Working Draft: Safe and Accepting Schools
Model Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan

The Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was developed by the Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet) in collaboration with the Accepting Schools Expert Panel.

Purpose:

- This document is intended to assist school boards in the preparation of their bullying prevention and intervention plans. Some school boards may already have a plan in place, and this Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (Model Plan) may provide additional elements to consider.

Context:

- A safe, inclusive and accepting school environment is essential for student achievement and well-being. There is conclusive research that shows that to reach their full potential, children and youth must feel safe, included and engaged in school.

- Bullying is associated with a range of physical and mental health problems, as well as educational problems, antisocial problems, and relationship problems. Experts call for early intervention for both the child who is victimized by bullying and the child who bullies. Without support, children who bully appear to learn how to use power and aggression to dominate others.[1] There is a growing base of knowledge and evidence about what works. The Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet) provides comprehensive information on their website about bullying and how to address it.

- An inclusive social climate based on caring and respectful relationships among and between students, teachers, other school staff, parents and administrators is generally accepted as a necessary supporting condition for learning.[2]

- Committed leadership and ongoing collaboration at all levels (individual, classroom, school, parent, board, community) among everyone involved are key factors to the success of a whole school approach.

- A whole school approach engages all key learning areas, all grades and the wider community. All aspects of school life are considered, such as policies and procedures, curriculum, school climate, teaching and assessment practices, co-curricular and leadership opportunities.

- The use of data is also a key factor. Data should be used to inform the development of bullying prevention and intervention plans, including the selection of evidence-informed programs and practices. A pre- and post- evaluation strategy is critical.

Creating a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan:

- The *Education Act*, as amended by the *Accepting Schools Act*, 2012, sets out the following requirements:
  - Every board shall establish a bullying prevention and intervention plan for the schools of the board and require its schools to implement the plan.

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[1] Wendy M. Craig, Debra J. Pepler, Ashley Murphy, and Heather McCuaig-Edge, "What Works in Bullying Prevention?", in Eric M. Vernberg and Bridget K. Biggs, eds., *Preventing and Treating Bullying and Victimization* ([U.S.A]: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 215-42.

[2] Adapted quote UNESCO Institute for Statistics, A Place to Learn: Lessons from Research on Learning Environments, 2012, pg 47.

reach every student

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- ○ When developing the bullying prevention and intervention plan, boards must seek input from students, teachers and other staff, parents/guardians, volunteers working in the schools, school councils and the public. Boards must regularly review their plan and seek input from these stakeholders to update it.
  - ○ School boards and schools must make their plan available to the public, for example, by posting it on their websites. Where a website is not available, it should be shared in another suitable manner.
  - ○ The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall address any matter specified in the policies or guidelines made under clause 301 (7.1) (i).

  Also see Policy/Program Memorandum 144: *Bullying Prevention and Intervention*.

- As boards continue to work to enhance and refine their plans, it is important that they:
  1) Review school climate surveys and other relevant information to identify areas of concern.
  2) Identify what evidence-informed programs are currently being used to promote a positive school climate and support bullying prevention efforts of the board. Please see the Public Health Agency of Canada's portal of best practice programs/ interventions at http://66.240.150.14/topic/br-rlac/6/page/1
  3) Reflect on what other evidence-informed strategies and practices may help to address concerns.
  4) Ask who their key partners are and who else should be included.

- School boards should also review and use the information gathered in their K-12 Improvement Planning Assessment Tool to identify the most appropriate strategies to include in their bullying prevention and intervention plans. Making these linkages assists the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement (BIPSA) process, as school boards are required to identify targeted goals and strategies that are focused on improving the achievement of all students. In addition, a well-planned and well-executed Board Leadership Development Strategy (BLDS) helps build coherence by supporting the achievement of goals outlined in the BIPSA and the development of a positive climate in the district and its schools.

- When developing their plans, school boards should take into account their local needs and circumstances, such as geographical and cultural considerations, as well as demographics. School boards should also consider the availability of supports and resources related to mental health and public health issues that have been developed by the board or by community agencies such as the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).

- Fostering a safe, caring and inclusive school climate as well as addressing bullying prevention is complex. Efforts need to be sustained over time. Board plans can take a multi-year approach and should be revisited as new data and information becomes available, or as progress is made.

Elements of a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

1. Education, Awareness and Outreach

Differing levels of knowledge and support for school board activities may exist. Efforts to increase education, awareness, and outreach will help to engage students, staff, parents and the broader community to support school and school board efforts to address inappropriate student behaviour, including bullying, as part of the whole school approach.

- Understand and include the definition of bullying from the *Education Act* in your communications. Consider the following:
  - ○ Identify different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying.
  - ○ Understand the myths and realities of bullying behaviour.
  - ○ Identify bullying and differentiate bullying from conflict, aggression and teasing.
  - ○ Understand power and peer dynamics.
  - ○ Identify how biases, prejudice and hate can lead to bullying.
  - ○ Identify different manifestations and underlying factors of bullying, such as body image, racism, sexism, homophobia, disability, etc.

- Understand a whole school approach and the essential importance of a [positive school climate](#) for student achievement and well-being.

- Develop awareness and understanding of the factors that contribute to a safe, inclusive, caring and accepting school climate.

- Identify ways to make students aware of how they can help prevent and address bullying.

- Identify strategies to engage parents in conversations about bullying prevention and how to promote a positive school climate.

- Reach out to parents and the broader school community. Consider the following:
  - Reflect on relationships and interactions and focus on promoting healthy relationships using a variety of strategies.
  - Become knowledgeable about community partners and resources available in the community. The availability of partners and resources will vary across the province.

- Communicate and share with the school community, policies and procedures including school board/school [Code of Conduct](#), [equity and inclusive education policy](#) and guidelines for religious accommodations, procedures to address incidents of discrimination, [progressive discipline approach](#), and bullying prevention and intervention plans and strategies.

2. Base the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan on data to assess, monitor and evaluate

Results of school climate surveys inform the development of the bullying prevention and intervention plans, including the selection strategies, practices, programs, etc. A pre- and post- evaluation strategy is critical. The pre-evaluation creates a baseline and identifies gaps and areas of concern for the school as well as areas of strength and success. A post-evaluation phase gathers evidence to test the efficacy of the prevention, responses, interventions or supports provided in order for changes to be made where necessary.

- Identify the main issues of concern in a particular school raised by students, school staff, parents, as well as identify issues in the physical environment.

- Conduct a needs assessment, e.g., what are the current processes for reporting, response, support and follow up on issues.

- Develop a pre- and post-evaluation strategy. These should be informed by the results of school climate surveys, and other relevant information which may include suspension and expulsion data, the board violent incident report, and reviews of programs and strategies. Steps in an evaluation strategy would include:
  - Creating a baseline and identifying areas of concern
  - Measuring success
  - Making changes where necessary
  - Creating an action plan to address areas of concern.

- Identify children and youth involved in bullying (including the bully, the person being bullied, and those who may have witnessed or been affected by the bullying). Consider a risk assessment approach in order to do this.

- Identify learning and training opportunities that are needed.

- Review and update plan as a result of gathering new information and share with the school community.

3. Policy and Procedures

A strong legislative and policy framework, coupled with a whole school approach, are important steps in bringing about systemic change.

- Actively communicate policies, procedures and guidelines to the school community.

- Review policies, procedures and guidelines and include the school community in this process in order to build upon and sustain a positive school climate.

- Review guidelines and procedures or develop new ones to address discrimination and harassment as they may apply to students, staff, parents and community members.

- Outline roles/responsibilities of the school community, including students, staff, parents, and community members.
- Ensure goals address areas of challenge, as identified in school climate surveys and other relevant data.

4. Prevention

Focusing on prevention is critical and should be an ongoing effort. Fostering a positive learning and teaching environment that supports academic achievement and well-being for all students will help reduce the potential for incidents of discrimination, harassment and bullying. The steps below outline what schools can do to strengthen prevention measures:

- Describe the roles and responsibilities of safe and accepting school teams (the name of this school committee may vary, e.g., safe and caring schools committee or healthy schools committee) to the school community.
- Identify bullying prevention and intervention programs or activities that are evidence-informed and that address the needs identified by the board or a school. These should be addressed at the following levels:
  ○ individual student level
  ○ classroom level
  ○ school level
  ○ board level
  ○ parent/community level.
- Identify relationship building and community building programs that are present in the school, classroom and in the larger community.
- Identify and support:
  ○ Activities that promote a positive school climate.
  ○ Training strategies for school staff.
  ○ Awareness raising strategies for students, e.g., social emotional learning, empathy, developing self-regulation skills.

  ○ Awareness raising strategies to engage community partners and parents in early and ongoing dialogue.
  ○ Ways to make linkages to curriculum resources and day to day learning.
  ○ Caring adults and student leaders within the school and school community.
- Provide opportunities for regular check-ins with students at risk of engaging in bullying, and those who have witnessed or been affected by bullying.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to develop effective classroom management strategies, incorporating progressive discipline.
- Establish and maintain respectful and caring classrooms, e.g., model equitable and inclusive behaviour and language.
- Align supervision plans to address where and when bullying happens, as identified through school climate surveys.

5. Intervention and Support Strategies

Interventions and supports should be evidence-informed, timely and take a whole school approach.

- Use "teachable moments" within a progressive discipline approach to address inappropriate behaviour. Consider mitigating factors like the student's age, the circumstances of the behaviour, and the student's history before determining the most appropriate way to respond to each situation. Consider a range of options to address the behaviour and help the student learn from his or her choices.
- Have in place processes and strategies to identify, and respond to bullying when it happens.
- Follow up after bullying incident(s) with students, parents, teachers and other school staff, where appropriate.

- Identify strategies for supporting students who engage in bullying, who have been bullied, and others who may have witnessed or been affected by bullying while respecting privacy. These strategies could include school based resources and/or referrals to community agencies, e.g., mental health services or public health.

- Communicate to the school community the progressive discipline approach to address inappropriate behaviour and the procedures that are in place to support students (as well as their parents) who have been harmed or who have engaged in serious behaviour incidents. These policies and procedures must outline what schools are required to do to support students, including the development of specific plans to protect students who have been harmed. It must also outline a process for parents to follow if they are not satisfied with the supports that their children receive.

Suggested References:

The Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet)
www.prevnet.ca/

Policy/Program Memorandum No.144: Bullying Prevention and Intervention
www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/144.pdf

Policy/Program Memorandum No.145: Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour
www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/145.pdf

Toolkit for Safe, Inclusive and Accepting Schools on the Ontario's Institute for Education Leadership website
http://live.iel.immix.ca/safeandacceptingschools/

Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf

Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf

Policy/Program Memorandum No.119: Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools
www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/119.html

Ontario's Parent Engagement Policy
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/policy.html

We welcome your feedback:

Please submit your suggestions or comments on this working draft to safeschools@ontario.ca. The Ministry will rerelease the Model Plan in the future to incorporate feedback received on effective practices.

Sharing school/board tools and templates:

Samples of school and board tools and templates will be posted on the Institute for Education Leadership website in order to facilitate sharing and learning across the province. If you would like to have your school board or school level bullying prevention and intervention plans or other related tools/templates shared on this site, please email them to safeschools@ontario.ca.

Learn more

Find more information about the Accepting Schools Act at ontario.ca/acceptingschools.

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