

Safe & Caring SCHOOLS 4

What to Do if Your Child is Facing Suspension

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
is committed to making each and every
one of its schools a caring place that
is safe for learning.

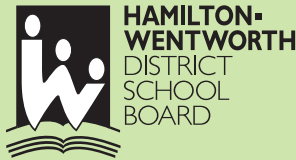




Table of Contents

What is a suspension?	3
How long do suspensions last?	3
Why are suspensions given?	4
What should I do if my child is facing suspension?	5
On the day of the suspension	5
Review the situation with your child	5
Speaking with the school Principal	6
How do I prepare for a meeting with the Principal?	6
Can I bring someone to the meeting?	7
What if I think my child has been unfairly suspended?	7
Where can I get more support for my child?	8
Is there help for parents and families?	9
What is the Gateway Program?	9
How do I appeal a suspension?	10
How do I get more information on suspensions?	11

Every student deserves to feel and be safe in school, on the school grounds, on the school bus and at school events and activities. At Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB), we know safety is essential to good learning. Students learn and teachers teach more successfully when schools are safe. If a student misbehaves, the Principal decides on what steps to take to help the student improve his or her behaviour.

Certain misbehaviors may mean a student is suspended.

What is a suspension?

A suspension means that a student cannot enter his or her school and is not allowed to take part in any of his or her school's activities on or off school property.

How long do suspensions last?

A suspension can last from one day up to a maximum of 20 school days.





Why are suspensions given?

A Principal may suspend a student if he or she has engaged in any of the following activities while at school, at a school-related activity, or in any situation where the activity will impact on the school environment. A suspension may be considered for any of the following reasons:

- Uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm on another person
- Possessing (having) alcohol or illegal drugs
- Being under the influence of alcohol
- Swearing at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority
- Committing an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property
- Bullying
- Physically or mentally hurting another person
- Persistent opposition to authority
- Behaving in a way that affects the positive tone of the school
- Behaving in a way that affects the physical or mental wellbeing of any member of the school community
- Acting in a way that would be considered by the Principal to be contrary to the Board or school's Code of Conduct

What should I do if my child is facing suspension?

If your child is going to be suspended from school there are several things that you can do that may be helpful.

On the day of the suspension

The school will contact you the day your child is suspended to tell you what has happened. They will tell you:

- Why your student is being suspended
- How long the suspension will be
- The type of support that will be provided (i.e. homework)
- Arrange a time to meet with you and your child before your child returns to school. This is called the re-entry meeting.

Review the situation with your child

- Listen to his or her account of what happened
- Help your child to understand the reason for the suspension
- If necessary, develop a plan of action, this may include medical or community support
- Discuss setting goals for improvement with your child





Speaking with the school Principal

Once you have spoken to your child, you may wish to contact the school's Principal or Vice Principal for clarification.

- Be clear about the events that led to the suspension
- Talk openly with the Principal about the consequences
- Understand that your child is responsible for his or her actions
- Be aware of what further supports are available for your child
- Arrange a formal meeting with the Principal or Vice Principal

How do I prepare for a meeting with the Principal?

Before the meeting, write down any questions you would like answered. Below are some things you might want to ask:

- What did my child do?
- Why is this consequence appropriate for my child?
- If this is a repeat pattern of behaviour for my child, what else can we do to provide support?
- Which teacher or other school official was in charge at the time?
- Were there other students involved?
- Is a suspension necessary?
- Is there another way my child could correct what was done?
- What can be done to help my child to avoid this problem in the future?
- You may ask to see a copy of your child's Ontario Student Record and details of any efforts made to support your child if he or she has had difficulty before this suspension.

Can I bring someone to the meeting?

If it makes you more comfortable, you may bring someone to this meeting to support you. This could be another family member, a friend, a neighbour, an agency worker or a religious advisor. For example, you may ask to have an interpreter attend the meeting if English is not your first language or you or your child has difficulty hearing. Please let the school know that this person is coming with you. Your child may also attend this meeting.

It is helpful if all those at the meeting come with open minds and remain calm while discussing what has happened.

What if I think my child has been unfairly suspended?

If, after meeting with the Principal, you feel that your child has been unfairly suspended, you should request a meeting with your school Superintendent of Education. The Superintendent will review the case with you and look at supports available for your child.



Where can I get more support for my child?

The school can give you information and help to provide support for your child.

The school will arrange to provide course work for your child while on suspension.

The school will also tell you about the Gateway Program. This program supports students during a suspension of greater than 6 days.

If your child needs emotional or other social supports, the principal may consult with the school social worker.

Here are some of the supports that **may** be available in your child's school:

- Peer mediation
- Tutoring programs
- Conflict resolution programs
- Social skills programs
- Peer leadership programs
- After school homework support
- After school recreational program
- Drug and alcohol counseling
- Anger management programs
- Alternative education programs
- Public health nurse
- School liaison officer
- Board psychologists

Is there help for parents and families?

In some cases a student's difficulties may be a symptom of problems faced by the student's entire family. If so, you may also wish to ask the school to recommend agencies or community support programs that can help both your family and child.

What is the Gateway program?

The Gateway Program is HWDSB's system level support program for students who are on long-term suspension (6 days or more).

Open to both elementary and secondary school aged students; we offer academic support, allowing students to complete assigned homework and/or independent learning modules leading to high school credits.

Classes run during the school week from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm and students are supported by a qualified teacher as well as an educational assistant to complete their studies in a classroom environment.

Through our social worker, we may also provide students with social, emotional and behavioural support, helping them deal with issues such as anger management, substance abuse and bullying prevention. The social worker can help students and families connect with community agencies when needed or requested.



How do I appeal a suspension?

If you still do not agree with the suspension, you can appeal it. The suspension appeal process includes the following:

- Submit a letter to the Superintendent of Safe Schools stating your desire to appeal within **10 days** of the start of the suspension
- Within 15 days of receiving your letter of appeal the Board will hold an appeal hearing
- You will be notified of the date and time of the hearing
- You and your child may attend. You may choose to bring an advocate for your child as well.
- At the hearing the committee may decide:
 - ▶ To confirm the suspension as it was originally set out
 - ▶ Confirm the suspension but shorten its length, or
 - ▶ Remove the suspension all together. In this case any record of the suspension will be removed from your child's school record.

How do I get more information on suspensions?

You can read other pamphlets in the Safe & Caring Schools Initiative. They are available in your school office, or you can download them from www.hwdsb.on.ca. You may also phone the Safe Schools Principal at 905-383-5111.

You can contact the Principal or Vice Principal at your child's school. You can phone your school's superintendent. Contact information for your school Superintendent is available from the school office, the *Quick Guide* to HWDSB or from the HWDSB Web site at www.hwdsb.on.ca.

Please note: *This pamphlet is intended for information purposes. It is not a substitute for legal advice and is subject to all applicable laws and Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board policies.*

Safe & Caring SCHOOLS

Safe and Caring Schools Series

What are Codes of Conduct?

What is Progressive Discipline?

What is Bullying?

What to do if your child
is facing suspension

What to do if your child
is facing expulsion

What is the Gateway Program?



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