



Promoting Positive School  
Climate and Well-being  
2019

## **Preamble**

The ALCDSB is dedicated to creating and promoting positive school climate and well-being in all of our schools. Respect for the dignity of all persons by fostering trusting relationships through policies and practices that promote equity, inclusion and diversity is 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**

Our Lady of Mercy 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 following Ministry of Education definition of bullying in communications with the school community (see the final page of this document):

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, 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.

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School will communicate and share with the school community, policies and procedures including: the Board/School Codes of Conduct, Equity and Inclusive Education Policy and Guidelines for Religious Accommodations; Procedures to address incidents of discrimination; the 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 relationships;
  - Continue to reinforce the PeaceQuest ideals within our school and school community.
  - Continued work with the local OPP Community Services Officer to deliver pertinent programming, build awareness and to co-ordinate responses/protocols to emergency situations (e.g., Lockdown, Hold and Secure, and Shelter in Place as well as Bomb / Explosive Events threats).
  
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;
  - Discussions / presentations to School Council on bullying prevention and positive school climate;
  - Work with community partners including North Hastings Children Services, local HPEDSB schools (elementary and secondary), as well as contacts made through the Bancroft Safety and Well-being Committee to investigate having Dr. Alex Russell come to speak in the community about anxiety and mental well-being;
  - Investigate the possible return of Paul Davis during the 2020-2021 school year to address appropriate use of technology and cyber-awareness;
  - Make inquiries and/or advertise about possible presentations to parents / guardians and/or community members about such issues as sex trafficking, substance abuse, etc.. and
  - Information to staff, students and parents about Restorative Justice practices.

## **II. Evaluation of Evidence**

Our Lady of Mercy 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;
- Identify the children and youth who are 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;
- Review and update the School's strategies as a result of gathering new information; and
- Share the updated strategies with the school community.

### **Pre-evaluation strategy**

1. The School's main issues of concern raised by Grade 4 and 7 students during the 2019 implementation of the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) include:
  - Our 50% of our Grade 4 students scored in the low range for the Well-Being Index (including the measures of optimism, happiness, self-esteem, absence of sadness, and general health) which is above the Board average of 39%.
  - 42% of our Grade 7 students scored in the low range for the Well-Being Index (including the measures of optimism, happiness, self-esteem, absence of sadness, and general health) which is slightly above the Board average of 41%.
  - Only 42% of our Grade 4 students rated the school climate as high and only 31% of the Grade 7 students rated the school climate as high. School climate is explained as the overall tone of the school environment, including the way teachers and students interact and treat each other, e.g., People care about each other in this school.
  - Only 31% of our Grade 4s feel that they have 2 or more important adults at school which greatly differs from the Board average of 61%. Also 50% of our Grade 4 students say that that they have no important adults at school which again differs greatly from the Board average of 28%.
  - 39% of our Grade 7s feel that they have 2 or more important adults at school which is close to the Board average of 40%. Also 33% of our Grade 7 students say that that they have no important adults at school which again differs greatly from the Board average of 46%.
  - 47% of our Grade 4 students feel connectedness with peers (peer belonging) which is below the Board average of 60% or so. This connectedness with peers rises for our Grade 7 students to 63% which is at the Board average.
  - We realize that After School activities are difficult to access for some (due to travel, work schedules, costs) as well as the lack of activities in the community. We do our best to offer to programs and activities at school that are accessible to all (e.g., in school extra curricular, clubs, etc...).
2. The School's areas of focus with respect to the physical environment are:
  - Ensuring consistent and active supervision of students inside the school and on school property; and

- Ensuring that staff will respond to concerns brought to them appropriately and in a timely manner (e.g., injuries are tended to and student requests for assistance and concerns are addressed by all members of staff on duty).
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*;
  - Use of communication / documentation (e.g., Behaviour Reports) and/ or calls home; and
  - Continue our work to ensure that all students feel that they and their opinions are valued.

Based on a review of the Grade 4 and 7 student responses to the 2019 implementation of the Middle Years Instrument (MDI):

- The Grade 4 and 7 students did not note bullying (cyber, social, physical and verbal) as areas of real concern but it should be noted that the Grade 7 students reported higher levels of social bullying (21% - many times a week vs. 0% - many times a week for Grade 4s) as well as higher levels of verbal bullying (11% - many times a week vs. 0% - many times a week for Grade 4s).
  - Our students in both Grade 4 and Grade 7 report that learning new things and success are important to them.
  - Our students have a feeling of belonging and intimacy with their friends. 82% of our Grade 4s would rate as medium / high and 73% of our Grade 7s would rate as medium / high for Peer Belonging. 89% of our Grade 4s would rate as medium / high and 100 % of our Grade 7s would rate as medium / high for Friendship Intimacy.
  - Lastly, a high percentage of our students report that they are engaged in the after-school activities that they want to be doing – Grade 4 students report 92% and our Grade 7 students report 79%.
4. 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 build awareness about and support the development of mental wellness to address the higher levels of anxiety (e.g., Dr. Alex Russell);
  - Staff will continue to work on the building of positive relationships as well as look for ways for students to realize that they have advocates for them both at home and at school (this may come through our work with FreshGrade and D2L Portfolios);
  - Participation in the Bell Let's Talk initiative as well 6868;
  - Staff will continue to reflect upon how to continue to promote student engagement and interest in the learning process as we continue on our journey toward Inquiry based learning as well as continued implementation of Student Centred Learning.
  - We are currently conducting a staff Circles of Support survey to address students expressed lack of connectedness to adults in the school community;

- Mrs. Cannon is going to work with the Faith Life Committee to develop a theme for a whole school Kindness Initiative during April 2020 to address the students expressed lack of happiness. It has been noted that acts of kindness increase happiness in the giver. We intend to participate in High Five Day on April 16, 2020; and
- We are going to further investigate possible implementation of the Umbrella Project which is currently being piloted in some ALCDSB schools (e.g., St. Peter's, Trenton).

#### **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:
  - Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School Practices & Protocols (on the school website) (<http://www.alcdsb.on.ca/School/omer/About/codeofcontact/Pages/default.aspx>);
  - Ministry of Education Provincial Parent Guide;
  - Reference to the Checkered Flag resource as well as to 211Ontario.ca.
2. The roles/responsibilities of the school community (students, staff, parents, and community members) are as follows:
  - To follow the standards of behaviour outlined Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School Practices & Protocols (on the school website):  
<http://www.alcdsb.on.ca/School/omer/About/codeofcontact/Pages/default.aspx>);
  - To continue our work outlined in this document (on the school website):  
[https://www.alcdsb.on.ca/School/omer/About/PositiveSchoolClimateWellBeing/Pages/default.aspx#/=](https://www.alcdsb.on.ca/School/omer/About/PositiveSchoolClimateWellBeing/Pages/default.aspx#/)

- 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>.

## 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:
  - Team members are responsible for addressing issues identified in the School Climate Surveys and other related data;
  - Team members will communicate the initiatives that are being considered and/or implemented to address concerns;
  - Contact and/or involve appropriate community agencies and investigate other resources that may be available
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:
    - Administration and staff member attendance at Self Regulation Workshop in August of 2019;
    - Use of Christian Meditation practices (use of Guided Meditations for Catholic Kids);
    - Continued investigation and use of Restorative Practices (e.g., Class Circles);
    - Use of the Kelso' Choice program (Grade 1 / 2);
    - Boys Social Skills Group (K to Grade 2) and Guys Group (Grade 4/5)
    - Reflective Spaces (Grade 7/8)
    - Monthly Merit Award assemblies;
    - Breakfast Club; and
    - Student Faith Committee and the Eco-School's team.
  - 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;
    - Youth Workers; and
    - Children's Mental Health and Mental Health and Addictions Nurse

- c) Activities that promote a positive school climate:
- School-wide focus on Gospel values and Catholic Graduate Expectations;
  - Partnership with Our Lady of Mercy Church (e.g., Church Supper set up and decorations, visits by Father Casmir for Advent Wreath candle lighting; collection of the Blessed Palms at the church and at school in preparation for their burning for Ash Wednesday);
  - Breakfast Club & Friday Snack Trays;
  - Provision of meals – Community Breakfast (Food for Learning), Spaghetti and Sloppy Joe Lunches as well as Shrove Tuesday Pancake Breakfast (School Council);
  - Use of Mind Up resource and associated activities; \*\*
  - School-wide social justice and charity initiatives (e.g., Terry Fox Run and Jump Rope for Heart);
  - Faith Life Committee sponsored fundraising and/or awareness raising campaigns (e.g., CHEO, Sick Kids, ALCDSB Foundation);
  - Spirit Days;
  - Faith Life Committee sponsored school dances; and
  - Buddy Programs – bus, reading, Mass.
- d) Awareness-raising strategies for students, e.g. social-emotional learning, empathy, developing self-regulation skills:
- Roots of Empathy (not possible for 2019-2020 academic year);
  - Boys Social Skills Club (Kindergarten to Grade 2) as well as Boys Leadership (Grade 4/5); \*\*
  - Chess Club;
  - D & D Club;
  - LEGO and Colouring Clubs; \*\*
  - Use of Mind Up, Kelso's Choices; \*\*
  - Academic Support at 10:45 and 12:40;
  - Grade 6/7/8 Quiet Reflective Time \*\*
- \*\* Indicates facilitation by the Youth Worker
- 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;
- 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;
  - Continued reinforcement of PeaceQuest ideals;



- Mission Day speakers and community guest speakers / presentations;
  - Promoted use of Kelso Choices strategies on the yard; and
  - High levels of volunteerism (e.g., Reading programs, Breakfast Program, Friday Snack Trays and School Council).
- g) Strategies to support and encourage role modeling by caring adults and student leaders within the School and school community:
- Peer assistance and mentoring programs;
  - Kindness Project (SK / Grade 1);
  - Work with HPEDSB schools to bring in guest speakers, facilitate transitions to North Hastings High School and some of the opportunities available there (e.g., instrumental music and the JEDI program);
  - Work with parents/ guardians to facilitate transitions to other Secondary schools; and
  - Involvement of community agencies (e.g., OPP, Fire Department, local athletic agencies, North Hastings Children Services partnerships (e.g., K Orientation, Experience Summer Camp referrals as well as Intesections 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; and
  - Promoting Positive School Climate and Well-being pamphlet for parents (available at the Board's website [www.alcdsb.on.ca](http://www.alcdsb.on.ca)).

## **IV. 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 inappropriate behaviour, and consider mitigating and other factors;
  - Have in place processes and strategies to identify and respond to bullying when it happens;
  - 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 the student.
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;

- Discussion with Board Social Worker (Mental Health Leader);
- Referral of students to school Youth Worker or out to Mental Health Counsellor (secondary); and
- Contact with / referral to community agencies (e.g., Intersections, Children’s Mental Health, Child and Youth Clinic) to support youth and their 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.