



Promoting Positive School Climate and Well-being  
September 2020



## 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. Mary Catholic School (Read)* 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's 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, conflicts, 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. Mary Catholic School (Read)* will communicate and share with the school community, policies and procedures including the Board/school Code of Conduct (Appendix A), Equity and Inclusion 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 relationships;
  - The purposeful promotion of “Wellness” in all aspects of working and learning;
  - Promotion of community supports as we are “The First Door” for students, staff and families;
  - Using Restorative Justice Practices as a first strategy to repair and strengthen relationships, before using punitive measures.
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;
  - Presentations to School Council on bullying prevention and positive school climate;
  - The direct engagement of School Council in the strategic planning process for the School Improvement Plan;
  - The creation of parent engagement activities that promote social and community involvement geared for parents in our community.

## **II. Evaluation of Evidence**

**St. Mary Catholic School (Read)** 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 Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) and other relevant information.
- Identify children and youth involved in bullying, or potentially 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.
- Identify strategies and learning opportunities for students, staff and families around the deeper implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.
- Review and update the School’s strategies as a result of gathering new information and gaining feedback from students directly.
- Share the updated strategies with the school community.

### Pre-evaluation strategy

1. The School's main issues of concern raised by students, staff and parents in the school MDI surveys and based on other relevant information are the following:
  - **Students understand the importance of education but report a low level of connection with staff in both Grade 4 and Grade 7.**
  - **Students are not involved in creative activities outside of school and report almost no exposure to the Arts, Music or Cultural Activities unless facilitated by the school;**
  - **Our Grade 4 students report a high degree of struggle in the area of Self-Regulation and being able to access the skills to overcome situations that require these skills;**
  - **While students are highly supported at home and feel safe and valued, they have little organizational outlets around them to explore their interests.**
2. The School's areas of focus with respect to the physical environment are:
  - **Remove barriers that might impede all students from accessing the areas they need to learn in;**
  - **Create a space that honors the voice, history and needs for students of all ability levels and interests;**
  - **Create a physical environment that actions our Equity and Inclusion philosophy and welcomes all community members to a Faith filled environment.**
  - **Further embed elements from our Indigenous brothers and sisters' lived experiences and knowledge; with a specific link to the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte.**
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*;
  - Students can report issues to any adult in the building who will help them resolve the issue, or report it to another adult who can help them, including the school Principal and Vice-Principal;
  - Parents are also strongly encouraged to contact their child's teacher, or school Principal and Vice-Principal to report issues that may be affecting their child from feeling safe and welcomed at school.
4. Based on a review of the MDI survey results and other relevant information, the following areas have shown success/improvement:
  - There has been a strong decline in at-risk behaviours by our older students.

- Students are reporting a greater sense of confidence in their personal and physical self-image as they get older.
  - Students feel that they have a strong connection with parents, extended family and caring adults in the community around them.
  - There was also a sense of growing pro-social behaviour by wanting to do “service projects” for others as a way to demonstrate their personal abilities and beliefs.
5. Based on the school climate survey and other relevant data, the School proposes the following action plan to address areas requiring improvement:

Students did convey a sense of not being connected to an adult in the school, which could be linked to the younger students reporting having needs around self-regulation and problem-solving skills:

- More explicit instruction around mental health and wellness terms and their meanings and how to action them in our own lives.
- Specific instruction around strategies for expression of need regarding personal safety and feelings of anxiety/stress.
- Introducing programs through our Child and Youth Worker that teach students about stress, anxiety and potential social situations with concrete strategies for them to use with a focus on positive outcomes for all.
- Regular “check-ins” with our Student Council to gain student level insight into some of the issues and trends they feel students need support with.
- The integration of community based support staff into our learning and social experiences for our students and their families. How do we connect people in need with the right agency?
- More engagement of students with exceptionalities and their parents. Looking for the **hidden and suppressed voices** when making major decisions around school culture and our working processes.
- A focus on the Good Learnings/Teachings of our Indigenous brothers and sisters to create a culture of inclusion where truly: **“All Are Welcomed in This Place”**.

### Post-evaluation Strategy

The School will reassess the results of subsequent MDI 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 MDI 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:
  - *School Code of Conduct (Appendix A)* ;
  - Ministry of Education Provincial Parent Guide;
  - Engagement of our Catholic School Council;
  - Use of Newsletters and school website to share information with parents.
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 <http://schools.alcdsb.on.ca/shrb/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>.

## 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 and empowering students to be active agents in our preventative strategies.

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 MDI Surveys and other related data;
  - The team will help the Principal/Vice-Principal and their leadership team set goals that address specifically creating a caring and safe community where all are welcomed;
  - Help the Principal/Vice-Principal address specific issues and trends that may arise in the school and require a team approach to addressing;
  - Help identify key issues, strategies and solutions that have been used during the school year to the broader community.
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:
- Use of Restorative Justice Practices;
  - The use of relationship building and mentoring as the “strongest” teaching tool and use of student voice;
  - The close working relationship with our Catholic Parent Council to create opportunities for community building and strengthening relationships;
  - Creating a physical environment that is accessible to all students and their families, while reflecting their voices and lived experiences;
  - On-going and meaningful dialogue with parents and guardians; eliciting their voice in the creation of a community that reflects their lived experiences.
- 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;
  - Mental Health and Addictions Nurse (when appropriate);
  - Curriculum based learning that specifically addresses concepts of well-being, personal safety and belonging.
- 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 Weeks;
  - Leadership opportunities for students in all divisions.
- d) Awareness-raising strategies for students, e.g. social-emotional learning, empathy, developing self-regulation skills:
- Kids Have Stress Too
  - FRIENDS and Fun FRIENDS
  - Minds-On Curriculum
  - ECO Club
  - Student Council
- 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;



- Potential community presence through participation in events hosted by various community partners when possible.
  - Modelling for our students when and why we as faith leaders engage in supporting/bettering our communities through our own community faith leadership and charitable works.
  - Active outreach to all parents through “engagement” not just “informing” of the Good News in our school, while seeking their input on goals and dreams for their children.
- 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;
  - Integration of Catholic social justice teaching in all curriculum areas;
  - Specific instruction around mental health, wellness, personal safety, equity and inclusion, accessibility and social skills to assist students in navigating their learning journey beyond their years with us.
- g) Strategies to support and encourage role modeling by caring adults and student leaders within the School and school community:
- Catholic Student Council;
  - Peer assistance and mentoring programs (when possible);
  - Staff attendance at Catholic School Council events.
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](http://www.alcdsb.on.ca));
  - Regular professional development on diverse teaching pedagogies like inquiry, experiential education, special education, outdoor education and Aboriginal education.
  - Work with Board Special Assignment Teachers to integrate specific teaching strategies into teachers’ daily practice, promoting a sense of well-being and belonging for their students.

## V. 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 Workers (Mental Health Leader);
  - Referral of students to school Youth Worker.

**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.

## **Appendix A: School Code of Conduct**

### **St. Mary Catholic School Code of Conduct 2020-2021**



#### **Community Vision:**

As a Catholic Faith community, we believe that all are ***All Are Welcomed in This Place*** because we are called by God to promote, inspire and love one another as He has commanded us. We are a unique community that demonstrates the values that we proclaim through many different venues and interactions. We also recognize that we are responsible to each other, to ourselves and to our community at large. This means that we cannot only think about ourselves, but are also called to remember our brothers and sisters in every decision we make.

#### **Together We Are Stronger:**

A fundamental belief we have for our community is the idea that as a collective we not only possess strength; but we also possess a collective wisdom that will help us overcome any challenge we face. We firmly believe that our students have a great deal of knowledge, strength and can contribute to the common good in their own unique ways. We believe that all students have “something” they are great at and value an asset model when thinking about their talents. The idea of community is also one that is at the core of our Church and our weekly celebration of the Eucharist.

#### **Home/School/Church as One:**

In a community where we are so closely tied together, there is a strong bond between the families we serve, the school where we serve them and the Church that guides both through incredible leadership by our Parish Priest. This triad of relationship mirrors our belief in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and is one that often is called upon to get us through crisis and challenge. Through our morning announcements, sacramental preparations, daily religious instruction and monthly masses; we are living the virtues and scriptures of our faith. We are also blessed to be able to openly and publically declare the Good News in an effort to further strengthen our relationships and proclaim the messages of God that we have been taught and teach to our students.

## **Stewardship**

#### **Our Vision:**

As a community we are blessed with many natural gifts from God. If we believe this we then must take a greater level of responsibility to ensure these gifts are given the same respect as our spiritual gifts from Him. St. Mary is a Platinum Certified ECO School, which is a clear commitment to maintaining not only our school environment, but educating ourselves about the larger issues facing the global community.

#### **We Believe:**

- Students have the ability to understand the impact of their choices on the environment around them.
- All students will value and support our ECO School and Boomerang initiatives to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Conservation can become a way of life and one that is integral to all curriculum areas.
- Every community member who utilizes our school community will uphold the values of stewardship, conservation and understanding that we so value.
- Together we can create a different outcome for future generations if we work as a unit with a common goal of protecting God's creation.

**If you need help we will/can:**

- Provide you with our data around our school's reduction success with our carbon footprint.
- Have a student or teacher work with you to further your understanding around the key issues.
- Provide opportunities for direct service.
- Have a community partner share their passion and knowledge around stewardship.
- Give you the opportunity to record your thoughts, research ideas and plan upcoming preventative measures to strengthen your relationship with our community.
- Provide you with a leadership opportunity for you to shine and become a leader in the preservation of God's gift through nature and our environment.

## **Discipleship**

**Our Vision:**

Everything we do, we are given and will be given is because of our relationship with God. We are the recipients of his ultimate gift through the birth, death and resurrection of His only Son Jesus. This special relationship is at the core of all that we do at St. Mary. Simply put, we think differently, act differently and hold each other to standards based on teachings through the Church. As a school we are in relationship with St. Charles of Borromeo Parish and the parishioners who support this community. This brings a great level of commitment and support for our students and links them to a universal Church that is present around the world.

**We Believe:**

- God has called all community members to "BE" his Church.
- The power of our scripture teachings can provide us with a vision for living that will lead to our eternal salvation.
- All children are called to God and because of this are inherently good.
- As a faith community we are in relationship with each other on a deeper level and are called to support each other.
- We have a responsibility to care for those in need around us, in our community and globally.
- Every person in our community experiences their own faith development journey and we are powerful sources of growth and support for.
- We are expected to be voices of change for social justice and equity amongst all we encounter.

**If you need help we will/can:**

- Share our beliefs around certain topics through building a common understanding of God's expectations for us.
- Provide opportunities for further exploration of scripture teaching.
- Invite our Parish Priest to share his vision and guidance based on your needs for personal growth.
- Construct opportunities to allow you to further grow in your own faith development.

Our goal is to ensure that everyone who comes to our community is willing and supported in their own faith development, building stronger ties amongst their peers and a stronger sense of self.

## **Scholarship**

### **Our Vision:**

As a school community we value the Four Core Instructional Strategies, improving our understanding around assessment and evaluation and create conditions where our students will become academic risk-takers. We believe that a solid foundation in reading, writing and mathematical thinking form the core skills necessary to continue to build on the strengths our students already possess.

### **We Believe:**

- Every student has unique strengths and potential.
- Exploration and deep thinking are always at the root of learning.
- The natural environment is one of the best classrooms and can inspire innovation from our students.
- Children naturally want to explore, create and dream; adults sometimes need to teach and empower them to do this.
- Teaching is a calling based on nurturing children's God given talents.
- Our students with exceptionalities are important to our school community and remind us that brilliance comes in many different ways.
- All parents and children want the best for their future and scholarship is key in helping them achieve greatness.

### **If you need help we will/can:**

- Differentiate our teaching so you can learn the best way possible to show what you know in multiple formats, or using technology.
- Create an Individual Education Plan based on your strengths, with realistic goals for your personal growth.
- Look for staff, agencies and other community members to help construct a unique program for you.
- Allow you to try something more than once; perfection is in changing the way we think, not just getting something right the first time.
- Look for peers to mentor and coach you as you master certain skills through rich and relevant learning tasks.
- Explore testing options that might help us find out the unique way you see things.

One of the key principles to our belief in scholarship is that fairness does not mean same. There will be times when a student may need individualized attention, or supports and they are entitled to it without being measured against other students, or judged.

## Wellness

### Our Vision:

**“Wellness starts with “ME” at St. Mary Read”.** We know that our students, staff and families face great challenges at different points in their lives and if we trust our relationships we can support each other in powerful ways. At STMS our goal is to remove the stigma around mental health and wellness and to promote the concept of redemption and restorative justice when we are supporting each other. We also know that in order to fully understand our community’s needs for wellness we also need to respect and listen to everyone’s voice, history and dreams for the future. Our vision of wellness is not based on single events, but a constant stream of discussion, community events and honest conversations about what we need from each other.

### We Believe:

- Every member of our community wants to belong and has a right to belong.
- Relationship building and maintenance is the best way to support those who might need help.
- Mental health supports are not always a “forever” thing, sometimes they are short term and impactful.
- Student success is tied closely to their sense of mental wellbeing and belonging and is something that needs to be built, not assumed.
- As a community we possess a lot of influence and power to meet the needs of those who are struggling amongst us.
- In order for students to excel at wellness they need to SEE themselves reflected in the school building and what they are being taught.
- Our aboriginal and first nation families possess great knowledge and teachings that are vital to wellness.
- We are the “First Door” and there is no wrong door, we will always help if we can.

### If you need help we will/can:

- Discuss the help you need and make plans to implement, or find it.
- Provide access to our board social worker, youth worker or other professionals who might be able to help.
- Work with outside agencies to create a wrap-around level of support for your wellness.
- Support you in the referral process to outside agencies who specialize in the help you need.
- Be empathetic, caring and realistic about the level and kinds of supports we provide. And facilitate what we are capable of.

## Belonging

### Bullying Prevention and Building Relationships:

**Our Vision:**

Everyone has a right to feel safe in our community. We recognize the seriousness of bullying behavior and are committed to the power of building positive relationships.

**We Believe:**

- Both people involved in a bullying situation need support.
- We believe in an inclusive, caring Catholic school community.
- It is important to value different perspectives and experiences to create our community.
- Relationships can be repaired if they are authentic and positive to start with.
- The responsibility of relationship building belongs to everyone.

**Progressive Discipline:**

**Our Vision:**

The purpose of discipline is for growth and learning. We believe it should be strengths based, to establish our students for success. At the core, progressive discipline is about maintaining relationship with our community.

**We Believe:**

- The use of a continuum best meets the needs of students.
- We will reflect on our students' strengths and needs to help them grow.
- Discipline should be founded on the ideas of redemption; growth and dignity.

**Attendance:**

We believe that "every school day counts." (Dr. Wayne Hammond) To create strong relationships we need to be in community as much as possible. We also need our students to be with us to help them learn and gain the skills they will need for their future success. Attendance is about the relationship between home and school and a common understanding of benefit.