

**2024-2026
HWDSB
BULLYING
PREVENTION
AND
INTERVENTION
PLAN**

HWDSB
BE YOU. BE EXCELLENT.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose.....	3
Ministry Definition Of Bullying.....	3
Education, Awareness, and Engagement.....	3
Use of Evidence and School Climate Data	4
System-Level Trends (2023–2024 to 2024–2025)	4
Prevention.....	5
Intervention and Support	5
Board-Approved Programs and Supports.....	5
Roles, Responsibility, and Alignment.....	6
Review and Continuous Improvement	6

PURPOSE

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to creating and sustaining safe, inclusive, and caring school environments where all students feel a sense of belonging, dignity, and respect. Positive relationships and a healthy school climate are essential to student well-being, engagement, and achievement.

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan meets the requirements of the Ministry of Education and the Education Act and outlines HWDSB's system-wide approach to preventing and responding to bullying. The plan reflects a whole-school approach and is aligned with Board policies and procedures related to Caring and Safe Schools, the Code of Conduct, Student Behaviour and Bias-Free Progressive Discipline, and Equity and Inclusion.

Bullying is understood as a serious form of harmful behaviour that occurs within a context of real or perceived power imbalance and may be linked to bias, prejudice, or discrimination. This plan supports prevention, early intervention, and progressive discipline, recognizing that student behaviour is best addressed through learning, relationship-building, accountability, and support.

This plan applies to all HWDSB schools and will be reviewed every two (2) years, as required by the Ministry of Education.

MINISTRY DEFINITION OF BULLYING

As defined in the Education Act, bullying means aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a pupil where:

- I. 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:
- II. causing harm, fear, or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social, or academic harm, harm to reputation, or harm to property; or
- III. creating a negative environment at a school for another individual; and
- IV. The behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance 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 receipt of special education.

Bullying may take many forms, including physical, verbal, social, written, or electronic behaviour. Bullying by electronic means (cyber-bullying) includes impersonation, posting or sharing harmful content, or communicating material electronically that may be accessed by others.

EDUCATION, AWARENESS, AND ENGAGEMENT

HWDSB and its schools are committed to building shared understanding and awareness of bullying, harmful behaviour, and positive relationships as part of a whole-school approach. Schools will:

- I. Help students and adults understand the difference between conflict, aggression, and bullying
- II. Build awareness of power dynamics, peer relationships, and the impact of bias, prejudice, and discrimination

- III. Promote empathy, respect, and accountability through learning opportunities and daily practice
- IV. Share information with students, families, and the school community about bullying prevention, reporting, and response processes
- V. Seek and reflect student and parent/guardian voice in developing and reviewing prevention and intervention strategies

USE OF EVIDENCE AND SCHOOL CLIMATE DATA

In alignment with Ministry requirements, HWDSB uses school climate data and other evidence to inform bullying prevention and intervention planning, monitor progress, and identify areas for improvement.

HWDSB uses [the Health and Peer Relations Study \(HPRS\)](#) as its system school climate survey. Beginning in 2024, HWDSB adopted the Solberg-Olweus cut-off, a research-accepted method that defines bullying as behaviour occurring “every month,” “every week,” or “many times a week.” This method provides consistency, clarity, is consistent with academic research and supports reliable comparisons over time.

SYSTEM-LEVEL TRENDS (2023–2024 TO 2024–2025)

- ✓ Decreases in reported bullying across most grade groups and behaviour types
- ✓ Stability in social bullying for students in Grades 9–12
- ✓ A slight increase in reported physical bullying for students in Grades 9–12
- ✓ No change in reported cyber-bullying for students in Grades 4–8

Percent of Students Reporting Bullying Every Month, Every Week, or Many Times a Week

Grades 4-6

Type of Behaviour	2023-2024	2024-2025
Physical	12%	10%
Verbal	22%	19%
Social	18%	16%
Cyber	6%	6%

Grades 7-8

Type of Behaviour	2023-2024	2024-2025
Physical	9%	8%
Verbal	23%	20%
Social	16%	14%
Cyber	6%	6%

Grades 9-12

Type of Behaviour	2023-2024	2024-2025
Physical	2%	3%
Verbal	11%	10%
Social	10%	10%
Cyber	6%	5%

PREVENTION

Prevention focuses on creating positive learning environments that reduce the likelihood of bullying and support student well-being. Schools will implement evidence-informed prevention strategies at the:

- ✓ Individual student level
- ✓ Classroom level
- ✓ School level
- ✓ Board level
- ✓ Family and community level

Prevention strategies include:

- ✓ Relationship- and community-building practices
- ✓ Social-emotional learning, empathy, and self-regulation
- ✓ Equitable and inclusive classroom practices
- ✓ Staff learning related to classroom management and progressive discipline
- ✓ Supervision practices aligned with identified areas of need

INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT

When bullying occurs, schools respond in a timely, supportive, and proportionate manner using a progressive discipline approach. Schools will:

- ✓ Address incidents using teachable moments that support learning and accountability
- ✓ Consider mitigating factors such as age, identity, lived experience, and individual circumstances
- ✓ Follow established Caring and Safe Schools and Student Behaviour procedures
- ✓ Provide appropriate supports for students who have been harmed, those who have caused harm, and those affected as witnesses
- ✓ Communicate with families, as appropriate, while respecting privacy

BOARD-APPROVED PROGRAMS AND SUPPORTS

HWDSB supports bullying prevention and intervention through a range of Board-approved programs and initiatives that promote well-being, positive relationships, and student engagement. These may include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Reimagining Wellness
- ✓ On the Horizon
- ✓ Recess Guardians
- ✓ Learn. Disrupt. Rebuild.
- ✓ Roots of Empathy
- ✓ Healthy Schools Certification
- ✓ PHOENIX
- ✓ YMCA Back on Track Program
- ✓ Violent Threat Risk Assessment

Programs and supports are reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with evidence, equity, and system priorities. Schools may also implement additional evidence-informed approaches that meet local needs.

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND ALIGNMENT

This plan is guided by and aligned with HWDSB's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy and Procedure, which affirm the Board's commitment to safe, inclusive, and caring learning environments and to addressing bullying through prevention, early intervention, and progressive discipline.

Consistent with the policy, HWDSB:

- ✓ Promotes whole-school approaches that involve students, staff, families, and community
- ✓ Recognizes that bullying is linked to power imbalances, bias, prejudice, and discrimination, and must be addressed through equity-responsive practices
- ✓ Emphasizes prevention and relationship-building as foundational to student well-being and achievement
- ✓ Uses evidence and school climate data to inform planning, monitor progress, and guide improvement
- ✓ Responds to bullying through progressive discipline, focusing on learning, accountability, restoration, and support
- ✓ Ensures that students who have been harmed, students who have caused harm, and those affected as witnesses are provided with appropriate supports while respecting privacy

In alignment with the policy, schools will:

- ✓ Communicate expectations, reporting processes, and available supports to the school community
- ✓ Clearly outline roles and responsibilities for students, staff, parents/guardians, and community members
- ✓ Engage student and family voice in prevention and intervention efforts
- ✓ Align school-level actions with Board policies, Ministry requirements, and Caring and Safe Schools procedures

REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be reviewed every two (2) years, as required by the Ministry of Education. Reviews will be informed by school climate data, student voice, and system priorities to ensure the plan remains responsive, effective, and clearly understood by the school community.