



SAFE, CARING AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

The Board of Education believes that every child deserves an education free from bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment and violence. Student safety is paramount and can only be realized through ongoing focus on fostering safe, caring and inclusive school communities and ensuring schools have appropriate education, prevention and intervention strategies in place.

The purpose of this policy is to guide staff in their efforts to create safe, caring and inclusive learning environments and develop prevention and intervention strategies for dealing with harmful behaviours and threats or risks of violence.

Central to these efforts to create safe, caring and inclusive learning communities is the Board's commitment to support staff as they seek to:

- develop positive school cultures and focus on prevention
- use school-wide efforts to build compassionate communities which foster respect, inclusion, fairness and equity
- set, communicate and consistently reinforce clear expectations of conduct
- teach, model and encourage positive social behaviours that contribute to the school community, solve problems in peaceful ways, value diversity and defend human rights
- assume responsibility, in partnership with the wider community, for resolving critical safety concerns
- develop multi-disciplinary (multi-agency) community protocols for violence threat or risk assessment
- work together to better understand issues such as:
 - bullying
 - intimidation
 - harassment
 - discrimination
 - racism
 - sexual orientation and gender identity
 - sexism and homophobia
 - behaviours that are harmful to self and others
- and to learn new skills to respond to the above
- respond consistently to incidents in a fair and reasoned manner, using interventions that repair harm, strengthen relationships and restore a sense of belonging
- establish procedures, protocols and practices that promote school safety
- engage in continuous professional learning designed to foster safe school communities and address emerging safety concerns
- maintain a secure and calm environment that fosters alert and engaged learners



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DEFINITIONS:

- a) **Bullying** occurs when one or more individuals target another with the purpose of harassing or inflicting verbal, physical or emotional harm. Bullying is different from ordinary conflict or quarreling: when bullying occurs, there exists a power imbalance:
- b) **Intimidation** occurs when one or more individuals target another with the intent of causing fear and apprehension through verbal and/or non-verbal threats.
- c) **Discrimination** occurs, for the purposes of this policy, when an individual is subjected to insults, ridicule, or alienation for reasons of:
 - race
 - colour
 - ancestry
 - place of origin
 - religion
 - marital status
 - family status
 - physical and mental disability
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
 - gender identity or expression; and
 - age
 - other like discrimination

The Board of Education supports the values expressed in the *BC Human Rights Code* (2016) prohibiting discrimination based on the items listed above.

- d) **Harassment** occurs when one or more individual's verbal and/or non-verbal (e.g. gestures) behaviour towards others is, and is intended to be: insulting, humiliating, malicious, degrading or otherwise offensive.
- e) **Violence** occurs when words or actions (threatened or actual) are used with the intent of harming oneself, another person, or a group.

References:

- *Administrative Procedure: Safe, Caring and Inclusive School Communities*
- *BC Human Rights Code (July 2016)*

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Purpose

The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to provide safe, caring and inclusive learning environments in our schools. Bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment and violence are behaviours that can disrupt a student's ability to learn and interfere with the school's ability to maintain an appropriate learning environment. Therefore, bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, or violence constitute serious misconduct that warrants appropriate intervention should it occur and the implementation of educational programs and administrative measures that are designed to prevent it from occurring.

This administrative procedure is explicitly directed toward the conduct of students in their interaction with other students. Also included in this administrative procedure is the bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, or violence toward adults by students.

Bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, or violence by adults toward students or of adults by other adults are similarly prohibited but are governed by procedural guidelines in other school district administrative procedures - Collective Agreements, Human Rights and Workers Compensation Legislation and in *the Criminal Code of Canada*.

School Codes of Conduct (previously Board Policy 7001)

The Board of Education believes that a "Code of Conduct" with broad support of the students, parents, teachers, staff and administrative personnel greatly contributes to a safe and effective learning environment. The Board of Education also believes that there should be ongoing communication and consultation regarding behavioral expectations of students within the school community.

The Board of Education supports the values expressed in the *BC Human Rights Code* respecting the rights of all individuals in accordance with the law – prohibiting discrimination based on race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical and mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and age.

Principals and Vice-Principals shall establish, with the involvement of students, parents, and staff a code of conduct for the school. This code of conduct shall be in compliance with the *Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct Order [Ministerial Order 276/07(M341/16)]*.

1. This code shall establish expectations for student conduct:
 - a. within the school facility in all school programs and activities
 - b. outside the school facility in all school programs and activities
 - c. going to and from school, when the school deems it to be appropriate
2. Principals and Vice-Principals have the overall responsibility to see that codes of conduct are enforced and have paramount authority for the discipline of students.
3. All adults in the school are expected to be vigilant and to act thoughtfully and responsibly in ensuring the safety and security of the students and the building.

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4. Strategies are to be in place for active teaching and promotion of the behavioural expectations outlined in the School Code of Conduct.
5. Significant breaches of the Code of Conduct and related disciplinary/restorative responses noted in the district student information system.
6. The code of conduct will clearly state a range of consequences for inappropriate behavior.
7. Each school's code of conduct shall be filed for approval by the Board of Education by October 15th, annually.
8. The school's code of conduct will be informally reviewed annually with input from students, staff, parents, and administration. Confirmation of the review will be filed with the Superintendent of Schools by April 15th of each school year (*attached form*).
9. The school's code of conduct shall be posted publically.
10. All reasonable steps will be taken to prevent retaliation against a student who has made a complaint of a breach of a Code of Conduct.

Student Dress Code (*previously Board Policy 7003*)

1. Each school is required to develop, in consultation with students, parents, teachers, staff and administrative personnel, a school dress code.
2. The school's dress code may be incorporated into the school's student code of conduct.
3. The school's dress code should address such issues as the following:
 - a. the student's health and safety;
 - b. protective clothing/equipment for participants in specialized programs;
 - c. the wearing of clothing, insignias, symbols or adornments which may promote the use of controlled substances including, but not limited to, drugs, alcohol, tobacco;
 - d. the wearing of clothing which features offensive or vulgar words, pictures or drawings;
 - e. the wearing of clothing which features phrases/pictures of a sexual nature or phrases/pictures that are derogatory regarding a person's race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical and mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and age;
 - f. the wearing of clothing which features any group or philosophy which advocates violence or disruption;
 - g. the wearing of clothing which is considered unduly revealing.
4. The school's dress code may be reviewed annually by students, parents, teachers, staff and administrative personnel as part of the code of conduct.

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Education for Prevention of Bullying, Intimidation, Discrimination, Harassment and Violence

The Board expects that each school in the district will ensure:

- a. that communication with parents, at least annually, includes emphasis of the seriousness with which the district regards bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, or violence and the provisions of this administrative procedure.
- b. that students are informed on an annual basis, in language appropriate to their age level about the following:
 - the definition of bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, and violence
 - the expectations of the district for student conduct with regard to bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, and violence - including the obligation of students to report to adults incidents of bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, or violence
 - the interventions listed in this administrative procedure

Complaints of Bullying, Intimidation, Discrimination, Harassment, or Violence

An allegation of bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, or violence shall be made informally through a verbal report to a staff member or, more formally, in writing to the principal or vice-principal of the school or a district administrator. A trusted adult may accompany students making complaints.

Complaints may be made anonymously but those making such complaints should understand that an anonymous complaint might not be resolved satisfactorily due to the limitations placed on an investigation by anonymity.

Persons lodging complaints may request that their identity be kept confidential for fear of reprisal. Staff should endeavour to honour such requests but any person lodging a complaint must be informed that due process may, at some stage of the investigation and intervention process or of a subsequent legal process, require the District to release all information.

All staff are responsible for receiving complaints of bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, or violence and for ensuring that the most appropriate staff member is informed of the complaint.

Falsely Reporting Bullying, Intimidation, Discrimination, Harassment, or Violence

It is a violation of this district administrative procedure to knowingly report false allegations of bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, or violence. Persons found knowingly to have filed a false report will be subject to appropriate discipline and/or the filing of a complaint with other appropriate authorities.

Retaliation

No student, school employee, parent or volunteer may engage in reprisal or retaliation against a victim, witness, or other person who brings forward information about an act of bullying, intimidation,

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discrimination, harassment, or violence. Reprisal/retaliation or shunning/isolation is prohibited and will result, where appropriate, in discipline and/or in the filing of a complaint with other appropriate authorities.

Investigation

All complaints of bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, or violence will be taken seriously and will be followed up in a timely manner. In cases a criminal offence has occurred, the school or district administration will notify the RCMP. Similarly, in all cases where child abuse is suspected, a report will be made to the appropriate ministry. An investigation of bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, or violence shall include obtaining input from the person(s) alleged to have been harmed by the behaviour, from the alleged perpetrator and from one witness, (if one exists) to the alleged behaviour.

More intensive interviewing of those involved and/or of witnesses may be required at the discretion of the investigator, depending on the nature of the behaviour or incident.

Intervention

When there is a finding that has occurred intervention will be:

- appropriate to the degree of misconduct
- educative, preventive and/or restorative
- implemented in a timely manner
- appropriate intervention may include, for example, one or more of the following actions:
- an opportunity for those harmed by the behaviour to explain to the perpetrator that his/her conduct is unwelcome, offensive or inappropriate either in writing or face-to-face
- a statement from the principal/designate to an individual that such behaviour is not appropriate and could lead to discipline
- a general public statement from the principal/designate to the school as a whole which outlines this administrative procedure without identifying those involved or revealing details of previous behaviour or incidents
- arranging measures which are designed to provide those harmed with restitution of status or sense of self-worth
- counselling or educative measures designed to support any students involved with bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, or violence – including both those who may have been harmed and those who are responsible
- disciplinary measures up to and including suspension or expulsion from a regular educational program
- notification of other agencies as deemed by the principal/designate to be appropriate or legally required

Student Locker Searches (*previously Board Policy 7040*)

A student locker search may be undertaken if there are reasonable grounds to believe that a school rule has been or is being violated and that evidence of the violation will be found in the student's locker.

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1. All requests/questions regarding student locker searches will be referred to the Principal of the school.
2. Students shall be advised at the time they are assigned a locker of the following Rules and Conditions of Use under which the locker is assigned:

The locker is assigned to a student for use during the school year based on the following rules and conditions of use:

- a. Students are responsible for the locker which is assigned to them and the locker is not to be used by any other person.
- b. Only approved locks may be used on student lockers and the combination of the lock must be registered at the office.
- c. No illegal substances, weapons or other prohibited or offensive material are to be placed in school lockers.
- d. School officials may search student lockers at any time and without prior notice in order to ensure compliance with the conditions of use and other school policies and rules. It is recommended that an additional staff member be present when a locker is searched, except in an emergency situation.
- e. Permission to use the locker may be terminated where a student does not comply with the conditions of use or school policies or rules.
- f. If any student has reason to believe that any locker contains anything which would threaten the safety of other students, staff of any other person, that student is expected to immediately report the information to a teacher, Vice Principal or Principal. The name of the student making the report will be kept confidential.

Questioning of Students by Law Enforcement Authorities (*previously Board Policy 7035*)

School and district administration should be aware of the current provisions and requirements of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and other pertinent legislation.

Issues of particular importance to school and district administration in current legislation are:

- a. the 'ban on publication' provisions which seek to protect the identity of young offenders or those accused or suspected of committing an offence
- b. the potential admissibility of all statements made by students to school authorities

The RCMP School Liaison Officer is authorized to discuss police matters directly with students at the school and, where appropriate or required by law, make contact with the parent or guardian of a student being questioned. This does not preclude the questioning of students by other RCMP officers who have the legal right to do so.

Where practicable, the designated RCMP School Liaison Officer should be involved when students are to be questioned by police.

Should the parent or guardian not be available, the Principal or designate may, with the agreement of the student, act in loco parentis with his/her primary concern being the protection of the rights of the student.

No school district employee shall act or be required to act as a representative of the police.

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Routine cooperation with the police, where such cooperation is a legal or reasonable expectation of school and district personnel such as providing student contact information or arranging meeting space, does not constitute acting as a representative of the police.

The Principal or designate acting in loco parentis in a police investigation shall not assume the lead role in subsequent school investigations or outcomes related to the matter(s) originally under investigation.

Unless otherwise instructed by the RCMP, the Principal or designate (as soon as practicable) shall inform the parent and/or guardian of any case where a student is accused of an alleged offence or is apprehended.

The Principal or designate shall proceed with any school-level investigation and/or other discipline-related steps as necessary pursuant to school and district policy.

The Principal or designate shall make it clear to students and parents that school-related consequences may be determined separately from the police investigation and outcomes, and that information gained from statements by students to police may result in school and/or school district level consequences.

Violence, Threat, Risk Assessment (VTRA)

Trained multidisciplinary teams at both the school and district level will be guided by the *Assessing Violence Potentials: Protocol for Dealing with High-Risk Student Behaviours* when responding to threats.

Each school is to review this threat assessment policy with all staff and students at the beginning of each school year as well as with the school PAC, and with parents/guardians through the school newsletter and/or website in order to provide "Fair Notice" that each threat will be taken seriously.

Students and staff who become aware of a threat have a duty to inform the school principal/vice principal immediately.

The principal or vice principal is expected to secure the school environment by detaining students involved in a threatening or violent situation, notifying parents/guardians, implementing the school code of conduct as appropriate to the situation or by taking any other immediate action deemed necessary to ensure student and staff safety.

The school threat assessment team is to be notified of all threats or violent situations and will coordinate the school's threat assessment procedures.

The suspension of students for engaging in threatening or violent acts is not to be a substitute for a thorough threat assessment and intervention plan; however, suspension may be used as an interim intervention as the threat assessment is conducted and within the guidelines of the suspension policy until such time as an adequate intervention plan can be implemented as appropriate.

School threat assessment teams may be formed to assess intervention needs, based on the level of the threat (low, medium, high), consult with outside experts, and provide intervention recommendations to

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the school coordinator and to the school principal as per the district VTRA intervention planning document.

When the threat assessment protocol is activated, a designated Threat Assessment Team member will notify parents/guardians when it is deemed appropriate. Whenever possible, parents should be an integral part of the VTRA process.

For serious threats requiring significant interventions and protection of students and/or staff, a district threat assessment team will be convened by the Safe Schools Coordinator or superintendent.

The district threat assessment team will meet with the school threat assessment team coordinator to review the incident, assess the threat intervention needs, and make recommendations for intervention planning to the school principal for action and the superintendent of schools for information.

The resulting VTRA report and recommendations represent the collective opinion of the whole team rather than any one individual member of the team.

If students are suspended for threat containment purposes for up to and including 5 school days as per Board Policy 7030: *Suspension of Students* until the threat assessment is completed, then interim counselling and support services are to be provided as appropriate when students are suspended for up to and including 5 days to ensure student safety and well-being. Any recommended suspensions over 5 school days will be referred to the District Discipline Committee as per Board Policy 7030: *Suspension of Students*.

Schools are to report all threats involving threat assessment procedures to the superintendent's office outlining the incident, the assessed threat level, actions and interventions taken and planned.

Any communication with the media regarding incidents of violence, risk or threat will be done through the superintendent's office.

Appeal

All decisions of the Board or district staff are subject to appeal pursuant to Section 11 of the *School Act* and Board Bylaw 5: *Parent/Student Appeals to the Board of Education* and its attendant Administrative Procedure.

Other Laws

Nothing in this administrative procedure precludes any person harmed by alleged bullying, harassment, intimidation or violence from exercising his/her rights under procedures outlined in other laws; for example, *the Criminal Code of Canada* or civil action.

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Other District Policies and Procedures

Nothing in this administrative procedure is intended to prohibit discipline or remedial action for inappropriate student conduct that falls outside of the definition of bullying, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, or violence as defined in Board Policy 7000: *Safe, Caring and Inclusive School Communities*, but which is or may be prohibited by other district policies or by school codes of conduct.

References:

- *Board Policy 7000: Safe, Caring and Inclusive School Communities*
- *Board Policy 7001: Student Discipline and its attendant Administrative Procedure*
- *Violence, Threat-Making, Risk and Threat Assessment Community Protocol*
- *Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct Order [Ministerial Order 276/07(M341/16)]*
- *Youth Criminal Justice Act*
- *Guidelines: School Support for Trans and Gender Non-Conforming Students (Vancouver School Board)*