



Promoting
Positive School
Climate and
Well-being



Preamble

The ALCDSB is dedicated to creating and promoting positive school climate and well-being in all of our schools. Respecting the dignity of all persons by fostering trusting relationships through policies and practices that promote equity, inclusion and diversity are at the core of our Catholic values, the Board's spiritual theme of *Faith in Action* and our provincial *Catholic Graduate Expectations*. A positive school climate is directly linked to student success and well-being ensuring students are motivated to do well and will realize their full potential. We are committed to sustaining healthy and nurturing communities of belonging that are safe, caring and respectful and built on the principles of restorative practice and progressive discipline.

The ALCDSB and its school communities engage in a whole school approach in putting prevention and intervention strategies in place to facilitate a positive relationship between students, staff, parents and community partners.

I. Education, Awareness, and Outreach

St. Martha Catholic School proclaims that all people are created in the image and likeness of God and, as such, have the right to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness. The school further recognizes that a whole-school approach to engaging the school community will help the School's efforts to address inappropriate behaviour.

To these ends, the School will utilise the Ministry of Education definition of bullying in communications with the school community:

In its communication efforts, the School will:

- Make known that a positive school climate is essential for student achievement and well-being
- Identify the factors that contribute to a safe, inclusive, caring and accepting school climate.
- Support relationship building and focus on promoting healthy relationships using a variety of strategies
- Educate parents and students regarding the differences between bullying, age appropriate conflict, aggression and teasing
- Explore and identify the underlying factors that contribute to conflict and/or bullying
- Work in partnership with parents and the broader school community to build awareness about the resources and pathways available.
- Be responsive to parental concerns and continue to build relationships and resiliency.



St. Martha Catholic School will communicate and share with the school community, policies and procedures including the Board/school Code of Conduct, equity and inclusive education policy and guidelines for religious accommodations, procedures to address incidents of discrimination, progressive discipline approach, and promoting positive school climate and well-being.

1. The School will endeavour to increase education, awareness and outreach by using the following best practices:

- A whole-school approach to creating a safe and caring school
- Religious and Family Life Education curriculum focused on building and maintaining positive relationships
- Guest speakers, community partner presentations and children's entertainers on building and maintaining positive relationships
- I Care Week activities (focus on the actions and language of respect)
- Continued focus on Peace Quest activities
- Focus on school-wide theme Grace
- Roots of Empathy Program
- Social Justice Committee raises awareness of local and global issues relating to inclusivity, equity and discrimination
- Fun Friends program offered by KMFRC
- Restorative Circles in classes
- Restorative Responses and Teaching to specific school incidents
- Zones of Regulation Program
- Mind Up Program
- Participating in the Tell Them From Me Survey
- Reaching out to consult with SATs from Student Services to educate us on learning profiles
- Yoga Group for students with anxiety
- School Council to purchase Zumba Lessons for all classes two times in February
- CYW to lead Anxiety Group for boys

2. The School has identified the following strategies to engage parents in conversations about promoting a positive school climate:

- Parent representation on Caring and Safe Catholic Schools Team - each school has a team
- Good News phone calls and notes in the Agenda to praise students
- School Case Conferences to address individual needs and to support student success and well-being
- Ongoing communication with families when issues come to light
- Presentations to School Council on bullying prevention, intervention and creating a positive school climate
- Parents Reaching Out Grant to host an evening on promoting positive mental health, well-being and raising resilient children with the screening of SCREENAGERS documentary
- Student Agendas
- School website

II. Evaluation of Evidence

St. Martha Catholic School recognizes that effective prevention strategies must be evidence-based.

The School will base its interventions, strategies, practices and programs on evidence from the school climate surveys and other relevant information. The school will take the following steps to assess prevention initiatives and strategies:

- Evaluate the evidence to determine the main areas of concern, and identify issues in the physical environment, determine current procedures, and assess the strategies in place based on results of the school climate surveys and other relevant information (February-March 2017).
- 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). The School will consider using a risk assessment approach in this process (Threat Assessment).
- Review and update the School's strategies as a result of gathering new information.
- Gather student feedback on student based solutions and conduct regular check ins with students who have had a conflict with a peer

- Seek student voice in the creation of Behavior Support Plans
- Staff inservices on increasing student sensory needs and self-regulation strategies offered through Occupational Therapist
- Regular case conference to address changing needs of students
- Regular meetings with Educational Assistants to address changing needs of students and supports in place

Pre-evaluation strategy

1. The School's main issues of concern raised by students, staff and parents in the school climate surveys and based on other relevant information are the following:
 - Ensure that students know who they can talk to so that they feel supported in all aspects of school life to reduce levels of anxiety
 - Continue to provide adequate levels of supervision during non-instructional times so that students feel safe
 - Create a Student Voice Box for reporting incidents of bullying behavior anonymously
 - Intermediate student refs during Primary Intramural Games at recess times
2. The School's areas of focus with respect to the physical environment are:
 - Ensuring adequate supervision of students during non-instructional times including hallways, line ups, doorways, yard, play structures, gym, Performing Arts Room and Mavericks Room
 - Ensuring that when issues are reported, the identity of the person reporting is kept confidential
 - As part of Safety Plans, students and staff have identified safe spots that students can access to assist them when needed
3. The School's current processes for reporting on, responding to, supporting, and following up on issues are as follows:
 - Use of the Board's *Caring and Safe Catholic School Administrative Procedures*
 - Talk to all individuals involved to collect relevant information
 - Keep all information confidential to protect the dignity of all involved
 - Use restorative practices to invite forgiveness and healing
 - Conduct regular check-in with students to ensure that the issue remains resolved

4. Based on a review of the school climate survey results and other relevant information, the following areas have shown success/improvement:
 - Students report feeling safe reporting incidents of bullying at school
 - Students report that there are adults at the school that victims can talk to
 - Students report that teachers at school help students understand bullying
 - Students report that they know the consequences of bullying
5. Based on the school climate survey and other relevant data, the School proposes the following action plan to address areas requiring improvement:
 - Staff will continue to actively supervise and respond to reports of bullying during non-instructional time
 - Staff will review the difference between age appropriate conflict and bullying
 - Staff will continue to conduct regular check-ins with students after issues have been resolved to ensure that students are feeling safe and confident that issues remain resolved
 - Staff will continue to empower bystanders to stop bullying from happening by seeking help from adults at school and supporting the victim
 - Educate and role model caring behavior
 - Empower students to identify a superhero quality they have and how to use it for the good of all members of our school community
 - Students reflect on and take responsibility for their role in an incident
 - Students take action to show they are making things right when an injury to relationships has taken place in the community

Post-evaluation Strategy

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

Upon re-evaluation, the School will update the information in this template to reflect the effectiveness of its bullying prevention initiatives.

III. Policies and Procedures

The School recognizes that a whole school approach and the policies and procedures of ALCDSB are important for promoting positive school climate and well-being.

The School also recognizes that the goals of policy initiatives must address the areas of challenge identified in school/Board climate surveys and other relevant data.

- 
-
1. The School will actively communicate its policies, procedures and guidelines to the school community (including involving the school community in the review and/or development of policies, procedures and guidelines relating to Caring and Safe Catholic Schools, by taking the following steps:
 - Regularly review our St. Martha Code of Conduct (reviewed April 2018)
 - Make available and review Ministry of Education Provincial Parent Guide on Safe Schools

 2. The roles/responsibilities of the school community (students, staff, parents, and community members) are as follows:
 - To follow the standards of behaviour as outlined in the Code of Conduct available in student agendas and found on our school's website.
 - To participate in a whole-school approach to positive school climate in order to ensure that schools are safe, inclusive, and accepting. The Ministry of Education Provincial Parent Guide link: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/code.pdf>.

IV. Prevention

The School recognizes that fostering a positive learning environment will help to reduce possible bullying, harassment, and discrimination incidents. The School is committed to taking steps to strengthen prevention measures.

1. The roles and responsibilities of the Caring and Safe Catholic Schools Team (which will be communicated to the school community) are as follows:
 - Build rapport and relationships with all students
 - Team members are responsible for addressing issues identified in the School Climate Surveys and other related data
 - Team members are responsible for updating our school's Code of Conduct to ensure it is relevant and current with our needs
 - Team members receive and review reports of bullying, meet to discuss how issues can be resolved, and identify what steps need to occur to ensure that everyone feels safe and included
 - Education, role modelling and communication with all people involved

2. From its evidence-based analysis, the School has identified the following practices and initiatives for promoting positive school climate and well-being:
 - a) Bullying prevention and intervention programs or activities that are evidence-informed and that address the needs identified by the Board or the School:
 - Restorative practices and class circles to resolve issues as they arise and on a regular basis as a way of modeling respectful dialogue when there is tension
 - Anonymous and safe ways of reporting incidents of bullying through the creation of a Voice Box
 - Teaching about the purpose and use of the Buddy Bench
 - Regular check-in with students involved in incidents of bullying to ensure that it remains resolved

 - b) Relationship-building and community-building resources that are present in the school, classroom and in the larger community:
 - Promoting connections to caring adults;
 - Peer assistance and mentoring programs;
 - Pastoral ministry (Advent and Lent Masses at the Church)
 - Child and Youth Workers;
 - Mental Health and Addictions Nurse
 - Grade 8 Confirmation Retreat

- Student led Grace Group to promote acts of mercy in our classroom and school environment
- Student led intramural leaders for primary students
- KFL&A Health Unit spoke on healthy eating, lifestyle choices and fitness
- PeaceQuest initiatives
- Me to We School designation
- ECO Schools
- OFIP tutoring
- Learning Buddies
- Social Justice Committee
- Intramural Sports Program
- Kindergarten Helpers
- Staff viewing Dr. Gordon Neufeld videos on anxiety, attachment and belonging (staff attended conference in the fall and purchased the videos)

c) Activities that promote a positive school climate:

- School-wide focus on gospel values and Catholic Graduate Expectations
- School-wide social justice and charity initiatives
- Spirit Days
- Christmas Market
- Buddy Programs
- School-wide focus on Grace (2017-2018)
- I Care Week Prayer Celebrations and activities
- Regular student-led announcements related to maintaining a safe and caring community
- Buddy Bench
- School-wide dances (Halloween and Valentine's Day)
- Peer support for technology in the classroom
- Social Justice Talent Show

- d) Awareness-raising strategies for students, e.g. social-emotional learning, empathy, developing self-regulation skills:
- Roots of Empathy program
 - Zones of Regulation program
 - Mind Up Curriculum
 - BMS Training
 - Bucket filling exercises including reminders such as “Have you filled a bucket today?”
 - Classes focus on resiliency building strategies as part of the health curriculum
 - Health Education lessons on emotional health and wellness, mindfulness
 - Religious Education and Family Life programs taught at all grade levels
 - Restorative practices are used so that students have an opportunity to share how they are feeling when they see or are part of an incident of bullying
 - Transition support for students as needed between grades and divisions
 - Wellness Centres created in each classroom flexible furniture
 - Yoga and mindfulness program to support students with stress and anxiety
 - Social Justice Group and guest speakers
 - Additional break out spaces for small groups of students to use
 - Sensory equipment is used in classrooms and in the Sensory Room
 - Use of Christian Meditation in classes
- e) Awareness-raising strategies to engage community partners and parents in early and ongoing dialogue:
- Presentation to Caring and Safe Catholic Schools Team and School Council on results from School Climate Surveys;
 - Case conference and parent meetings to address issues of behavior early and then ongoing communication to provide feedback to parents on progress their child is making to seek good choices
 - Articles and information provided to parents in school newsletters and on school website about recognizing signs of bullying behavior in children at home with siblings and playmates
 - School referrals to community mental health agencies that are able to assist in giving children strategies to use when they are angry/ frustrated

- Consultation with other professionals (Guest Speakers, Physicians, Psychologists)
 - Kindergarten Open House and Registration Packages/materials to reduce anxiety
 - Monthly masses
 - Transition visits during the week before school starts in September and for students transitioning to secondary school
 - Welcome Back BBQ and Open House in September
 - NET Ministry (International Group Ministry) every second year when in our diocese
- f) Strategies for linking curriculum and daily learning for promoting positive school climate and well-being:
- School-wide focus on restorative practice as a whole-school approach;
 - Use of revised Physical and Health Education curriculum document to teach children how to make reasoned decisions
 - Teach Seven Learnable Traits of Resiliency (Intermediate classes)
 - Zones of Regulation resource
- g) Strategies to support and encourage role modeling by caring adults and student leaders within the School and school community:
- Reading Buddies
 - Peer assistance and mentoring programs
 - Student leaders on ECO Team, Intramural Sports, Choir and Safe School Team, Yearbook Committee, etc.
 - Morning Prayer leaders on the announcements
 - Social Justice Committee and ECO Team members to give regular updates and promote responsible social actions on morning announcements
 - Roots of Empathy Program
3. The School has identified the following learning and training opportunities for school staff and the school community that are needed:
- Annual training promoting positive school climate and well-being:

- Promoting Positive School Climate and Well-being pamphlet for parents (available at the Board's website www.alcdsb.on.ca)
- Community partners' presentations on mental health and well-being
- Staff awareness through staff meetings and PA Days

4. Interventions and Support Strategies

The School recognizes the importance of using timely interventions and supports with a school-wide approach.

1. To this end, the School will:

- Use teachable moments within a progressive discipline approach to address unexpected behaviour, and consider mitigating and other factors;
- Have in place processes and strategies to identify and respond to bullying when it happens (use of Incident Report Forms)
- Restorative Practices are in place to support prevention and intervention practices;
- Communicate the progressive discipline approach to the school community and the procedures in place to support all students affected by bullying behavior

2. The School supports the use, in a timely manner and using a whole school approach, of the following evidence-informed interventions and support strategies:

- Restorative practices;
- Referral to Pathways for Children and Youth
- Discussion with Board Social Worker and Mental Health and Addictions Nurse
- Referral of students to school Child and Youth Worker or to Mental Health Counsellor (secondary);
- Regular case conferences with the school team to address areas of concern and to plan interventions in a timely manner with follow up to report progress; this may include the use of community agency partners to assist and support families

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 ("intimidation")

For the purposes of the definition of "bullying" above, behaviour includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written or other means.

Cyber-bullying

For the purposes of the definition of "bullying" above, bullying 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.