Promoting Positive School Climate and Well-being

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 fostering personal responsibility within our Catholic Community. 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. Carthagh (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 Ministry of Education 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, 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.

St. Carthagh (the "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;

    - Use of programs to promote positive relationships between students e.g. Fun Friends, Roots of Empathy, Kids Have Stress Program and the use of restorative circles.

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;

    - Sharing our School Improvement Plan with parents and encourage their input and ideas;

    - Encouraging parent participation in the school climate survey.

II. Evaluation of Evidence

St. Carthagh 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 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:

    - Mental Health concerns; anxiety, bullying and use of illegal substances

    - Students are experiencing increased levels of bullying, specifically within Junior grades;

2. The School's areas of focus with respect to the physical environment are:

    - Ensuring supervision of students inside the school and on school property;

    - Completion of ALCDSB Safety Plan Development Checklist;

    - Monthly Health and Safety walk-throughs and reports to Board.

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;*

    - Development and encouraging of the connection for each child with a caring adult in their lives; caring adult who attends the school.

4. Based on a review of the school climate survey results and other relevant information, the following areas have shown success/improvement:

    - Students from Grades 4-6 feel safe attending their school environment;

    - Male students in Grade 7 & 8 have had a decrease in their levels of anxiety.

5. Based on the school climate survey and other relevant data, the School proposes the following action plan to address areas requiring improvement:
    -As part of the SIPSAW the staff have developed and encouraged the continued implementation of programs to build more positive relationships between students (Fun Friends, Restorative Circles, Kids Have Stress Too, Builders' Club, Community Circles, Together is Better theme/assemblies

    - Intentional Debriefing with students who witness any violent outbursts at school

    - Paul Davis (Internet Safety) speaking to parents (with Tweed Elementary School)

-Continued use of 21st Century Learning and programs to improve communication between parents and teachers/strategy (FreshGrade/Remind/D2L/Phonecalls/Emails/Twitter) to help reduce student anxiety over school work and to share student work at school with the parents and encourage discussions at home about school.

      -Implementation of School House System and Mentoring Program for Grades 6-8 students.

      -Nurture the home-school connection through monthly events to bring our community together.

      -Offer programs and presentations to senior students about the challenges related to the consumption of illegal substances within society (VIP-type program & MADD Canada Presentation).

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: http://schools.alcdsb.on.ca/cart/default.aspx* ;

    *   Ministry of Education Provincial Parent Guide;

    *   Involvement in the development of the School Improvement Plan;

    *   Involvement in the Safe and Caring Schools Team and the review and update of the Safe School Team Safety Plan Development Checklist..

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 [St. Carthagh 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;

- To report to the Parent Council regarding the results of the School Climate Survey and the strategies to be implemented to address areas of concern raised within the document;

- Offer strategies to the Parent Council regarding strategies to address concerns raised within the School Climate Survey and monitor results and success of these strategies.

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:

- Whole School focus on being a "Peace Quest School" – activities throughout the year that promote awareness and empathy for others in our community and around the world. This program encourages supportive relationships with strangers and with one another.

- Use of restorative circles within the classrooms; as part of our religious education programs and specialized support with Board level personnel with intermediate level students to develop leadership skills ;

- Fun Friends with the Primary and Junior Students Program and a "type of VIP Program" (Values, Influence, Peers) for our Intermediate students, TRIBES, Umbrella Project introduction (staff and students) – Spring 2020

- Use of school house system for students from Kindergarten to Grade 8 working on building positive relationships and "growth mindset".

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

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

- Buddy Programs

- PALS

- Together is Better school theme / monthly assemblies

- Positive Office Referrals

- Chit Chat Café (daily – conversations with principal)

- Students of Mercy ("Sneaky Love")

- Builders' Club (community focused program with support from CYW and Kiwanis)

- Develop and Implement a Mentoring Program for student leaders as part of the School House System

- CYW focus on Mental Health for staff and students (monthly reminders / supports for staff; joke of the week in the staffroom, etc.)

- Whole-school Catholic meditation on morning announcements

- Umbrella Project (introduction Spring 2020 for full implementation Fall 2020)

d) Awareness-raising strategies for students, e.g. social-emotional learning, empathy, developing self-regulation skills:

- FRIENDS and Fun FRIENDS

- TRIBES (Together is Better Teams)

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;

- Visual display of School Improvement Plan in Parent and child-friendly language – Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Hands

- Continued updates of School Improvement Plan on the website; survey to community (staff, parents, students)

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;

- Catholic Social Justice Teachings and CGEs embedded into curriculum practice and into daily announcements;

- Umbrella Project as a whole-school strategy to embed empathy and positive relationship building between students (Spring 2020)

- Access to a calming space (updated Sensory Room)

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;

- Intermural activities (such as chess club, choir and seasonal sports activities).

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).

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.

- Debriefing sessions after high-stress situations to promote healing and coping strategies

- Learning Commons as a designated "safe place" for students (Grade 4 and up) who are feeling stressed/afraid during or immediately after a high-stress situation

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 (Mental Health Leader)

- PLCs with board Special Assignment Teachers (self-regulation)

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

- Connection with a caring adult within the school.

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.