Progressive Discipline:

Part of Ontario's approach to making schools safe places to learn

A safe and accepting learning environment is essential for student achievement and well-being.

Positive School Climate

A positive school climate means everyone – students, parents, staff and community members – feels safe, welcome and respected. Everyone has a role to play in promoting healthy relationships and a school climate which encourages appropriate student behaviour.

Ontario's "Whole School" Approach

Ontario's approach to making schools safe and accepting involves the whole school and focuses on:

- collaboratively promoting positive student behaviour through a code of conduct
- building healthy and respectful relationships throughout the whole school community
- preventing inappropriate behaviour through initiatives like bullying prevention programs
- addressing inappropriate behaviour through progressive discipline.

Schools are also encouraged to build partnerships with community agencies to support prevention and early intervention.

What is Progressive Discipline?

Every school in Ontario is required to have a progressive discipline policy.

Through progressive discipline, principals determine appropriate consequences and/ or supports to help students improve their behaviour, while taking into account their individual circumstances. The goal is to help prevent inappropriate student behaviour from happening again.





When schools use progressive discipline, the following should be taken into consideration:

- the students' stage of growth and development
- the nature and severity of the behaviour
- the impact of the behaviour on the school climate.

Within this context, more serious consequences may be considered for inappropriate behaviour that escalates or is repeated. Providing students with the opportunity to reflect on their own actions and the impact of these actions is essential to student learning.

What Does This Mean in Practice?

Principals will consider a **range of options** to determine the most appropriate way to respond to each situation and help the student learn from his or her choices. These will include different supports and consequences.

Supports could include:

- a conversation with the student
- a review of expectations for the student's behaviour
- counselling from a social worker, for example, life skills coaching or anger management.

Consequences could include:

- an assignment
- a detention
- a suspension or an expulsion.

Principals will make these decisions after looking at individual circumstances and **mitigating factors** like the student's age, stage of social development, special education needs, history and the circumstances of the behaviour.

Behaviour occurs in a broader context and can be changed over time. Each decision on discipline is unique for each student. It will depend on the strengths and challenges of that student.

How do schools address inappropriate behaviour?

Intervention can come through different supports (such as counselling) and consequences (such as a detention). Ongoing discussion with students and their parents/guardians will inform the principal's choice of the supports and/or consequences that will help the student improve their behaviour and make good choices. For a student with special education needs, the interventions, supports and consequences must be consistent with the information in the student's **Individual Education Plan**.

There are a variety of resources to support school leaders, including "Supporting Bias-Free Progressive Discipline in Schools: A Resource Guide for School and System Leaders" and "Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario: Supporting Students with Special Needs through

Progressive Discipline, Kindergarten to Grade 12." These resources enhance understanding among members of school communities about key areas and topics related to progressive discipline including: consideration of mitigating and other factors; bias and barriers to equity; human rights principles; and the unique needs of some students receiving special education programs and services as they relate to progressive discipline.

In some cases, a **suspension or an expulsion** may be necessary. Students who are suspended for more than five school days, or who are expelled from all schools in the school board, will be offered a board program to give them opportunities to keep learning. For students who are suspended for one to five school days, schools are expected to give them a homework package to allow them to continue their education.

How are parents involved in a progressive discipline approach?

Parents have a primary role to play in their children's education. Schools actively engage parents in the progressive discipline approach by involving them in ongoing conversations about their children's achievement, well-being and behaviour. When schools and parents are partners, there are many positive results. These include improved student well-being, reduced absenteeism, positive student behaviour, improved student achievement and increased confidence among parents in their children's schooling. The approach behind progressive discipline is the result of listening to the feedback and advice of parents, students and educators and incorporating their perspectives.

More Resources

Parents:

- **Bullying:** We Can All Help Stop It. This is a resource for parents and is available in multiple languages. Do you know how to help prevent bullying? Learn what to watch for and what you can do at edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/bullying.html.
- We All Belong: A Multimedia Toolkit for Parents and Schools. Developed by Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA) and is available in multiple languages at http://infocopa.com/capsules-en.html
- Parent Toolkit. What Parents Can Do to Help their Child Succeed in School. Developed by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education and is available at ontariodirectors.ca/ Parent_Engagement/PA%20Downloads/CODE%20Parent%20Toolkit.pdf
- Parent Tool Kit (Teen Edition): What Parents Can Do to Help Their Teens Succeed.
 Developed by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education and is available at ontariodirectors.ca/Parent_Engagement/PA%20Downloads/34963_CODE_Teen_Tool_Kit-ENG_sm.pdf
- Parents' Guide to the Ontario Code of Conduct. Available at edu.gov.on.ca/eng/ safeschools/code.pdf
- Responding to and Reporting Incidents. Available at edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/ KeepKidSafeSchool.pdf

- Mitigating factors refers to mitigating and other factors as set out in Ontario Regulation 472/07. Behaviour, Discipline and Safety of Pupils. Available at e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_070472_e.htm
- Suspension and Expulsion: What Parents Need to Know. Available at edu.gov.on.ca/ eng/safeschools/NeedtoKnowSExp.pdf
- What else is Ontario doing to help make schools safe and accepting? Visit ontario.ca/ safeschools to learn more.

Understanding youth from 12 to 25:

• Stepping Stones: A Resource on Youth Development. Detailed overview about the stages of youth development from the Ministry of Children and Youth's Services available at ontario.ca/steppingstones.

Schools:

- Supporting Bias-Free Progressive Discipline in Schools: A Resource Guide for School and System Leaders. A resource to help foster a bias-free approach to progressive discipline, prevention, and early intervention available at edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/discipline.html. The illustrated poster depicting the views of members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council (MSAC) about bias-free progressive discipline is available as a PDF.
- Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario: Supporting Students with Special Needs through Progressive Discipline, Kindergarten to Grade 12. Available at edu.gov.on.ca/eng/ general/elemsec/speced/Caring_Safe_School.pdf

Students:

Need someone to talk to? Visit **kidshelpphone.ca** or call 1-800-668-6868 to find out how Kids Help Phone can help you. This confidential service is available 24/7.

LEARN MORE

For information on making Ontario's schools safe and accepting, and bullying prevention, visit **ontario.ca**/acceptingschools.

Promoting well-being is one of the four key goals outlined in *Achieving Excellence;* A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario. Learn more at: **ontario.ca/eduvision**.