

SAFE SCHOOLS

POLICY

CODE: A 3.3

The London District Catholic School Board believes it is important that all pupils must have a safe, caring, accepting, and faith-filled school environment in order to maximize their learning potential and to ensure a positive school climate for all members of the school community.

The Provincial Code of Conduct, the London District Catholic School Board Code of Conduct, the *Education Act*, Ontario Regulation 472/07, Policy Program Memorandum (PPM) 128 (Provincial and school board codes of conduct), 141 (programs for long term suspension), 142 (expulsion programs), 144 (bullying prevention) and 145 (progressive discipline), together with the Board's discipline policies and procedures 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 *Human Rights Code* of Ontario has primacy over provincial legislation and school board policies and procedures, such that the *Education Act*, regulations, Ministry of Education Program Policy Memoranda, and Board policies and procedures are subject to, and shall be interpreted and applied in accordance with the *Human Rights Code* of Ontario.

Pursuant to the *Education Act*, principals are required to maintain proper order and discipline in schools, and pupils are responsible to the principal for their conduct and are required to accept such discipline as would be exercised by a reasonable, kind, firm and judicious parent. A principal may delegate some disciplinary responsibilities to a vice-principal and/or teacher of the school in accordance with the *Education Act*, Ministry of Education policies and Board procedures. In such circumstances, the delegation of authority and the authority delegated will be clearly identified in Board procedures, as will the supports available to individuals in receipt of the delegated authority.

To meet the goal of creating a safe, caring, and accepting school environment, the London District Catholic School Board supports the use of positive practices as well as consequences for inappropriate behaviour, including progressive discipline, which includes suspension and expulsion where necessary. The Board considers homophobia, gender based violence, and 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*, as well as inappropriate sexual behaviour 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.

The Board does not support discipline measures that are solely punitive or the use of exclusion as a disciplinary measure.

Schools are encouraged to implement proactive positive practices and corrective supportive practices when necessary. However, before applying disciplinary measures, the principal/designate and Discipline Committee of the Board shall consider the discriminatory impacts of disciplinary decisions on pupils protected by the *Human Rights Code*, including but not limited to race and disability, and whether or not accommodation is required.

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

Safe Schools and Catholic Education

Schools are expected to be safe, respectful, and inclusive environments for learning and teaching. Safe schools implementation consists of interrelated components that are developed by school communities for the purpose of reflecting these essential expectations. The common goal is maintaining a safe and positive environment for all members of the school community - students, staff, parents, volunteers, and community members offering services in schools. This environment is created through the daily interactions among members of the school community and the concerted efforts at building a sense of belonging and community.

Within the context of Catholicism, the call to live a moral life is seen in a positive light. Each school's mission statement is an affirmation of moral living. For students to experience this affirmation on a daily basis, they need to develop the capacity to:

- distinguish right and wrong;
- analyze society's values and messages;
- build and maintain healthy relationships;
- handle interpersonal conflicts;
- handle violence;
- obtain and show forgiveness;
- recognize and respond to others in need.

Members of the school community must come to understand that violence, in any form, in any community, is unacceptable and that people have the right to be free from violence. If violence is to be prevented in the long term, school communities must help all students learn alternatives to violence - handling conflict and anger in healthy, assertive ways and preparing them for responsible citizenship. In Catholic schools, the dignity of the human person is stressed, along with respect for one another based on the belief that God shares life with us. Creating a learning environment where the Gospel values of peace and justice are lived out every day is the essence of the Catholic school culture.

The Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations represent an integral component of the London District Catholic School Board student's character formation. We envision students who are:

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- discerning believers formed in the Catholic faith community who celebrate the signs and sacred mysteries of God's presence through word, sacrament, prayer, forgiveness, reflection and moral living;
- effective communicators who speak right and listen honestly and sensitively, responding critically in light of Gospel values;
- reflective, creative and holistic thinkers who solve problems and make responsible decisions with an informed moral conscience for the common good;
- self-directed, responsible life-long learners who develop and demonstrate their God-given potential;
- collaborative contributors who find meaning, dignity and vocation in work which respects the rights of all and contributes to the common good;
- caring family members who attend to family, school, parish and the wider community;
- responsible citizens who give witness to Catholic social teaching by promoting, peace, justice and the sacredness of human life.

This can be a challenging task for Catholic schools when students' experiences relay conflicting messages - they may be witnesses to or victims of abuse in their own homes or see violence glamorized or sensationalized in the media. When trying to prevent or respond to incidents which compromise safety, all members of the school community - students, parents or guardians, community partners, racial and ethno cultural minority organizations, the Aboriginal community, business, labour, and other groups - must work collaboratively to ensure consistency and effective interventions.

The London District Catholic School Board affirms its commitment to safe schools for all members of school communities through the following statements:

1. Schools are places of learning. Students, their families, school staff, the Parish team, and the community have the right to expect that schools are safe and positive learning environments. A school's mission statement is an affirmation of these expectations.
2. A school setting that strives toward creating a safe, inviting, nurturing, and inclusive environment will be one in which a strong sense of community exists. It is expected that all members of the Catholic school community will interact with each other with respect and dignity, and uphold the values of the Gospel.
3. Parents, students, school staff, the community, and social service agencies must work together to support a cooperative and equal partnership aimed at creating and maintaining safe school environments.

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4. The school Code of Conduct begins with its development through a process which encourages the participation of the school community. It continues to be a living reality through strategies aimed at helping members of the school community understand, discuss, and practice the beliefs and values explicitly contained in the Code.
5. Opportunities for staff development in safe school policies and directives as well as school-based strategies are necessary to ensure all staff acquires the knowledge and skills for consistent and effective interventions.
6. The Ontario Curriculum and religious education programs include cross-curricular and program specific expectations that relate to components of safe schools implementation; particularly, violence prevention.
7. Every aspect of the Curriculum is taught in light of Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church so that we build a caring community of faith.
8. The school community has an integral role in assisting students to develop social competence. Specific strategies may include actively engaging students in collaborative problem-solving, establishing a connection with at least one adult, and offering support services and/or programs. This would be of utmost importance for students identified as at-risk for emotional and behavioural problems.
9. Preventive strategies are very beneficial to learners and to society. However, when situations or incidents which compromise safety occur, immediate responses are necessary and often mandated.
10. The school is an integral part of the broader community. The expertise of professionals in the community can complement and provide additional opportunities for students to meet curriculum expectations. As well, it is imperative to seek out partnerships with community agencies so that the best supports and counseling for students and families, whether they are the victims, witnesses or perpetrators, are available.
11. The opportunity to take responsibility for one's actions should be given to each student. Having taken that responsibility, students will experience the acceptance and forgiveness of the school community and be given the opportunity to begin again.
12. Belief in the growth of the whole person - intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual - strengthens the commitment to the creation of school communities that promote faith experiences and reflect the teachings of scripture and of the Catholic Church.
13. Professional development will be provided through in-service training, workshops, and conferences. Often these opportunities will be developed in collaboration with community partners: local police departments, women's shelters, social service agencies, children's mental health services, community organizations, and with parent associations/ school councils.

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14. School boards must involve students, parents/guardians, staff, and members of the community in safe schools implementation. Efforts should be directed toward maintaining ongoing communication and collaborative efforts among all members of the school community.

SAFE SCHOOLS TEAMS

Each school must have in place a safe schools team responsible for school safety that is composed of at least one student (where appropriate), one parent, one teacher, one support staff member, one community partner, and the principal. The team must have a staff chair. An existing school committee (e.g. healthy schools committee) can assume this role. (PPM 144 Bullying Prevention and Intervention October 4, 2007)

The London District Catholic School Board recognizes and accepts the authority and the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church with respect to matters of faith and morals, as it is entitled to do under Section 93(1) of the Constitution Act, 1867. The teachings of the Church will be taken into account in the interpretation and application of this Safe Schools Policy. Nothing in this policy is intended to compromise the teachings of the Church or the constitutional right of the School Board and the class/community of persons it represents.

The Board empowers the Director of Education to establish Regulations and Procedures governing Safe Schools.

Adopted: January 28, 2008

Revised: August 30, 2010

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THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Background:

The Catholic school environment reflects a value system based on cooperation and equality in relationships. The Catholic school mission is an affirming vision which clearly and concisely conveys that learning and teaching are rooted in this value system.

1. The vision of the Catholic community includes the following:
 - the dignity and well-being of every member of the school community are acknowledged and respected;
 - all members of the school community are individuals created and redeemed by God and are entitled to the acceptance and respect of the Catholic school community.
2. In this community, all members will:
 - feel safe in their respective roles -learners, teachers, administrators, parents, etc.;
 - feel included as a member of the community;
 - have a voice in what happens in the community;
 - feel responsible for and be effective contributors to the community and hence their own sense of self;
 - feel ownership and pride in their work;
 - share mutual goals with other members of the community.
3. In this community, each member will:
 - acknowledge and accept responsibility for his/her work, words, actions, decisions, and relationships;
 - work toward the peaceful resolution of conflicts.
4. The school community understands that physical, verbal (oral or written), sexual, or psychological abuse, bullying behaviour, or discrimination on the basis of race, culture, religion, age, gender, language, disability, sexual orientation, or other attributes such as income or appearance are deemed unacceptable behaviour on the part of any member of the school community.
5. Positive behaviour is acknowledged, celebrated, and modeled by all staff and students.

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6. Discipline strategies are consistent, fair, proactive and progressive. The primary focus is on teaching students about socially appropriate behaviours while respecting the students' dignity and promoting their sense of self-worth.
7. Strategies which encourage a sense of responsibility, empowerment, and ownership of actions and decisions will promote collaboration and a sense of belonging for all members of the school community.
8. Active and meaningful participation by members of the school community will encourage shared ownership and responsibility for safe schools implementation.
9. All staff and students share responsibility for ensuring that the school environment is safe for every person in attendance.
10. Supervision of students will be ensured during all school related activities.
11. Procedures outlining methods for visitors and parents to make inquiries about their children - such as signing in at the office, arranging appointment times to visit teachers, visits to classrooms, etc., will be established and reviewed regularly.
12. Review of safe schools policies, directives, and guidelines will occur regularly with the school community.
13. Regular review and update of procedures that impact students who are involved with outside agencies or community-based services, will occur.
14. The establishment of a Safe School Team in each school will encourage the participation of the community in ensuring a safe, caring, inclusive Christ-centered school.
15. The Safe School Team, where possible, should also include a representative of the Catholic School Advisory Council.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you” John 14:27

Background:

Violence prevention has the overall purpose of empowering school communities to create safe and caring learning environments by introducing and implementing prevention and intervention strategies. The vision of Catholic education is the foundation and context from which violence prevention is developed and implemented. Faith development through the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and skills demonstrates to students the enduring essentials of living in relationships and striving toward the “common good”. Secular violence prevention initiatives most often complement Catholic teachings and can be connected to the formal and informal spiritual growth of members of the school community.

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There is ample research and documentation to support that prevention and early intervention efforts can reduce violence and assist in addressing troubling behaviours in schools. The involvement of the entire school community, administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, students, and community-based professionals increases the effectiveness of prevention and intervention strategies. The school community works together to form positive relationships with all children, nurtures a sense of belonging and inclusiveness, and addresses both the academic, spiritual, and social-emotional needs of students. Effective prevention, intervention, and crisis response strategies operate best in school communities that:

- focus on academic achievement for all students;
- access community services for resources;
- engage parents in meaningful ways;
- promote positive relationships between students and staff;
- provide students with opportunities to express their concerns;
- discuss safety issues openly;
- identify problems and assess progress toward solutions;
- promote respect, equality, and tolerance;
- foster service learning through community involvement;
- identify and effectively respond to early warning signs of violence.

Violence prevention, as an integral component of safe schools implementation encompasses a broad range of strategies. Formal and informal educational opportunities are a part of effective violence prevention programming. The Ontario Curriculum and religious education in Catholic schools identify general and/or specific expectations for students to learn and demonstrate an understanding of interpersonal violence/safety concerns, healthy and unhealthy relationships, and self-management skills.

1. Violence prevention and intervention strategies are implemented in the context of Catholic teachings and values which promote equality, tolerance, respect, and striving toward the common good.
2. The involvement of all members of a school community will promote the effectiveness of violence prevention and intervention strategies. This includes accessing services from professionals in the community with expertise in violence prevention and intervention.
3. The Ontario Curriculum, The Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations, and religious education in Catholic schools include overall and specific expectations related to violence prevention and citizenship. Students have opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in self-management, healthy interpersonal relationships, and strategies for responding to safety concerns.

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4. Instructional strategies which emphasize experiential learning, (role playing, simulations, cooperative learning), differentiated instruction and opportunities to apply the learning are essential components of violence prevention instruction.
5. Shared solutions to identified needs will increase the likelihood of shared ownership and responsibility among staff, students, and parents.
6. Community-based programs and resources can be used effectively to support efforts toward creating a learning environment which is safe and secure for students and staff.
7. Opportunities for staff training in violence prevention including early warning signs of violence will assist with promoting consistent and planned responses and interventions.
8. Violence prevention and intervention includes opportunities for students to learn skills such as social problem solving, communication skills and healthy ways to handle emotions. Safe behaviours, such as reporting situations that threaten another student's safety and alerting school personnel if a stranger is on the school grounds, also formulate part of this training.
9. Early and ongoing identification practices for at-risk students should be followed as soon as possible with interventions.
10. Service learning programs/initiatives such as peer mediation and attending conferences related to violence prevention will empower students to actively participate in addressing concerns and develop leadership skills.
11. Resources for members of the Safe Schools Team and for use by staff are available from the Program Department.

EARLY IDENTIFICATION, INTERVENTION, AND COUNSELLING

1. School safety must be approached from both an immediate and long-term perspective and incorporate prevention as well as intervention strategies. In every school community, there are students who are at-risk for perpetrating, being victimized, or becoming a bystander of violence or other antisocial behaviours. The early and ongoing identification of these students is necessary for establishing appropriate forms of prevention and intervention.
2. The school community needs to assess school-based characteristics which can help in preparing and reducing the likelihood of violence. For example, the following school characteristics serve as protective factors for reducing the likelihood of violence:
 - positive school climate and atmosphere;
 - clear and high performance expectations of all students;

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- inclusionary practices throughout the school;
 - students feeling a sense of belonging and connection to school life;
 - high levels of student participation and parent involvement;
 - opportunities for the acquisition of social skills and social competence.
3. Strategies for the early identification of at-risk students will allow students, families, and the school community to intervene at an early stage.
 4. School-based intervention strategies may include: programs which focus on specific topics such as bullying behaviour, strategies for using social problem-solving steps, modifications to educational programming, peer mentoring, a structured social skills program, and teaching conflict resolution skills or curriculum content in program areas such as Family Life or Health and Physical Education. No single program or strategy will be effective in every school or with every student. However, the accurate assessment of students' needs and matching these needs with available resources will increase the likelihood of effective interventions. As well, the consistent application of these programs or strategies by staff and students increases the likelihood of sustaining improvement in social behaviours.
 5. Community-based services may be required to assist certain students. Involvement of system personnel such as a social worker, attendance counsellor or psycho-educational consultant to identify possible community services can facilitate access to services, assist in monitoring progress and providing follow up support services.

CODE OF CONDUCT IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The Education Act requires school boards to establish policies and guidelines with respect to the conduct of persons in schools. School board codes of conduct must address such matters and include such requirements, as the Ontario Ministry of Education requires.

Program/Policy Memorandum No. 128, issued on October 4, 2007, sets out standards of behaviour for all members of the school community (e.g. parents, students, staff, visitors and volunteers). These essential components serve as the nucleus around which each individual school community can develop their own Code of Conduct. This ensures that very important points are emphasized consistently across the system and leaves each school community free to engage in the process of developing their unique Code of Conduct. This process builds commitment to fulfillment of the expectations in the Code of Conduct.