

## 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 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 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:** 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.
- 2.2 **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*.

- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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).
- 2.5 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 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 avoids 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 Reporting Form as soon as reasonably possible. This includes any incident of bullying. 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.
- 8.2 In addition to Board employees, school bus drivers are also required to report to the principal, in writing, such incidents noted in 8.1.
- 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 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.
- 8.5 Each report must be assigned a report number by the school.
- 8.6 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 of the aggressor. 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.
- 8.7 No information is to be filed on the OSR of the victim unless expressly requested by the parent of the victim.

## **C. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

### **9. Training, Communication and Outreach**

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 The district will communicate expectations related to bullying to students, staff members, parents, school councils, SEAC, and school bus operators and drivers.
- 9.3 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.

### **10. Monitoring and Review**

- 10.1 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.

10.2 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.

## **11. Safe Schools Teams**

11.1 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.

11.2 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*

*Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act, 2009*

*Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*

*Ontario Regulation 472/07 Suspension and Expulsion of Pupils*

*Ontario Student Record Guideline*

*Violence-Free Schools Policy, 1994*

*Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 - Equity and Inclusive Education, 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 (revised October 2009)*

### **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*