

DUFFERIN-PEEL CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

POLICY/REGULATIONS

Board Policy Number:	9.02
Subject:	Bullying Prevention
Effective Date:	February 1, 2008; Revised (035) January 26, 2010

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board prohibits bullying in all its forms, as a serious offence against the dignity of persons created in God’s image, and as an affront to the integrity of Catholic learning communities. “Bullying adversely affects the student’s ability to learn, adversely affects healthy relationships and school climate, and adversely affects the school’s ability to educate its students.”

The Ministry of Education’s Policy Program Memorandum 144 (bullying prevention) together with the Board’s Catholic Code of Conduct, discipline policies and regulations create expectations for behaviour for all persons on school property, and outline strategies to be taken to reduce incidents and impose appropriate consequences for pupils. The Board recognizes that the *Human Rights Code* of Ontario has primacy over provincial legislation and school board policies and other administrative documents.

Bullying will not be permitted on school property either in classrooms or common areas, at school-related activities, on school buses, or in any other circumstances (*including cyberbullying: i.e., e-mail, cell phone, pager text messages, instant messaging and websites*) where engaging in bullying will have a negative impact on the Catholic school climate *or disrupt the learning environment*.

The Board considers harassment on the basis of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, colour, ethnicity, culture, citizenship, ancestry, origin, religion, creed, family status, socio-economic status, disability and/or any other immutable characteristic or ground protected by the *Human Rights Code* unacceptable and supports the use of positive practices to prevent such behaviour and authorizes principals, or their delegates, to impose consequences in appropriate circumstances, up to and including a referral to the Discipline Committee of the Board for expulsion from all schools.

This policy authorizes the creation of regulations for implementation, which might include requirements described in Ministry of Education Policy Program Memoranda as matters of policy, and any such regulations shall be considered guidelines pursuant to the *Education Act* and other relevant and/or related Ministry of Education materials and all of which shall be sufficient for the purposes of implementing the requirements of Ministry of Education PPMs.

BOARD REGULATIONS

9.02.01

PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Bullying Prevention Policy* is to express the Board's commitment to make bullying prevention a priority in all our schools and Board facilities. This priority initiative will be undertaken through a comprehensive system-wide plan for the creation of "bully-free" learning and work environments characterized by relationships founded on mutual acceptance, inclusion, and respect for the dignity of each person, created in God's image.

The *Bullying Prevention Policy* is intended to: a) increase awareness about the bullying phenomenon; b) expressly prohibit bullying, in all its forms; c) establish guidelines for appropriate prevention and intervention strategies; d) mandate the explicit teaching of pro-social skills and virtue education to mitigate the likelihood of bullying; e) contextualize bullying prevention messages within the Catholic worldview; f) ensure consistent reporting and response protocols system-wide to deal with bullying incidences; g) encourage a repertoire of formative consequences to adequately address the complex needs of those involved in bullying behaviours; h) promote a compassionate response to victim impact resulting from bullying behaviours; i) facilitate a restorative approach to bullying incidents that promotes, where possible, a process for making amends and reconciling relationships, and i) empower positive bystander involvement to reduce incidences of bullying system-wide.

9.02.02

ADMINISTRATION OF THE BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Purview of the Policy

The DPCDSB *Bullying Prevention Policy* is contextualized within the Board's broad vision for safe, caring, inclusive and healthy communities, and underscores the Government of Ontario's commitment to address the bullying phenomenon, as articulated in both the Provincial Code of Conduct and Policy Memorandum No. 144. Dufferin-Peel's *Bullying Prevention Policy* echoes the government's recognition of the negative impact of bullying behaviours in our school communities. We share this concern, acknowledging the relevance of research evidence that suggests that those involved in bullying are often unable to satisfactorily attend to their work, may experience psychological/emotional and relationship difficulties, and frequently suffer a range of residual long-term effects.

Thus, effective implementation of the *Bullying Prevention Policy* will rely on the consistent use of research-proven “best practices” and approved Board protocols.

Since bullying significantly impacts student safety, learning, and the school climate, *The Bullying Prevention Policy* is intended to give high priority to bullying prevention in all school communities and Board facilities. To this end, bullying has been added to the list of infractions for which suspension of students must be considered. With the passage of the Education Amendment Act (Progressive Discipline and School Safety), 2007, this change came into effect February 1, 2008 and is articulated in the Catholic Code of Conduct, revised May, 2008.

The Board reminds all community members that bullying is a serious issue with far-reaching consequences for individuals, their families and peers, and the community at large. Research indicates that bullying is on the rise in its many subtle and insidious forms and that a clearly articulated bullying prevention policy is the necessary foundation for effective programming at the local level. Opportunities for community members to receive adequate training to enable them to confidently implement prevention and intervention strategies is another key element in developing a successful system-wide prevention strategy. This policy will address these critical elements.

The scope of this policy is to articulate regulations and procedures for comprehensive education and prevention programs at the local level, as well as consistent intervention, reporting and response protocols to address bullying. The Board approaches this comprehensive strategy through the Catholic lens, predicated on the gospel imperative of respect for the dignity of all persons created in God’s image, and our shared obligation to defend those who are unable to protect themselves. *The Bullying Prevention Policy* uses the definition for bullying recommended by the Ministry of Education in Policy Memorandum No. 144, and applies the terms and conditions of the policy herein to all members of the community - students, staff, and parents.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DEFINITION OF BULLYING

“Bullying is typically a form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person’s body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.”

P.3 *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144, Ministry of Education, Government of Ontario, p. 3.* [For an explanation of the difference between bullying and other types of conflict see Addendum A]

9.02.03

ESTABLISHING BULLYING PREVENTION AND SCHOOL SAFETY

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board is committed to establishing safe, nurturing, respectful, inclusive and welcoming climates in which to learn and work; where all community members feel safe, dignified, valued and affirmed; and where diversity is appreciated, differences are celebrated, and cooperative relationships flourish. All members of the community have a responsibility to create and maintain this positive climate by ensuring that no one feels demeaned, belittled or humiliated, and all feel free to express, without fear of ridicule, their creativity and individual gifts in the service of others. To establish this positive climate staff, students, parents, parish and community partners collaborate in a process of authentic Catholic community-building. This collaboration is animated by Gospel values and characterized by respect for all, personal responsibility for one's actions, protection of the common good, and special care for the weak and vulnerable. In such an environment, bullying is clearly unacceptable, and will not find fertile soil. We believe that a positive "school climate is a crucial component of [bullying] prevention; it may be defined as the sum total of all of the personal relationships within a school. When these relationships are founded in mutual acceptance and inclusion, and modeled by all, a [Catholic] culture of respect becomes the norm."

Characteristics of "Bully-free" Catholic Communities

In order to ensure "bully-free" Catholic communities DPCDSB is committed to a comprehensive Boardwide approach to bullying prevention in which the prohibition against bullying, in all its forms, is clearly communicated; pro-social skills and virtue formation are explicitly taught in order to strengthen a culture of deep caring; bullying reporting and response protocols are consistently employed to ensure that all schools and Board facilities remain free from violence, fear or intimidation; and optimum conditions for meaningful work and learning exist for all.

Students are made aware that bullying behaviours may result in suspension and/or expulsion, and those who choose to bully others will participate in interventions, consequences and ongoing supports to help them behave in more positive ways. Committed to the well-being of those involved in bullying incidents (those who bully, those who are victimized by bullying, and those who witness the incident), programs will be offered to help to transform negative behaviours and unhealthy relationship dynamics, to build Christian community, and to protect the safety and security of all.

A "bully-free" Catholic Community is characterized by:

- 1) high expectations for appropriate behaviour;

- 2) a safe, welcoming, respectful and inclusive climate for work and learning;
- 3) respectful and peaceful resolution of conflicts when they arise;
- 4) shared commitment to guide, correct, and intervene at the earliest signs of disrespectful communication or conduct;
- 5) fidelity to the well-being of community and the common good;
- 6) advocacy to protect the weak and vulnerable;
- 7) proactive processes that actively discourage bullying behaviour;
- 8) support for individuals involved in bullying incidents that aim to transform attitudes, behaviours and relationships;
- 9) early intervention for students at-risk of bullying or victimization;
- 10) consistent practice of progressive discipline;
- 11) opportunities for students to participate in mentoring and leadership programs;
- 12) school-wide and classroom anti-bullying education that promotes respect and inclusivity;
- 13) an emphasis on cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity and special needs;
and
- 14) safe methods to report bullying and get help when it occurs.

9.02.04

UPHOLDING BULLYING PREVENTION AND SCHOOL SAFETY

Research has clearly demonstrated that the most effective means to address bullying is through comprehensive school-wide programs that are grounded in empirical data and best practice, and tailored to meet local school needs through grassroots involvement. This kind of multi-leveled and multi-component approach to preventative education requires a commitment at the school level that empowers all stakeholders. A school-wide approach that is consistently and proactively undertaken tends to “set in motion a culture of recognition that reduces the risk of students slipping into situations where they misbehave to get attention.”

The best way to protect students from bullying and other forms of aggression is to establish clearly articulated expectations for behavior, and work collaboratively to engage the entire community in taking responsibility for school safety. This requires leadership from administration, staff and parents, who must consistently model and reinforce pro-social behavior, mutual respect, and a deep caring for the well-being of all members of the community.

The most effective whole-school programs for bullying prevention focus on proactive skills and community-building, and de-emphasize the role of sanctions and punishments. Since bullying is a learned behaviour, effective intervention can eradicate it from an individual’s repertoire of behaviours and prevent it from spreading throughout the community. But perhaps the most important reason for developing a school-wide bullying prevention program is to engage and empower the “silent majority” – the large percentage of children who regularly witness bullying at school but don’t know what they can do to help. Thus, efforts to combat bullying must provide a Catholic perspective on the following:

- † Preventative education across the curriculum
- † Clear standards of behaviour for all
- † Consequences and rehabilitation for those involved in bullying
- † Efforts to mobilize and motivate the bystander/observer
- † Education and professional development for staff and parents
- † Support for victims of bullying

Administration and school staffs are well-positioned to play a significant leadership role in enhancing the physical, emotional, and psychological safety of children. However, schools cannot do it alone. The combined effort of students, parents and community members, working together with educators to create a school-wide plan, is required to develop a school community where students and staff feel respected and parents and community members are welcomed.

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