



We are the best versions of ourselves as we learn, love and pray together.



**Promoting Positive School
Climate and Well-being**

Updated: November 2019

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, guardians and community partners.

I. Education, Awareness, and Outreach

St. Thomas More Catholic School (the 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:

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
communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals.

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;
- Educators model and nurture positive, respectful and inclusive behaviour and attitudes;
- Support relationship building and focus on promoting healthy relationships using a variety of strategies;
- Encourage students' voice and engage them in conversations about their school's learning environment;
- Educate parents and students, and engage in open and ongoing dialogue 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;
- Each students' dignity (self-worth) is respected as we communicate with the student and families.

St. Thomas More 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 relationships;
- School-based initiatives promoting caring and kindness "Find Kind" board, Spirit Days, Whole School Community Building activities and classroom lessons;
- Youth Worker is present and visible within the classrooms supporting lessons.

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;
- Presentations to School Council on bullying prevention and positive school climate;
- Encourage dialogue and sharing with students and families about proactive strategies.

II. Evaluation of Evidence

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

Equity Goal: Create a healthy, resilient, inclusive environment that teaches about living a balanced lifestyle (pray, fuel, chill, chat, and play) so students feel they belong, and feel welcomed.

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 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;
- Review and update the School's strategies as a result of gathering new information;
- 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 climate surveys and based on other relevant information are the following:
 - Creating relationships with students where they feel comfortable with an adult to share their concerns (i.e. bus issues, yard issues, classroom/peer conflict, family dynamics);
 - How to help children build relationships with their peers and keep them (i.e. how to play on the yard, what to do when there is a conflict; how to self-regulate);
 - Meet student's basic needs and provide nurturing, inclusive and caring learning environments.
2. The School's areas of focus with respect to the physical environment are:
 - Ensuring active supervision of students inside the school and on school property (adults wear bright vests for visibility);
 - Create calming spaces both within the classroom and throughout the school.
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*;
 - Follow the School Code of Conduct;
 - Use a progressive and supportive approach to issues.
4. Based on a review of the school climate survey results and other relevant information, the following areas have shown success/improvement:
 - Students' reporting of feeling safe at school
 - Students' comfort level with talking to staff about problems
5. Based on the school climate survey and other relevant data, the School proposes the following action plan to address areas requiring improvement:
 - Ensure that each student can name at least one caring adult in the building;
 - Promote healthy relationships with our community partners through recreation (sharing circles, staff versus students' volleyball/basketball);
 - Provide breakfast daily for students and staff to eat in 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:
 - *Link to school Code of Conduct;*
 - [Ministry of Education Provincial Parent Guide;](#)
 - Communication through the [School Website](#).

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;
 - 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:
 - Team members are responsible for addressing issues identified in the School Climate Surveys and other related data;
 - Monitor and review procedures related to Safe Schools policy;
 - Encourage activities that promote a sense of community, wellness and respect.
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:
 - Create a positive school climate;
 - Integrate curriculum connections (Minds Up, Fun Friends, Circles);
 - Encourage student engagement.
 - 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
 - Community Police Officers
 - Safe and Caring Adult
 - c) Activities that promote a positive school climate:
 - School-wide focus on theme of “Find Kind”;
 - School-wide social justice and charity initiatives;
 - Spirit Weeks
 - Intramural Sports Program, Knitting Club, Harry Potter Club, Sign Language Club, Board Games Club;
 - Community Games (Staff vs Students);
 - Wednesday Wellness Walks;
 - Buddy Groups (Reading Buddies, Fitness Buddies)

- d) Awareness-raising strategies for students, e.g. social-emotional learning, empathy, developing self-regulation skills:
- Mentally Healthy Classroom Resources
 - Minds Up Program
 - Kelso's Choice
 - Fun Friends
 - Self-regulation (Shanker)
- 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;
 - Community Police Officer engaging in recreation and sharing circles;
 - Hospitality Sunday;
 - Welcome Back BBQ;
 - Advent Celebration, Thanksgiving Turkey Lunch;
 - Valentine's Day Community Dance/Spring Fling Community Dance
- 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;
 - Religious and Family Life Education;
 - School-wide Social Justice Projects;
 - Reading buddies, Fitness Buddies;
 - Various clubs (i.e. Intramurals, Board Games Club; Knitting club, Breakfast Club).
- g) Strategies to support and encourage role modeling by caring adults and student leaders within the School and school community:
- Social and Ecological Justice;
 - Breakfast Club;
 - Intramural Program;
 - Wellness Walks;
 - Board Games
3. The School has identified the following learning and training opportunities for school staff and the school community that are needed:
- Trauma Informed Practices for Educators;
 - Promoting Positive School Climate and Well-being pamphlet for parents (available at the Board's website www.alcidsb.on.ca).

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 Worker;
- Referral of students to school Youth Worker or out to Mental Health Counsellor