

# Whole School Approach

### **The Question:**

“We want to move forward to implement a whole school approach. How do we proceed?”

### **The Answer:**

Understanding these five essentials is key to successful implementation of a whole school approach:

1. What is a whole school approach?
2. Why use a whole school approach?
3. Keys to implementation – Leadership and Evidence
4. Common elements
5. Components

## **1. WHAT IS A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH?**

A positive learning and teaching environment is essential if students are to succeed in school.

Research shows:

- That there is a direct link between students’ success and the school environment in which learning takes place (Jaffe, 2010).

An effective school is more than achieving academic markers; it involves the development of relationships among staff, among students, and between staff and students to promote a safe environment and a positive school climate (Jaffe, 2010)

Building and sustaining a positive and inclusive school culture is a complex challenge and requires complex solutions. Schools alone cannot end bullying (Pepler, 2011).

A whole school approach involving all education and community partners is an important step to bring about the necessary systemic changes. Canadian and international research calls for the adoption of safe schools policies and safe schools initiatives (Fox et al, 2003; Olweus, 1993; Pepler & Craig, 2004).

*“A positive school climate makes negative behaviours such as bullying and harassment unacceptable and requires relationship solutions to extend beyond the students themselves to include relationships with teachers, parents and the community.”*

Pepler & Craig, 2004

## **2. WHY USE A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH?**

It is important to engage all key learning areas, all grades and the wider community. All aspects of school life are included in a whole school approach, such as curriculum, culture, teaching practices, policies and procedures.

To bring about a cultural change in schools, it is necessary that adults in the school and the wider community develop awareness and understanding of behaviour issues in their school.

*“The school principal has the greatest influence on a comprehensive school reform initiative such as the whole school approach*

Jaffe, 2010

## **3. KEYS TO IMPLEMENTATION – LEADERSHIP AND EVIDENCE**

Leadership by the Director of Education, Supervisory Officer and Principal is essential in establishing a vision, policies, and procedures that promote a positive school culture to prevent bullying and violence. Moreover, it is the principals’ leadership that is essential to establishing a foundation of collaboration across the groups within the school community (Jaffe, 2010).

A pre and post evaluation strategy is critical. The pre phase creates a baseline and identifies areas of concern and gaps in service. The purpose of post evaluation is to gather evidence to test the efficacy of the intervention.

## 4. COMMON ELEMENTS

Implementation of the whole-school approach needs to occur at four levels; school, class, individual and community (Olweus & Limber, 2010; Steinberg, Allensworth & Johnson, 2011).

School policies/procedures, views and attitudes toward student behaviour must be consistent regardless of the individual involved or the context.

Although activities are different at the various levels, there are common overlapping themes of prevention, intervention (response and support) that occur at all the levels. At each level;

- Roles and responsibilities must be identified;
- Staff, student, parent and community engagement is critical.
- A pre and post evaluation strategy. The [Ministry of Education's Sample School Climate Surveys](#) are useful tools.

## 5. COMPONENTS

According to research (Eslea & Smith 1998; Olweus & Limber, 2010), the following types of activities should occur within each component:

### School level:

- Establish a coordinating committee (e.g. a Safe Schools Team as referenced in [Policy and Program Memorandum 144](#)).
- Conduct a pre and post evaluation
- Provide committee and staff training.
- Establish school rules regarding behaviour, prevention and support.
- Review and refine the school's supervision plan, which should identify "hotspots" or those areas difficult to supervise.
- Involve parents and community.

### Classroom Level:

- Communicate and enforce school-wide rules on behaviour.
- Hold regular class meetings, hold meetings with students' parents.
- Learn and practice prevention and intervention strategies that address behaviour concerns.

### Individual Level:

- Supervise students' activities.
- Hold meetings with students and their parents when misbehaviour occurs. You may find [The Positive School Climate Model-Preventing and Responding to Bullying in School](#) to be a useful resource.
- Develop individual intervention plans for students involved in serious incidents.

### Community Level:

- Involvement of community members in the policy development process.
- Development of school-community partnership to support school's program.
- Communicate the school's Code of Conduct and expectations on appropriate behaviour to the school community.

*"A whole school approach requires strong, supportive, committed and competent leadership which requires the school board to lead and work in partnership with its principals and support of teachers, students and parents".*

*Salmivalli, Kärnä and Poskiparta, 2011*

Remember that these five tips are meant to get you started. You might also find the following Ministry of Education resources helpful: [Introduction to Promoting a Positive School Climate, A Resource for Schools](#), and [Worksheet for Discussion and Planning](#).

## REFERENCES

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