



Policy Committee  
Thursday, May 29, 2025  
EC-340D & Virtual Meeting

**AGENDA: 6:00 p.m.**

1. Call to Order/Roll Call
2. HWDSB Land Acknowledgement
3. Approval of the Agenda
4. Committee Workplan - Highlights

**Policy Review:**

5. [Boundary Review](#)
6. [Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline](#)
7. [Volunteer](#)
8. Adjournment

**BE YOU. BE EXCELLENT.**

Subject:

Boundary Review

Executive Council Member Responsible:

Matthew Gerard  
Associate Director of Business Services & Board  
Treasurer



## BACKGROUND

The Boundary Review Policy has been reviewed as part of the policy review cycle. Staff have made minor updates to language throughout the policy.

## RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Boundary Review Policy be recommended for approval.

# Boundary Review

Date Approved: XXXX

Projected Review Date: XXXX

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## PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) believes in optimizing and ensuring the effective and efficient use of all facilities to support student achievement. In alignment with the Long-Term Facilities Plan, guided by HWDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan, the Board determines school boundaries in accordance with its authority under Section 171 (1)7 of the Education Act.

The Board is committed to responding to changing demographics and program needs through boundary changes in a fair and transparent manner, prioritizing effective community engagement. New school boundaries or changes to existing school boundaries will consider the Guiding Principles of the Long-Term Facilities Plan and HWDSB's commitment to human rights and equity.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Address the short and long-term accommodation requirements of the impacted communities in a timely manner;
- Be mindful of the best and most prudent use of all resources available to HWDSB;
- Adhere to the guiding principles as defined in the Long-Term Facilities Plan including optimal school capacity, grade organization, transportation, facility requirements, site size and the balance between French Immersion and English track students in dual track schools ([Long-Term Facilities Plan](#));
- Consult with the impacted school communities to gain further insight into the boundary recommendation(s).
- Ensure Ward Trustee(s) are engaged as a member of the boundary review resource team.

## INTENDED OUTCOMES:

When a boundary review is conducted, HWDSB staff will:

- Validate or amend school attendance boundaries to support and optimize the effective and efficient use of all facilities, while also supporting student well-being and achievement.
- Ensure community and school engagement strategies are considered through the boundary review process.

## RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education  
Members of Executive Council

# Boundary Review

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## TERMINOLOGY:

**Long-Term Facilities Plan:** A comprehensive planning document illustrating municipal demographics, condition and utilization of current facilities and accommodation analyses designed to enhance student achievement. The plan is meant to support and promote the goals of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan, Board Improvement Plan, Human Rights Policy, Multi-year Accessibility Plan, Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan and other HWDSB Policies and Plans.

## ACTION REQUIRED:

A boundary review, outside of the accommodation review process, may commence under the following circumstances:

- Initiated through the Long-Term Facilities Plan, upon Board approval, or
- Recommended from a Superintendent of Student Achievement, upon Board approval, or
- Initiated through the Board of Trustees.

Consultation with impacted school communities and changes to the school boundaries will adhere to the HWDSB Boundary Review Procedure.

## PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
To validate or amend school attendance boundaries to support and optimize the effective and efficient use of all facilities, while supporting student well-being and achievement.	Measured by monitoring and planning for pupil accommodations through the Long-Term Facilities Plan. This includes annual analysis of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining, increasing and shifting enrolments and demographics</li> <li>• Current funding and operational realities</li> <li>• Changing educational and program objectives</li> <li>• Physical limitations of schools and sites</li> </ul>
Ensure community and school engagement strategies are considered through the boundary review process.	Measured through engagement with the Advisory Panel and public engagement with school communities.

## REFERENCES:

**Government Documents**  
Education Act

Subject:

Student Behaviour & Bias-Free Progressive Discipline Policy

Executive Council Member Responsible:

Gerry Smith  
Superintendent of Safe, Compassionate and Equitable Schools, K-12



## BACKGROUND

The consultation for the Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline Policy has been completed. Staff have reviewed the feedback provided and updated the policy (please refer to the policy consultation findings and feedback reports attached).

## RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline Policy be recommended for approval.

### Policy Consultation Feedback and Response Chart

#### **POLICY: Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline**

**Feedback was gathered through: Community surveys, open comments, and student focus groups at the Phoenix Program.**

The Consultation Report can be found in [Appendix A](#), at the end of the Policy Package.

Categories	Comment/ Feedback	Response
Purpose	Clarify the policy's intent to move away from punitive discipline and toward identity affirming, equitable approaches. Some found the purpose too vague.	The purpose now better reflects the direction of HWDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan, particularly the focus on student belonging and upholding human rights. Many respondents supported this shift and confirmed the need for policies that emphasize safe, inclusive schools through supportive, bias-aware practices.
Guiding Principles	Requests to embed student voice, cultural responsiveness, and relationship-based approaches.	Guiding principles have been updated to better reflect HWDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan. These changes were affirmed by students and staff who emphasized the importance of voice, relationships, and restorative approaches.
Intended Outcomes	Need for greater clarity on what bias-free approaches to student behaviour look like and how equity outcomes will be measured.	Intended outcomes now focus on reducing disproportionate discipline and improving student engagement, in alignment with HWDSB's Human Rights and Equity commitments. This direction was supported by community feedback recognizing the importance of restorative and anti-oppressive practices.
Terminology	Some terms (such as "progressive discipline") felt unclear or inconsistent with equity goals.	Terminology has been updated to reflect the language and principles of HWDSB's Human Rights and Equity Action Plan. Bias-free progressive discipline is now clearly defined as identity-affirming, trauma-informed, and supportive rather than punitive.

Action Required	Need for clear expectations around roles and responsibilities, especially for administrators and educators.	Educators and leaders are expected to use culturally responsive and trauma-informed strategies. Phoenix Program feedback reinforced the value of clear, supportive adult relationships, which is now embedded into the policy's tone and expectations.
Progress Indicators	Questions about how success will be measured and how results will be shared.	Progress will be measured using disaggregated data related to student discipline, climate surveys, and engagement metrics. These indicators to be informed by HWDSB's MYSP and BIP.
Overall Readability/understandability	Requests for plain language, consistency across terms, and clearer structure.	Policy document has been revised for improved clarity, alignment with HWDSB's accessibility guidelines, and consistent use of terms from HWDSB's strategic plans and communication tools.
Items for the Procedure	Suggestions to include flow charts, school/program re-entry processes and family engagement templates.	Supporting procedures will include decision making tools, restorative re-entry guidance, and culturally inclusive communication templates and conversation tools. These tools are to be aligned closely with HWDSB's Action Plans and Strategies.
Other	Need for transparency, trust-building, and data use. Calls to reflect HWDSB's strategic directions.	<p>The final version of this policy reflects a strong alignment with and between HWDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan, Equity Action Plan, Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan, Mental Health Strategy and Safe schools Action Plan.</p> <p>The Human Rights Impact Assessment Tool has been used to incorporate key elements from each of these documents to support inclusive, transparent, and accountable implementation of this policy.</p> <p>Feedback from students and caregivers confirmed that this direction builds confidence and trust when applied consistently for all students.</p>



# Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline

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## PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to ensuring every student has the right to learn in an environment that upholds their human rights, safety and well-being, and is free from harassment and discrimination. By utilizing a continuum of strategies including social skill-building programs, interventions to address interfering behaviours and/or unmet needs, and progressive discipline, when necessary, this policy ensures that both prevention strategies and response to interfering behaviours are equitable, effective, and bias-free in nature and further address known disproportionalities in our student achievement and well-being data.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Ensure opportunities are provided to improve student engagement, learning and achievement focusing on pro-social skills, bullying prevention, and bias-free restorative practices to support effective prevention and intervention strategies.
- Prioritize relational approaches to repairing harm and strengthening community, recognizing that behaviour is a form of communication and identity expression.
- Center student voice and identity in decision-making processes and responses to behaviour.
- Implement restorative practices and bias-free progressive discipline in classrooms to promote healthy relationships, wellness, community building, and early intervention, while upholding anti-racist and anti-oppressive principles.
- Address inappropriate behaviours with developmentally appropriate consequences that provide learning opportunities and focus on learning, behaviour improvement, accountability for improvement, and safety.
- Ensure that student discipline considers bias, prejudice, and discrimination, especially for historically and currently underserved populations, to promote fairness and equity.
- Maintain culturally- appropriate and trauma-informed communication between the school, home, and students to build trust and support student well-being and learning.
- Consider all mitigating circumstances when addressing student behaviour to ensure fair and appropriate responses.
- Uphold students' rights as outlined in international and national human rights documents and codes, ensuring an equitable and respectful environment.

## INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- Create and maintain a learning and teaching environment where safety, inclusivity, and well-being of diverse identities are prioritized to enable every student to achieve their full academic potential.
- Encourage and reinforce positive student behaviours by focusing on social skills development, healthy relationships, and respect for all identities, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.
- Honour our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation by nurturing respectful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous Peoples and Treaty Partners. Cultivate intergenerational healing and wellness through a restorative education system that acknowledges and respects Indigenous histories, cultures, and contributions.
- Effectively manage and address both pro-social and disruptive student behaviours using strategies that are informed by an understanding of students' diverse identities. This approach ensures fairness and equity in





# Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline

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behaviour management, supporting overall student well-being.

- Ensure interventions and support are sensitive to students' unique identities and backgrounds, fostering a more equitable school environment.

## RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education

Members of Executive Council

School Principals

## TERMINOLOGY:

**Adult Pupil:** For the purpose of this policy, an “adult pupil” who is 18 years of age or older or who is 16 or 17 and has withdrawn from parental control.

**Bias:** An opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination that limits an individual’s or a group’s ability to make fair, objective, or accurate judgement.

**Bias-Free:** The absence of opinions, preferences, prejudices, or inclinations that limit an individual’s or group’s ability to make fair, objective, or accurate judgments; an approach, practice, or environment that actively promotes equity, impartiality, and fairness for all.

**Bias-free progressive discipline:** A comprehensive, school-wide approach that emphasizes creating a positive and inclusive learning environment while addressing student behavior issues fairly and equitably. It focuses on using a range of strategies, from prevention and early intervention to consequences, to promote positive behavior and address inappropriate actions without discrimination.

**Bullying:** 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:
  - i. 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;
  - 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 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 dynamic.

**Child and Family Services Review Board (CFSR Board):** The Child and Family Services Review Board provides a mechanism under the Child and Family Services Act to hear an appeal of a school Board's decision to expel a pupil. The CFSR Board makes specific decisions on the residential placement of children; refusal of placement by private adoption licenses; rules on licenses for children’s residences, adoption placement, day nurseries and private home day care; refusal to disclose adoption information; and applications for the release of children from emergency secure treatment facilities.



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## Committees:

- (i) Expulsion Hearing Committee: A committee of three or more Trustees of Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, established to hear a recommended expulsion of a pupil.
- (ii) Suspension Appeals Committee: A committee of three or more Trustees of Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, established to hear an appeal of a principal's decision to suspend a pupil.

**Discrimination:** Any form of unequal treatment based on a Code ground, whether imposing extra burdens or denying benefits. It may involve direct actions that are discriminatory on their face, or it may involve rules, practices or procedures that appear neutral, but have the effect of disadvantaging certain groups of people. It can be direct or indirect, individual or systemic. It may be intentional or unintentional, and it may take obvious forms (direct), or occur in very subtle ways (indirect). In any case, even if there are many factors affecting a decision or action, if discrimination is one factor, that is a violation of this policy. Hate activities and harassment are forms of discrimination. Putting measures to correct, relieve or remedy hardship or systemic discrimination experienced by persons or groups in an attempt to achieve equity, is not discrimination.

**Harassment:** Defined in the Code as engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome. This policy covers code-based harassment, which is a type of harassment that is directed towards a person or group on the basis of a protected code ground(s). It can involve words or actions that are known or should be known to be offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning, or unwelcome. More than one event may take place for there to be a violation of the Code. However, one incident could be significant or substantial enough to be interpreted as harassment. Some examples of harassment are name calling, unwelcome remarks, jokes, slurs, displaying derogatory or offensive messages, and bullying. This policy covers code-based harassment. Other types of harassment are addressed through other policies, for e.g.- Workplace Harassment and Prevention Policy.

**Hate Activity:** Comments or actions against a person or group motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on factors connected to one or more code grounds. Examples include hate incidents (non-criminal activities), hate crime (criminal activities), hate propaganda, advocating violence, bullying, promoting hate, and publicly displaying hate in notices, signs, symbols, and emblems.

**Individual Education Plan (IEP):** A plan that provides modifications or accommodations to program of Exceptional students, or, in some cases, students who have specific needs.

**Medical Cannabis User:** As defined by the Education Act, a person who is authorized to possess cannabis for the person's own medical purposes in accordance with applicable federal laws.

**Mitigating Circumstance:** These are factors that lessen the severity or culpability of an act requiring a suspension or expulsion.

**Parent/Guardian:** Where there is a reference to involving a parent/guardian it means the custodial parent or guardian of a minor who is under 18 years of age or is not 16 or 17 years old and removed from parental control.

**Positive School Climate:** School climate is the learning environment and relationships found within a school and school community. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community (staff, students, parents, community members) feel safe, included, and respected; and actively promote address the needs of the student



# Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline

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population, particularly those currently and historically underserved. Principles of equity and inclusive education are embedded in the learning environment to promote a positive school climate and a culture of mutual respect.

**Prejudice:** An opinion against a group or an individual based on insufficient facts and is usually unfavourable and/or intolerant.

**Progressive Discipline:** A framework that fosters learning, responsibility, and restoration by addressing student behavior through a continuum of prevention programs, interventions, and supports. It emphasizes the importance of considering the context of behavior, including trauma, ableism, racism, and other systemic factors that may impact students. This approach does not involve escalating punishments but focuses on appropriate consequences that encourage positive behavior, while providing learning opportunities that help students make better choices and reinforce positive behaviors.

**Restorative Practice(s):** Used to build, maintain, and repair relationships between individuals. They focus on fostering belonging, accountability, and mutual respect, aiming to resolve conflicts and promote healing through open communication and/or actions.

**Whole-School Approach:** A whole-school approach involves all members of the school community including, but not limited to, staff, students, administrators, community members and parents. It supports efforts to ensure that schools are safe, inclusive and accepting. It involves the development of respectful and caring relationships between staff, students, parents and community. All aspects of school life are included in a whole-school approach, such as curriculum, school climate, teaching practices, policies and procedures.

## **ACTION REQUIRED:**

- Maintain a Safe and Caring Schools Action Plan with the goal to enhance the well-being of students and staff and addressing gaps in support for students who are disproportionality represented in suspension and expulsion data. The plan must support and be informed by other departments (Human Rights and Equity, Mental Health and Wellness) action plans and strategies.
- Prioritize differentiated school climate strategies to strengthen relationships with students, families and community that promote inclusion, pro-social behaviours, and healthy relationships.
- Collaborate with students, teachers, other staff members, community, School Council, and Home and School Association (where applicable), to create and maintain a school-based bullying prevention and intervention plans.
- Implement and deliver programs and professional development for all school personnel, to increase their awareness and understanding of skill-building programs, interventions to address interfering behaviours and/or unmet needs, and progressive discipline.
- Implement culturally inclusive and responsive programming and assessment practices, taking proactive instructional steps to identify, prevent and mitigate systemic barriers in all classrooms.
- Continue to seek feedback from students, staff, and the HWDSB community through surveys and publicly share this information to further inform and strengthen Board practices and programs.
- Ensure that all students, staff, parents/guardians/caregivers, community agencies, school bus drivers and operators and volunteers are aware of the policy and its commitment to creating a safe, respectful, and identity-affirming environment for all.



# Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline

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## PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
Create and maintain a learning and teaching environment where safety, inclusivity, and well-being of diverse identities are prioritized, allowing every student to achieve their full academic potential.	School Climate and community engagement tools indicate improved student sense of safety. Board data shows improvement in all categories.
Regular reporting and data analysis will ensure transparency, build trust, and inform school-wide Supports.	Input /data from student forums indicates students feel comfortable and safe at school.
Encourage and reinforce positive student behaviours by focusing on social skills development, healthy relationships, and respect for all identities, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.	School plans include programs/opportunities for students to learn/engage in building healthy relationships and pro-social skills. The plans are reviewed with the Superintendent during the School Improvement Visit using school-based data.
Effectively manage and address both pro-social and disruptive student behaviours using strategies that are informed by an understanding of students' diverse identities.	Decrease in incidents resulting in suspensions or expulsions.  Incidents of bias, prejudice and hate are reported and addressed  Fewer incidents of bullying leading to suspension.
Ensure interventions and support(s) are bias free and sensitive to students' unique identities and backgrounds, fostering a more equitable school environment(s).	Reduced suspension and expulsion disproportionality rates.
Cultivate intergenerational healing and wellness through a restorative education system that acknowledges and respects Indigenous histories, cultures, and contributions.	Gather feedback in a variety of ways from Indigenous community members, including elders and knowledge keepers, about the perceived cultural sensitivity of school disciplinary practices.  Measure if the implementation of restorative and culturally responsive practices have reduced disproportionate discipline outcomes for Indigenous students.

# Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline

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## REFERENCES:

### Government Documents

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Part XIII of the Education Act (300.0-316.0): Student Behaviour, Discipline, and Safety

An Act to Amend the Education Act (Accepting Schools Act), 2012

Policy/Program Memorandum 141, Programs for Students on Long Term Suspension Policy/Program

Memorandum 142: Program for Expelled Students

Policy Program Memorandum 145: Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour

Policy Program Memorandum 119: Developing and Implementing Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools  
2009

Policy Program Memorandum 166: Keeping Students Safe: Framework for school Board Protocols to Combat Sex  
Trafficking (2021)

Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act (Bill 157) 2010

Ontario Regulation 472/00 Shaping A Culture of Respect in Our Schools 2008 Ontario Regulation 181/98

“Identification and Placement of Exceptional Pupils” Access to School Premises – Ontario Regulation 474/00

OCT Standards of Teaching Practice

Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs Through Progressive  
Discipline, K-12 2010

English Language Learners: ESL and ELD First Nation, and Inuit Education Policy Framework 2007 Ontario’s Equity  
and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009

Ontario Human Rights Code

Ontario Criminal Code

United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Convention on the Rights of the Child

Subject:

Volunteer Policy

Executive Council Member Responsible:

Simon Goodacre  
Superintendent of Equity & Student  
Achievement



## BACKGROUND

The consultation for the Volunteer Policy has been completed. Staff have reviewed the feedback provided and updated the policy (please refer to the policy consultation findings and feedback reports attached).

## RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Volunteer Policy be recommended for approval.

### Policy Consultation Feedback and Response Chart

#### POLICY: Volunteer Policy

Feedback was gathered through: EngageHWDSB/ survey

The Consultation Report can be found in [Appendix A](#), at the end of the Policy Package.

Categories	Comment/ Feedback	Response
Purpose	The survey confirmed the importance of volunteering within an engaged school community.	The policy is aligned with this feedback.
Guiding Principles		The Guiding Principles are supported by the feedback summary.
Intended Outcomes	The feedback affirms the importance of volunteering. The feedback focuses on potential barriers to volunteering and suggestions to remove these barriers.	The policy has a stated outcome of promoting volunteering.
Terminology		No change to the terminology section would be required.
Action Required		The actions are supported by the feedback summary.
Progress Indicators		The Progress Indicators are supported by the feedback summary.
Overall Readability/understandability		No feedback was received regarding this aspect of the policy.
Items for the Procedure	<p>The feedback aligned with the intended outcomes of the policy but identified specific barriers to volunteering and feedback to potentially encourage volunteering. This feedback focused primarily on operational items best addressed through the Procedure. Specific feedback includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need to communicate volunteer processes and opportunities at the school level.</li> <li>- Communication regarding requirements to volunteer need to be clearer.</li> <li>- The Vulnerable Sector Screening process is a barrier.</li> <li>- Volunteers require clear training.</li> </ul>	<p>The feedback summary provided valuable information regarding the experience of current and potential volunteers. Many of the items identified for attention and improvement in the feedback summary would connect to topics in the Volunteer Procedure.</p> <p>The feedback provides specific areas in the Procedure that can be addressed related to the Vulnerable Sector Screening requirements, volunteer training and orientation, and communication at the school-level.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Equity and Human Rights considerations need to be considered in engaging volunteers.</li> <li>- Importance of Principals in supporting and engaging with volunteers.</li> </ul>	
Other		



# Volunteer

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## PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) recognizes, values, supports and expects the involvement of school volunteers to enhance all aspects of school life for the benefit of students and school communities. HWDSB believes that volunteer contributions enrich student educational experiences and contribute to more effective partnerships between a school and its community. HWDSB believes the community has valuable experience, knowledge and insight that benefits all students, contributing to student success and more effective partnerships between a school and its community.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

HWDSB has a respectful and reciprocal relationship with our volunteers, characterized by:

- Helping volunteers support the activities of the school while respecting the Code of Conduct, all policies and collective agreements and not replacing the roles of HWDSB staff.
- Modelling our school board's values and treat all others in accordance with these values.
- Recognizing and fostering the contributions of individuals and groups to the learning process.
- Recognizing that volunteers from a diversity of lived experiences can enrich the school community and student experience.
- Minimizing barriers to enable parents, guardians and caregivers to fully participate to the best of their abilities as volunteers.
- Caring, collaborative, and cooperative relationships.
- Fostering interaction between and among the school, parents, guardians, caregivers and the school community.
- Providing a caring and safe environment that recognizes the rights and dignity of all persons to be treated respectfully.

## INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- Encourage and welcome parents, guardians and caregivers to participate in volunteer activities in our schools to support programs and services and help students succeed.
- Recruit and provide ongoing support for volunteers so they may optimize their involvement and support with activities in the classroom, in the school and at the system level.
- Identify and recruit volunteers to act as coaches, advisors and/or experts as required to support extracurricular interests identified by students
- Recognize the contributions of volunteers.

# Volunteer

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## RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education  
Members of Executive Council  
Principals and Managers/Supervisors

## TERMINOLOGY:

**Advisor:** An HWDSB employee or an Extra-Curricular Non-Staff Volunteer who provides supervision over an extra-curricular activity.

**Coach/Expert:** An HWDSB employee or an Extra-Curricular Non-Staff Volunteer who provides direct instruction or expertise related to a specific extra-curricular activity. In addition, coaches have completed any training and certification as required by the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA) or any recognized athletic governing authority.

**Extra-Curricular Non-Staff Volunteer:** An individual who is not an employee of HWDSB who volunteers to support extra-curricular activities, who has satisfied all HWDSB requirements for screening, training and certification, and who may act as an Advisor or Coach/Expert.

**HWDSB Community:** Students, staff, parents, guardians, caregivers, trustees, community advisory committee members, school council members, permit holders, vendors, service providers, contractors, volunteers, visitors, and all other persons who are invited to, access or provide services, or attend Board and school events and any person or entity who enters into an agreement, or uses school board property.

**Student Volunteer:** A HWDSB student who may or may not be working towards their Community Involvement Hours.

**Supervision:** The overseeing of an activity for safety, guidance, regulation or direction.

**Volunteer:** An individual including non-HWDSB students, who agrees to undertake, without pay, a designated task that supports a student, a classroom, a school, or an HWDSB system initiative. A Volunteer may act as a Coach/Expert for extra-curricular activities if they have satisfied all HWDSB requirements for screening, training and certification.



# Volunteer

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## ACTION REQUIRED:

Maintain a Volunteer Procedure that is accessible to the HWDSB community and communicated annually to the community. The procedure will establish and maintain:

- A clear process for the recruitment and selection of volunteers.
- Necessary training and/or orientation for our volunteers, including HWDSB Human Rights and Equity Policy, relevant information from the Freedom of Information Act, other Board policies, procedures and provincial legislation.
- An outline about/information on how volunteers will be celebrated and recognized for their contributions to the HWDSB community.

## PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
Encourage and welcome parents, guardians and caregivers to participate in volunteer activities in our schools to support programs and services and help students succeed.	Various communication methods to welcome parents, guardians and caregivers to serve as volunteers in our community.
Recruit and provide ongoing support for volunteers so they may optimize their involvement and support with activities in the classroom, in the school and at the system level.	Communication between the principal, or designate, and the volunteers, to identify the needs of the volunteer in the classroom, school or system level.
Identify and recruit volunteers to act as coaches, advisors and/or experts as required to support extracurricular interests identified by students.	Tracking systems that identify skill sets and knowledge needed to support students, the school and HWDSB. The tracking systems are developed and implemented at the school level.
Recognize the contributions of volunteers.	Volunteer recognition on an annual basis.

# Volunteer

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## REFERENCES:

### **Government Documents**

Education Act

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Physical Education Safety Guidelines

PPM 124 Ontario Secondary School Diploma Requirement: Community Involvement Activities

## **APPENDIX A:**

### **CONSULTATION REPORTS**

Item# 6: [Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Discipline](#)

Item # 7: [Volunteer](#)



## HWDSB Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline Policy Consultation

### Executive Summary

In March 2025, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) launched a public consultation to gather feedback on the draft Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline Policy. The consultation was hosted on the Engage HWDSB platform and included a survey. Focus groups also took place in the Phoenix Program for students who are currently on longer term suspensions. The purpose of this consultation was to ensure that the revised policy promotes community-based approaches to discipline that prioritize repairing harm, rebuilding trust, and strengthening relationships, ensuring students are supported in both personal growth and academic success.

The consultation process through Engage HWDSB invited the community to review the draft policy, respond to guiding questions, and share their experiences and perspectives on school discipline. In total, 130 survey responses were received and 408 participants visited the Engage project page and left comments using the tools there.

Feedback revealed strong community interest in fair, transparent, and supportive disciplinary processes, but also surfaced deep concerns about implementation gaps. While many endorsed harm-repair, reintegration and trauma-informed approaches in principle, others emphasized the need for stronger protections for victims, consistent application of discipline, and greater transparency with families.

Focus groups with students currently suspended highlighted systemic challenges, including unclear communication, feelings of bias, a lack of emotional support, and the absence of preventive or relationship-focused interventions. Students also praised the alternative Phoenix program as a model for more responsive, supportive schooling.

The consultation findings underscore a critical need to balance accountability, equity, and student safety. The insights gathered will inform refinements to the final policy and guide HWDSB in strengthening its approach to student discipline.

### Key Takeaways

- **Student Protection and Victim Support:**  
Respondents emphasized the need to better protect students who experience bullying, harassment, or violence, alongside supporting those who exhibit challenging behaviour.

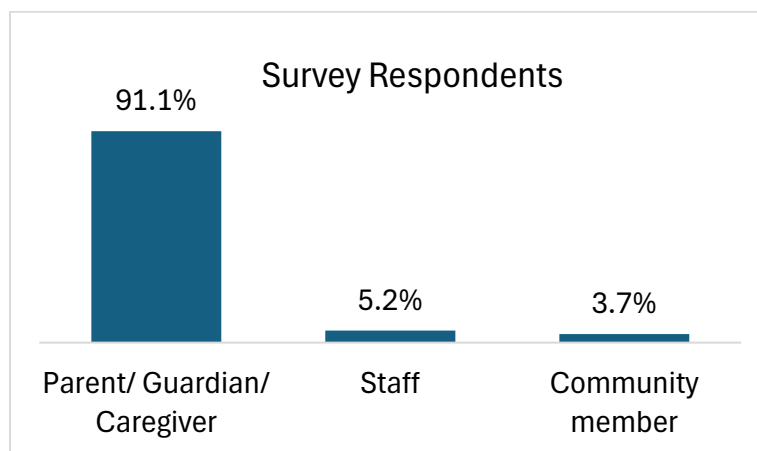
- **Mixed Support for Harm Repair and Reintegration approaches:**  
While practices that emphasize community building and relationships were valued in principle, many expressed concerns about inconsistent application, insufficient staff training, and erosion of confidence in school safety.
  - **Equity and Consistency:**  
Perspectives on equity were divided. Participants stressed that discipline should be behaviour-based, applied consistently, and transparent to all stakeholders.
  - **Effective Communication:**  
Families and staff called for clearer, more timely communication about incidents, discipline outcomes, and support plans for returning students. There were strong requests for decision trees, plain-language explanations, and clear examples of consequences to make expectations and processes understandable.
  - **Early Intervention and Mental Health Supports:**  
Respondents stressed the importance of earlier behavioural interventions in primary grades and improved mental health supports balanced with accountability.
- 

## Engage Platform and Survey Findings

Below are charts to visualize consultation findings followed by a thematic analysis and summary of comments provided by participants.

### Participant Demographics

The majority of participants identified as parents or caregivers. Student voices were captured primarily through targeted focus groups.

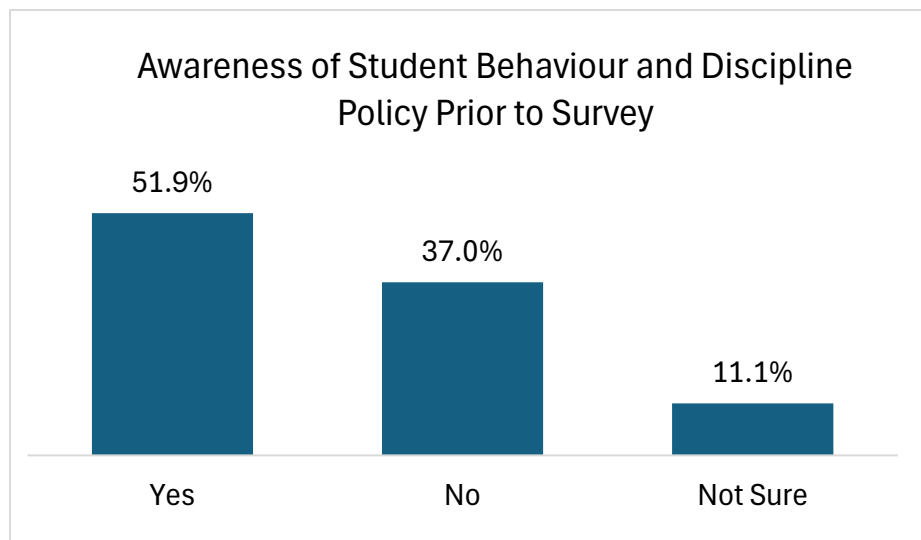


### Familiarity with the school's code of conduct

In a quick poll conducted on Engage, respondents were split equally across responses regarding their familiarity with the school's code of conduct: one-third were very familiar, one-third were somewhat familiar, and one-third were not very familiar, with no respondents indicating complete unfamiliarity.

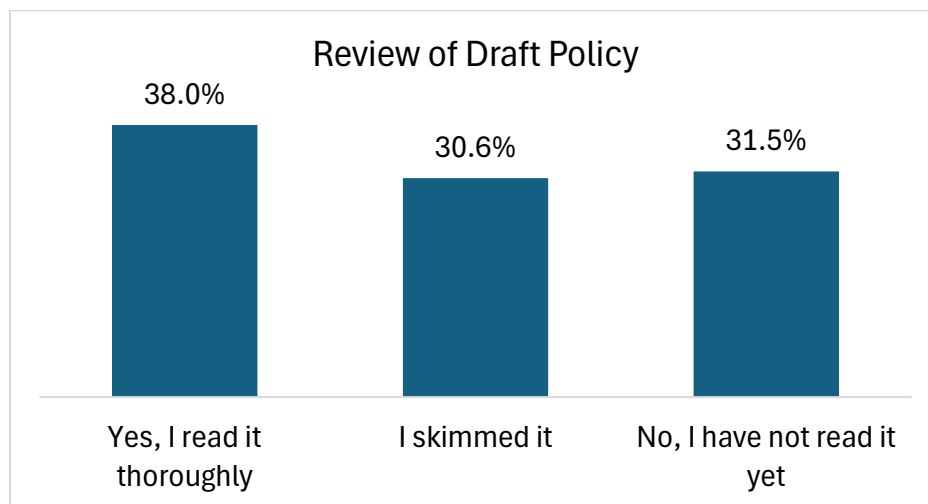
### Awareness of the current Student Behaviour and Discipline Policy

Roughly half of participants were already aware of the school's existing discipline policy, while others indicated little or no prior knowledge.



### Review of the draft policy

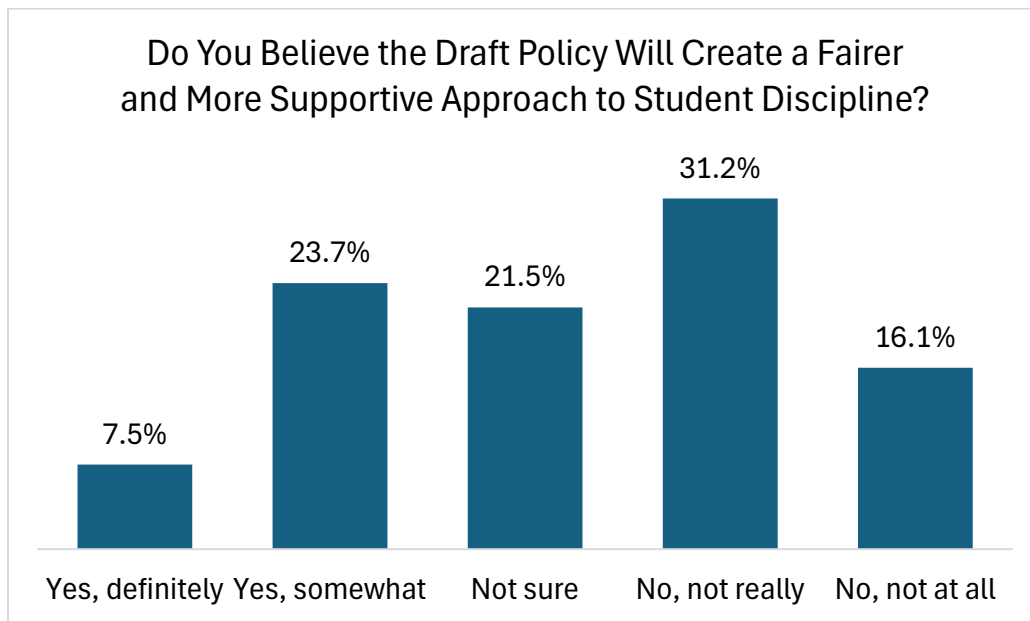
Just over half of respondents had reviewed the draft policy prior to responding, while others provided feedback based on their general impressions or experience with school discipline.





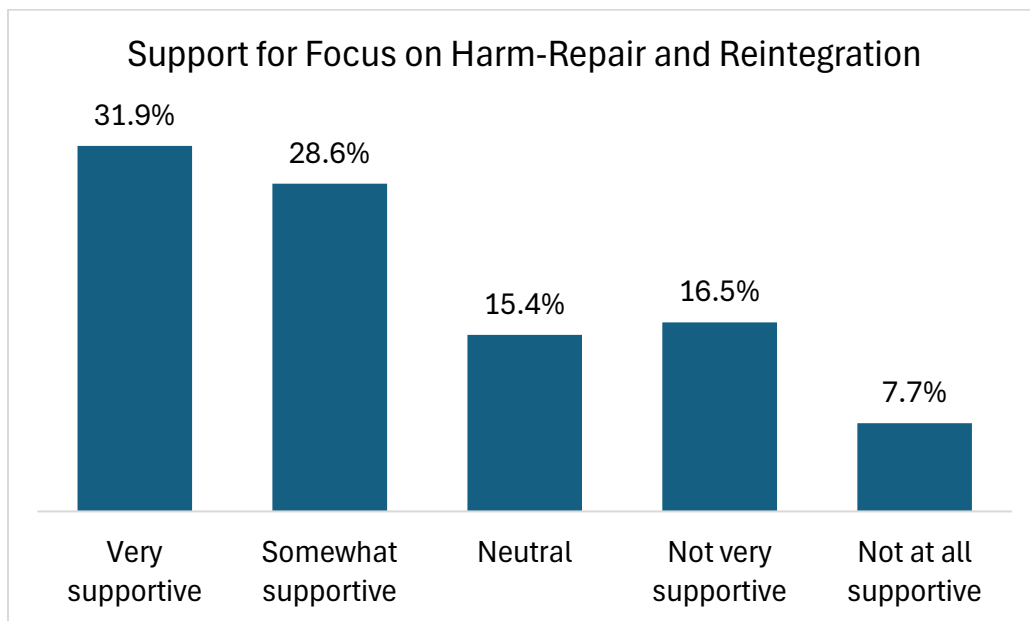
### Perceived fairness and supportiveness of the draft policy

Respondents are split on whether the draft policy will lead to a fairer and more supportive approach. While some expressed optimism, others raised concerns about clarity and follow-through which is fleshed out in the comment analysis below.



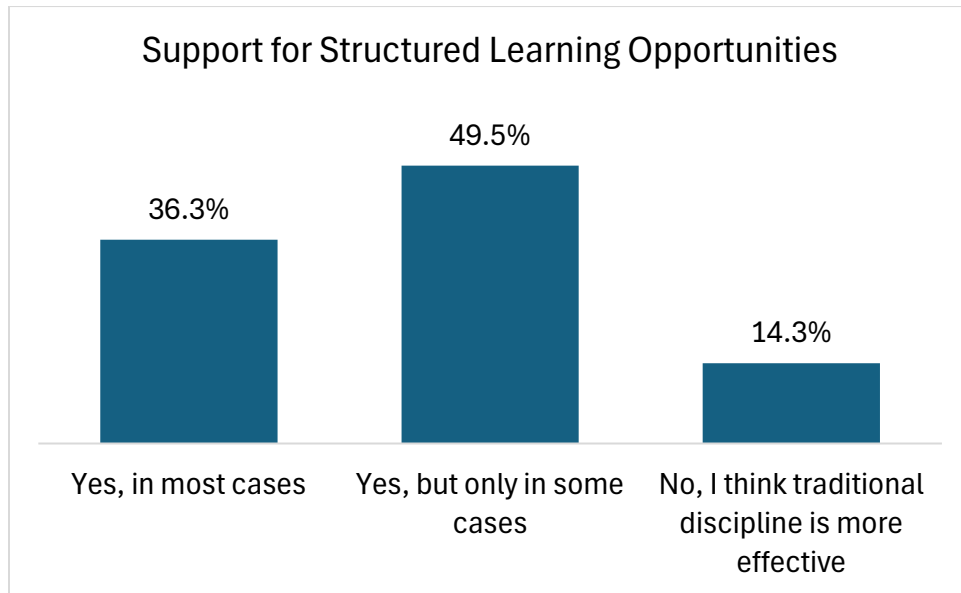
### Support for harm-repair and reintegration approaches

Support for these approaches is mixed. While many value its emphasis on accountability and repairing harm, a significant number voiced concerns about how it would be applied in practice.



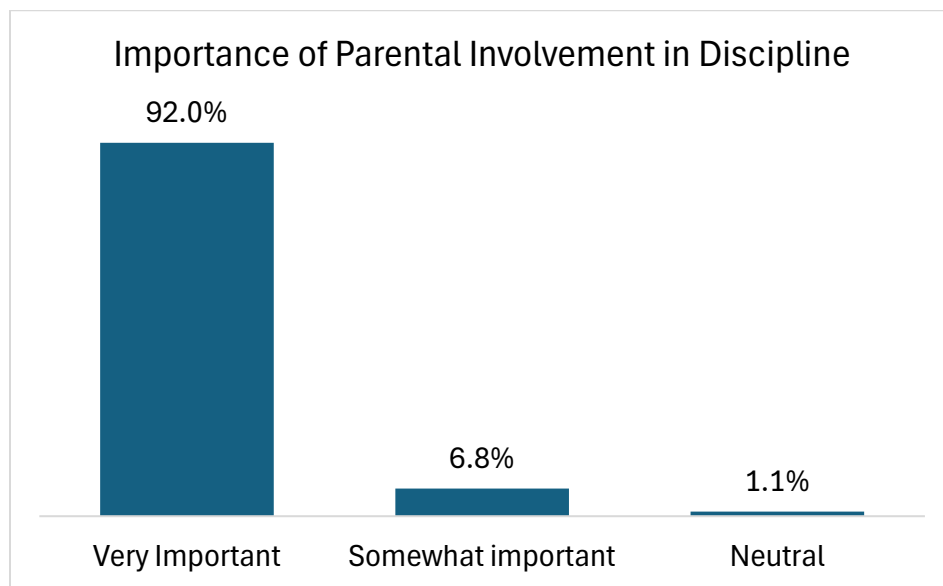
### Support for learning-based alternatives to suspension

There is strong support for structured opportunities for students to learn from their behaviour, with many respondents preferring alternatives to traditional suspension or expulsion.



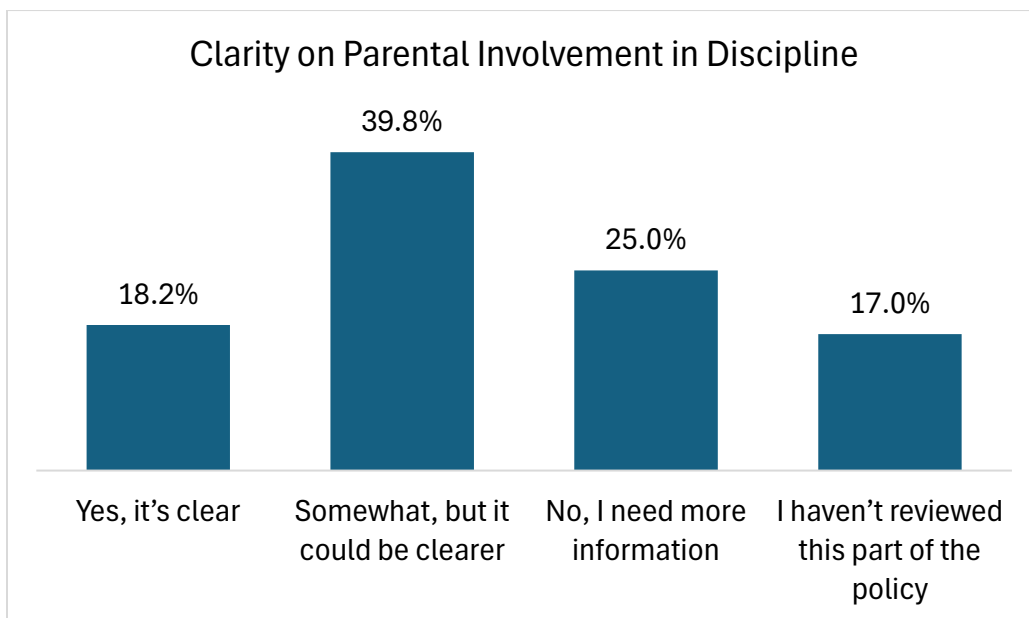
### Importance of parental involvement in discipline

Respondents overwhelmingly agree that parents and guardians should be informed and involved when a student is facing disciplinary action.



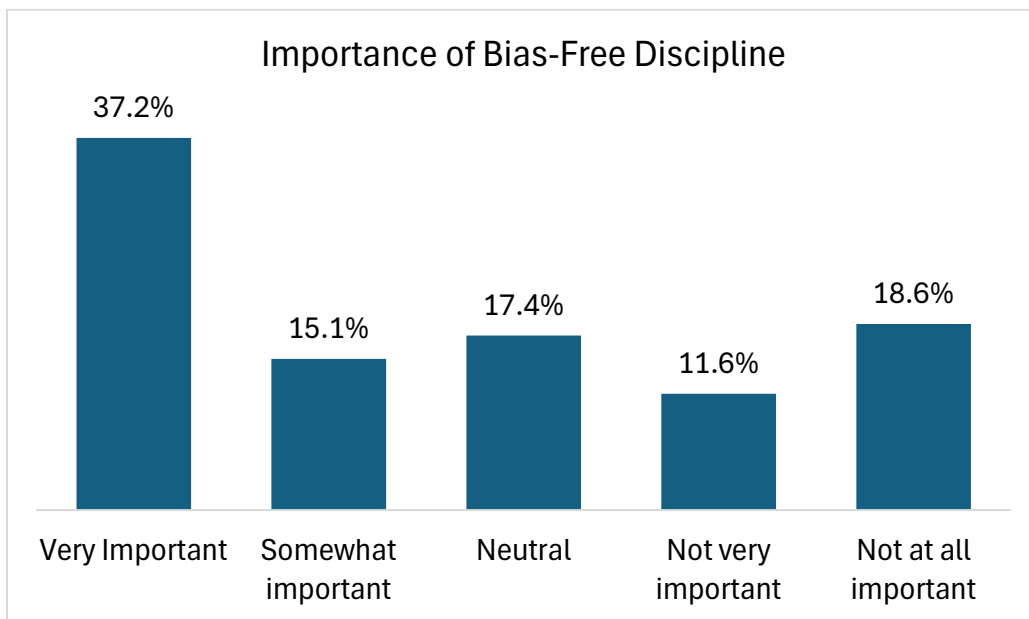
### Clarity on how parents will be informed and involved

While involvement was considered essential, many respondents felt the draft policy does not clearly explain how parents will be engaged during the discipline process.



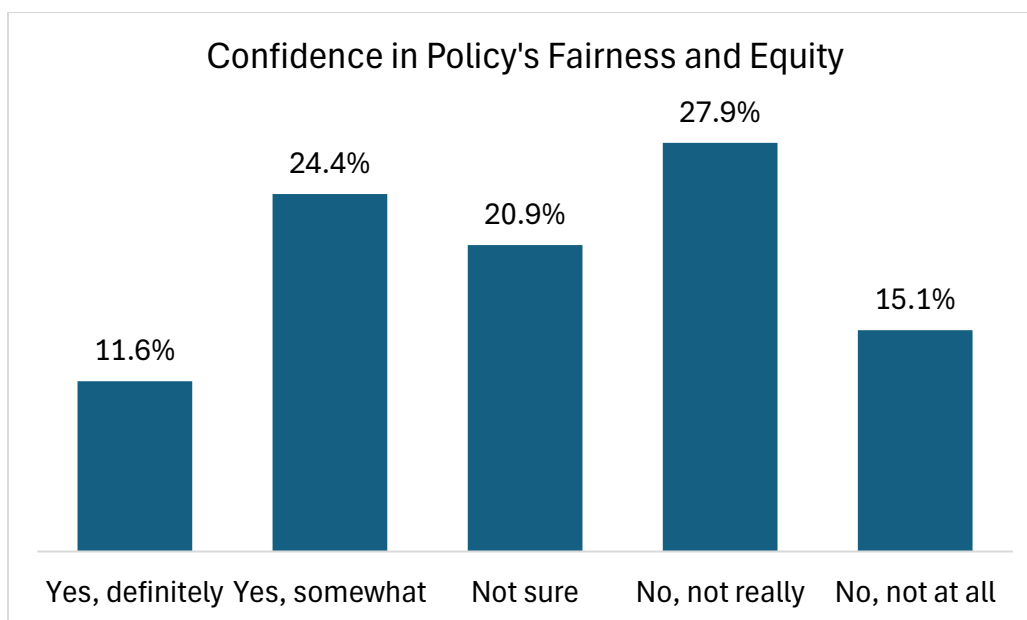
### Importance of addressing bias in school discipline

Most participants agree that bias-free discipline is critical, particularly in addressing the overrepresentation of marginalized groups in suspension data. However, perspectives differed on how this goal should be achieved.



## Confidence in the policy's fairness and equity

Levels of confidence in the policy's ability to promote fairness and equity are divided, with many respondents expressing the need for clearer implementation guidance and accountability structures.



## Summary of Qualitative Feedback

This section summarizes feedback from the open-ended questions in the consultation survey, along with comments submitted through the HWDSB Engage platform. A thematic analysis of this feedback revealed deep concerns about student safety, implementation consistency, and the real-world application of reconciliatory and equity-based approaches.

A dominant theme was the protection of victims and the overall safety of school environments. Many participants described repeated incidents of bullying, harassment, and violence that were either inadequately addressed or handled in ways that caused further harm. Respondents voiced frustration that students exhibiting disruptive or aggressive behaviours often remain in classrooms without meaningful intervention, leaving other students feeling unsafe, traumatized, or unsupported. This concern was especially pronounced in situations involving gender-based violence, where the perception is that girls are sometimes blamed, disbelieved, or expected to adapt, while the behaviours of male students are excused. These respondents emphasized that safety and emotional well-being should be prioritized equally for victims and bystanders, not only for the students being disciplined.

While the intent of harm-repair, reintegration or reconciliatory practices is appreciated by some, there was widespread skepticism expressed about how these approaches are used in practice. Respondents questioned whether staff are adequately trained to implement them fairly and effectively. Several noted that these measures, when poorly applied or overused, may fail to hold students accountable—particularly in cases involving repeat or serious infractions. Others worried that reconciliatory practices

are used to avoid conflict or discipline, rather than to truly resolve harm and change behaviour. Many felt these approaches should be used selectively and alongside, not instead of, consequences.

Views on equity and bias-free discipline are deeply divided. Some respondents supported the policy's efforts to reduce discriminatory outcomes and foster inclusion. Others, however, feared that emphasizing student identity could unintentionally reduce accountability for some students, resulting in inconsistent expectations and new forms of perceived unfairness. Several expressed concern that discipline should be tied to behaviour, not background, and that a fair system must treat all students equally regardless of race, diagnosis, or personal circumstance.

A strong theme is the disconnect between policy and practice. Many respondents noted that the current draft reads well but will not be upheld in schools. Participants described policies being ignored or selectively applied. Respondents called for greater consistency in how discipline is applied across schools, and clearer standards for educators and administrators to follow. This included requests for specific, tiered consequences, visual decision trees, plain-language explanations, and age-appropriate examples to improve understanding for students, families, and staff alike.

There are also significant concerns from educators and support staff about being left out of communication loops. Some reported that they are not informed when a student is suspended or returning to class after an incident—leaving them unsure how to support the student, maintain safety, or rebuild relationships. These staff emphasized the importance of summary information and collaborative planning to ensure effective re-entry and shared accountability.

Communication with families is another priority. Parents, guardians and caregivers want same-day notifications about serious incidents, regular updates about how discipline is being handled, and better access to policies and expectations. Suggestions include school newsletters, anonymized public reporting, brief email summaries, and even policy workshops to build understanding and trust. Early, proactive communication before issues escalate was viewed as critical.

Some feedback highlighted the need for early intervention in the primary years. Respondents argued that children as young as kindergarten are capable of understanding consequences and that a lack of early discipline sets negative behavioural patterns. They described alarming levels of physical aggression among students under Grade 4 and criticized the absence of consequences for these behaviours. Several called for formal discipline—including suspensions—to be available for younger students, suggesting the current policy may wait too long to intervene.

Lastly, several participants advocated for increased mental health and behavioural supports, particularly for students with repeated behavioural challenges. However, this support was seen as essential only if paired with clear expectations and accountability, not as a replacement for consequences. Others linked these discipline challenges to systemic issues, such as inconsistent classroom management, staff burnout, inequitable literacy instruction, and a perceived lack of district-level leadership.

Across all themes, there was a clear call for balance: between support and consequences, between equity and fairness, and between policy aspirations and the realities students, families, and staff face every day.

## Student Focus Groups

As part of the broader consultation process to inform revisions to the Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline Policy, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) conducted four student focus groups with youth who were currently in longer term suspensions and attending the Phoenix Program. Two distinct participatory methods were used to capture authentic student voices:

- **Photovoice:** Prompted by guiding questions, students reflected on and shared photographs representing their experiences and feelings related to disciplinary processes.
- **Hocus Focus):** Students engaged in creative, structured discussions guided by prompts designed to explore their experiences with suspension, expulsion, and school support systems.

These methods were selected to create supportive spaces for students to express their perspectives, building deeper understanding beyond traditional survey feedback. Capturing the voices of students with lived experience of discipline is critical to ensuring that future policies and practices are equitable, supportive, and effective.

### Key Findings from the Focus Groups

#### 1. Unclear Communication and Delays

Students reported confusion about the reasons for their suspension, with delayed and impersonal communication (often through mailed letters) heightening their stress.

#### 2. Perceived Bias and Unfair Treatment

Students described feeling judged based on peer associations, past behaviour, or personal identity, rather than being assessed fairly on the specific incident.

#### 3. Lack of Emotional and Academic Support

Students felt their emotional well-being was often overlooked. Support services, including social work and academic help, were limited or delayed during the suspension process.

#### 4. Use of Fear-Based Communication

Several students shared that staff used scare tactics — emphasizing worst-case consequences — which increased anxiety and made them feel unheard and unsupported.

#### 5. Limited Opportunities for Relationship-focused Practices

Opportunities for mediation, conflict resolution, or early intervention were rarely offered, despite students expressing a desire for more harm-repair and reintegration approaches.

#### 6. Breaches of Confidentiality

Students reported that details of suspensions were known among teachers and peers, creating stigma and harming relationships upon return.

#### 7. Academic and Social Impact

Suspension disrupted learning, made academic recovery difficult, and led students to feel isolated or mistrusted within the school community.

### **8. Positive Experiences at Phoenix**

Students praised the Phoenix program for its supportive staff, fair rules, mental health focus, and inclusive environment, describing it as more personalized and empowering than their home schools.

### **9. Recommendations for Improvement**

Students advocated for clearer and faster communication, stronger emotional and academic support, more harm-repair interventions, confidentiality protections, and greater recognition of positive contributions.

## **Reflections from Student Focus Groups**

These focus groups revealed critical insights into how suspended students experience disciplinary processes at HWDSB. The feedback strongly suggests that more equitable, transparent, and supportive approaches are needed — ones that prioritize communication, restore relationships, and recognize individual needs. Students emphasized that the Phoenix program offers a promising model for student-centred, trauma-informed support. Their insights highlight clear opportunities for HWDSB to strengthen its approach to student discipline — building systems that are transparent, reconciliatory, equitable, and aligned with the goals of the Bias-Free Progressive Discipline Policy.

## **Next Steps**

These consultation findings demonstrate the complexities and challenges of promoting fair, consistent, and supportive approaches to student behaviour and discipline. Participants across all groups — students, families, staff, and community members — expressed strong support for a system that balances accountability, equity, transparency, and student well-being.

The insights shared through the survey, Engage project, and student focus groups will directly inform the Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline Policy. The policy will aim to strengthen consistency across schools, enhance communication with families and staff, prioritize safety and support for all students, and better integrate repair, reintegration and trauma-informed practices.

HWDSB remains committed to working collaboratively with our communities to ensure that our disciplinary processes foster safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments where every student can thrive.

## HWDSB Volunteer Policy Consultation

### Executive Summary

HWDSB launched a Volunteer Policy Consultation to strengthen volunteer engagement across the board. Through [HWDSB Engage](#), the consultation project was visited by 664 participants, and 161 provided input on the volunteer experience in HWDSB for the purpose of informing the policy revisions.

Participants shared their stories, motivations, and barriers to volunteering, and offered suggestions to improve accessibility and policy design. Their feedback will guide updates to the Volunteer Policy, aligning it with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan and Board Improvement Plan to create inclusive, welcoming, and supportive conditions for all volunteers.

### Key Takeaways

- **Strong Interest in Volunteering:** Most respondents had volunteered before or wanted to, driven by a desire to support students, schools, and their communities.
- **Multiple Barriers:** Time constraints, short-notice requests, and communication were common challenges. Administrative burdens, police check costs, and equity concerns—especially among underserved families—also limited participation.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Respondents emphasized the need for inclusive, welcoming volunteer environments, and called for action on racism, ableism, and exclusion.
- **Clear Communication and Support:** Participants wanted timely updates, easier-to-use platforms, and more visible, accessible information about opportunities.
- **Broader Opportunities:** Participants suggested ways that volunteering opportunities could be diversified to attract more volunteers such as flexible, skill-based, or short-term roles, and more leadership opportunities in school-wide events.
- **Policy Should Remove Barriers:** Feedback called for simpler, clearer policies, consistent enforcement, and recognition of volunteer contributions.

Overall, the consultation revealed a high level of interest in volunteering—matched by a need to remove systemic, cultural, and logistical barriers to participation.

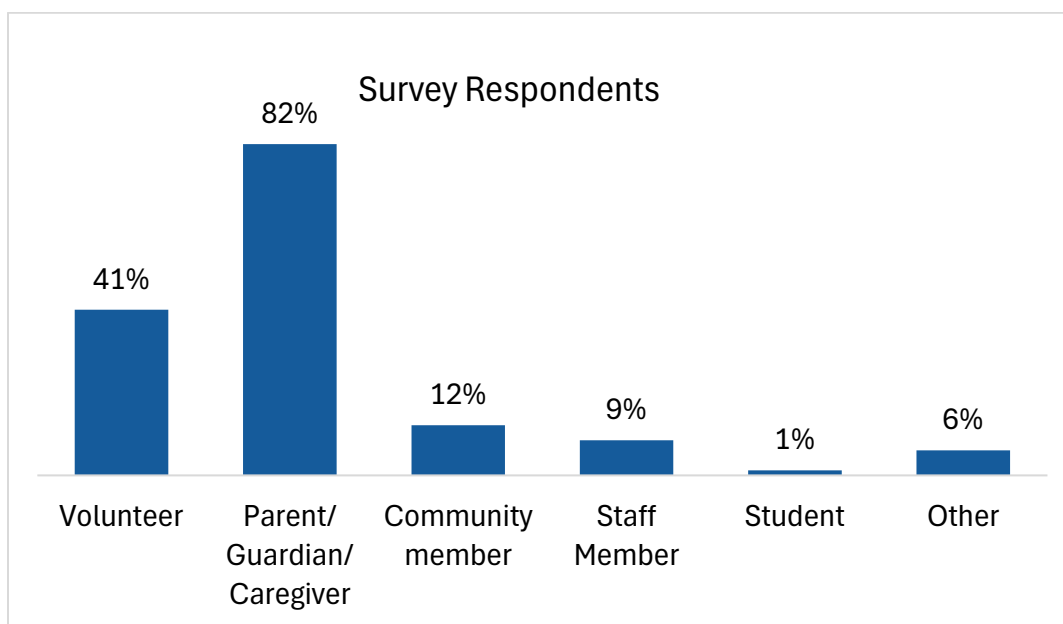


## What We Heard

Here we summarize key findings from the HWDSB Volunteer Policy Consultation which included a survey and an “ideas” tool on the Engage page. Responses are grouped by theme, with charts for multiple-choice questions and narrative summaries for open-ended feedback.

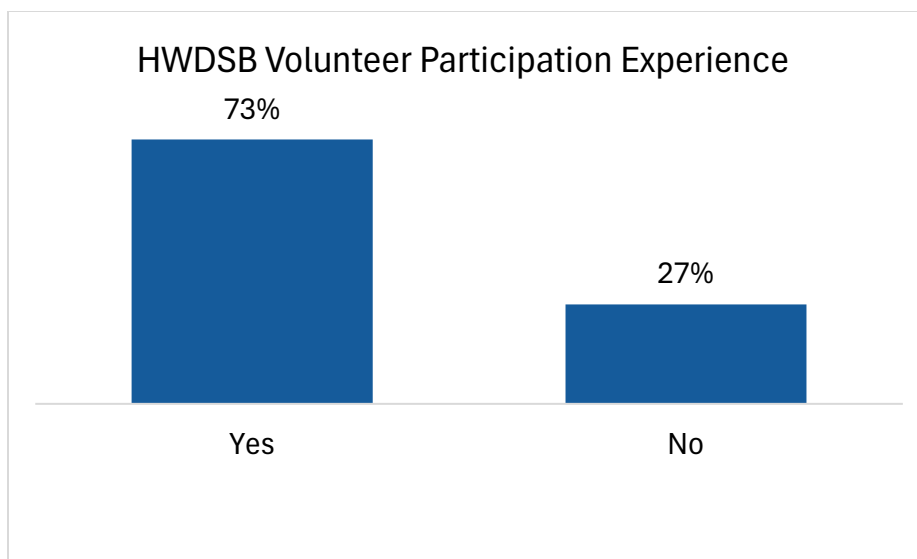
### Demographic context

Most participants identified as parents or guardians, followed by volunteers, community members, staff, and students. Many selected multiple roles (e.g., parent and volunteer), so totals exceed 100%. “Other” responses included parent or school council members and former volunteers.



### Volunteering experience

The chart below shows whether respondents have previously volunteered with HWDSB. Many had prior volunteer experience, while others had not yet participated—reflecting both experienced and prospective volunteers.

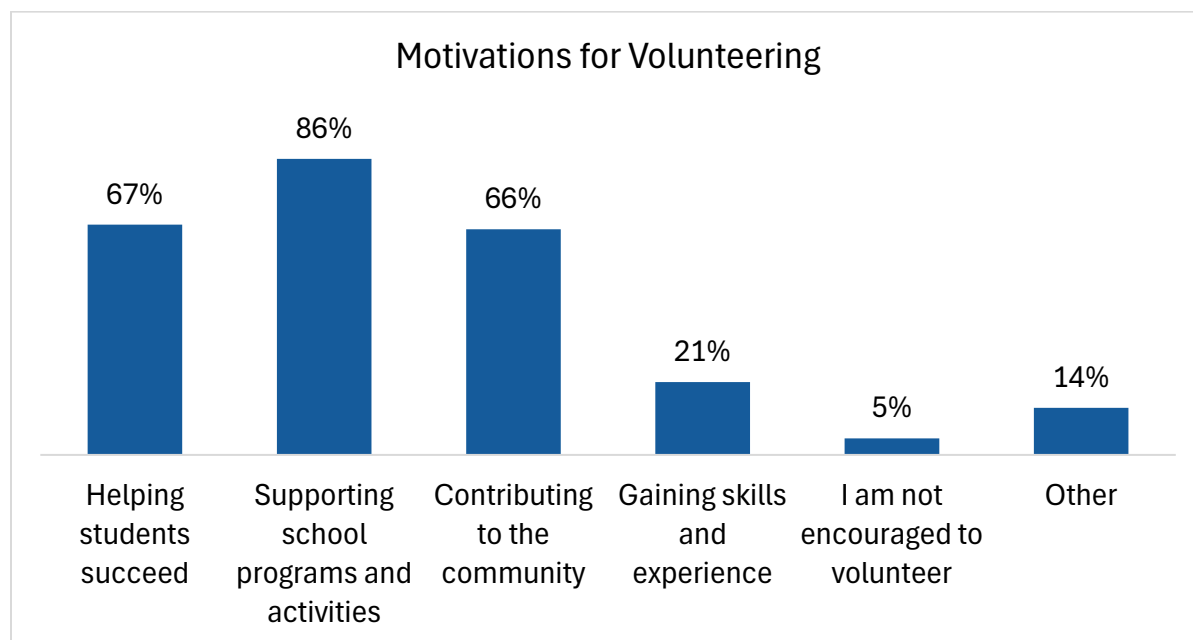


### Motivations for volunteering

Participants were asked to identify what motivates them to feel encouraged to volunteer. Common motivations included helping students succeed, supporting school activities, contributing to the community, and gaining experience.

**Other responses:** Participants also mentioned the desire to be involved in their child's school life, continue family traditions of volunteering, and support equity in school experiences.

**Note:** This was a multiple-response question.



## Barriers to volunteering

Respondents cited time constraints, short-notice opportunities, and caregiving responsibilities as major barriers to volunteering. Communication gaps—such as unclear outreach, hard-to-find roles, and inaccessible application processes—were also common.

Administrative hurdles like repeated police checks, slow clearance processes, and complex paperwork discouraged participation. Cost, especially for vulnerable sector checks, was another concern, with some noting that other jurisdictions cover these fees.

Equity-related issues were frequently raised. Racialized and equity-seeking parents described exclusion, racism, or inaccessible environments. Parents with disabilities also noted barriers. Respondents flagged school climate challenges, including cliques, lack of staff support, conflict within parent councils, and principals restricting involvement.

Logistical barriers included limited spots on trips, restrictions on bringing young children, and transportation challenges. Others pointed to a lack of training or clarity in volunteer roles. While some faced no barriers themselves, they acknowledged challenges faced by others.

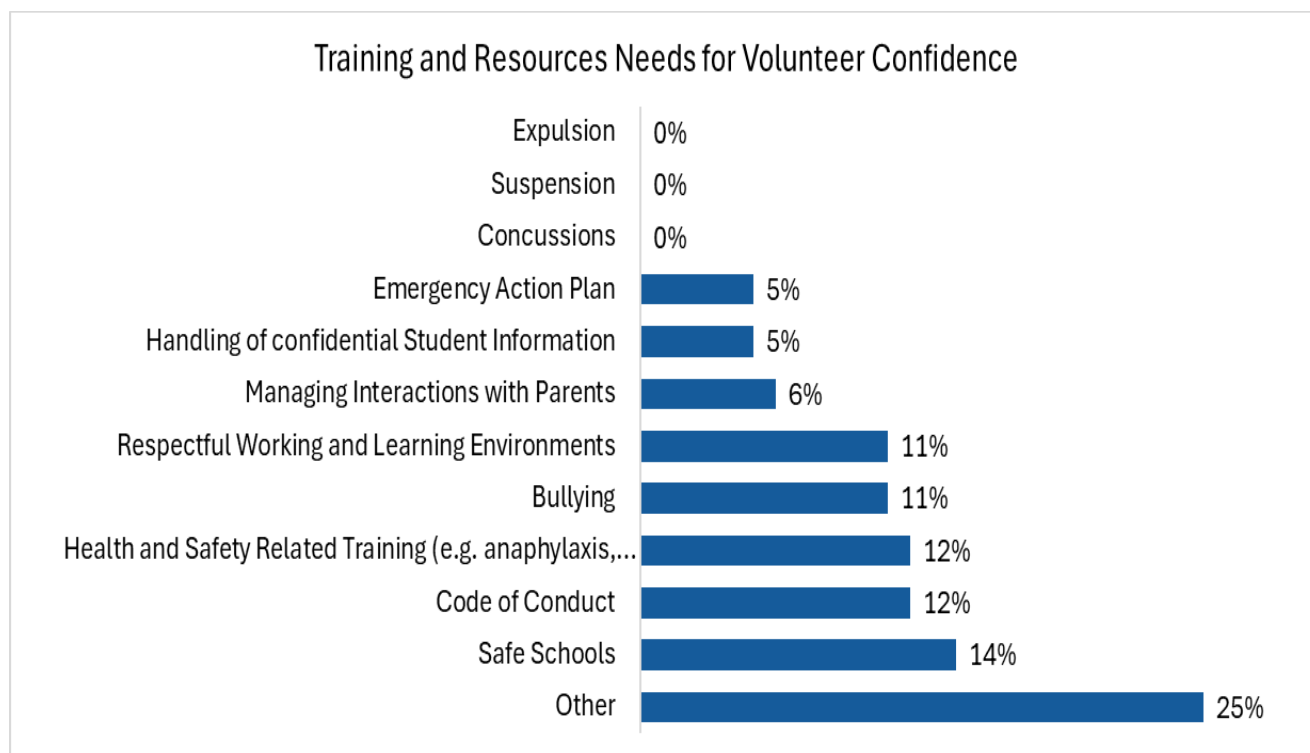
Public input from HWDSB Engage echoed these concerns, highlighting poor visibility of opportunities as barriers—underscoring the need for accessible, user-friendly communication tools.

## Training and resource needs

The chart below depicts what training or resources respondents felt would help them feel more confident as volunteers. Many respondents felt confident volunteering without training, but others wanted guidance on school policies, safety, student behavior, and inclusive practices.

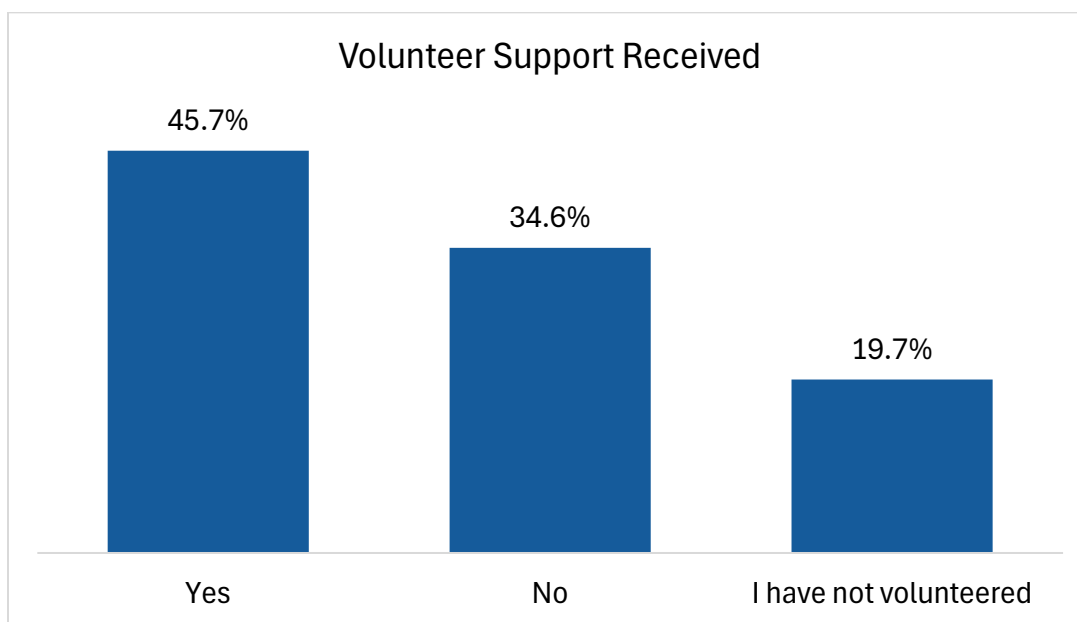
In open-ended “Other” responses, participants suggested additional training on anti-racism, gender diversity, curriculum content, and council roles. A few also warned that requiring too much training might discourage involvement.

**Note:** This was a multiple-response question.



## Support and communication

The following visual representation highlights whether individuals who have volunteered felt they received adequate support or communication from HWDSB. While some described positive experiences, others pointed to a need for clearer expectations, better coordination, and more consistent information.



## **Support needs for non-volunteers or those who felt unsupported**

Participants who hadn't volunteered—or felt unsupported when they did—identified a need for earlier and clearer communication about opportunities, expectations, and timelines.

Many wanted details shared at the start of the school year and updates provided in a timely, consistent way.

Others called for access to resources like volunteer handbooks, council guidelines, and safety procedures to better understand their roles. Respondents emphasized the value of using their skills meaningfully—not just for fundraising—and highlighted the importance of inclusive volunteer experiences.

Suggestions included more anti-racism and social justice training, as well as addressing barriers faced by racialized parents. Some noted challenges like limited staff capacity, disconnected communication from the board, or principals restricting involvement.

Additional needs included transportation help, more volunteer events, and support with police check costs. A few said no additional support was needed. Open-ended responses also recommended outreach tools like student agendas, websites, and social media to improve school-level communication.

## **Suggestions to make volunteering more accessible**

Voices emphasized the need for clear, early, and frequent communication about volunteer opportunities, ideally through school websites, posters, emails, and direct outreach from principals. They called for clearer listings of roles and timelines, and a more personalized, school-based approach.

Simplifying the application process was a key recommendation—such as accessible forms, step-by-step instructions, and in-school support. Many raised concerns about the cost of police checks, suggesting reimbursement, subsidies, or changes to when they are required.

Participants also wanted more flexible and diverse volunteer roles, including after-school, short-term, or virtual options aligned with their skills. They asked for opportunities beyond field trips—such as academic support, coaching, or classroom assistance.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion were recurring priorities. Respondents called for safer, more welcoming environments, anti-discrimination measures, and conflict mediation within volunteer groups. Stronger school-level support and clearer policies were seen as essential.

Finally, many suggested recognizing volunteers' contributions through appreciation events or small tokens. Others proposed expanding roles to include leading school or community events with staff support, to boost engagement and inclusivity.

### Summary of suggested improvements

- more consistent and transparent communication, including annual or semester-based overviews of volunteer opportunities
- upfront clarity on requirements, easier application information and process
- faster responses to inquiries
- a simplified policy--shorter, clearer, and more accessible—particularly for newcomers and racialized families
- address racism in volunteer groups
- broaden volunteer roles to support student learning in underserved communities
- diversify volunteer roles to include short-term, virtual, after school and during regular school programming
- limit principals' ability to block volunteers
- introduce oversight mechanisms when exclusion or conflict occurs
- partner with community organizations to coordinate volunteer efforts
- training and resources such as workshops, handbooks, and feedback tools
- recognize volunteers' unique contributions and offer visible appreciation through certificates or displays
- address cost barriers such as fees for police checks, accept clearances from other sources, or waive requirements for single events.
- include language around volunteers' shared responsibility for student safety and bullying prevention, reinforcing their role in fostering safe, inclusive schools.

### Next Steps

The insights gathered through this consultation reflect the strong interest and thoughtful contributions of community members who care deeply about HWDSB schools. As the Volunteer Policy is updated, these voices will help shape a more inclusive, accessible, and supportive volunteer system.

Next steps include drafting revisions to the policy that reflect community feedback, strengthening school-level practices, and identifying new ways to recognize and support volunteers across the board. HWDSB will continue to prioritize collaboration, equity, and clear communication as we build a volunteer experience that benefits students, families, staff, and the broader community.

We thank everyone who participated and look forward to continuing this work together.