



# GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

## BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

### 2023-2024

*The GECDSB formally recognizes the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of November as Bullying Prevention and Intervention Week. However, Bullying Prevention and Intervention is on-going and year-round and is everyone's responsibility.*

#### SECTION:

1. Purpose
2. Education Awareness and Outreach
3. Evaluation of Evidence
4. Policy and Procedures
5. Prevention
6. Intervention and Support Strategies
7. Current Plan of Action

#### 1. PURPOSE

The Greater Essex County District School Board understands the importance of ensuring a safe, caring and inclusive school environment and that the most effective strategy to address bullying is through a comprehensive school-wide approach that engages all stakeholders.

The purpose of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is to develop, in consultation with students, principals, teachers and other staff, parents/guardians, school councils and the public, a long-term school-wide approach regarding bullying prevention and intervention be implemented by all schools of the Board. The plan will be reviewed at least every two years.

The Board further recognizes that a key factor in the development of a successful bullying prevention and intervention plan is the consistent use of research-approved best practices. The Board shall also strive to consider local needs (geographical, cultural, and demographics), and the availability of supports when developing and reviewing this plan.

As required by the Ministry of Education when revising this plan, the Board will:

- ✓ review school climate surveys to identify concerns;
- ✓ identify best practices of evidence-based programs currently used at the Board;
- ✓ consider what other evidence-based practices may help address concerns;
- ✓ identify and include key partners in bullying intervention and prevention initiatives.

As required under subsection 303.3(3) of the *Education Act*, each school is required to implement the Board's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, and to comply with the Board's policies and procedures regarding Bullying Prevention and Intervention.

## 2. EDUCATION, AWARENESS AND OUTREACH

The Board and each school will endeavour to increase education, awareness and outreach, which will help to engage all members of the school community to support school and Board efforts to deal with inappropriate student behaviour, including bullying.

Communications with the school community will include the following Ministry of Education definition of bullying as defined in section 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;

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**

For the purposes of the definition, "bullying" in subsection (1) 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.



The Board and schools should strive to:

- Identify different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying.
- Understand the myths and realities of bullying behaviour.
- Identify bullying and differentiate bullying from rough play and conflict.
- Differentiate between teasing and bullying.
- Understand power and peer dynamics.
- Identify how biases, prejudice and hate can lead to bullying.
- Identify different manifestations and underlying factors of bullying, such as body image, racism, sexism, homophobia, disability.

In addition, each school should take the following steps:

- Recognize a whole school approach and the importance of a positive school climate for student achievement and well-being.
- Include positive culture and well-being goals in its school improvement planning.
- Develop awareness and understanding of the factors that contribute to a safe, caring and inclusive school climate.
- Identify ways to make students aware of how they can help prevent, address and report bullying.
- Seek student and parent/guardian voice in developing bullying prevention and intervention strategies.
- Identify strategies to engage parents in conversations about bullying and prevention and how to promote a positive school climate
- Reach out to parents/guardians and the broader school community. Consider the following:
  - Reflect on relationships and interactions and focus on promoting healthy relationships using a variety of strategies.
  - Become knowledgeable about community partners and resources in the school and in the broader community.
- Communicate and share with the school community, policies and procedures pertaining to safe schools, bullying prevention and intervention

### 3. EVALUATION OF EVIDENCE

#### Pre-evaluation Strategy

Each school will base its bullying interventions, strategies, practices and programs on evidence. Each school will take the following steps to assess their anti-bullying initiatives and strategies:

- Identify the main issues of concern in a particular school raised by students, school staff, parents/guardians, as well as identify issues in the physical environment.



- Review the results of the school climate surveys, and other relevant information to create a baseline.
- Take steps to measure success, make changes where necessary and create an action plan to address areas of concerns.
- Identify children and youth involved in bullying (including the bully, the person being bullied, and those who may have witnessed or been affected by the bullying).
- Identify learning and training opportunities that are needed.
- Review and update plan as a result of gathering new information and share with the school community.

At the Board level, School Climate Survey results show that in 2017, 78% of the students surveyed reported that they had not experienced bullying /harassment at school. In 2019, 81% of the students surveyed reported that they had not experienced bullying/harassment at school. An analysis of the type of bullying being reported as experienced by students at school is as follows:

Type of Behaviour	2017	2019
Physical	13.4%	13.1%
Verbal	29.3%	29.1%
Social	23.1%	22.1%
Cyber	11.0%	9.9%

### Post-evaluation Strategy

The school will reassess the results of the subsequent school climate surveys to verify the effectiveness of the anti-bullying initiatives implemented. The post-evaluation phase gathers evidence to test the efficacy of the prevention, responses, interventions or supports provided for changes to be made where necessary.

### **Board Approved Programs**

The GECD SB Bullying Prevention and Intervention Committee approves programs for Board and school use. There are other committees within the GECD SB that provide system initiatives/programs that deliver a message that is consistent with the Board philosophy and the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

These approved programs include:

1. Zones of Regulation
2. Peace Learning Circles Training
3. Character Education Initiatives
4. Restorative Practices
5. Socio-Emotional Learning Kits
6. Violent Threat Risk Assessment
7. Social Justice Begins With Me Literature Kits
8. Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

## 4. POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Each school will:

- ✓ Actively communicate policies, procedures and guidelines to staff, students, parents/guardians/caregivers and broader members of the school community.
- ✓ Review policies, procedures and guidelines and include the school community in this process in order to build upon and sustain a positive school climate.
- ✓ Review guidelines and procedures or develop new ones to address discrimination and harassment as they may apply to students, staff, parents/guardians and community members.
- ✓ Outline roles/responsibilities of the school community, including students, staff, parents/guardians and community members.
- ✓ Ensure goals address areas of challenge, as identified in school climate surveys and other relevant data.

## 5. PREVENTION

Fostering a positive learning environment will help to reduce possible bullying, harassment, and discrimination incidents. Schools will take the following steps in order to strengthen prevention measures:

- Identify bullying prevention and intervention programs or activities that are evidence based and that address the needs identified by the Board or the school.  
These should be addressed at the following levels:
  - Individual student level
  - Classroom level
  - School level
  - Board level
  - Parent/community level
- Identify relationship-building and community-building programs that are present in the school, classroom and in the larger community.
- Identify and support:
  - Activities that promote a positive school climate.
  - Training strategies for school staff.
  - Awareness raising strategies for students, e.g., social emotional learning, empathy, development self-regulation skills.
  - Awareness raising strategies to engage community partners and parents in early and ongoing dialogue.
  - Ways to make linkages to curriculum resources and day-to-day learning.

- Provide opportunities for regular check-ins with students-at-risk of engaging in bullying, and for those who have witnessed or have been affected by bullying.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to develop effective classroom management strategies incorporating progressive discipline.
- Establish and maintain respectful and caring classrooms, e.g., model equitable and inclusive behaviour and language.
- Align supervision plans to address where and when bullying happens, as identified through climate surveys.

## 6. INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Interventions and supports should be evidence-informed, timely and take a whole school approach.

When implementing interventions and supports, schools should endeavour to:

- Use “teachable moments” within a progressive discipline approach to address inappropriate behaviour. Consider mitigating factors like the student’s age, the circumstances of the behaviour, and the student’s history before determining the most appropriate way to respond to each situation. Consider a range of options to address the behaviour and help the student learn from their choices.
- Have in place processes and strategies to identify and respond to bullying when it happens. Follow up after bullying incident(s) with students, parents/guardians, teachers and other school staff, where appropriate.
- Identify strategies for supporting students who engage in bullying, who have been bullied, and others who may have witnessed or been affected by bullying while respecting privacy. These strategies could include school-based resources and/or referrals to community agencies, e.g., mental health services or public health.
- Communicate to the school community the progressive discipline approach to address inappropriate behaviour and the procedures that are in place to support students who have been harmed or who have engaged in serious behaviour incidents.

See these Board Policies:

- ❖ Bullying Prevention and Intervention
- ❖ Code of Conduct
- ❖ Human Rights
- ❖ Progressive Discipline
- ❖ Safe Schools

## 7. CURRENT PLAN OF ACTION 2023-2024

### **Action item # 1: Bullying Awareness Week and “Welcoming and Inclusive Schools” Campaigns**

Bullying Awareness and Prevention is on-going and year-round. Last year our System Wide Bullying Prevention and Intervention Committee theme was **WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS**. The Mental Health Leadership Committee feels strongly that this needs to continue to be a focused priority in our schools and have decided to continue with this theme for this year. The role of schools is to enhance the mental health of all students. Before we can understand our students, promote teaching and learning and partner with home, school and community partners, students first need to be welcomed and included into their school environment. What do all students need at school? Every day students need a smile and a warm welcome, a connection to a caring adult, and a sense of belonging and inclusion. They need a chance to learn and a safe place to take risks. They need someone who will notice and reach out when something is wrong, someone who will listen and try to find them help and someone who believes in them and will instill hope.

For Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week 2023, GECDSB Schools will continue to promote and create **“WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS”**. By planning activities, launching new initiatives and/or continuing with initiatives that were introduced last year that promote a safer and more welcoming learning environment, schools will be effecting positive change in student achievement and well-being.

Schools will be asked to review specific data from their School Climate Survey before and after the targeted campaigns. Results will be reviewed, analyzed and shared with the community on the Board Website and through the Board’s Bullying Prevention and Intervention Committee.

### **Action item #2: School-Specific Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plans**

All GECDSB schools will develop or review existing school-specific bullying prevention plans. Plans will reflect consultation and input from students and parents/guardians with a specific focus on school to home prevention/intervention strategies. Regular mechanisms for capturing student voice (e.g. Focus groups, surveys) will be developed and refined for use in subsequent school years.