

POLICY

1. RATIONALE

- (i) The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board holds sacred the view that each child is created in the image of God, and that every person must be treated with respect and dignity. Every Catholic student has the right to be safe and to feel respected in and around the school.
- (ii) Incidences of bullying within our Catholic school communities result in a negative atmosphere, which contradicts the image of God in each child and promotes disrespect and unkindness among students.
- (iii) Bullying adversely affects students' ability to learn.

Bullying adversely affects healthy relationships and the school climate.

Bullying adversely affects a school's ability to educate its students.

Bullying can also lead to more serious violence and to long-term social and emotional problems on the part of bullies, victims and bystanders.

2. DEFINITION

- (i) 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.
- (ii) Bullying may be physical (e.g. hitting, pushing, tripping), social (e.g. excluding others from a group on purpose, initiation or hazing rituals, subtle social manipulation such as malicious gossip or rumours) or verbal (e.g. name calling, teasing, threatening). It may also occur through the use of technology (e.g. spreading hurtful comments or images through the use of cell phones, e-mail, Internet websites, text messaging or other technology).

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3. BULLYING IS PROHIBITED

Bullying shall not be tolerated on school property, at school-related activities, on school buses or in any other circumstances (e.g. online) where engaging in bullying will have a negative impact on the school climate.

4. BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAMS

- (i) The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board expects the staff in each of its elementary and secondary schools to implement activities and programs designed to prevent the occurrence of bullying.
- (i) Prevention strategies include but are not limited to:
 - strict adherence to the Board’s Student Discipline Policy/Procedures and the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline;
 - a focus on the development of healthy social relationships through an emphasis on relevant components of the Religious Education Program of the Board;
 - involvement in Community/Board mentoring and other character development programs;
 - implementation of one or more of the following bullying prevention programs which have been endorsed by the Board –
 - Peer Mediation,
 - Roots of Empathy,
 - Second Step Violence Prevention Program.

5. INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

- (i) The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board requires all staff members who observe or become aware of an incident of bullying behaviour to report it to the school principal/vice-principal for further investigation.

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- (ii) The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board expects students and parents/guardians who become aware of an incident of bullying behaviour to report it to the school principal/vice-principal for further investigation. Reprisals against those reporting incidences of bullying behaviour shall not be tolerated by the school principal/vice-principal and shall result in consequences as determined by the Board's "Code of Student Conduct and Discipline".
- (iii) Upon learning about an alleged incident of bullying behaviour, the school principal or designate shall contact the parents/guardians of both the alleged aggressor and the victim, interview both students and thoroughly investigate the situation. The investigation may include interviews with students, staff and parents/guardians, review of school records and involvement of the Board's Student Services Department. Depending on the results of the investigation, community legal, medical and social services agencies may become involved.
- (iv) Consequences for students who bully others shall depend on the results of the investigation as well as the guidelines provided by the "Code of Student Conduct". Depending on the severity of the incident, the school principal/vice-principal may also take appropriate action to ensure student safety. In all cases, however, the outcome will be guided by the principle of progressive discipline.
- (v) Appropriate counselling for victims and bullies as well as for students who have been affected by observing bullying shall be arranged through the Board's Student Services Department.

6. IN-SERVICE EDUCATION

- (i) The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board will make available to its school administrators, teachers and educational assistants inservice education workshops on bullying prevention and intervention as well as on cultural sensitivity, respect for diversity and special education needs. Educational opportunities related to these topics will also be made available to all other school staff members as well as volunteers, school bus operators/drivers and crossing guards.

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7. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- (i) The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board will actively communicate its policies and procedures with respect to bullying prevention and intervention, including the definition of bullying, to students, parents/guardians, teachers and other school staff, school councils, volunteers and school bus operators/drivers.
- (ii) The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board will continue to partner with Community Agencies in bullying prevention initiatives.

8. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- (i) Superintendents will incorporate a review of school bullying prevention and intervention plans into the school profile.
- (vi) The Board’s Safe School Review Team will monitor and review the state of bullying and bullying prevention programs throughout the Board on a regular basis.

REGULATIONS

Education Act

- Section 264 – Duties of Teacher.
- Section 265 – Duties of Principal.
- Sections 306 – 309 – Suspension.
- Sections 310 – 314 – Suspension, Investigation and Possible Expulsion.

BM 01 Jun 04, 24 Jun 08

RELATED BY-LAW(S): 7.02

RELATED BOARD COMMITTEE: Religion, Family Life & Instructional Services

POLICY REVIEW DATE: 5 years