A TOOLKIT FOR SUPPORTING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Preventing Bullying Behaviours Revised: February 2020





OUR STORY

NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE YOU CAN LEARN HERE.

From the students, to the teachers, to the principals and staff.

Because here, education happens every minute, in every corner, of every school. Here, it isn't a between-the-bells thing it's a lifelong thing.

It's a division wide, school-to-school, network of learning. Where we never give up and we can't be more proud.

WHY?

Because we know learning makes us better.

Better students, better teachers, better leaders. It brings our communities closer and helps great ideas take shape.

HOW DO WE DO IT?

By understanding that every student is unique.
By creating a space where every student feels welcome.
And by inviting the whole family to participate in their education.
We do it by teaching, and inspiring, the whole child, until we create an environment where every student leaves school saying:



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Adapted from Edmonton Public Schools 'Preventing Bullying Behaviour'

PURPOSE

The best way to establish a positive school culture is to focus on the development of healthy interpersonal relationships.

In Alberta, all school staff members have a mandated responsibility to address bullying and inappropriate behaviour through relational approaches. This expectation is outlined in the Education Act, as well as in the Division's Administrative Procedures and board policies.

To support school staff, Northern Gateway Public Schools, with assistance from Edmonton Public Schools, has developed this toolkit that provides:

- strategies for addressing beliefs and attitudes that can enable bullying behaviors
- information and tools that promote a collective responsibility through systematic, school-wide collaboration
- guidance for teaching and modelling social skills, interpersonal skills, assertiveness, empathy and conflict resolution skills
- a social emotional learning (SEL) approach that aligns with Alberta Education's Curriculum and Programs of Study.

Expectations for principals:

- Review this resource.
- Review and meet the expectations for welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning environments.
- Focus on healthy relationship development to address bullying behaviours.
- Share appropriate information with all school and community stakeholders.



"Bullying is a relationship problem that requires relationship solutions." - PREVNet

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Alberta's <u>Plan for Promoting Healthy Relationships</u> <u>and Preventing Bullying</u> provides a clear link between healthy relationships and healthy development:

"Healthy relationships are based on the belief that everyone has value and is equal, and that the power in a relationship is shared. Positive interactions provide a base for good mental function and better overall health.

Conversely, negative or toxic stress, like abuse, neglect or ongoing bullying, weakens the brain structure and opens up the possibility for future developmental and behavioural changes."



Healthy relationships provide:

- security and stability
- a sense of being valued and belonging
- support to develop resiliency and guidance to learn essential skills
- protection from excessive stress



Bullying behaviour is NOT a part of healthy relationships.

In healthy relationships, encountering conflict is typical and expected.

Conflict is a disagreement about different beliefs, ideas, feelings or actions.

Conflict can cause stress.
Yet, learning to manage the stress related to conflict is important for social-emotional development and for building and maintaining positive relationships



Bullying behaviors are sometimes confused with conflict.

Conflict is not the same as bullying behaviour.

Alberta's Bullying Helpline:

1-888-456-2323 (24 hours, 7 days/week)
The helpline offers support and guidance in more than 170 languages.

Alberta's On-Line Chat Support:

Bullying Helpline Chat

Noon-8pm Daily English Only

WHAT IS BULLYING?

It is important to have a clear understanding of what bullying is and what bullying is not. Northern Gateway Public Schools has adopted the following definition from the Government of Alberta (June 1, 2015):

"Bullying means repeated and hostile or demeaning behavior by an individual in the community where the behavior is intended to cause harm, fear or distress to one or more other individuals in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to the individual's reputation."

Bullying behaviour has certain features that distinguish it from other forms of conflict, violence and abuse. In general, bullying behaviour involves:

- repetition
- intent to harm
- an imbalance of power

Forms of bullying behaviour

Physical bullying: hitting or kicking and/or taking or damaging personal property

Verbal bullying: taunts,

racial/religious/cultural slurs, name calling, putdowns, threats, slurs and intimidations

Social/relational(covert) bullying: exclusion from peer groups, gossip, ganging up on or group teasing

Cyber bullying: the use of technology to support deliberate, hostile and hurtful behaviours towards an individual or group of individuals

Homophobic/transphobic bullying: bullying behaviours that are motivated by prejudice against the person's actual or perceived sexual orientation gender identity or gender expression

Bullying behaviour is NOT...

Bullying is not a normal part of growing up and it does not build character. Bullying is a relationship problem. It is a learned behaviour that hurts everyone — those who get bullied, those doing the bullying and the people watching. It damages our schools, our communities and our society at large. It is the assertion of interpersonal power through aggression.

Student Health and Wellbeing

It is critical to address bullying behaviour. Students engaging in, and those impacted by inappropriate behaviour, may develop serious psycho-social, academic and health related effects such as:

- immediate and long term risk for emotional, behavioural and relationship problems
- vulnerabilities to sexual harassment and dating aggression that may later extend to workplace harassment, as well as marital, child and elder abuse
- developing into an adult or parent who bullies and/or enables bullying behaviour in children

Further information
Use the educator tool:
Critical Questions to Assess Bullying,
Aggression or Teasing

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A comprehensive approach to bullying behaviour demands collaboration and coordination between school staff, students, families and community members.

The information presented in this section provides an outline of the expectations related to the roles and responsibilities of school stakeholders. For more detailed descriptions visit The Society for Safe and Caring School Communities' website (safeandcaring.ca).

Principals/Administrators

School leaders provide vital leadership by setting the tone of the school. Principals administer evidence-informed approaches, strategies, practices and policies, and are expected to:

- meet the expectations outlined in board policies, administrative regulations and the Education Act
- share appropriate information with all school and community stakeholders
- assess school culture to obtain baseline data and determine the needs of the school (see Appendix II)
- address issues with an appropriate evidence based initiative (see Appendix II)
- identify bullying prevention and intervention strategies and establish supports to ensure a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning environment.

For example:

- ensure a clear understanding of behaviour expectations and consequences, and apply consistent consequences for bullying behaviour
- involve students in developing a safe reporting process and encourage students to use this process to break the code of silence around bullying behaviour (reporting vs. tattling)
- increase adult supervision in "hot spots" where bullying may occur
- establish effective mechanisms to support vulnerable students
- share healthy relationship messaging with all members of the school community
- work with and involve all stakeholders when issues arise

Resources:

- ★ Developing an Effective Code of Conduct
- ★ The Walk Around: A School Leader's Observation Guide
- ★ Pink Shirt Day

Educators and Support Staff

Educators set the tone for their classrooms by providing ongoing class time to teach healthy relationships and social emotional learning strategies. Support staff contribute to classroom teaching by using a common language that reinforces key learning strategies and understandings.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (cont'd)

All staff are expected to:

- build positive relationships with and among students and listen to their concerns
- develop the skills to identify, respond to and prevent bullying incidents
- intervene on the spot if bullying is witnessed
- reassure students who disclose bullying that you as the adult will act and follow up on all reports of bullying behaviour
- participate in school climate surveys
- develop the skills to address bullying behaviour in a safe, non-threatening manner

Additionally, teachers are also expected to:

- educate themselves on evidence-informed strategies and work with all stakeholders to address bullying issues
- teach students that school staff can be trusted and will be supportive
- post and consistently follow through with school expectations and the school's code of conduct
- communicate concerns to parents and students and debrief situations when needed
- draw attention to National Bullying Awareness Week (3rd week of November) and Pink Shirt Day (last Wednesday of February) to promote awareness and understanding of bullying and its consequences

Resources:

- ★ Guidelines for Best Practices
- **★** Media Smarts
- ★ Positive Behavioural Supports
- ★ The Walk Around: Teacher Companion Tool

STUDENTS

To prevent bullying, students require the confidence and skills to safely intervene and report inappropriate and hurtful behaviour. Learning opportunities should clearly outline the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships and allow for the practice of social skills, emotional regulation and healthy boundary setting.

Students are expected to:

- learn what bullying is, types of bullying, what is normal conflict and what bullying is not
- refrain from, not tolerate and report bullying behaviour whether it occurs at school, outside the school or online
- take responsibility for their own behaviour and follow school expectations, district policies and regulations related to student behaviour and conduct
- be a role model modelling the behaviours they value
- be a responsible citizen and report all incidents of bullying
- be a part of the solution
- tell an adult who they trust if they are experiencing difficulties and/or being bullied
- get involved in peer led healthy relationship/bullying prevention initiatives in their school and community

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (cont'd)

Resources:

- ★ Kids Help Phone
- **★** PREVNet

BROADER COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Police, neighbours, community organizations, local businesses, and parents/guardians need to be aware of how bullying and unhealthy relationships take place within the community and to:

- educate themselves on bullying and work with all stakeholders to build healthy positive relationships
- act as positive role models
- work as partners with our stakeholders to support initiatives
- assist in identifying and responding to bullying and unhealthy relationships among students
- support school initiatives through training, financial contributions and volunteering
- help spread bullying prevention and healthy relationship messages and principles of best practices in the community

Resources:

- **★** Bullying Prevention in Sports
- ★ Fact Sheet: Healthy Relationships
- ★ Media Smarts
- **★** PREVNet
- ★ What Adults Can Do To Prevent and Stop Bullying





TAKING PREVENTATIVE ACTION

Successful school-based bullying prevention initiatives require a coordinated school-wide plan that focuses on healthy relationship development. School plans should reflect the values, attitudes and climate of the school. The committee informing the plan should make up a diverse representation of school community members (i.e., including support staff, students, families, etc.). It is recommended that schools take the following steps for planning:

Step 1: Assess school culture

perspectives regarding school safety.
Assessment is vital. Data may be compiled from a number of sources (e.g., District Survey, questionnaires, focus groups, class discussions, climate assessment surveys – see Appendix III).

I: Collect data on student, staff and parent

Assessment should:

- identify what is currently happening in schools, how students, staff and parents feel, and where and when problems occur
- provide data to evaluate the effectiveness of programs/strategies currently being implemented
- provide information that supports the selection of resources and strategies that best address the needs of your school
- be ongoing as a means to determine if initiatives are effective

II: Analyze data and create baselines.

- use the data collected to identify supports in place already contributing to a positive school culture and to identify the nature and extent of possible problems including bullying behaviour
- use this baseline information to guide your school's planning for a proactive approach
- choose strategies that respond to your baseline data - for example, racism and homophobia/transphobia
- may arise as a school problem and the

strategies must appropriately address these particular forms of bullying

Step 2: Choose a focus of priority

Based on identified successes and issues, determine the approach you will take to create and/or sustain a positive school culture.

Step 3: Select a plan of action

- determine the resources available
- collaborate with staff members, students and stakeholders to create an action plan that addresses identified issues
- include evidence based strategies
- describe how actions will be taken to consistently reinforce the chosen strategies by all adults in the school
- outline how this plan will be implemented school-wide and how responsibilities will be shared
- develop a process to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the chosen strategies
- determine the cost associated with implementing a long-term plan

Step 4: Implement the plan

- identify lead teachers, parents, administrators, students and support staff, and provide training and school resources that support the strategies selected for the action plan
- review Edmonton Public Schools' policies and administrative regulations and ensure that school expectations and procedures align

TAKING PREVENTATIVE ACTION (cont'd)

- create a safe process and environment for school community members to bring concerns and issues forward
- offer learning opportunities to support families
- review the school's expectations and code of conduct to ensure it aligns with the plan
- reassess the school climate throughout the school year and continually evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives and supports in place

Resources:

- ★ Bullying Prevention Needs Assessment
- ★ Comprehensive School Health
- ★ Healthy School Planner
- ★ Key Elements of a Whole School Approach
- ★ Sample Strategies and Activities for a Whole School Approach for Bullying Prevention
- ★ Social Architecture: Supports for Positive Peer Dynamics
- ★ Suggested Timeline for Bullying Prevention School Activities

"Prevention and intervention efforts need to be across several types of relationship in order to address the complex social dynamics that influence bullying behaviours."

- The Healthy Relationships Project

NEED HELP?

Contact Alberta Human Services

Online chats are anonymous

(noon to 8 pm, 7 days/week)

Click here to begin online chat

RELATIONSHIP STRATEGIES

(Information adapted from PREVNet)

Protect and connect students who are bullied. Promote positive relationships by establishing buddies, circles of support and by highlighting individual strengths and talents for others to see.

Provide opportunities for students to practice positive leadership. Use leadership opportunities to teach students that they can use their power to create positive change.

Change group dynamics –**stop bullying before it starts**. Pay attention to and evaluate social dynamics (relationships) within peer groups. Unhealthy group dynamics often reinforce bullying and inappropriate behaviours.

Use social architecture to organize groups. Students who engage in bullying behaviour often have friends that also demonstrate bullying behaviour. Educators can use <u>social architecture</u> by choosing a random or planned strategy to create balanced groups in which all students are included and respected.

Encourage students to report. Convey the message that it is the responsibility of school staff to deal with bullying behaviour and that all incidents need to be reported. Clarify the difference between tattling and telling. Tattling is what you do to get someone in trouble; telling is something you do to get someone out of trouble.

Be a role model. Lead by example and refrain from using power aggressively.

Teach the social skills students lack. Social emotional learning strategies provide alternative pathways to negative peer interactions and help to support healthy relationship development.

Build on students' strengths. Encourage students to participate in activities they enjoy to help them feel good about themselves. Highlighting the strengths of a student for others to see can change their reputation within a peer group.

Be ready to listen and help. Be responsive in a way that allows students to feel safe in their school community. Don't put off reports of bullying behaviour.

APPENDIX I: Key Findings from Research

A school-wide focus on healthy relationship development reduces the incidence of bullying behaviour and contributes to a positive school culture.

- There is a correlation between high levels of self-awareness and the ability to manage and express emotions skills that reduce negative social interactions.¹
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) provides evidence-based strategies that improve students' social competence. High social competency is a prosocial factor that hinders aggressive and inappropriate behaviours.²
- There is significant evidence demonstrating that restorative practices (that are established within healthy relationship development) are more effective in preventing a recurrence of bullying behaviour in comparison to punitive measures or scripted programs. ³
- Research provides a reliable association between school cultures that focus on healthy relationship development and social emotional learning, and low levels of bullying and aggression.⁴
- Being a part of a healthy relationship with peers has shown to protect students from being victimized or bullied.⁵

The Healthy Relationships Project

<u>PREVNet</u> – Canada's national anti-bullying network of researchers and organizations created the Healthy Relationships Project to research the impact of healthy relationship development on children and youth. The findings of the project demonstrated a significant association with low quality (unhealthy) relationships and an increased likelihood that a student will engage in bullying behaviour. The project provided the following research implications for policy and curriculum consideration:

- Peers provide an important socialization context for many children and youth. To enhance
 the positive influences of peers and to mitigate the potential negative influences, adults
 supporting the development of children and youth need to attend to the complexity of
 peer dynamics.
- The quality of school relationships (i.e., school climate) is to a great extent dependent on school leaders. School leadership should promote healthy relationship development as a factor that can impact both the emotional and academic health of students.
- In order to address the complexity within the social dynamics that influence bullying behaviour, prevention and intervention efforts must be undertaken through several types of relationships.
- It is not possible for all relationships to be healthy. School communities support students by filling in *relationship gaps* by offering positive experiences and providing learning opportunities that develop the skills, capacity and attitudes for healthy relationships and for a healthy life.

APPENDIX II: School Climate Assessment Tools

TOOL	PURPOSE	LINK
Alberta Education The Walk Around	This tool is a checklist that can be used by administrators to complete a needs assessment. It is recommended that the School Leader Observation Guide is used in conjunction with the Teacher Companion Tool.	https://education.alberta. ca/media/3114867/the- walk-around-school- leader-revised.pdf
Joint Consortium for School Health Healthy School Planner	This free tool can be used by schools to assess the current health environment and for plans to make improvements.	http://healthyschoolplanner.com/
Ontario Ministry of Education School Climate Survey: Equity and Inclusive Education, Bullying Harassment	A set of four surveys provide a standardized way to assess the school climate in relation to equity and inclusive education, bullying and harassment.	Surveying Students in Grades 4 to 6 Surveying Students in Grades 7 to 12 Surveying School Staff Surveying Parents/Guardians
The Society for Safe and Caring Schools A Process Guide for School Leaders	This downloadable guide includes an assessment section called SET. School leaders can use this section to gather information about the school's readiness.	http://safeandcaring.ca/w p- content/uploads/2014/12 /Administrators- Guide March-2015.pdf

APPENDIX III: Selecting Appropriate Resources

"Preventing and reducing bullying is not a simple process because bullying is a highly complex problem that is shaped by individual, classroom, peer group, teacher, principal, family and community factors."

In May 2016, Dr. John LeBlanc of Dalhousie University presented the <u>Bullying Prevention</u>

<u>Programs for Children and Youth: A Guide to Program Selection</u> to school districts, providing an analysis of bullying prevention program effectiveness. LeBlanc and his team cautioned schools implementing bullying prevention programs as current research data indicates that many programs claiming to be evidence-based were having no or little effect on bullying prevention.

LeBlanc recommends targeted social emotional learning (SEL) that focuses on developing healthy relationships and welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning environment to achieve a desired significance in the reduction of bullying behaviours within school settings.

Dalhousie Media Release

Choosing Resources

(Information adapted from the <u>Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund</u> and PREVNet)

Schools often consider using resources from community or institutional partnerships to promote healthy relationship development. The following guiding questions are meant to help schools choose high quality and effective resources that can meet diverse needs of their learning community.

Questions to ask:

- What are the intended outcomes of the strategies and/or approach presented in the resource?
- Have you verified the effectiveness of the resource, strategies and/or approach?
- Has the resource been evaluated? What type of evaluation was done?
- Who developed the resource, strategies or approach? What are their credentials? Are these credentials appropriate for this type of resource?
- Does the resource, strategy, or approach align with Canada and Alberta health and education standards and messages (e.g., Alberta Government, Public Health Agency of Canada)?
- Does the resource, strategies, or approach focus on the whole school climate or the individual?

The Alberta Government has developed a fact sheet that provides the components of a positive, research-based prevention approach.

Read: Alberta's Plan for Promoting Healthy Relationships and Preventing Bullying

APPENDIX IV:

Components of a School-Wide Approach

Schools that experience success with mitigating bullying behaviours embed evidence-based strategies consistently across the school. The following criteria outline the parameters of an effective school-wide approach.

	Yes	No	Comments
An evidence based assessment tool is administered yearly to obtain baseline data.			
Adult leadership is a focus and includes modelling healthy relationships.			
Ongoing, collaborative action to address bullying behaviours takes place over the course of the school year. One-time or one-off universal interventions are avoided (e.g., a one-time assembly).			
The school's code of conduct outlines appropriate and inappropriate behaviours and is clearly communicated and understood by all members of the school community.			
An action plan is developed that includes strategies that are gender and age appropriate. Short and long term goals are considered in the planning.			
Roles and responsibilities for all community members are clearly communicated and shared. All school staff are involved with the focus of shaping the culture of the school over the long term.			
Information that guides the strategies of a school-wide approach come from evidence-based research.			
The school-wide approach encourages collaboration and partnerships with all stakeholders (parents, students, community, school staff).			

	Yes	No	Comments
Messaging on healthy relationships is embedded into the curriculum and in all areas of school life.			
School and classroom efforts ensure school-wide expectations and messaging are consistent.			
Support is provided for and focuses on all those involved and impacted by bullying and inappropriate behaviours.			

APPENDIX V: Additional Resources

RESOURCE: Guides and Toolkits	PURPOSE	LINK
Bullying Prevention and Intervention in the School Environment: Factsheets and Tools	Provide strategies and supports, including an action plan template.	https://www.prevnet.ca/
Bullying Prevention for Children and Youth: A Guide to Program Selection	Evaluate bullying prevention programs with respect to effectiveness, cost, and fit with a school's particular needs.	https://sites.google.com/site/c pscatlantic/
Guidelines for Best Practices: Creating Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions	Provide best practices that support an inclusive, high quality education for all.	https://education.alberta.ca/m edia/1626737/91383- attachment-1-guidelines- final.pdf
Watch and Listen: How to Recognize Bullying Behaviour	Provide information to caregivers on how to recognize bullying and inappropriate behaviour.	https://education.alberta.ca/m edia/ 3114896/what_adults_can_do_t o_prevent_bullying.pdf

RESOURCE: Websites	PURPOSE	LINK
Alberta Government: Bullying prevention for educators	The resources on this site raise awareness of what bullying is, how to stop it, and provides ways to foster change within societal attitudes.	https://www.alberta.ca/bullying- prevention-for- educators.aspx?utm source=redir ector
Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning	Provide social emotional learning resources for K-12 educators.	https://casel.org/about-2/
Institute for Sexual Minorities Studies and Services	Support agencies and institutions by translating research knowledge to community-based practice.	https://www.ualberta.ca/ismss
Kids Help Phone	Provide tools, games and information for children and youth that addresses bullying behaviours including cyberbullying.	https://kidshelpphone.ca/get- info/what-bullying/
National Aboriginal Health Organization	Provide culturally specific bullying prevention strategies including fact sheets, videos, links and presentations.	http://www.naho.ca/
PREVNet (Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network)	PREVNet (Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network)	https://www.prevnet.ca

RESOURCE: Websites	PURPOSE	LINK
Public Health Agency of Canada	Promote and protect the health of Canadians through leadership, innovation and action in public health.	https://www.canada.ca/en/public-lic-health/corporate/publications/chief-public-health-officer-reports-state-public-health-canada/chief-public-health-officer-report-on-state-public-health-canada-2011.html
The Society for Safe and Caring Schools	This site is dedicated to violence prevention and education. This organization has developed many tools, resources and workshops to assist adults with providing safe spaces for children and youth.	http://safeandcaring.ca/

APPENDIX VI: Identifying Ineffective Approaches

It is important that schools understand and avoid integrating the following bullying interventions which have been proven to be ineffective through research and practice:

- Simple short term solutions e.g., a motivational speaker: Current research indicates that effective bullying prevention approaches are those that attempt to change the climate of the school. One-off or short-term interventions are effective only when used to support a comprehensive school-wide approach.
- Program du jour approaches: Moving from program to program and implementing each for short periods of time does not produce long term change and can lead to staff burn out.
- Group treatment for children who bully: Research shows that grouping together students who engage in bullying behaviour for therapeutic reasons can have a negative impact.
- Enforcing zero tolerance policies for bullying: Such policies are ineffective because they
 do not address the complex nature and underlying issues of the social environment or
 the development experiences of the students involved. Options for helping students
 who engage in bullying behaviours are lost when schools rely on suspensions or
 expulsions.
- Selecting inappropriate supplemental material: Some resources may illustrate unreal
 or simplistic resolutions to bullying and relationship problems, or reinforce stereotypes
 about students who bully or the students who are victims of bullying behaviour. All
 stakeholders are encouraged to be careful consumers when evaluating literature and
 classroom materials.



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