

The *South Slave Education Divisional Council* (SSDEC) believes that each student has the right to a safe and caring education environment, free of unnecessary distraction, intimidation and fear. It is the SSDEC's commitment to provide students with a safe and welcoming learning environment that respects diversity, is equitable, inclusive and fosters a sense of belonging for all. The main tenets of this Policy are based on the Dene Laws and the traditional Indigenous values of respect, caring, sharing and responsibility.

Student misbehaviours can have negative effects on their own and other student's lives, including their learning, achievement, attendance, wellbeing and relationships. Violence, bullying and harassment of anyone, by students, staff, school officials, parents, volunteers and persons working with or among persons in the school environment is unacceptable. Behaviours such as these are serious, and can be traumatic and have long lasting and far reaching impacts. The SSDEC also recognizes that while any person may be bullied or discriminated against, some groups are especially vulnerable.

Everyone has a role to play in eradicating harmful behaviours and promoting a positive school climate. This Policy applies to all SSDEC students, staff, parents, volunteers, visitors and contractors while engaging in South Slave school related activities on or off school property; and all behaviours, whether contact is face-to-face, by phone, electronic or by any other means of communication and interaction.

The SSDEC expects that students will report to school regularly and punctually, comply with school rules, co-operate fully with school staff, be diligent in pursuing their studies, and conduct themselves in a manner that does not interfere with any other individual's rights.

The best way to stop bullying is by making the school a positive, safe and caring place for everyone. Focusing on developing healthy relationships both inside and outside of the school is one way to do that. All students and staff need to feel that they belong at the school.

The SSDEC also recognizes that students need to be taught what is and is not respectful and appropriate, and that perpetrators of misbehaviour and bullying require corrective action that is educational and firm but fair with regard to the application of progressive discipline depending on the frequency, duration and intensity of the behaviours and the cognitive and developmental age of the student.

Further, once an adult becomes aware of repeated bullying, they shall intervene as quickly as possible. When adults don't intervene a climate of fear develops, reinforcing the belief that bullying will be tolerated.

This Policy is intended to assist schools with the development of procedures and practices that are designed to create a culture that fosters healthy relationships and prevents bullying and harassment within the school community. It is a guide and reference tool for informing, developing, implementing, tracking and assessing actions and programs for safe and caring school environments.

LEGISLATION AND DEFINITIONS

Civil, common and criminal law prohibits harassment, bullying, hazing, or any other victimization based on real or perceived race, sex, creed, colour, national origin, religion, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, physical appearance and/or personal characteristics.

The *NWT Human Rights Act* provides every individual in the NWT the right to freedom from harassment that is related to their race, colour, ancestry, nationality, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, family status, family affiliation, social condition and so on. Section 14(1) states, “no person shall, on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination, harass any individual or class of individuals.

Section 1(1) & (2) of the *Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Education Act* recognizes the devastating effects of bullying and cyber-bullying and defines them as:

"bullying" means typically repeated and hostile or demeaning behaviour by a student, (a) that occurs while at school, at a school-related activity or in another situation where the behaviour is likely to have a negative impact on the school climate; (b) where the behaviour is intended by the student to have the effect of, or the student 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 learning environment for another individual, and (c) where the behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the student and the individual based on factors such as size, strength, intelligence, peer group power, race, colour, ancestry, nationality, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status, family affiliation, political belief, political association or social condition; (intimidation)

*Bullying by electronic means ... commonly known as **cyber-bullying**, includes: (a) typically repeated and hostile or demeaning electronic communication by a student (i) through the use of technology including... computers, other electronic devices, social networks, text messaging, websites and electronic mail, and (ii) that is intended by the student to have the effect of, or the student ought to know that the communication would be likely to have the effect of, causing harm, fear or distress to another individual, including psychological, social or academic harm, or harm to the individual's reputation, and; (b) behaviour by a student that in any way assists or encourages communication referred to in paragraph (a).*

Flowing from the requirements in the Education Act, the *Safe School Regulations* include the *Territorial School Code of Conduct* that describes the Responsibilities and Rights of all members of the school community including students, parents, elders and school staff. The Regulations also describe the membership requirements for each school's *Safe and Caring School Committee*, and clarifies what must be included in a *Safe School Plan*.

REGULATIONS

Schools are required to be safe, caring, equitable and inclusive learning environments, in compliance with Legislation, and with significant means to impede unacceptable behavior and prevent bullying, cyber bullying, discriminatory and/or other harmful behaviours.

Principals take the lead in working with the local District Education Authority (DEA) and staff in a collaborative fashion to promote and improve students' self-discipline, a clear understanding of positive and acceptable behaviours, healthy relationship education, and the knowledge that there are consequences when behaviour expectations are not met.

Principals are responsible for creating and sustaining a safe, caring and respectful learning environment for all students, staff, and partners by:

- 1) Establishing a *Safe and Caring School Committee* in compliance with the *NWT Safe Schools Regulations*;
- 2) Creating and maintaining a *Safe School Plan* that is updated annually, appropriate to the local school community, and in accordance with the *NWT Education Act* and *Safe Schools Regulations*, the *Territorial School Code of Conduct*, and SSDEC Policies;
- 3) Establishing an universal school-wide approach that focuses on prevention and developing social and emotional skills to help children manage themselves, work cooperatively with others, solve problems and make appropriate decisions, and that reaches students, staff, parents and community with school wide initiatives, classroom activities and individual interventions. This will include choosing and teachers implementing evidence-based healthy relationship and bullying prevention programming for students such as *WITS: Walk away, Ignore, Talk it out, Seek Help* (<http://www.witsprogram.ca/>) and *Fourth R* (<https://youthrelationships.org/>) that help to develop student empathy and self-discipline, and provide them with the skills and confidence to self-regulate and resolve conflict in a non-violent way;
- 4) Ensuring school staff explicitly teach expected behaviours, model these behaviours, provide opportunity for students to practice those desired behaviours, clarify what behaviours are not acceptable, and address incidents of misbehaviour consistently throughout the various school contexts;
- 5) Requiring teachers to establish and consistently implement classroom, hallway and playground rules and interventions, that may include rewards and consequences, and that promotes respectful behaviour, protects individuals and groups of victims, and creates and maintains a positive learning environment;
- 6) Taking opportunities to have staff members trained in conflict resolution, de-escalation strategies, and/or non-violent crisis intervention;
- 7) Establishing, in consultation with the local DEA and staff, a student discipline policy or guidelines that clarifies what issues the teacher deals with classroom consequences and parent communications, and what are considered major incidents that should be referred to the office for administrative follow up. The consequences of unacceptable behavior may include warnings, 'reflections', detentions, privileges removed, phone calls and meetings with parents to impress on the student of the need to change and improve their behaviour.

More serious incidents may result in suspensions, reconciliation, justice circles, restitution, referrals to professionals, and involvement of the authorities, such as the police. Typically, students who engage in violent behaviour including bullying, stealing or damaging the property of others, bringing or using illicit drugs or alcohol, or engaging in repeated and documented willful disobedience, will be subject to progressive discipline up to and including expulsion for the remainder of the school year.

- 8) Implementing bullying intervention strategies including guidelines and procedures with respect to reporting, documenting, and responding to incidents of bullying. One of the strategies will be an incident report template and a process to collect anonymous reports of incidences of bullying. This will also include establishing a process of data collection to track types, frequency and location of student behaviour incidents in order to have a record and to make informed decisions;
- 9) Enacting the *South Slave Violence Threat Risk Assessment* (VTRA) protocol in consultation in the case of a student(s) change in baseline behaviour suggesting a potential imminent risk of harm to self or others;
- 10) Communicating this Policy, the Safe School Plan, the student code of conduct, the school's discipline procedures, and related responsibilities to the school community, including staff, students and parents.
- 11) Notifying the Superintendent immediately in the event of serious incidents, including activations of the VTRA protocol, and copying all letters of suspension and expulsion to the Superintendent.

References: Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

NWT Human Rights Act

GNWT *Education Act* sections 1, 7(3f), 22, 27, 33-43, 45-46, and 69
(<https://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/en/files/legislation/education/education.a.pdf>)

NWT Safe Schools Regulations (2016)

Territorial School Code of Conduct

(<https://www.canlii.org/en/nt/laws/regu/nwt-reg-010-2016/latest/nwt-reg-010-2016.html>)

NWT Safe & Caring Schools Manual (2016-17 DRAFT)

Guidelines for Ensuring LGBTQ2S+ Equity, Safety and Inclusion in Northwest Territories Schools

(https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/final_eng_web_lgbtq2s_guidelines_2020.pdf)

Date: February 2022