

## **Bully and Harassment**

Responding to Bullying Behaviour – A Family Guide

**Appendix A**

**RESPONDING  
TO  
BULLYING  
BEHAVIOUR**



**Important Information  
for Families  
from the  
Hamilton-Wentworth  
Catholic District School Board**

**December, 2012**

## MISSION AND VISION

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### MISSION

The mission of Catholic Education in Hamilton-Wentworth, in union with our Bishop, is to enable all learners to realize the fullness of humanity of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the model.

The Catholic Community of Hamilton-Wentworth believes the learner will realize the fullness of humanity:

If the learning process:

- begins at home and is part of family life
- is nurtured within the Parish
- is anchored in the Catholic Faith
- takes place within the context of worship, sacraments, and the life of the Church
- is enhanced by the school community
- is embraced by the learner as a personal responsibility for life.

If learning takes place in an appropriate and challenging environment:

- in which members of the school community exemplify the teachings of Jesus Christ
- which reflects Gospel values and responsible use of human, financial and natural resources
- which promotes academic excellence and clear indicators of achievement.

### VISION

Learners from Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Schools will demonstrate:

- knowledge and practice of their Catholic faith
- the capability of nurturing a strong family unit
- esteem, respect and responsibility for self and others
- academic competence
- the ability to listen accurately and express knowledge clearly
- independence, critical thinking and effective problem solving
- proficiency with technology in order to adapt to a changing world
- the values, attitudes and skills for effective partnerships
- the ability to transform our society.

To enable learners to achieve this Vision, the faith community of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board will reflect:

- the centrality of Jesus Christ in our lives
- the teachings of the Catholic Church
- exemplary role models
- social justice, respect and fairness for all
- a dedicated staff
- a curriculum that is dynamic, practical and relevant
- high standards
- an environment conducive to learning
- effective partnerships
- accountability at all levels.

## **Board Policy on Bullying**

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### **Rationale**

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board recognizes that bullying behaviour has a negative effect on the school community. Students who are intimidated and victimized at school are unable to give their education the full attention and effort needed for success. Bullying behaviour can also lead to more serious violence and to long-term social and emotional problems on the part of bullies, victims and bystanders. Every student has the right to be safe in and around the school.

### **Definition**

Bullying behaviour consists of negative actions which may be physical or verbal in nature, have hostile intent, are repeated over time and involve a power differential between bully and victim.

Bullying may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, punching), verbal (e.g. name-calling, teasing, threatening), social (e.g. excluding an individual from a group on purpose, initiation or hazing rituals, subtle social manipulation such as malicious gossip or rumours) or computer-based (e.g. using the internet or e-mail to ridicule, spread rumours, threaten).

### **Bullying Behaviour is Prohibited**

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board and its staff members shall not tolerate any form of bullying behaviour in any school facility or at any school-related activity on or off campus.

### **Bullying Prevention Programs**

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board expects the staff in each of its elementary and secondary schools to implement programs and activities designed to prevent the occurrence of bullying behaviour.

### **Staff Intervention**

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board expects staff members who observe or become aware of an incident of bullying behaviour to take immediate, appropriate steps to intervene, including informing the school Principal/Vice-Principal of the incident.

### **Students and Parents/Guardians Shall Report Bullying Behaviour**

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.

## **Investigative Procedures**

Upon learning about an incident of bullying behaviour, the school Principal or designate shall contact the parents of both the alleged aggressor and the victim, interview both students and thoroughly investigate. The investigation may include interviews with students, parents and school staff, review of school records and involvement of the Board's Student Services Department. Depending on the results of the investigation, the Police may become involved.

## **Consequences/Intervention**

Consequences for students who bully others shall depend on the results of the investigation as well as the guidelines provided in 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. Appropriate counselling for victims and bullies may be arranged through the Board's Student Services Department. Any student who retaliates against another for reporting bullying behaviour will be subject to consequences outlined in the Code of Student Conduct.

## **What is bullying?**

Bullying may be:

- Physical-hitting, kicking, punching, inappropriate sexual touching;
- Verbal-name-calling, teasing, threatening;
- Social-excluding an individual from a group on purpose, spreading malicious gossip or rumours;
- Electronic- using the internet, e-mail, cell phones, facebook, twitter to ridicule, spread rumours, threaten.

## **Why be concerned about bullying?**

Bullying must be stopped because:

- being bullied hurts both physically and emotionally;
- victims of bullying may suffer depression, fear, humiliation, isolation and self-hatred;
- bullying behaviour may indicate other serious adjustment problems;
- bullying incidents may involve ganging up on one individual and may lead to the use of weapons to exact power;
- a bully may grow up to be an abusive adult.

## **Who is involved in bullying behaviour?**

There are four individuals who may be involved in the process of bullying:

- Bully - an individual who deliberately tries to exclude, hurt, tease or threaten another person on a repeated basis.
- Victim - someone who is repeatedly excluded, hurt, teased or threatened by another person or persons.
- Bystander - a person who witnesses bullying behaviour and chooses not to come to the assistance of the victim.
- Ally- a person who observes bullying behaviour and intervenes directly on behalf of the victim or gets help from an adult.

### **How do I know that my child is being bullied?**

If you suspect that your child is being bullied at school or in the neighbourhood, look for the following clues. Your child may:

- frequently ask permission to stay home from school;
- complain of headaches, stomach aches or nightmares;
- have difficulty sleeping;
- demonstrate a sudden change in eating habits;
- have unexplained bruises, scratches or other injuries;
- have had clothing or other belongings stolen or damaged;
- appear depressed, lonely or have no lasting friendships;
- steal money or request money for no apparent reason.

### **How can I help my child if he/she is a victim?**

- Avoid blame and the expectation that one should be able to deal with the problem alone.
- Assure your child that you take the problem seriously.
- Calmly help your child recall the details of what happened. Write down who was involved, where it happened, who else was present and whether there have been other similar incidents.
- Model assertive behaviour rather than aggression as a way of resolving conflicts.
- Devise a plan of action that does not threaten or frighten your child. Keep in mind that children must live with the consequences of our actions when we intercede on their behalf. Their continued trust depends on our delivery of sound advice, guidance and protection from harm.
- Meet with your child's teacher and/or Principal and discuss your concerns, providing written details, if possible and ask how you can further support your child.
- Follow up regularly with the school personnel to ensure open communication and on-going support.
- If the situation remains unresolved and the bullying continues, submit your concerns in writing to your Superintendent of Education.

### **How can I protect my child from computer-based bullying?**

Victims of computer-based bullying or what is commonly referred to as cyber-bullying are quite often the recipients of threatening text messages or are the targets of mean-spirited web sites used to spread malicious rumours. Breaking into e-mail accounts has also become one of the more common ways for bullies to harass or exclude their victims.

You can protect your child from cyber-bullying by:

- explaining to your child the importance of keeping passwords confidential;
- encouraging your child to choose a password that won't be easy for others to figure out;
- having your child change their password if they have reason to believe that their e-mail account has been tampered with;
- having them regularly check that the information in their on-line profile is accurate. The changing of information found in these profiles has become a popular way for bullies to harass their victims;
- never allowing your child to "chat" with strangers;
- informing the school of any safety concerns your child encounters when online. Depending on the severity of the concern, you may also choose to contact the Police;

- being nosy when your child is using the computer. Ask them what they are doing and with whom they are communicating;
- trying to keep the home computer in a high traffic area of the house. This way, you can easily monitor what your child is doing online and from whom they are receiving messages;
- blocking the sender, if your child receives a message they are uncomfortable with;
- being informed. Ask friends, the school, or your internet provider about ways to keep your child safe from bullies when online.

### **What if my child demonstrates bullying behaviour?**

If you think that your child is bullying other children, you may not be sure what to do about the situation. Many parents are hesitant to address the problem because they are under the mistaken impression that in doing so they would be viewed as not supporting their child.

Rest assured that dealing with your child's bullying behaviours will not only benefit the victimized child but your child as well. Research evidence confirms that children who engage in bullying behaviour often become involved in more serious, behavioural problems as adolescents and adults.

Your child may be behaving in this way because he/she:

- may not realize it is wrong or know how hurtful it is to other children;
- may not have the language skills to relate appropriately to other children;
- may not have learned to empathize with others' feelings;
- may gain recognition and popularity by acting aggressively;
- may be encouraged to bully by a negative role model;
- may be imitating violent or aggressive behaviour which is witnessed regularly;
- may be trying to regain lost personal power.

If you suspect that your child is involved in bullying other children, contact your child's school and ask for help.

### **What are our schools doing about bullying?**

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board has established a Bullying Prevention Task Force to develop strategies for dealing with the problem of bullying in our schools. In addition, each school has a Bullying Prevention Steering Committee which is responsible for determining how serious the problem of bullying is in its school, for putting in place strategies to prevent bullying behaviour and to intervene effectively when bullying does occur.

### **Who may I contact to obtain more information about bullying behaviour?**

If you need more information about bullying or if you have a concern about bullying behaviour that is occurring at your children's school, you may contact your school Principal. In addition, you may wish to contact one of the following individuals at the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board.

- Manager, Social Work Services  
905-525-2930, ext. 2838
- Behaviour Resource Teachers 905-525-2939, Ext. 2840 or 2818
- Psychologist, 905-525-2930, ext. 2841

Other sources of information include:

#### Internet Resources

[www.bullybeware.com](http://www.bullybeware.com)

[www.bullying.org](http://www.bullying.org)

[www.canadiansafeschools.com](http://www.canadiansafeschools.com)

[www.kidsareworthit.com](http://www.kidsareworthit.com)

[www.stopbullyingnow.com](http://www.stopbullyingnow.com)

*Get Connected, Get in the Know*  
*On-Line Respect and Responsibility*  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca)

*Safety and the Internet [Ages 8 -9 and 10 – 12]*  
*Canadian Center for Child Protection*  
*Kids in the Know*  
[www.protectchildren.ca](http://www.protectchildren.ca)

*Safe Schools Strategy*  
*Bullying*  
*We Can Help Stop It*  
*A Guide for Parents of Elementary and Secondary School Students*  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca)

#### Print Resources

HWCDSDB Publication:  
Report of the Bullying Prevention Task Force,  
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