



STUDENT BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Responsibility:	<i>Executive Officer; Executive Superintendent of Education.</i>
Legal References:	<i>Education Act, as amended; Ontario Human Rights Code; Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; Provincial Code of Conduct; PPM 144; PPM 145; Safe Schools: Creating a Positive School Climate; Ontario Regulation 474/00 – Access to School Premises; Ontario Regulation 472/07 – Suspension and Expulsion of Pupils; Trespass Act;</i>
Related References:	<i>Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario; Realizing the Promise of Diversity, Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy; Board Policy 6009 – Bullying Prevention and Intervention Board Policy 6008 – Student Discipline; Board Policy 6001 – Code of Conduct; Board Policy 6000 – Safe Schools; Board Policy 1008 – Equity and Inclusion; AP1260 – Student Discipline; School Board Police Protocol; Traumatic Response Protocol; and Threat Risk Assessment Protocol.</i>
Effective Date:	<i>February 1, 2008</i>
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1. Preamble

The procedures that follow provide guidelines and expectations for responding to bullying. It outlines the reporting procedure, the consequences for student who bully and the roles of staff/vice-principals/principals.

2. General

The Waterloo Region District School Board is committed to building and sustaining a positive school climate for all students and to provide opportunities for all students to reach their full potential. Providing students an opportunity to develop and learn in a safe, caring and inclusive environment that is respectful is a shared responsibility between school, home and community. Bullying prevention and intervention strategies contribute to a positive teaching and learning environment that supports academic achievement and helps student reach their full potential.

3. Definition of Bullying (sections 1(1) and 1(1.0.0.2) of the *Education Act*, as amended)

- 3.1 Bullying means aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a pupil where,
- (a) 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,
 - i) causing harm, fear 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
 - (ii) creating a negative environment at a school for another individual, and
 - (b) 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; ("intimidation")

For the purposes of the definition of "bullying" behaviour includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written or other means.

Cyber-bullying

For the purposes of the definition, "bullying" includes bullying by electronic means (commonly known as cyber-bullying), including,

- a) Creating a web page or a blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person
 - b) Impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the internet; and
 - c) Communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals.
- 3.2 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 becomes the norm. Promotion of a positive school climate means that all members of the school community are inclusive and accepting of all, including persons of any race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability.
- 3.3 Bullying is a dynamic of unhealthy interaction that can take the following means and forms:
- Physical bullying* includes behaviors such as: hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, beating up, stealing, or damaging property.
- Verbal bullying* includes behaviors such as: name-calling, mocking, hurtful teasing, humiliating or threatening someone, racist comments, or sexual harassment.
- Social bullying* includes behaviors such as: rolling your eyes or turning away from someone, excluding others from the group, gossiping or spreading rumours, setting others up to look foolish, and damaging friendships.
- Electronic or Cyberbullying* includes the use of email, cell phones, text messages, and internet sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships.
- Racial bullying* includes behaviors such as: treating people disrespectfully because of their racial or ethnic background, saying bad things about a cultural background, calling someone racist names, or telling racist jokes.
- Religious bullying* comprises treating people disrespectfully because of their religious background or beliefs, saying bad things about a religious background or belief, name calling or telling jokes based on others' religious beliefs and practices.

Sexual bullying includes behaviors such as leaving someone out or treating him/her disrespectfully because of their gender, making sexist comments or jokes, unwanted touching, pinching or grabbing someone in a sexual way, making crude comments about someone's sexual behavior, spreading a sexual rumor about someone, or calling someone gay, a fag, a dyke, or making inferences about their sexual orientation.

Disability bullying includes behaviors such as: leaving someone out or treating them disrespectfully because of a disability, making someone feel uncomfortable because of a disability, or making comments or jokes to hurt someone with a disability.

3.4 Interactions between students are often difficult to visually classify. The following provides an assessment tool to help with the situation at hand. Even where conduct is not necessarily labelled as bullying, staff should consider what appropriate responses may be used to support students and to avoid any such conduct developing into future bullying.

Rough Play	Conflict	Bullying
Usually friends or friendly towards each other. Often repeated. Same players.	Acquaintances or friends. Occasional. Usually issue-centred, until resolved; could centre around misunderstanding, misinformation or no common ground.	Typically not friends, however may have had a relationship previously. Intentional target. Repeated and persistent.
Balance of power	Power relatively equal	Unequal power
Equal, consensual reaction.	Equal or near equal emotional reaction.	Bully's reaction meets own intrinsic need for power and control (consciously or unconsciously). Strong emotional, mental and physical reaction for target.
Not seeking power or attention.	Not seeking power or attention.	Attempt to gain power and control, possessions or popularity.
No intention to harm.	Intention to sort out who is right.	Intentionally harm-doing.

Rough Play	Conflict	Bullying
Intention is fun. If goes wrong, then remorseful.	Remorse – takes responsibility.	Bully may or may not show remorse. May or may not know what they are doing is wrong. May blame target or believe the target deserves it.
Not regarded as a problem.	Effort to solve problem.	Bully may deny there is a problem. Target may not be able to articulate.
Not serious, unless something goes wrong.	Usually not serious and can be resolved on their own or with aid of third party.	Threats of physical or emotional harm; intent to humiliate, exclude or victimize. Often complex and multi-faceted. Can be resolved but takes time, patience and skill.

4. BULLYING AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

A crucial component of prevention is a positive school climate. A school climate is the pervasive atmosphere in the school community and is determined by the relationships between students and staff, behaviour codes, discipline practices and inclusivity. It is also determined by the level of pride taken in the school and the feelings of belonging and engagement experienced by staff and students. The climate in any school reflects the dominant school community values around how students learn and what they learn.

4.1 Positive School Climate

A whole-school approach is utilized and a positive school climate exists when:

- a) All members of the school community feel safe and are safe, included and accepted;
- b) Healthy, inclusive relationships are promoted;
- c) All members of the school community demonstrate respect, kindness, empathy, initiative, integrity, co-operation and social responsibility;
- d) All members of the school community build relationships with one another that are free from harassment and discrimination;
- e) Open and ongoing dialogue takes place between the principal, staff, parents, community members and students;
- f) All partners are actively and positively engaged;
- g) Students are encouraged to be positive leaders and role models in the school community;
- h) Every student is inspired and given support to succeed in an environment of consistently high expectation.
- i) The learning environment, instructional materials and teaching and assessment strategies reflect the diversity of all learners;
- j) Improvement of learning outcomes is emphasized for all students;
- k) Bullying prevention and awareness raising strategies for students and staff are reinforced through curriculum; and
- l) Bully prevention and intervention strategies are reinforced for staff and students through programs addressing discrimination based on such factors as gender, race, ethnicity, faith, age, disability, sexual orientation and socio-economic disadvantage.

4.2 All schools are expected to support and continuously work to maintain a positive school climate in their schools.

4.3 All schools will develop programs which actively promote and support positive behaviours that reflect the Board's Character Development initiatives.

4.4 Teaching Strategies

Teaching strategies that focus on developing healthy relationships by including bullying prevention in daily classroom activities, will include training on cultural sensitivity, special needs, respect for diversity and promotion of social justice.

4.5 When issues arise, prompt, consistent intervention with coaching and support will help all students develop pro-social skills and understanding around maintaining positive relationships with others.

4.6 Address early signs of relationships problems to prevent bullying, ensuring the safety and inclusion of all students.

4.7 Classroom Climate

Create a warm and inclusive environment in the classroom, advocating for individual students when needed. Supervise, manage and monitor student's interactions, ensuring safety and inclusion of all students.

4.8 Promote positive values and attitudes in the classroom, modeling appropriate relationship skills.

- 4.9 Promote positive group activities by intervening in the organization of groups, activities and seating arrangements to promote inclusion and tolerance. If left to make these decisions, students who are bullied will always be left out and humiliated. Students who bully tend to congregate in groups and act aggressively together. By creating balanced groups with a diverse mix of students, you can ensure that everyone is included and respected.
- 4.10 **Acceptable Behaviour in the Classroom**
All members of the school community will be familiar with demonstrate understanding of the Board's and School's Codes of Conduct which sets out expected standards of behaviour.
- 4.11 Involve students in developing a Classroom Charter (Covenant/Values/etc.) setting out what they consider to be appropriate and unacceptable behaviour when they are with one another. Have everyone endorse the final product and post it in the classroom to remind everyone what is acceptable and what will not be tolerated. If students are responsible for setting the tone around how they will behave with one another, they are more likely to follow and enforce it with their peers. Have students determine what approach they should use with one another when someone's behaviour is contrary to the charter.
- 4.12 **Training**
Students will be provided with opportunities to participate in bullying prevention training and positive leadership initiatives within their own school.
Parent councils are encouraged to provide programs for parents on bullying prevention and intervention.
Board staff and students will participate in bullying prevention and intervention training.
- 4.13 **Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week**
All schools will organize activities for the annual Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week which will occur during the week beginning on the third Sunday in November. This week will be used to promote awareness and understanding of bullying and its consequences in the schools community.
- 4.14 **Communication Strategy**
Principals have the responsibility to communicate the policy, definitions and procedures for bullying prevention and intervention to staff, parents and students. Staff are responsible for reinforcing this message with students and parents.

5. INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Bullying is a covert activity that we all have a responsibility to stop. Reporting instances of bullying to the administrator in the school is the socially responsible thing to do. Intervention and support should be consistent with a progressive discipline approach.

Appendix "A" entitled "Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form – Parts 1 & 2" [IS-12-03 (1)(2)] is attached to this Administrative Procedure.

- 5.1 **Responding to Bullying by Board Staff**
All Waterloo Region District School Board staff, who work directly with students MUST respond to all student behaviours that may lead to bullying. This includes administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff. When bullying is observed, the response may include a request to stop the behaviour because it is disrespectful or inappropriate OR it could mean removing the victim(s) from the area. Board employees are not required to respond to incidents of bullying when, in their opinion, responding would cause immediate physical harm to a student or themselves, or another person. This behaviour and the response (or lack of response) must be reported to an administrator.

Bullying incidents are complex. When responding to a report of bullying, staff must not attempt to deal with the situation quickly, be punitive in their approach, nor should they attempt to put the bully and target together to talk it out, unless they are skilled in mediating

this kind of issue. Chastising a bully who feels what their target deserves what they get could potentially intensify the behaviour, making it more covert and thus worsening the situation for the target. It is imperative to use a restorative approach to rectify the situation, which is a longer process. Refer to WRDSB AP 1260 – Student Progressive Discipline.

5.2 Reporting of Bullying Incidents by Board Staff

All staff who work directly with students have a duty to report all incidents of bullying to an administrator. This includes all teaching, non-teaching staff in the school. Third parties (and their employees) such as bus drivers and daycare providers also have this duty to report. Reporting can be either written or verbal (where immediate action is required) and must be done as soon as possible after the incident. For incidents of bullying that will be considered for suspension or expulsion, the incident must be reported by the end of the school day at the very least verbally with the written report submitted the following day.

5.3 Reporting of Bullying Incidents by Students

Students are encouraged to report instances of bullying not only for themselves, but on behalf of those who bully, victims or bystanders in a timely manner, to a teacher, Child Youth Worker, Principal, Vice-Principal, Guidance Counsellor, bus or taxi driver, social worker either by phone, email or in person. The Board will take steps to ensure that bullying incidents can be reported safely and in a way that will minimize the possibility of reprisal.

5.4 Reporting of Bullying Incidents by Parents/Guardians/Caregivers

When a parent/guardian/caregiver suspects their child is being bullied or when their student discloses a bullying situation to them, they are encouraged to contact the school immediately. If the parent/guardian/caregiver does not feel the school is responding to their report in a timely fashion, or providing sufficient supports for their child, it is always the custodial parents' prerogative to request assistance from the Superintendent of Instruction.

5.5 Principal's/Vice-Principal's Response to Reports of Bullying

5.5.1 After the "Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form" is submitted, the Principal must acknowledge the receipt of the report to the employee who reported. The receipt will identify if further action is being taken or if no action is required. The "Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form – Part II" is attached to this Administrative procedure.

5.5.2 If no action is taken, it is not necessary to retain the report.

5.5.3 If action is taken, the report will be kept for a period of one year in the student's OSR, however the names of all other students on the form (co-aggressors and victims) must be removed. No record of the incident shall be placed in the victim or victims OSRs.

5.5.4 Principals are required to inform parent/guardians/caregivers of victims, as a result of any incident for which suspension/expulsion is being considered.

5.5.5 Principals must not inform the parents/guardians/caregivers of a victim when, in the Principal's discretion, doing so would put the victim at risk of harm from the parent/guardian/caregiver. If the Principal decides not to notify the parent/guardian/caregiver for this reason, the Principal must document the rationale for the decision and advise the Supervisory Officer. The Principal is required to inform the teacher or if appropriate the other staff member who reported the harm of this decision.

5.5.6 When notifying the parent/guardian/caregiver of the victim, the Principal must disclose the nature of the incident that caused harm, the nature of the harm to their child and the steps being taken to keep their child safe, including the nature of the discipline in response to the incident. Principals must not share the name of perpetrator or any identifying information with the parent/guardian/caregiver of the

victim, except to the extent that it is necessary to comply with the requirements of subsection 300.3(4) of the *Education Act*.

- 5.5.7 The Board shall provide programs, interventions or other supports to persons who have engaged in bullying. Intervention for students who demonstrate bullying behaviour will be consistent with a progressive discipline approach that utilizes a continuum of supports and consequences to address inappropriate behaviour. Interventions will build upon strategies that promote positive behaviour, ranging from early interventions to more intensive interventions which could include possible referral to community or social agencies. For students with special needs, interventions, supports and consequences must be consistent with the student's strengths, needs, goals and expectations contained in the IEP. Mitigating and other factors must also be taken into consideration.

Bullying is an activity for which suspension and possible expulsion must be considered pursuant to sections 306(1) and 310(1) of the Education Act.

6. Supports for Students Who Bully

- 6.1 Students who bully need help developing problem-solving skills that don't involve aggression and rechanneling their leadership skills. Formative consequences are designed to send the message that bullying is unacceptable while helping them learn the social skills and empathy they may lack. Assure students who bully you know they can change their behaviour. Some suggested consequences for students who bully are set out below:
- Provide positive leadership opportunities, i.e., teaching younger students a new sport or skills;
 - Praise respectful and cooperative behaviour when it happens;
 - Encourage empathy development. Help the student who bullies understand the impact of his/her words and actions;
 - Have the student who bullies create a poster, drawing or collage of what it feels like to be bullied. Discuss feelings of embarrassment, shame, anger, fear and sadness.
 - Talk to the student who bullies about his/her personal strengths and weaknesses and they can use their power to help, instead of hurting others.
 - Assign a research project where the student who bullies can learn about the prevalence, nature and consequences of bullying. Have him/her write a paper or create a class presentation based on his/her findings.
 - Have a student who bullies interview an adult or older student about their bullying experiences and the impact it had on him/her.
 - Assign a project requiring the student who bullies to research a celebrity or historical figure who has been bullied.
 - Have the student who bullies read a novel about bullying and write a character study.
 - Have the student who bullies watch a movie about bullying and then describe the characters and the consequences of their actions. Encourage them to focus on the feelings of the targeted character or characters, identifying the feelings through facial expressions, body posture and tone of voice.
 - Have the student who bullies identify instances of bullying in the media, talking about them and their reactions to these instances.

7. Supports for Students who are Bullied

- 7.1 All WRDSB staff must take allegations of bullying seriously. Incidents of this nature must be dealt with in a sensitive, supportive and timely manner.

- 7.2 All staff must support students who disclose they are being bullied by providing programs, interventions or other supports and by making available information on community agencies that can provide professional support and by developing plans to protect the student.
- 7.3 Schools will develop specific plans to protect students who have been bullied and must outline a process for parents/guardians/caregivers to follow if they are not satisfied with the supports their children receive.
- 7.4 If it is deemed necessary that students need to be separated to protect a student or to preserve school safety, it is preferable if the victim remains in the home school, unless parents make a specific request for a move.
- 7.5 Strategies for helping students who are bullied:
- 7.5.1 Teach Social Skills
Students who are bullied often find it difficult to stand up for themselves. Teach assertiveness using role-play, coaching students to use eye contact and speak with purpose. Help students determine if there is anything they might be doing to make the problem worse.
- 7.5.2 Build Self-Esteem
Encourage students who are bullied to participate in activities they enjoy or are good at to increase self-esteem. Praise and highlight their talents for other students to see which assists with repairing their reputation in the peer group.
- 7.5.3 Encourage Friendships
Surround students who are bullied with other students who will stand up for them when needed.

8. Supports for Bystanders

- 8.1 The Board shall provide programs, interventions or other supports to these individuals who witness bullying.

When bullying does happen, it is imperative to debrief the incident with bystanders. This is a teachable moment and the best tool for building empathy. The debriefing should cover the following:

- What made this a bullying incident?
- At what point did you make the decision to stay and watch the bullying happen or move far away instead of reporting it to an adult?
- Do you know the difference between reporting and ratting/tattling/telling on?
- If you stayed to watch, how might your presence have influenced the behaviour of the student doing the bullying?
- Did you record the incident on your phone? Why would you do this? What were you intending to do with the video? If posting it on the internet was the intention, how would posting this video be helpful to the student doing the bullying and to the student was being bullied?
- What were you thinking and feeling as you watched the incident happen?
- What do you think and feel about it now?
- How do you think the target felt? What expressions did you see on his/her face? What was his/her body language? What did he/she say?
- What could you have done differently either to stop or prevent the incident?
- What could you do now to make the target feel happier at school?

- 8.2 Clarify the difference between tattling/telling on/ratting (which are used to get another person in trouble) vs. reporting. Discuss with students their basic right to feel and be safe at school. If they agree they have the right to be safe, then it carries the moral responsibility to ensure everyone else is. When they see someone being targeted by bullying, that person is not safe and it is their duty to report the target needs help. The adult will then assist that person and decide what needs to happen. They won't be getting the person who is bullying in trouble, they will be getting help for someone who is unsafe.
- 8.3 Students are more likely to challenge bullying situations if active intervention by all members of the school community in bullying situations is valued and encouraged.

9. Prevention Strategies

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

- Daily classroom teaching with curriculum links;
- Character development initiatives;
- Regular Class meetings/circles;
- Social skills development;
- Restorative Practices/Restorative Justice Interventions;
- Mentorship programs;
- Citizenship development and Leadership activities;
- Bullying Prevention Programs;
- Healthy lifestyle initiatives;
- School Resource Officer (WRPS) presentations;
- Assemblies, guest and motivational speakers, etc.;
- Girls' and Boys' groups to deal with gender-related issues ;
- Student-led activities, such as Gay Straight Alliances, organizations that promote respect for people with disabilities and organizations that promote anti-racism and gender equity; and
- School Climate Survey results.

9.1 Code of Conduct – All WRDSB staff will familiarize themselves with both the Board Code of Conduct and the School's Code of Conduct which set out standards for behaviour. Schools will incorporate into their Code of Conduct, the stipulations of this policy, associated procedures and the responsibilities for staff, students and parents/guardians/caregivers as outlined in this policy.

9.2 Safe, Caring & Inclusive Schools Team – Every school will have an SCIS Team consisting of an administrator, teacher, paraprofessional, parent/guardian/caregiver and a student. The team will meet a minimum of 3 times per year for the purpose of monitoring the school climate. Members will review the data from annual surveys and recommend appropriate measures to address areas of concern. The Chair of this team must be a staff member.

9.3 Positive School Climate – A positive school climate is defined by the Ministry of Education as “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 becomes the norm. Confirmation of a positive school climate is when all members of the school community feel safe, accepted and included.

9.4 Partnerships with Community Agencies – The Waterloo Region District School Board pursues partnerships with community organizations and agencies to work towards the elimination of bullying.

- 9.5 Training – Bullying Awareness and Prevention Training will be provided to staff and students on an on-going basis.
- 9.6 Leadership Activities – All students should participate in bullying prevention and leadership initiatives within their own school, such as: daily classroom teaching with curriculum links, character education initiatives, mentorship programs, citizenship development, student leadership, student success strategies, healthy lifestyles initiatives and social skills development.
- 9.7 Teaching Strategies – Teaching strategies will support the school-wide Ministry of Education bullying prevention strategies by integrating prevention and intervention strategies into curriculum. Teaching strategies will focus on developing healthy relationships by promoting inclusion, respect and empathy. Prevention messaging will be reinforced through programs addressing discrimination based on age, race, sexual orientation, gender, faith, special needs, ethnicity, social status and family circumstances.

10. Bully Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Board will support schools in the development and implementation of site-specific Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plans that will provide consultation opportunities with all stakeholders, including students, principals, teachers and all other staff, parents/guardians/caregivers, volunteers, school councils and community members. Such plans will be based on the Ministry of Education's most recent Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and will comply with the Board's policies and procedures regarding Bullying Prevention and Intervention.

When revising its plan, the Board will review school climate surveys to identify concerns, identify best practices of evidence-informed programs currently used at the Board, consider other evidence-based practices and identify key collaborators in respect of its bullying initiatives. The School Implementation Template is Appendix "B" to this Procedure.