

SAFE AND ACCEPTING SCHOOLS TEAM

Purpose

From PPM 144

The school climate may be defined as the learning environment and relationships found within a school and school community. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. Principles of equity and inclusive education are embedded in the learning environment to support a positive school climate and a culture of mutual respect. A positive school climate is a crucial component of bullying prevention.

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Building and sustaining a positive school climate is a complex challenge requiring evidence-informed solutions. A whole-school approach³ involving all education and community partners is needed to bring about necessary systemic change. The following are some characteristics of a positive school climate:⁴ •

Students, staff members, and parents feel safe, and are safe, included, and accepted.

All members of the school community demonstrate respect, fairness, and kindness in their interactions, building healthy relationships that are free from discrimination and harassment.

Students are encouraged and given support to be positive leaders and role models in their school community.

Open and ongoing dialogue takes place between the principal,⁵ staff members, parents,⁶ and students. All partners are actively engaged.

The learning environment, instructional materials, and teaching and assessment strategies reflect the diversity of all learners.

Every student is inspired and given support to succeed in an environment of high expectations.

Bullying prevention and awareness-raising strategies for students and staff are reinforced through curriculum-linked programs.

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Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week has been established in subsection 300.0.2(1) of the Education Act as beginning on the third Sunday in November of each year.

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Research indicates that a clearly articulated school-wide bullying prevention policy is the foundation of effective bullying prevention programming.

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DEFINITION OF BULLYING

For the purposes of policies on bullying prevention and intervention, school boards must use the following definition of bullying, given in subsection 1(1) of the Education Act:

“bullying” means aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a pupil where, (a) the behaviour is intended by the pupil to have the effect of, or the pupil ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to have the effect of, (i) causing harm, fear or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm, harm to the individual’s reputation or harm to the individual’s property, or (ii) creating a negative environment at a school for another individual, and (b) the behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the pupil and the individual based on factors such as size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability or the receipt of special education;

Bullying (1.0.0.1) For the purposes of the definition of “bullying” in subsection (1), behaviour includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written or other means.

Cyber-bullying (1.0.0.2) For the purposes of the definition of “bullying” in subsection (1), bullying includes bullying by electronic means (commonly known as cyber-bullying), including, (a) creating a web page or a blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person; (b) impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the internet; and (c) communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals.

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If it is social, or relational, aggression, it is more subtle and may involve such behaviours as gossiping, spreading rumours, excluding others from a group, humiliating others with public gestures or graffiti, and shunning or ignoring.

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Parents play a key role in the development of safe, inclusive, and accepting schools. When parents are engaged and involved in their children’s education, everyone benefits, and our schools become increasingly rich and positive places to teach, learn, and grow.

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SAFE AND ACCEPTING SCHOOLS TEAMS

Each school must have in place a safe and accepting schools team responsible for fostering a safe, inclusive, and accepting school climate that should include at least one student and must include at least one parent, one teacher, one non-teaching staff member, one community partner, and the principal. An existing school committee (e.g., the healthy schools committee) can assume this role. The chair of this team must be a staff member.