Safe and Caring Schools

**Parent/Guardian
Brochure**

Overview

In a school community, everyone (administrators, teachers, students, parents/guardians, volunteers and visitors) has a responsibility for building and maintaining a safe, caring and inclusive school climate. The revised Safe and Caring Schools Policy provides the school community with the direction it needs to create this environment.

What does a safe school look like?

A safe school has:

- an orderly environment
- an environment free from bullying, harassment, intimidation and discrimination
- a Code of Conduct with consistent expectations and consequences
- procedures and guidelines implemented as intended
- active adult supervision
- security plans to keep out intruders
- a crisis response plan

What does a caring and inclusive school look like?

A caring and inclusive school encourages:
- courtesy and respect
- support for student well-being
- belonging and connectedness
- equity and equality
- positive and supportive relationships
- teaching and learning that considers student differences
- recognition of efforts and accomplishments
- celebration of diversity
- an ongoing focus on student achievement

How does the policy encourage safety in schools?

The policy provides direction to schools on how to prevent and respond to bullying and other inappropriate behaviours. This includes teaching students how to be safe, respectful, and responsible both in-person and online. It also provides direction to teachers on how to respond to bullying and other inappropriate student behaviours.

How does the policy focus on teaching and learning?

When positive behaviours are taught, practiced and acknowledged, student behaviour improves. The policy asks educators to teach appropriate behaviours to students and practice them throughout the school year. When educators see students following school expectations and making positive choices, they can recognize students for their efforts.

Social-emotional learning is an important part of this approach. Through curriculum and safe and caring schools initiatives, students learn respect for self, others and their environment.

How does the policy promote building an inclusive school environment?

The policy provides guidance to schools on creating a welcoming, positive school climate where all members of the school community feel they belong and have the chance to realize their potential and contribute.

School communities will promote the acceptance and the inclusion of all individuals, regardless of economic status, national or ethnic origin, religion, culture, body image, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or ability. Schools are expected to use inclusive educational practices, such as differentiated instruction or encouraging student-led clubs (e.g. Gay-Straight Alliance) to make school environments inclusive for all learners.

What procedures are in place for schools to create safe, caring and inclusive environments?

The revised Safe and Caring Schools Policy has six procedures that provide guidance to schools for building and maintaining safe, caring and inclusive school environments. They are:

1. **Positive Behaviour Supports**

   - An effective, efficient and consistent way to implement a school's code of conduct. This promotes consistent understanding of how to behave and consequences for inappropriate behaviour.

2. **Code of Conduct Guidelines**

   - Helps schools establish expectations for behaviour and strategies for preventing and responding to inappropriate behaviours.

3. **Bullying Intervention Protocol**

   - Provides a definition of bullying and a step by step plan for schools to follow when responding to bullying.

4. **Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Guidelines**

   - Helps schools prevent and respond to potentially violent behaviours according to a formalized practice, requiring professional certification.

5. **Teaching Digital Citizenship**

   - Emphasizes the importance of teaching students safe, respectful and responsible online behaviour.

6. **Safe and Caring Schools Policy Implementation Progress**

   - Helps schools implement the policy through their school development plans.

Online Resources

A number of online resources are identified in the Safe and Caring Schools Policy. These resources provide valuable information for teachers, students and parents/guardians on topics such as Internet safety, cyberbullying, teaching digital citizenship, and inclusive educational practices.

Bullying and violence prevention resources for students, educators and parent/guardians are available on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's website.

www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/bullying/index.html;
www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/safeandcaring/index.html
www.cdli.ca/bullying/

Commonsense Media is a national, nonpartisan organization that provides information and resources, free of charge, to educators, parents/guardians and the public, on issues that shape the media's impact on students.

www.commonsensemedia.org

Cyber-safe-girl is a public education program. Its goal is to provide information to girls (and boys), parents and educators, about how to be safe online.

www.cybersafegirl.ca/

MediaSmarts is designed to teach about the safe and ethical use of the Internet – particularly with respect to personal and private information posted online.

http://mediasmarts.ca/

MyGSA is a Government of Newfoundland and Labrador resource designed to help members of the school community make their environment safe and welcoming for all students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/safeandcaring/gsa/index.html

Bullying Definition

The revised Safe and Caring Schools Policy includes a definition of bullying.

- Bullying is typically a repeated behaviour.

- The intention of the behaviour is to cause harm to another person(s).

- A person participates in bullying if he or she directly carries out, assists or encourages the behaviour in any way.

- Those that engage in bullying behaviour are perceived to be in a position of power.

- Bullying can be physical, verbal, social and/or electronic.

- In some circumstances, bullying is an illegal activity.

Reporting Bullying

The Safe and Caring School Policy requires schools to offer students and/or parents/guardians a variety of ways to report bullying, which may include:

- an anonymous box located in a "safe" spot such as the guidance counsellor's or administrator's office

- an anonymous "hotline" and/or online reporting

- e-mail, text, telephone

- in-person to any staff member

What can Parent(s)/Guardian(s) do to help?

Parent(s)/guardian(s) can help schools create safe, caring and inclusive environments by:

- encouraging and assisting their children to abide by the school's Code of Conduct

- modeling and practicing positive social behaviours both in person and online

- engaging in positive, nonviolent conflict resolution

- becoming familiar with the provincial Safe and Caring Schools Policy and the school's Code of Conduct

For more information on the Safe and Caring Schools Policy, please visit us at www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/safeandcaring/index.html