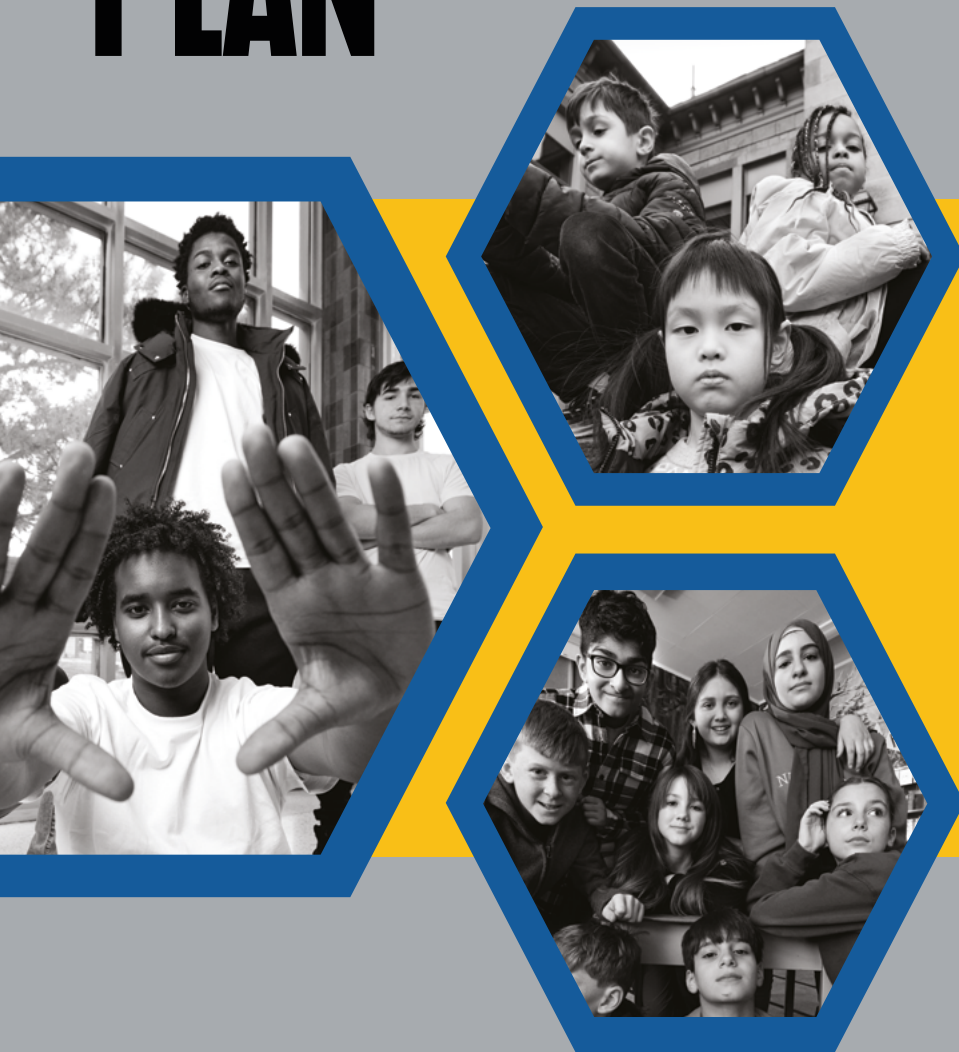


2024-2027 CARING & SAFE SCHOOLS ACTION PLAN



HWDSB
BE YOU. BE EXCELLENT.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HWDSB’S MISSION STATEMENT3

HWDSB’S VALUES3

GUIDING PRINCIPLES3

GOALS: 2024-2027 CARING AND SAFE SCHOOLS ACTION PLAN.....5

2024-2027 CARING AND SAFE SCHOOLS ACTION PLAN.....5

CARING AND SAFE SCHOOLS ACTION PLAN: A HOLISTIC APPROACH8

HWDSB’s **2024-2027 Caring and Safe Schools Action Plan** commits to fostering a positive, inclusive, and supportive educational environment where student identity and voice are centered, relationships are nurtured, and safety and well-being are prioritized. HWDSB is dedicated to transparent communication and accountability in decision-making, ensuring that all students and families feel safe, secure, valued, and supported. Through active involvement, HWDSB aims to create and support environments where every voice is heard and listened to.

HWDSB’s Mission Statement:

“Every student experiences a sense of belonging and engages in dynamic learning to reach their potential and build their own future.” ([HWDSB 2023-2028 Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#)).

HWDSB’s Values:

<p>Compassion:</p> <p>Leading with peace, friendship and love creates space for compassionate accountability, where we are responsible to one another in creating a culture of care.</p>	<p>Dignity:</p> <p>Reciprocity, anti-racism and anti-oppression lead to a just and equitable learning community, where every person is included, respected and valued.</p>
<p>Trust:</p> <p>Humility and transparency build the trusted relationships, connections and education system necessary for growth, change and evolution.</p>	<p>Joy:</p> <p>Curiosity, play and fun are catalysts for meaningful student learning outcomes and support joyful and enriching experiences.</p>

Guiding Principles:

The following principles guide HWDSB’s work in implementing **the Caring and Safe Schools Action Plan** by having a shared understanding of the work and its application to our mission:

- We honour local Indigenous knowledge and practices, recognizing that cultural disconnection has adversely affected community wellness and healing across generations.
- We prioritize safety and care for all, deeply valuing the well-being of every individual in our educational community.
- We commit to ethical consultation and collaboration, actively engaging with students, families, staff, and the community to create a supportive environment.
- We intentionally seek input from individuals and communities historically underserved by the education system, acknowledging our responsibility to learn from their experiences.

Guiding Principles continued:

- We openly share our engagement processes with students, families, staff, and the community, as we believe in nurturing trusting relationships founded on transparency.
- We embrace a consensus-building approach to decision-making, ensuring that every voice is heard, valued, and honoured within our community.
- Our work is dedicated to benefiting students, families, staff, and the community, respecting and promoting self-determination at all levels.
- We strive to communicate in accessible language, ensuring that our messages resonate with and are understood by everyone in our community.

Impacts when Students Feel Safe and Secure:

- **Engaged School Communities:** School communities actively participate in practices that establish and sustain safe, equitable, and inclusive classrooms, fostering a secure environment for all students.
- **Amplified Voices:** Students from historically marginalized communities feel safe to share their perspectives, promoting collaboration and inclusivity among students, staff, families, and the community.
- **Profound Sense of Belonging:** Students feel safe to explore their identities, experiencing acceptance and honour that fosters a deep sense of belonging and authenticity.
- **Connected Relationships:** Students build secure and meaningful connections with responsive adults and peers, which enhances their learning experience through nurturing relationships.
- **Recognition of Value:** Students feel that they matter and are valued within their school community, receiving the support and attention necessary for their health and wellness.
- **De-stigmatized Mental Health Conversations:** Conversations about mental health are encouraged and normalized, creating a safe space for understanding and support among students.



GOALS: 2024-2027 CARING AND SAFE SCHOOLS ACTION PLAN

- We will foster positive, inclusive environments where student identity, voice, and relationships are prioritized, ensuring every student feels valued and empowered to succeed.
- We commit to maintaining a safe and secure environment for students, families, and caregivers with transparent communication and collaborative approaches to addressing safety concerns.
- We will amplify student and family voices in decision-making, creating inclusive structures that reflect the needs and experiences of the entire school community.

2024-2027 Caring and Safe Schools Action Plan:

This section provides an overview of the key objectives and actions at the system and school levels under the following five priority areas and commitments:

- Creating the Conditions for Learning
- Identity Affirming Curriculum and Teaching Practices and Learning Environments
- Responding to Student Need
- Secure Schools Awareness and Response
- Accountability and Transparency

Creating a nurturing and secure environment is essential for fostering well-being and enabling every student to thrive within our school communities. A sense of safety and belonging shapes how students learn, interact, and develop. It is vital to recognize and address the systemic barriers that can impact students' experiences, ensuring that every individual has the resources they need to succeed.

Implementing an identity-affirming curriculum and inclusive teaching practices fosters a sense of belonging, allowing students to feel valued and engaged in their learning journeys. Every student's experience is unique and influenced by their diverse identities, including age, race, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and ability. Embracing these identities helps create an environment where everyone feels respected and understood.

By actively responding to the needs of students and promoting a culture of safety within schools, we cultivate a supportive atmosphere where all individuals feel secure and empowered. Our commitment to accountability and transparency ensures that our actions are continuously assessed and refined, leading to an equitable and caring educational experience for everyone.

1. Creating the Necessary Conditions for Learning

Objective:

To create student-centred learning environments where identity, voice and lived experience are affirmed and honoured, contributing to safety and the development of positive, caring and respectful relationships.

Actions:

- Establish regular opportunities for students to share their voices and lived experiences through discussions, forums, or focus groups, fostering an environment of trust and understanding.
- Encourage cooperative learning activities that build community and mutual respect, helping students develop positive relationships with their peers.
- Recognize and implement strategies to mitigate disproportionalities and inequities observed in student achievement, attendance, disciplinary actions, and well-being, aiming to foster a more equitable learning environment for all students.
- Ensure access to resources and support systems that address students' emotional and social needs, reinforcing their sense of safety and belonging within the school community.

2. Identity Affirming Curriculum and Teaching Practices and Learning Environments

Objective:

To create identity-affirming curricula and learning environments that ensure every student feels safe and secure. By celebrating diverse backgrounds and voices, we foster a culture of belonging and positive relationships, prioritizing students' well-being and success in a supportive learning environment.

Actions:

- Enhance inclusivity and cultural relevance across teaching, curriculum, assessment, and resources to ensure responsiveness to diverse student needs and backgrounds.
- Design and implement a curriculum that reflects diverse identities and cultures, allowing students to see themselves represented in their learning materials.
- Involve students and families in the planning and decision-making process regarding educational pathways that provide diverse pathway options, ensuring every student has opportunities to achieve success and fulfillment in their educational journey.

3. Responding to Student Need

Objective:

To foster a responsive educational environment that meets diverse student needs through bias-free progressive discipline, ensuring that all students feel safe, respected and supported.

Actions:

- Provide role -embedded learning for all staff on recognizing and addressing implicit bias, and systemic racism, and how these factors influence student discipline.
- Involve student voice in the development and revision of school policies related to discipline, ensuring they reflect the lived experiences and needs of diverse student populations.
- Expand and further develop anti-bullying resources that are informed by student voice, and foster and strengthen compassion, dignity, trust and joy for every student.
- Develop clear, consistent communication mechanisms that allow students and caregivers/families to report safety concerns, biases, or other needs. This should include anonymous reporting options and appropriate follow-up support(s).

4. Secure Schools Awareness and Response

Objective:

Ensuring that school emergency procedures, including evacuation, hold and secure, shelter in place, lockdown, and bomb threat protocols, are communicated and practiced for student safety and security.

Actions:

- Develop and maintain a clear reporting system to transparently communicate the implementation of secure school procedures and emergency readiness, using comprehensive data collection to assess safety outcomes, support inclusive practices, and enhance preparedness across all HWDSB sites.
- Provide regular progress updates on the organization's website and at board meetings to ensure accessible information on both equity initiatives and emergency preparedness for all HWDSB community members.
- Actively seek feedback from students, staff, and families on safety, inclusivity, and emergency protocols to guide future planning and enhance accountability and effectiveness in creating secure, inclusive learning environments.

5. Accountability and Transparency

Objective:

To consistently evaluate and adapt our Caring and Safe Schools commitments, using auditing tools to assess secure environments, identity-affirming practices, and inclusive responses. We will remain accountable to our community by transparently communicating progress and evolving with the educational landscape and student needs.

Actions:

- Conduct regular audits of secure schools practices and inclusive environment initiatives, using findings to refine policies and practices. This continuous assessment ensures our response evolves alongside the needs and experiences of our students, staff, and community.
- Provide accessible, periodic updates on the implementation of Caring and Safe Schools initiatives, including secure schools protocols. By sharing this information through multiple channels, we foster transparency, trust, and accountability across the community.
- Actively invite and incorporate feedback from students, families, and staff on safety and inclusion practices, using these insights to shape future planning and decision-making.

Caring and Safe Schools Action Plan: A Holistic Approach

HWDSB's continuous and ongoing commitment to creating a caring and safe learning and work environment is linked to the work of all departments in the organization, including:

- [HWDSB's Mental Health and Addictions Strategy](#)
- [Equity Action Plan](#)
- [Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan](#)
- [Special Education Action Plan](#)

Braided together, these initiatives promote a holistic approach to student well-being, ensuring every student feels valued and supported. We recognize that collaboration can create a cohesive framework that fosters safety, belonging, and equitable outcomes for every student.

HAMILTON

WENTWORTH

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