

NORTHEASTERN CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

**Policy
F-44**

**Authority
04-168/06-151/08-06**

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

The Northeastern Catholic District School Board shall endeavour to ensure that the school environment is one of respect, dignity and trust, consistent with the Gospel Values which are centred in the teachings of Christ. Bullying fails to respect the dignity and value of all individuals involved and the Board believes that all forms of bullying are unacceptable behaviours.

All members of the school community, including staff, students, parents/guardians and visitors, will be respectful to one another and are responsible in helping create a safe and caring school environment free from bullying. As such, bullying is prohibited on school property, at school-related events, on school buses, or in any other circumstances (i.e. online) where engaging in bullying will have a negative impact a member of the school community and on the school climate.

A positive school climate is defined by the Ministry of Education as "the sum total of all the personal relationships within a school". When these relationships are founded in mutual acceptance and inclusion, and modeled by all, a culture of respect becomes the norm" (Report of the Safe Schools Action Team, 2006). A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted.

POLICY REGULATIONS:

1. Definitions of Bullying:

Bullying behaviour is defined as any repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour intended to cause (or should be known to cause) harm, fear and/or distress to another person's or group of persons body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.

Students may attain or maintain power over others in the school through real or perceived differences. Some areas of difference may include size, strength, age, intelligence, economic status, social status, solidarity of peer group, religion, ethnicity, disability, need for special education, family circumstances, gender, and/or race.

A victim of bullying has a difficult time defending himself or herself and feels powerless. Victims of bullying often deal with social anxiety and loneliness, withdrawal, physical ailments, low self esteem, absenteeism,

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diminished academic performance, phobias, depression, and even aggressive behaviour. In the most extreme cases, the result is suicide. Bullying adversely affects healthy relationships, the school's ability to educate its students, the school climate and the students' ability to learn.

Bystanders must also understand that spectators contribute to the bullying problem. They need to know how to intervene in a safe, secure, and positive way. They need to know that reporting bullying incidents to teachers, staff, and principals is the right thing to do. Bystanders also need to be confident that they will be heard, and that reporting will lead to resolution.

Bullying is an unhealthy interaction that can take many forms, including but not limited to, physical (e.g., hitting, pushing, shoving, tripping), verbal (e.g., name-calling, mocking, sexual or racist or homophobic comments), social (e.g., excluding others from a group, spreading gossip or rumours). It may also occur through the use of technology (e.g., spreading rumours, images, or hurtful comments through the use of e-mail, cellphones, text messages, Internet websites or other technology).

2. Responsibilities of the Board

The Board shall:

- form a Safe School committee made up of teachers, staff, parents, administrators, community and students that will meet at least three times a year to review implementation and monitor effectiveness.
- provide bullying prevention and intervention training to Board staff and students.
- support schools in the implementation of the bullying prevention policy.
- establish a monitoring and review process to determine the effectiveness of this Policy. This may include an analysis of the school climate through surveys of students, staff members, and parents, as well as performance indicators for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of this Policy.

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3. Responsibilities of Schools

All Schools shall:

- inform all members of their Catholic school community of the Board's Code of Conduct which sets out expected standards of behaviour.
- develop and implement school-wide bullying prevention and intervention plans as part of their School Improvement Plan. Components must include the definition of bullying, prevention and intervention strategies, training strategies for members of the school community, communication and outreach strategies, and monitoring and review processes.
- develop programs which promote and support positive behaviours that reflect our Christian beliefs and values, in consultation and under the direction of the Board's administration.
- use teaching strategies that focus on developing healthy relationships by including bullying prevention in daily classroom teaching including training on cultural sensitivity, respect for diversity and special needs. (e.g., availability of books that deal with bullying)
- provide opportunities for all students to participate in bullying prevention training and leadership initiatives with their own school;
- locally, schools and Catholic School Councils are encouraged to provide programs for parents on bullying prevention and intervention
- establish a Safe Schools Team responsible for school safety that is composed of at least one student (when appropriate), one parent, one teacher, one support staff, one community partner, and the principal. The team must have a staff chair or co-chair. Also, an existing school committee (e.g. Catholic School Council) can assume this role.
- implement a disclosure process and practices whereby any student feels comfortable in disclosing an incident of bullying to the attention of the Principal, Vice-Principal, the student's teacher, a guidance counselor or other staff member, whether the student was the victim or an observer.
- implement a process by which bullying is addressed in a timely manner in order to terminate the conduct and protect the victim from further harm

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- communicate with school staff that they must be vigilant in supervising students to note when a student or students are engaging in bullying. In the case of non-teaching staff, such conduct must be brought to the attention of the student's teacher, the Principal or Vice-Principal in order that the conduct can be dealt with in a timely manner.
- implement intervention strategies for the student who is engaged in bullying conduct, from counseling to discipline in the case of persistent or extreme bullying.
- include the prohibition of bullying in student/school handbooks, and inform students of the prohibition against bullying, the consequences for bullying, and the reporting procedures;
- direct teachers and staff to notify school administrators when they witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying;
- investigate any written reports, and review anonymous reports of bullying;
- document reported incidents of bullying;
- notify the parents/guardians of a student who bullies of the school's response, and the consequences that will result from further acts of bullying and what action is being taken to prevent any further acts of bullying;

4. Concerned parents/guardians should follow the Board protocol in contacting the classroom teacher first. If the concern is not resolved to the satisfaction of the parent/guardian, he/she should contact the school principal. If the concern persists, the matter should be forwarded to the Superintendent of Education.