Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

"Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others"
(Philippians 2:4)

OVERVIEW

At the Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB), we recognize that our school communities exist to foster and exemplify Catholic values. In HCDSB, all classroom, school and system teaching and learning spaces are safe and welcoming environments where relationships, priorities, curriculum and discipline have potential to speak of God's loving care for each individual.

This commitment to fostering a safe, inclusive and welcoming school community is reflected in all aspects of the operations of the schools within HCDSB. Thus, it forms the basis for the creation of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as required by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan has been developed with a view to promote a school-wide approach to ensuring a safe, inclusive and accepting school environment, free of bullying, harassment, discrimination and other inappropriate behaviours. It is intended to facilitate the implementation of comparable plans for all of the Board's schools.

EDUCATION, AWARENESS AND OUTREACH

All schools in the Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB) recognize that a whole-school approach to engaging the school community will help the Schools' efforts to address inappropriate behaviour. To this extent, the Board, and all of its schools, continue to foster the implementation of Catholic Graduate Expectations and Developmental Assets

To this end, all HCDSB Schools will utilize the following Ministry of Education definition of bullying in communications with the school community:

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" above, behaviour includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written or other means.

Cyber-bullying

For the purposes of the definition of "bullying" above, 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.

In the development of School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plans and as part of their ongoing communication with school partners, all HCDSB Schools will identify and promote an understanding of

o   different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying.

o   the myths and realities of bullying behaviour.

o   how bullying is differentiated from conflict, aggression and teasing.

o   power and peer dynamics.

o   how biases, prejudice and hate can lead to bullying.

o different manifestations and underlying factors of bullying, such as body image, racism, sexism, homophobia, disability, etc.

o a whole school approach and the essential importance of a positive school climate for student achievement and well-being.

o the factors that contribute to a safe, inclusive, caring and accepting school climate.

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

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

o how to reach out to parents and the broader school community.

o how to promote healthy relationships using a variety of strategies.

o community partners and resources available in the community.

The Halton Catholic District School Board recognizes that a whole school approach and a strong policy and legislative framework are important for bringing widespread change. Thus, the Board will communicate and share with the school communities, policies and procedures including but not limited to the Board Code of Conduct, Equity and Inclusive Education (including guidelines for religious accommodations), Bullying Prevention and Intervention and Progressive Discipline and Safety in Schools.

All members of HCDSB School communities will endeavour to live our Gospel values in interactions with others. As part of this expectation, schools are to foster a commitment to increase education and awareness of bullying concerns and practice effective outreach to all members of the community who may be affected by bullying.

All HCDSB Schools will identify and implement strategies to engage parents in conversations about bullying prevention and how to promote a positive school climate.

EVALUATION OF EVIDENCE

The Board and all Schools recognize that effective Bullying Prevention and Intervention strategies must be evidence-based.

Each HCDSB School will base its bullying prevention and intervention plan, strategies, practices and programs on evidence from the school climate surveys (i.e. Tell Them From Me Survey) and other relevant information. Each school will take the following steps to assess bullying prevention and intervention initiatives and strategies:

o Evaluate the evidence to determine the main areas of concern, and identify issues in the physical environment, determine current procedures, and assess the strategies in place based on results of the school climate surveys and other relevant information.

o   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). [All Schools will consider using a risk assessment approach in this process.]

o   Review and update the Schools' strategies as a result of gathering new information and share with the school community.

Pre-Evaluation Strategy

The main areas of success and/or concern raised by students, staff and parents in the school's climate surveys (or based on other relevant information) will be identified and reviewed by the School for appropriate follow-up and to update school practices.

The Schools' current processes for reporting, response, support and following up on issues will be reviewed and revised as appropriate.

Post-Evaluation Strategy

Each school will reassess the results of subsequent school climate surveys (and other relevant information) to verify the efficacy of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention initiatives implemented. The 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.

Upon re-evaluation, each school will update the information in the action plan to reflect the effectiveness of its Bullying Prevention and Intervention initiatives.

PREVENTION

The Board will identify and implement as appropriate the learning and training opportunities for school staff that are needed.

All Schools recognize that fostering a positive learning environment will help to reduce possible bullying, harassment, and discrimination incidents. The Schools are committed to taking steps to strengthen prevention measures.

The roles and responsibilities of the Safe, Accepting and Inclusive School Team (which will be communicated with the school community) will be implemented and revised as appropriate.

Using the evidence-based analysis, each School will identify and implement as appropriate the following practices and initiatives for bullying prevention:

a.   relationship building and community building programs that are present in the school, classroom and in the larger community.

b.   activities that promote a positive school climate.

c.   awareness raising strategies for students (e.g. social emotional learning, empathy, developing self-regulation skills).

d. awareness raising strategies to engage community partners and parents in early and ongoing dialogue.

e. ways to link curriculum and daily learning.

f. ways to support and encourage role modeling by caring adults and student leaders within the School and school community (e.g – Developmental Assets).

Each School will also:

- o provide opportunities for regular check-ins with students at risk or affected by bullying.
- o provide opportunities for teachers to develop effective classroom management strategies using progressive discipline.
- o establish and maintain respectful and caring classrooms.
- o align supervision plans to address where and when bullying happens, as identified through school climate surveys.
- o on an on-going basis, review and update processes for reporting, response, support and following up on issues.

INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES

All Schools recognize the importance of using timely evidence-based interventions and supports with a school-wide approach.

To this end, Schools will

- o use teachable moments within a progressive discipline approach to address inappropriate behaviour, and consider mitigating and other factors.
- o have in place processes and strategies to identify and respond to bullying when it happens.
- o identify strategies for supporting all students involved in bullying.
- o communicate the progressive discipline approach to the school community and the procedures in place to support the student.