



Bullying Prevention and Intervention

Date Approved: XXXX

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PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to creating safe, inclusive and caring school environments through a focus on healthy relationships and development of positive school climates. Bullying, on or off school property, will not be tolerated and is never acceptable. Students and parents/guardians/caregivers will be informed and engaged when incidences of bullying have occurred.

All students have a right to a safe and nurturing learning environment that is free from exploitation, exclusion, harassment, discrimination, bullying and violence. Bullying adversely affects a student's well-being, ability to learn, attendance, safety, sense of self-worth and may be a violation of their human rights. It adversely affects the school climate, including healthy relationships. Bullying, including cyber-bullying, is a serious issue and is **not** acceptable in the Board and school environment (including virtual), in a Board or school-related activity, or in any other circumstances that will have an impact on the school climate (e.g. off school property).

All Board employees have a responsibility to respond and report behaviour that may lead to or be described as bullying. It is the responsibility of all individuals within a school, as part of a school community, to contribute to a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting of all students and staff, and that promotes the prevention of bullying.

Note: This Policy aligns with Ministry of Education PPM 144: Bullying Prevention and Intervention

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

HWDSB is committed to:

- a relentless focus on building positive and inclusive cultures in all classrooms and schools (including virtual) so that students feel a sense of belonging and safety within the conditions to achieve their full potential;
- creating student-centred learning environments where identity, voice and lived experience are affirmed and honoured as an essential part of learning;
- listening and responding to student voice;
- fostering relationships that are positive, supportive, caring and respectful;
- proactively addressing bullying throughout the school year as part of daily practice;
- protecting students from harm, peer victimization, including bullying;
- investigating and responding to incidents of bullying using a clear and transparent process;
- working alongside students and families impacted by incidents of bullying and/or bullying-like behaviour;
- providing supports to students impacted by bullying and/or bullying-like behaviour;
- improving engagement with attention to working with those impacted by decisions;



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- building trust through our actions – listening, documenting, responding and being accountable at the school and system-level for improvement in student safety and well-being through the monitoring and review of school-based data and communicating outcomes to the community.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

The intended outcomes of this policy are:

- students feel a sense of belonging and safety within the classroom and school which supports the conditions to achieve their full potential;
- student-centred learning environments where identity, voice and lived experience are affirmed and honoured as an essential part of learning;
- relationships that are positive, supportive, caring and respectful;
- consistent approaches to addressing and reducing the incidents of bullying in schools;
- working alongside students and families impacted by incidents of bullying and/or bullying-like behaviour including considering the most appropriate supports.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education
Members of Executive Council

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Bullying prevention, intervention and responding requires all members of the school community to have roles and responsibilities. The Director of Education and Members of Executive Council are directly responsible for the operationalizing and monitoring of this Policy.

TERMINOLOGY:

Parent throughout this document is intended to be inclusive and represent parents, guardians, caregivers, and students who are 18 years of age or older.

Bullying is defined as aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a student where:

- a) the behaviour is **intended**, by the student to have the effect of, or the student ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to have the effect of,
 - a. causing harm, fear or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm, harm to the individual's reputation, harm to the individual's property, or
 - b. 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 student 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



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circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability, or the receipt of special education.

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

For the purposes of the definition of “bullying” it 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 website that may be accessed by one or more individuals.

Types of Bullying:

Physical: may include hitting, pushing, slapping, tripping, kicking, shoving, beating up, stealing, damaging another person’s property or physical intimidation.

Verbal: may include name-calling, mocking, insults, threats, teasing.

Social (or Relational)/Mental/Emotional/Psychological: demeaning rolling of the eyes, excluding others from the group, gossiping, spreading rumours or images, humiliating others, making hurtful comments verbally or electronically, and/or damaging another person’s friendships, treating someone badly based on their appearance.

Electronic/Cyber: including (see definition of Bullying) and:

- a) sending or sharing hateful, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating electronic communication or images via text messages, emails, direct messages
- b) revealing information considered to be personal, private, and sensitive without consent
- c) making and/or engaging, and/or participating in fake accounts on social networking sites to impersonate, humiliate and/or exclude others
- d) excluding or disrupting access to, a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts and during digital gaming sessions

Bullying (including cyberbullying) may include intentional aggression, exclusion, saying negative things, telling a joke that may cause harm, treating someone badly or name calling directed to a person or persons because of one or more of the protected areas under the Ontario Human Rights Code (e.g. race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other similar factor). In these situations, the bullying might also be considered an act of discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected



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human rights ground and an act motivated by bias, prejudice or hate requiring a response under section 310 of the Education Act (suspension pending expulsion process)

ACTION REQUIRED:

The Board shall establish, maintain and review a comprehensive *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Strategy* which includes:

Engaging Parents/Guardians/Caregivers and Families

Parents (see Terminology) play a critical role in the lives of their children and as partners in the education of their children. It is vital that parents are confident with the measures in place to protect students from harm. Parents of students involved in bullying must be notified of the incident and be engaged in discussion of supports.

The Board and/or schools will develop communication and outreach strategies, as part of the *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Strategy*, that:

- inform parents, students, and staff of the policy, including who to contact with questions or concerns, where information is available and how to report bullying;
- establish ongoing processes to meaningfully engage parents so that they feel heard and are valued partners in their children's education;
- assess how well parents understand their roles and responsibilities with respect to policies and practices related to bullying prevention, including cyber-bullying prevention;
- adjust practices as necessary to address any barriers that might prevent parents from understanding their roles and responsibilities;
- provide access to appropriate board supports, resources and publications for parents.

Prevention and Awareness Raising

Bullying prevention and awareness raising is a critical responsibility of the board and schools which will include:

- a school-wide approach with a focus on healthy relationships, equity, inclusion and Indigenous Cultural Safety principles;
- every school will be responsible for fostering a safe, inclusive and accepting school climate through a school team;
- awareness raising, as part of daily practice, that includes expectations for appropriate student behaviour;
- *Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week* will begin on the third Sunday in November of each year;
- student and staff learning related to bullying;
- student and staff leadership within their school.



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Programs, Interventions and Other Supports

All allegations of bullying will be taken seriously and the process of responding and providing support will be transparent. Programs, interventions and supports will be provided, including:

- allegations of bullying are taken seriously;
- a clear and accessible process when incidents of bullying occur including appropriate and timely responses and ways to report safely and in a way that will minimize the possibility of reprisal;
- a plan to protect students who have been harmed and a process for parents to follow up if they are not satisfied with the supports;
- programs, interventions and other supports for students who have experienced bullying behaviour, witnessed incidents of bullying, or engaged in bullying behaviour;
- students with special education needs are considered in the development of interventions, supports and consequences are consistent with the child's strengths and needs, as well as with the program goals and learning expectations documented in their Individual Education Plan (IEP);
- ongoing intervention and support may be necessary to promote and sustain positive student behaviour;
- clearly defined roles and responsibilities for staff, students, parents and community partners.

Reporting to the Principal

Students and families are encouraged to report bullying immediately to any adult within the school. The principal is responsible for school operations and HWDSB will maintain a clear and transparent process for the following:

- students, staff and parents to report incidents of bullying to the Principal immediately when they experience it, witness it or have it reported to them;
- the principal to adjust practices as necessary to address any barriers that might prevent parents from understanding their roles and responsibilities;
- the principal to provide access to appropriate board resources/publications for parents, students and staff.

Suspensions and Expulsions for Bullying

HWDSB is committed to sharing with students and families, a clearly defined process aligned with the Education Act and related Regulations (e.g., Reg. 440/20) for incidences of bullying as defined within this Policy.



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Professional Development for School Staff

To support awareness and understanding by those who have regular contact with students, HWDSB will:

- establish and provide annual professional development programs to educate educators and other staff about bullying prevention and strategies for promoting a positive school climate;
- put in place curriculum-linked culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy training strategies on bullying prevention and intervention to provide administrators, educators, and other school staff the resources and support they need to disrupt and dismantle systemic barriers and to address all forms of bullying and
- make learning resources available to other adults who have significant contact with students (e.g., parents, volunteers, early learning and child care, partners).

Communication and Outreach

Communication and outreach are critical components of bullying prevention and intervention. HWDSB will:

- actively communicate policies and procedures on bullying prevention and intervention to principals, educators, and other school staff, students, parents, Special Education Advisory Committee, Indigenous Education Circle, school councils, Parent Involvement Committee, other Board Advisory Committees, Early Learning and Childcare partners and school bus operators and drivers;
- articulate roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community (such as, principals, educators, other school staff, students, parents).

Monitor and Review

Monitoring and reviewing the policy will occur on a regular basis including:

- establishing indicators to support monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the Policy and Procedure;
- tracking of all incidences of bullying;
- establishing approaches to gather student, parent/guardian/caregiver voice in addition to surveys;

Surveys completed by students, staff and parents every 2 years;



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PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
Students feel a sense of belonging and safety within the classroom and school conditions to achieve their full potential	School Climate Surveys/Other student voice approaches
Student-centred learning environments where identity, voice and lived experience are honoured as an essential part of learning	School Climate Surveys/Other student voice approaches
Relationships that are positive, supportive, caring and respectful	School Climate Surveys/Other student voice approaches
Consistent approaches to responding and reducing the incidents of bullying in schools	Recorded and monitored through data collection of School Climate Surveys/Other student voice approaches, parent/guardian/caregiver surveys (or other data collection methods), suspensions and expulsions, and school data collection
Working alongside students and families impacted by incidents of bullying and/or bullying-like behaviour	Recorded and monitored through data collection of School Climate Surveys/Other student voice approaches, parent/guardian/caregiver surveys (or other data collection methods)

REFERENCES:

Government Documents

Part XIII of the Education Act

Accepting Schools Act (Bill 13), 2012

An Act to Amend the Education Act (Progressive Discipline and School Safety), 2007

Policy/Program Memorandum 144 (Dec. 5, 2012)

Safe Schools: Creating a Positive School Climate

Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs Through Progressive Discipline K-12

Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009

Ontario First Nation, Metis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework, 2007

English Language Learners: ESL and ELD Programs and Services, 2007

Ontario Regulation 472/07

Access to School Premises - Trespass Act

OCT Standards of Teaching Practice



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Ontario Human Rights Code
Ontario Criminal Code
Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
All applicable curriculum guidelines

HWDSB Policies

21st Century Learning and Technology
Code of Conduct
Equity and Inclusive Education
Procurement
Staff Progressive Discipline
Student Behaviour and Discipline
Volunteer
Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention

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