

BULLYING PREVENTION & INTERVENTION PROGRAMS IN PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD SCHOOLS

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that this report be received.

BACKGROUND:

The following information outlines the extensive programming efforts made throughout the board by teachers and administrators to teach students about this complex social issue.

The report is organized to provide information in the areas of:

1. Preamble
2. Bullying Prevention - proactive measures
3. Bullying Intervention - responsive measures
4. Professional Development
5. Next Steps

Prepared by:

Scott Moreash, Superintendent of Staff Development & School Support Services

Nancy Gilliard, Climate for Learning & Working Leader

Beth Veale, School Support Officer

Submitted by:

Scott Moreash, Superintendent of Staff Development and School Support Services

1. PREAMBLE

Bullying prevention and intervention in the Peel District School Board is based on the following definition of bullying from the Ontario Ministry of Education's PPM144:

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.

Schools use a variety of effective programs and initiatives for empowering students to understand and address bullying behaviours. The programs vary in style, length and format, but the messages are similar. Students in the Peel District School Board are taught to:

- **define** bullying (*repeated behavior intended to cause harm directed at an individual in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance*);
- identify **forms** of bullying (e.g. physical, verbal, social/emotional, electronic) and impact;
- identify **roles** in bullying relationships (bully, target, bystander, trusted advocate) and reasons for roles;
- identify **strategies** for addressing bullying (e.g. "voice and choice", name the problem, report to a trusted advocate, create a plan for safety, review choices for responding to the bully, invest in positive healthy relationship).

A school-wide *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan* is developed and coordinated by the school's Climate for Learning and Working Team as a Ministry-mandated component of every school's School Success Plan.

As per Bill 157, every employee directly involved in the care and service of students is obligated to report to the administration, in writing, any action for which the principal must consider suspension and/or expulsion. Bullying is, in fact, an offence that must be considered for suspension.

The Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form is linked to each PDSB employee's *My Site* page and is used to record the incident and inform the administration. The principal, in turn, investigates the situation and records any action taken. The outcome of this school investigation is then communicated back to the reporting employee, and the Incident Reporting Form is stored in the OSR. This reinforces the need to work as a team in order to address student behaviour.

2. BULLYING PREVENTION - PROACTIVE MEASURES

Some popular and effective bullying prevention strategies used in Peel District School Board locations include:

- communicating expectations and raising awareness about bullying prevention with parents through school websites, student agenda books and newsletters;
- templates for Codes of Conduct provided by Staff Development & School Support to ensure bullying prevention is addressed at all sites;
- curriculum expectations using resources infused with character education (e.g. use of graphic novel series for reading expectations: "The MISadventures of Bully-Boy and Gossip-Girl");
- daily, teacher-guided use of character attribute resources in the student agenda;

- daily announcements or “thoughts for the day” related to positive decision-making;
- monthly recognition assemblies promoting character attributes;
- co-curricular clubs addressing harm and repair (e.g. “Me to We”, “Go Girrrrls”, Rainbows Grief Support);
- alternative lunch settings to assist those students who have difficulty with social skills during unstructured times;
- *Practiquest: Quest for the Golden Rule* (interactive anti-bullying computer program – centrally purchased for all students in Grades 2 to 5, available for both home and school use by these students);
- The Roots of Empathy (weekly in-class program teaching young adolescents to care for infants);
- Second Step (series of lessons for skills development in problem-solving, impulse control and empathy);
- *Fair Play* (character-building cooperative activities facilitated during nutrition breaks);
- *Heroes* program (10 week program focused on developing confidence, character and integrity);
- Peel Health programs (e.g. *PALS*: playground peer mediation and inclusive activities);
- Peel Regional Police/Ontario Provincial Police programs (e.g. *Cyberproofed*, *GREAT: Gang Resistance Education and Training*);
- promoting use of the Ontario Ministry of Education website, *Parents* section, for bullying prevention and intervention resources;
- use of Peel District School Board resources such as camera-ready articles and Parent Tips in order to address the issue of bullying;
- creating and promoting a safe space/process for reporting bullying;
- establishing GSA groups in Peel secondary schools in order to address the issue of bullying based on sexual orientation;
- Peel Regional Police NPU (Neighbourhood Policing Unit) presence in middle and secondary schools to address violence and bullying prevention on a proactive level;
- Interactive productions and presentations in schools:
 - Stand Up Now Productions features “Stand Up for Respect” and “CyberBullying - Got To Go”;
 - Toronto Argonauts *Huddle-Up* anti-bullying program provides interactive workshops facilitated by players and cheerleaders;
 - SWOLE (Self Respect, Work Hard, Overcome Adversity, Lead by Example and Excellence) provides students with leadership skills to address self esteem and self image

3. BULLYING INTERVENTION – RESPONSIVE MEASURES

(a) Responsive Measures for the Bullied

Peel District School Board staff:

- facilitate the reporting experience (provide a safe space, time, compassionate attention, reassurance);

- assist the student in identifying and naming the specific bullying behaviours (repeated, intent to harm, power differential)
- provide problem-solving strategies to increase student's sense of safety and to address the bully and deal with the backlash;
- facilitate ongoing support for the student (involve family, provide counselling, self-esteem/assertion skills development, social skills training);
- review processes for continuing to report incidences and monitor well-being (eg. weekly check-in with trusted adult);
- refer students to the Ontario Ministry of Education's "Anti-Bullying Hotline" in order to report incidents of bullying in a safe, anonymous way;
- encourage the cooperative partnership between Peel Regional Police/Ontario Provincial Police and the Peel District School Board to assist in responding to reports of bullying and violence.

(b) Responsive Measures for the Bully

Peel District School Board staff:

- enforce progressive discipline interventions (corrective interventions that support learning);
- communicate with parent/guardian to inform and enlist support and consistency of expectations;
- listen to and help the bully identify "reasons" for bullying behaviour (e.g. *"I was just joking around."* *"I was just trying to make my friends laugh."*);
- provide pressure and support: *"The behaviour must stop. We will help you stop by..."* (keeping you inside at recess this week). *If you don't stop these are the possible future consequences."*
- connect students with a mentor through In-School Mentor Program or Big Brothers/Big Sisters;
- involve Guidance Counsellor, Contact Teacher or BTA to facilitate student learning related to the incident with on-going monitoring, debriefing and problem-solving:
 - direct skills instruction (e.g. emotional self-regulation);
 - practice, feedback, reinforcement;
 - anticipation of applications and potential trigger situations
- organize programs such as "Chill Pass" to allow the bully to self-regulate escalating emotions by removing himself/herself from the situation
- organize peer mediation programs;
- encourage volunteer service to the school community;
- provide conflict mediation and resolution;
- engage in restorative mindset work (harm repair, restitution for damages, "how will you fix it" contract, opportunities to earn back trust);
- withdraw privilege/earning back privileges
- assign detentions;
- withdraw from class;

- develop Safety Plans/PBIPs through the ISRC/IPRC process, as required;
- access PDSB central resources as required (School Support Officers, Resource Teachers for programming adaptations);
- refer to community agencies;
- assign suspensions and/or expulsions (Education Act - bullying is one of the activities leading to possible suspension/expulsion)
- encourage the cooperative partnership between Peel Regional Police/Ontario Provincial Police and the Peel District School Board to assist in responding to reports of bullying and violence.

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Peel District School Board provides a wealth of professional development opportunities to assist teachers, support staff and administration in managing student behaviour, particularly related to bullying prevention and intervention. Some examples of this professional development include:

- *ABC Network* (Anti-Bullying Collaborative) – a network of Peel teachers who meet regularly to discuss bullying prevention and intervention, share resources, etc. – funded by Staff Development & School Support Services
- resources and links available on Peel intranet (e.g. Staff Development School Support Services: Climate for Working and Learning);
- OTF/FEO *Safe at School* Bullying Prevention Program;
- Canadian Safe Schools Network conferences and seminars;
- *Fundamentals for Facilitating Problem Solving*: training for all Peel District School Board Principals, Vice-Principals and Business Managers in resolving conflict (part of Report Card for Student Success goals) – currently in pilot stage;
- funds available for self-selected professional development opportunities;
- Climate Resource Teachers available to work with Climate Teams in site-specific School Success Planning;
- Climate for Learning and Working presentations/training sessions available through My Learning Plan for school teams:
 - Character Attributes in Action
 - Bullying Prevention and Intervention
 - The Restorative Mindset

5. NEXT STEPS

The Climate for Learning & Working team, as a component of the Staff Development & School Support Services department, has a three-year strategic plan for the implementation of the Climate for Learning & Working framework, including bullying prevention and intervention. Next steps in this three-year strategic plan include:

1. In partnership with Peel Public Health, investigate expansion of *Practiquest* for use with students in middle schools;
2. Further implementation of the *Fundamentals for Facilitating Problem Solving* training program for Principals, Vice-Principals and Business Managers;

3. Full implementation of the School Success Planning template to facilitate development of school-wide plans for bullying prevention & intervention;
4. Increased supports for school-based Climate Teams provided by Climate for Learning & Working Resource Teachers; and
5. Grant proposal to the Ministry of Community Services and Correctional Services to work with Peel Regional Police, the Canadian Mental Health Association and Saint Elizabeth Health Care to develop a new dynamic, multidisciplinary approach to the issues of bullying and cyber-bullying.

6. COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

This report will be broadly communicated to various stakeholders in the Peel District School Board. Some of these communication strategies include:

- Distribution of the report to all Principals and Vice-Principals via email;
- Reinforcement of strategies through Principal/Vice-Principal meetings with Superintendents of Education;
- Distribution of the report to School Council Chairs;
- Placement of the report on the Peel Board Internet site (www.peelschools.org);
- Placement of the report on the Peel Board Intranet on the Staff Development & School Support Services website (<http://inet.peelschools.org/departments/staffdev/>); and
- Link to the report directly from the School Success Planning website to assist with the development of school-based Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plans.