guardian of concerns related to actual and/or perceived harassment or bullying and of the Resolution Process.