

Ministry of Education

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MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Supervisory Officers and Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities
Director, Provincial Schools Branch

FROM: Barry Pervin
Assistant Deputy Minister
Instruction and Leadership Development Division

DATE: January 29, 2013

SUBJECT: **Safe and Accepting Schools: Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

I am writing to provide you with the Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and encourage you to share it with your leads for Equity and Inclusive Education, Safe Schools, Special Education, Student Success and Literacy and Numeracy. As you are aware, the *Accepting Schools Act* (Bill 13) came into force on September 1, 2012. The policy requirements, including the requirement that school boards put in place bullying prevention and intervention plans, comes into effect February 1, 2013. Prior to this, a plan was required for schools as part of Policy and Program Memorandum No. 144, Bullying Prevention and Intervention.

The Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet), in consultation with the Accepting Schools Expert Panel, have advised the Ministry in the development of an evidence-informed provincial Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (Model Plan) to assist boards as well as schools as they develop, update or refine their own plans.

The Model Plan is being released as a working draft and will be posted on the ministry and Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) websites. We invite school boards and schools to submit their comments and suggestions regarding this document, as well as share their own plans with the Ministry at safeschools@ontario.ca. The Ministry plans to update the Model Plan based on school and board experience and input over the next year.

The Model Plan is one of a number of resources and supports that are being made available to the sector to build capacity to implement the *Accepting Schools Act* and related policy changes in order to positively affect and support a longer term culture and climate changes in Ontario schools. Research consistently supports the fact that a safe, inclusive and accepting learning environment that promotes healthy relationships and behaviours is essential for student success. To reach their full potential, children and youth must feel safe, included, and engaged in school. Safe and accepting schools requires a whole school approach that engages all key learning areas, all grades and the wider community. Attached please find a summary of the additional resources/supports available to school boards for implementation purposes.

We appreciate your support in continuing to work to implement the *Accepting Schools Act* and related policy changes.

Sincerely,

Barry Pervin
Assistant Deputy Minister

Attachments:

- Appendix A - Ministry Resources and Supports for Board Implementation of the *Accepting Schools Act*
- Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan
- Stepping Stones summary

cc: Partnership Table
Ministry of Education, Assistant Deputy Ministers

Appendix A - Ministry Resources and Supports for Board Implementation of the *Accepting Schools Act*

- The Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) is developing multiple toolkits for release in winter 2013, which will bring together a practical set of resources and information based on the experience of schools and boards and the best evidence available on how to promote and sustain safe, inclusive and accepting schools. School boards and schools are invited to submit their bullying prevention and intervention plans and other supporting tools to safeschools@ontario.ca and they will be posted on the IEL toolkit site. Currently the IEL website houses a Thames Valley District School Board toolkit which includes this school board's approach to addressing safe and accepting schools, reflecting on the programs and procedures that have been successful <http://www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/content/home> .
- School boards have been provided with \$4.75M through transfer payment agreements for 2012-13 to support the implementation of the *Accepting Schools Act* and a whole school approach to promote safe, inclusive, and accepting schools to enhance student achievement and well-being. As a reminder, these funds are to be spent by August 31, 2013 and the report back is due October 31, 2013.
- Three Policy and Program Memoranda (P/PM) have been revised to align with the *Accepting Schools Act*:
 - P/PM 128, The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct;
 - P/PM 144, Bullying Prevention and Intervention; and,
 - P/PM 145, Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour. All of these are posted on the ministry website at www.edu.gov.on.ca .
- The Ministry is holding a number of Adobe Connect sessions to provide an overview of the key legislative and policy requirements, the importance of a whole school approach, and provide boards an opportunity to share successful practices and discuss challenges. A series of other Adobe Connect sessions and webinars are being planned over the course of the year.
- PREVNet is developing research based fact sheets to help highlight the key elements found in the model plan including:
 - differentiating bullying from teasing and aggression;
 - principles of prevention and intervention;
 - key questions to ask to help identify students who are at risk of involvement in bullying;
 - key questions to consider when choosing a bullying prevention and intervention program and how to implement with fidelity. Fact sheets will be released in 2013.
- *Bullying, We Can All Help Stop It. A Guide For Parents*, which is currently posted on the ministry website is being updated as a result of the *Accepting Schools Act* and will be released spring 2013.

- The Ministry will be holding regional sessions again this year in the spring of 2013. The purpose of these sessions is to work towards a more consistent application of legislation, regulations and policies in schools and boards across the province. Participants will discuss strategies for narrowing the gap in suspension rates between schools and groups of students within schools. Promising practices in designing and implementing programs for suspended and expelled students and strategies for overcoming challenges in implementation will also be discussed. More information about these sessions will be forthcoming.
- Enhancements are being made to the Ministry's sample online school climate survey tool located at <http://www.edu-climate-surveys.ca/>. Survey administrators will be able to produce an aggregated data report that is user-friendly and adaptable to local needs. For example, survey administrators will be able to create a customized report by cross-referencing questions or a full comprehensive report which includes all responses to all questions. There will also be a school-to-board roll up function and an improved report that mirrors the look of the PDF survey. A memo will soon be sent out which will include a detailed User-Guide and technical support contact information. Sample surveys continue to be available in PDF format at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/climate.html> .
- *Stepping Stones* is an evidence-based resource developed by the Ministry of Child and Youth Services (MCYS) that describes how youth grow and develop, and what supports and opportunities they need to make a successful transition into adulthood. It describes major milestones and dynamics in human development from 12 to 25 years and is organized around four main domains: social, emotional, physical and cognitive. This is a valuable resource for anyone who works with youth, particularly educators. The Ministry of Education has worked with MCYS to develop a short summary for educators that will familiarize them with *Stepping Stones* in the hopes that educators will seek out the full version so they can take advantage of its insights. The summary is attached and the full version is at ontario.ca/steppingstones. Please share this with staff at your school and encourage them to make it available to parents since its findings are relevant to anyone interested in supporting healthy development for youth.
- To support positive school climates and cultures, the Ministry of Education has been working in partnership with the Ontario Human Rights Commission to develop a resource to help school and system leaders foster a bias-free approach to student discipline to support positive behaviour. It builds upon positive changes made through amendments to the *Education Act*, human rights settlements, and Ministry initiatives focused on safe, inclusive, caring and accepting schools and supports for healthy student growth and well-being. This resource will be available spring 2013.