



**DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

**AN EQUITABLE FRAMEWORK for**  
**PROGRESSIVE**  
**DISCIPLINE**





This guide was created through an equity perspective to support staff as they use Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline to develop and sustain positive learning environments that are safe, equitable and inclusive. To create positive school climates staff, students and parents must work together to establish positive, respectful relationships.

**Note:** Within this document, assume that the word "parent" refers to parent or guardian.

# WHY THIS RESOURCE?

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESOURCE IS TO...

- reinforce that all schools must be positive learning environments that are safe, equitable and inclusive
- establish a common understanding that respectful relationships are key to developing and sustaining a positive school climate
- recognize anti-black racism as a critical focus in understanding the needs of our Black students
- provide direction on the implementation of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline
- ensure that Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline is implemented in a manner that allows staff to help students understand when their behaviour is inappropriate, and provide them with supports/interventions to minimize the chances that another incident will occur
- reinforce the understanding that staff, students and parents have a responsibility to work together to establish positive learning environments in schools that are safe, equitable and inclusive.
- reinforce that the School Code of Conduct must be based on the expectations of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline
- recognize that police reported hate crimes are on the rise for a number of groups (Black, Muslim, Jewish and LGBTQ) and this often takes the form of bullying

## THIS RESOURCE CAN BE USED...

- to help establish positive learning environments that are safe, equitable and inclusive in schools
- to communicate expectations for staff, students and parents on how to maintain and sustain positive school climates
- to outline how the School Code of Conduct should be applied and communicated
- to guide the investigation of infractions that occur, as well as the subsequent implementation of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline
- to support existing Policies, Regulations, Procedures and resources related to developing positive learning environments that are safe, equitable and inclusive

## THIS RESOURCE ADDRESSES...

- The development of positive learning environments in schools that are safe, equitable and inclusive
- The roles and responsibilities for developing and sustaining positive school climates
- The application of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline into the School Code of Conduct
- The use of Bullying Prevention and Intervention
- The effective use of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline
- The suggested use of strategies to de-escalate situations
- Support for students with special needs during the implementation of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline
- The use of self-regulation to support student behaviour
- Expectations for conducting a proper investigation when addressing an incident
- Strategies for engaging and informing parents in the implementation of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline

# SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT

## THE SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT MUST REFLECT THE BOARD CODE OF CONDUCT AND PROVINCIAL POLICY, AND MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- That a school is a place that promotes responsibility, respect, civility and safety in the teaching and learning environments
- That all staff, students and parents have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in their school community. With this right comes the responsibility to follow the expectations in the School Code of Conduct, and to be accountable for actions that put the safety and dignity of others at risk
- The establishment of clear standards of behaviour, as well as the consequences for student actions that do not comply with these standards
- That the standards of behaviour apply not only to students and staff, but also to all individuals involved in the school system; including parents and volunteers, whether they are on school property, on school buses or at school-authorized events

## THE PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT IS TO:

- promote the safety of staff, students, parents and community members in school
- ensure that all members of the school community are treated with respect and dignity
- promote responsible citizenship by encouraging positive participation in the school community and positive behaviours
- maintain an environment in which conflict and differences can be addressed and resolved in a respectful manner
- discourage the use of alcohol, illegal drugs and other intoxicants
- prevent bullying in schools
- recognize, accept, and be sensitive to equity and inclusivity
- ensure that Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline is used to address inappropriate student behaviours



## BIAS-AWARE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline utilizes a continuum of prevention strategies to foster and reinforce positive behaviour, and to help students make good choices. It includes the use of age-appropriate interventions, supports and consequences to address inappropriate student behaviour. The Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline measures used in response to inappropriate behaviour are both corrective and supportive.

### BIAS-AWARE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE WORKS WHEN...

- Staff, parents and students work together to create and sustain a positive school climate that supports student success and well-being
- There is a shared vision that ensures the use of common practices that encourage positive behaviour and promote healthy relationships, growth and positive development in students
- Staff take proactive, individualized and progressive measures when dealing with discipline
- A caring, safe, inclusive and accepting learning environment is fostered for everyone
- All students, parents, and other community members are welcomed, respected and valued
- Prevention and early intervention strategies are used to support positive student behavior
- Parents and community partners are involved and professional supports for students are accessed when appropriate

# POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. Principles of equity and inclusive education are embedded in the learning environment to support a positive school climate and a culture of mutual respect. A positive school climate is a crucial component of the prevention of inappropriate behaviour.

*Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145, "Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour" (December 5, 2012).*

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF A POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

**The following are some of the characteristics associated with a positive school climate:**

- Students, staff members and parents feel – and are – safe, included and accepted
- All members of the school community demonstrate respect, fairness and kindness in their interactions, and build healthy relationships that are free from discrimination and harassment
- Students are encouraged and given support to be positive leaders and role models in their school community; e.g., by speaking up about issues such as bullying
- Students, administration, staff members, parents and community members engage in open and ongoing dialogue. All partners are actively engaged
- Principles of equity and inclusive education are embedded across the curriculum. Strategies for bullying prevention and intervention are reinforced for students and staff
- The learning environment, instructional materials, and teaching and assessment strategies reflect the diversity of all learners
- Every student is inspired and given support to succeed in an environment of high expectations

## A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

A Whole School Approach is essential in developing and sustaining a positive school climate. This approach engages all key learning areas, all grades and the wider community. Students and adults in the school and the community develop awareness and understanding of the factors that contribute to safe, inclusive, caring and accepting school climates. All aspects of school life are considered, such as curriculum, school climate, teaching practices, policies and procedures.

# ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN IMPLEMENTING BIAS-AWARE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

A Whole School Approach requires that staff, students, parents and community members assume responsibility for developing and sustaining a positive school climate. It is important that staff, students, parents and community members work together in a collaborative fashion to build positive, respectful relationships. In addition, the stakeholders must adhere to the expectations outlined in the School Code of Conduct and DDSB Policies, Regulations and Procedures.

## PRINCIPAL OR VICE-PRINCIPAL

- Work with the Safe and Accepting Schools Team to collect data and use that information to build and sustain a positive learning environment that is safe, equitable and inclusive
- Be responsible for student and staff safety and well-being
- Communicate the expectations in the School Code of Conduct to students, staff and parents
- Review and revise the School Code of Conduct with staff, student leaders and members of the School Community Council on an annual basis
- Investigate incidents of student misconduct or safety concerns. Advise staff and parents as required
- Ensure that Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline is applied appropriately to minimize the chances that another incident will occur

## STAFF

- Work collaboratively with administration, the Safe and Accepting Schools Team, parents and students to build and sustain a positive learning environment that is safe, equitable and inclusive
- Be responsible for student safety and well-being
- Adhere to the School Code of Conduct, and communicate the expectations to students and parents
- Investigate incidents of student misconduct or safety concerns. Work collaboratively with administration as required
- Ensure that Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline is applied appropriately to minimize the chances that another incident will occur

## PARENTS

- Be responsible for student safety and conduct prior to arrival at school and after departure
- Work with their children and school staff to help build and sustain a positive school climate
- Cooperate with staff to ensure that they and their children adhere to the School Code of Conduct
- Understand and reinforce the expectations associated with Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline
- When there is an incident, support the application of Bias-Aware Discipline, and help with interventions when appropriate
- Reinforce the importance of respecting the school and the resources within the school. If damages occur as a result of their child's actions, support restitution
- Remind students about respecting the rights of others and their personal property
- Ensure their children understand and apply the DDSB Character Traits, including being courteous and respectful
- If there is an issue, concern or question, address it with the teacher and/or an administrator in a respectful manner
- Notify the school if they witness any incident that may impact the positive learning environment, in particular the safety of others





## STUDENTS

- Understand and follow the School Code of Conduct at all times, including acting in a safe and courteous manner upon arrival at school and after departure
- Work to help build and sustain a positive school climate
- Cooperate with staff to build and sustain positive, respectful relationships based on the expectations in the School Code of Conduct
- Understand and apply the expectations associated with Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline
- When there is an incident, understand and respect the application of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline
- When there is an incident reflect on the following restorative questions:
  - What happened?
  - What was I thinking at the time?
  - What have I thought about since?
  - Who has been affected by what I did?
  - In what ways were people affected?
  - What can I do to make things right?
  - What will I do differently the next time?
- Respect the school and the resources within the school. If damages occur as a result of their actions, be involved in restitution
- Respect the rights of others and their personal property
- Understand and apply the DDSB Character Traits, including being courteous and respectful
- If there is an issue, concern or question to address it with the teacher, and/or administrator in a respectful manner
- Notify a staff member if they witness any incident that may impact on the positive learning environment, in particular the safety of others
- If they are on a bus for a school transportation or a school related event, act in a manner that does not endanger the safety of themselves or others including:
  - Being respectful to the bus driver
  - Not engaging in any activity that interferes with the safe operation of the bus

# CREATING A SAFE, WELCOMING & INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT



A safe, welcoming and inclusive school environment is defined as positive school climate. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. Principles of equity and inclusive education are embedded in the learning environment to support a positive school climate and a culture of mutual respect.

*Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145, "Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour" (December 5, 2012)*

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A SAFE, WELCOMING & INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

- Students, staff members and parents feel – and are – safe, included and accepted
- Members of the school community demonstrate respect, fairness and kindness in their interactions, and work to build healthy relationships that are free from discrimination and harassment
- Students are encouraged and given support to be positive leaders and role models in their school community e.g., speaking up about issues such as bullying
- Students, staff, parents and community members are actively engaged in open and ongoing dialogue.
- The principles of Equity and Inclusive Education, and strategies for students and staff related to bullying prevention and intervention are reinforced across the curriculum
- The learning environment, instructional materials, and teaching and assessment strategies reflect the diversity of all learners
- Every student is inspired and given support to succeed in an environment of high expectations

## STRATEGIES TO FOSTER A SAFE, WELCOMING & INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

**Strategies that support building and sustaining a positive, safe, welcoming, and caring classroom environment where students experience belonging, inclusion and respect include:**

- School staff meet and greet students on arrival
- School staff take time to check-in with all students
- Inclusive and respectful language is used
- Diversity is recognized and honoured, respected and valued, e.g., all students see themselves reflected in the curriculum and the learning environment
- Staff, students and parents accept and celebrate differences
- Incorporate various classroom activities that promote a positive climate, healthy relationships, bullying prevention and support for students e.g., the use of Restorative Practice
- Engage students in the learning and involve them in decision making
- Staff find out about students' interests and incorporate these interests to change their instructional program
- Staff and students create class rules and guidelines together
- Staff find out about their students' learning styles, to help determine which methods of instruction suit their students' abilities
- Staff use Zones of Regulation or Feelings Charts to support the development of students' self-awareness and "feeling" vocabulary. This information is used to develop and implement class-wide and individual self-regulation initiatives and interventions
- Initiatives and interventions are used to support students' mental health needs

## SOCIAL MEDIA/DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Developing a positive school climate includes fostering responsible Digital Citizenship. Safe, welcoming and inclusive environments include digital spaces. It is our responsibility to create the conditions that support students use of technology in a way that shows that they are accountable digital citizens that contribute to a positive school climate (*Refer to Procedure 3101 - Acceptable And Safe Use Procedure For Computing Technology And Cyber Safety*).

**A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions.**



# CREATING A SAFE, WELCOMING & INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT CONT'D

## THE USE OF RESTORATIVE PRACTISE TO SUPPORT A SAFE, WELCOMING & INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

**Restorative Practice** is a way of being that helps strengthen relationships to support student well-being and achievement. Restorative Practice should be used proactively to build a positive, safe climate, and as a responsive way to help maintain and restore community when needed.

Restorative Practice is based upon nine interconnected elements. These elements provide the foundation to cultivate caring and healthy communities. The elements include **Healthy Relationships; Voice; Fair Process; Structure and Support; Safety; Empathy & Perspective-Taking; Ownership; Learning; and Belonging & Interdependence**. These elements help shape a positive climate at school.

Restorative Practice questions can be used as a responsive strategy when there is an incident in the school or classroom. The Restorative Practice questions are designed to elicit the essential elements of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline. The questions provide a framework that may be used to lead a conversation that examines what went wrong, what the impact was, and how to move forward in a positive manner.



**The following are examples of restorative questions that can be used when things go wrong:**

- What happened?
- What were you thinking of at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

**The following are examples of restorative questions that can be used when someone has been harmed:**

- What were you thinking when you realized what happened?
- What impact has this incident had on you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?



## SELF-REGULATION: UNDERSTANDING STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

A student's behaviour can be affected by excessive stress due to factors such as lack of sleep, sensitivity to noise, and conflict with others. How stress impacts a student varies, as does how the student may self-regulate to achieve a state of calm and alertness. Signs of stress behaviour might include increased impulsivity, difficulty ignoring distractions and/or trouble listening.

**When dealing with stress behaviour, it is important to help the student:**

- learn what it feels like to be calm
- figure out what is causing the stress
- identify and implement strategies or activities to reduce the stressors, and then help the student get back to calm (*Merit Centre, 2018*)

# BULLYING PREVENTION & INTERVENTION



The Ontario Ministry of Education has provided a definition of bullying that is to be used by all schools (Refer to Procedure 5148 – Positive School Climate for the definition of bullying and the use of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan BPIP). The definition of bullying needs to be included in the School Code of Conduct and in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. This definition is also helpful to help staff, students and parents distinguish between conflict and bullying. In both the School Code of Conduct and in the BPIP, it is important to reinforce behaviour expectations for all members of the school community, including students, staff, parents, and community partners. The BPIP must also clearly state that bullying will not be accepted on school property, at school-related activities, on the bus, or in any other circumstances (e.g., online/digitally) where engaging in bullying will have a negative impact on the school climate.

The BPIP is an important component of a Whole School Approach, and helps to support student well-being. Each school must develop a BPIP in consultation with students, staff, parents, and community partners, and then post the BPIP on the school website.

It is important that data is used to inform the BPIP. Data can be gathered from a variety of sources, including but not limited to; School Climate Surveys, The Violence Risk Assessment Tool (Refer to Regulation 5148 – Positive School Climate), The Equity Continuum, School Incident Referrals such as the types and locations of incidents and/or "student voice" gathered from focus groups. This data should also be used to monitor the success of the preventative strategies and interventions.

## THE BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

The BPIP will include a small number of key goals for the year. These goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-based. These goals should also be assessed and refined throughout the year.

Examples of goal statements that might be used in a BPIP include:

- Every grade 9 student will be connected with a caring adult
- Self-Regulation will be embedded into practice to assist students to be calm, alert and ready to learn

Schools should also highlight the work they are doing in bullying prevention and intervention during events such as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, and Pink Shirt Day. It is important to incorporate activities that address bullying that may occur outside of the classroom e.g., an "Upstander" program for the schoolyard and the bus.



An important aspect of the BPIP is the inclusion of mechanisms to report bullying. The BPIP should include how students report bullying that occurs e.g., reporting bullying to a trusted adult (parent, teacher, principal or vice principal, support staff, police Liaison Officer) or by using the “Report Bullying Now” button on the school website. The BPIP should also reinforce that all staff and other adults, e.g., bus drivers are required to report incidents of bullying to administration.

**The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan should also outline how the school responds to bullying in the school and during school related activities by:**

- ensuring the safety of all involved
- responding to any student behaviour that is likely to have a negative impact on the school climate
- conducting a school-based investigation (*Refer to Procedure 4255 - Security and Safety*)

Schools are also required to provide support for those impacted as a result of an incident. This includes the person(s) who had been harmed, the person(s) who caused harm, and the person(s) who witnessed harm.

**The support plan for a student impacted by an incident, must include interventions such as:**

- connecting the student to a caring adult, and having that person check-in with the student on a regular basis
- implementing board-level supports such as Social Work or Psychological Services (with consent)

The support plan should be developed collaboratively with the student and the family and should focus on the student's needs (*Refer to the Safe Schools Portal for Guidelines for the Development of a Safe Schools Student Safety Plan*).

# CONNECTIONS TO THE SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT

**Developing and sustaining a positive school climate that is safe, equitable and inclusive is essential if students are to succeed in school. The School Code of Conduct should include expectations that help to maintain a positive, safe learning environment based on healthy, respectful relationships. An important process to developing and maintaining positive learning environments that are safe, equitable and inclusive is the use of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline.**

**The School Code of Conduct must be consistent with the requirements outlined in the Provincial Code of Conduct, and include the following standards of behavior and expectations:**

- That a school is a place that promotes responsibility, respect, positive self-regulation, civility and safety in the teaching and learning environments
- That all staff, students and parents have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in their school community. With this right comes the responsibility to follow the expectations in the School Code of Conduct, and to be accountable for actions that put the safety and dignity of others at risk
- Clear standards of behaviour, as well as the consequences for student actions that do not comply, (notwithstanding Mitigating Factors, Other Factors and Human Rights Factors)
- The standards of behaviour apply not only to students and staff, but also to all individuals involved in the school system, including parents and volunteers, whether they are on school property or at school-authorized events

## THE SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT MUST:

- promote the safety of staff, students, parents and community members in the schools
- ensure that all members of the school community are treated with respect and dignity
- maintain an environment in which conflict and differences can be addressed and resolved in a respectful manner
- discourage the use of alcohol, illegal drugs and other intoxicants
- prevent bullying in schools
- promote positive digital citizenship
- recognize, accept, and be sensitive to equity and inclusiveness
- ensure that Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline is used to address inappropriate student behaviours



# INVESTIGATING AN INCIDENT

An investigation is conducted by the Principal or Vice-Principal when there has been a violation of the School Code of Conduct. This includes when a student engages in behaviour that impacts negatively on the school climate. *Please refer to the appendix Safe Schools: Conducting Student Investigations from Policy and Procedure 4255 – Safety and Security for more detailed information.*



## WHEN CONDUCTING AN INVESTIGATION OF AN INCIDENT, A PRINCIPAL OR VICE-PRINCIPAL SHOULD:

- interview witnesses, and the student(s) involved in the incident
- ensure that the investigation process is fair, thorough and complete
- ensure neutrality and procedural fairness
- gather and document the facts, not opinions
- be unbiased. Many marginalized families have experienced negative interactions with schools, it is important to listen to, and acknowledge the student's and parents' feelings and concerns
- be flexible, especially when presented with new information that affects the original decision
- ensure that the expectations for searching a student, a student's property and/or electronic devices are followed
- use Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline to focus on corrective, not punitive measures
- consider Mitigating Factors, Other Factors and Human Rights Factors
- consult with the Superintendent or designate, and/or other support personnel, when necessary
- follow Board and Ministry legislation, including Policies, Regulations, Procedures and protocols
- involve the police regarding possible criminal activity (*refer to the Procedure 3041 School Board/ Police Protocol*)
- involve Durham Children's Aid if warranted (*refer to Procedure 5146 Guidelines for Reporting Children in Need of Protection*)
- communicate the outcome and the application of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline to the student(s), parents and appropriate school staff while maintaining expectations for confidentiality

# APPLYING MITIGATING, OTHER & HUMAN RIGHTS FACTORS

**When implementing Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline, schools must comply with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Education Act.**

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The Ontario Human Rights Code prohibits actions that discriminate against people based on a protected ground and/or in a protected social area. As outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code, it is public policy in Ontario to recognize the inherent dignity and worth of every person and to provide for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination. The provisions of the Code are aimed at creating a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of each person, so that people feel that they are a part of the community and able to contribute to the community. In addition, service providers, including schools have a legal duty to accommodate the Code-related needs of people who are adversely affected by a requirement, rule or standard. As a result, Principals and Vice-Principals must consider the provisions of the Code when implementing a suspension or recommending an expulsion as a part of the continuum of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline.

### THE PROTECTED GROUNDS INCLUDE:

- Age
- Ancestry, Colour, Race
- Citizenship
- Ethnic Origin
- Place of Origin
- Creed
- Disability
- Family Status
- Marital Status (including single status)
- Gender Identity, gender expression
- Receipt of Public Assistance (in housing only)
- Record of Offences (in employment only)
- Sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding)
- Sexual Orientation



## MITIGATING AND OTHER FACTORS

As stated in the Education Act, (*Ontario Regulation 472/07*) Principals or Vice-Principals must consider Mitigating and Other Factors when implementing a suspension or recommending an expulsion as a part of the continuum of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline. In addition, these should also be considered when implementing Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline. Considering these factors will help staff better understand the student's behaviour, and how to effectively address the behaviour.

### MITIGATING FACTORS INCLUDE:

- The student does not have the ability to control their behaviour
- The student does not have the ability to understand the foreseeable consequences of their behaviour
- The student's continuing presence in the school does not create an unacceptable risk to the safety of any person

### OTHER FACTORS INCLUDE:

- The student's history
- The student identifies as LGBTQ+, and disclosure could result in undue harm
- Whether a progressive discipline approach has been used with the student
- Whether the activity for which the student may be or is being suspended or expelled was related to any harassment of the student due to their race, ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender, or sexual orientation or to any other harassment
- How the suspension or expulsion would affect the student's ongoing education (especially in the case of those protected under the Protected Grounds of the Human Rights Code)
- The age of the student

In the case of a student for whom an Individual Education Plan (IEP) has been developed:

- whether the behaviour was a manifestation of a disability identified in the student's individual education plan
- Whether appropriate individual accommodation has been provided
- Whether the suspension or expulsion is likely to result in an aggravation or worsening of the student's behaviour or conduct

# SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL

## AN INCIDENT OCCURS

### INFORMATION GATHERING

When investigating the incident determine if the student has a:

- **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**
- **Behaviour Safety Plan (BSP)**
- **Student Brief**



### CONSIDERATIONS

When investigating, and determining how to apply Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline, consider the following:

#### MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES APPLICABLE TO THE STUDENT:

- Does the student have the ability to control his/her stress behaviour/misbehaviour?
- Does the student have the ability to understand the foreseeable consequences of his/her stress behaviour/misbehaviour?
- Will the student's presence in the school create an unacceptable risk to the safety of others?

#### RELEVANT BACKGROUND TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE STUDENT

- What is the student's history?
- Was the behaviour a manifestation of the student's diagnosis or identification through an IPRC?
- Were the appropriate accommodations/modifications in place to support the student's educational or behavioural needs?
- Will the suspension or expulsion have a negative impact on the student's behaviour upon return e.g., re-establishing classroom expectations may lead to further misbehaviour?



## INVESTIGATING & APPLYING BIAS-AWARE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

When investigating, and determining how to implement Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline, consider the following:

Where applicable, review the BSP, IEP, Accommodations and Modifications

- Connect with school, board and community agencies or supports
- Collect ABC data to determine the function of the student's stress behaviour/misbehaviour – why did the student display this behaviour? What other supports need to be added or changed?

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Are there board and community supports in place?
  - Autism Resource Team (ART)
  - Short-term Assistance Resource Team (START)
  - Community agencies such as: Children's Aid Society (CAS), RFECY (Resources for Exceptional Children and Youth), Kinark, etc
- What data has been gathered? (e.g., antecedent/behavior/consequence ABC)
- Are there other systemic disadvantages at play that have contributed to the incident?

## POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

- Restorative Practice
- Counselling/Conference/Monitor
- Conflict Resolution
- In-school alternative activity
- Suspension

# DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES FOR NAVIGATING CHALLENGING INTERACTIONS

## 1 BE EMPATHETIC AND NON-JUDGMENTAL

When a student says or does something you perceive as exaggerated or irrational, try not to judge or discount those feelings. Whether or not you think those feelings are justified, they are real to the student and may be the most important thing in the student's life right now.

## 2 RESPECT PERSONAL SPACE

If possible, stand at least 1 metre away from a student who is escalating. Providing personal space will decrease a student's anxiety and can help you prevent the situation from getting worse. If you must enter personal space, explain what you are doing.

## 3 USE NONTHREATENING NON-VERBAL CUES

The more a student loses control, the less he/she hears your words, and the more he/she reacts to your non-verbal communication. Be mindful of your gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Keep your tone and body language neutral. Minimize the amount of talking.

## 4 AVOID OVERREACTING

Remain calm, rational, and professional. While you can't control a student's behaviour, how you respond to the behaviour will have a direct effect on whether the situation escalates or defuses. Positive thoughts like "I can handle this" will help you maintain your calm.

## 5 FOCUS ON FEELINGS

Facts are important, but how a student feels is more important. Some students have trouble identifying how they feel about what's happening to them. Watch and listen carefully for the student's real message. Use supportive language to acknowledge feelings (e.g. that must be scary, upsetting).

## 6 IGNORE CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Answering challenging questions often results in a power struggle. When a student challenges your authority, redirect his/her attention to the issue at hand. Ignore the challenge, not the student.

## 7 SET LIMITS

If a student's behaviour is belligerent, defensive, or disruptive, give him/her clear, simple, and enforceable limits. Offer concise and respectful choices and consequences. An upset student cannot focus on multiple pieces of information.

## 8 CHOOSE WHAT YOU INSIST UPON WISELY

Decide carefully which rules are negotiable and which are not. For example, if a student does not want to sit where you suggested, can you allow him/her to choose a different seating location? Options and flexibility may help you avoid unnecessary altercations.

## 9 ALLOW SILENCE FOR REFLECTION

We have all experienced awkward silences. While it may seem counterintuitive to let moments of silence occur, sometimes it is the best choice. It can give a student a chance to reflect on what's happening and how to proceed.

## 10 ALLOW TIME FOR DECISIONS

When a student is upset, he/she may not be able to think clearly. Give the student a few moments to think through what you've said. Rushing a student to make a decision will increase his/her stress which may amplify the situation.

# THE USE OF SELF-REGULATION

Student behaviour can be viewed as a response to stressors that occur in five domains. The following are descriptions of the domains:

- **BIOLOGICAL DOMAIN:** Maintaining optimal alertness
- **EMOTIONAL DOMAIN:** Regulating feelings and moods
- **COGNITIVE DOMAIN:** Mentally processing different kinds of sensory information
- **SOCIAL DOMAIN:** Understanding social situations and cues
- **PRO-SOCIAL DOMAIN:** Caring for others by demonstrating traits such as empathy and honesty

## SUPPORTING SELF-REGULATION

Self-Regulation supports Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline. Self-Regulation allows students to recognize and respond to stress. Students develop an awareness of what stresses them, how these stressors impact them, and then develop and use interventions to allow students to better understand their behaviour, and then use interventions to allow them to be calm, alert and ready to learn. In addition, when staff are aware of their own stressors and how to self-regulate they become more effective at helping students manage their stressors and make good choices.

**For each of the domains, there are strategies that can be used to support students.**

### THE BIOLOGICAL DOMAIN:

Some of the stressors in the Biological Domain that may impact a student's behaviour include:

- Illness
- Insufficient or poor quality sleep
- The environment (too much/too little noise; light; temperature and /or visual stimulus)
- Food choices (skipping meals, fat/sugar/salt content)
- Daily water intake

To support students' self-regulation in the Biological Domain, schools may:

- Adjust the environment e.g., flexible seating, the use of noise cancelling headphones and/or fidget tools
- Incorporate movement ("body breaks")
- Accommodate flexible nutrition breaks
- Encourage parents to ensure that their child has adequate sleep, is physically active and eats healthy meals



## THE EMOTIONAL DOMAIN

Some of the stressors in the Emotional Domain that may impact a student's behavior include:

- A change in routine e.g., a supply teacher or a room change
- Experiencing strong emotions, positive or negative with peers, family or a person of authority
- The use of a punitive approach by staff e.g., negative comments/feedback, yelling

To support students' self-regulation in the Emotional Domain, schools may:

- Create predictable structures and routines e.g., an assigned seat
- Prepare students for any changes in routines
- Provide opportunities for students to be heard and valued
- Support students when managing strong positive or negative emotions
- Encourage parents to support their child to take an active role in repairing mistakes

## THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN:

Some of the stressors in the Cognitive Domain that may impact a student's behaviour include:

- Classroom work that isn't engaging e.g., assignments that are too difficult/easy
- A learning challenge e.g., Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder, Depression or Anxiety Disorder
- Difficulty following multi-step instructions

To support students' self-regulation in the Cognitive Domain, schools may:

- Co-create classroom expectations, and review them as needed
- Provide assignments that are developmentally appropriate and differentiated for each student
- Provide positive feedback and reinforcement when students behave appropriately
- Offer clear structure, and "chunk" expectations into simpler steps
- Encourage parents to support their child's use of positive self-talk when problem solving





## THE SOCIAL DOMAIN

Some of the stressors in the Social Domain that may impact a student's behaviour include:

- Peer pressure
- Dealing with unfamiliar social interactions
- A learning challenge e.g., ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Depression or Anxiety Disorder

To support students' self-regulation in the Social Domain, schools may:

- Foster and model healthy, respectful and meaningful relationships e.g., the use of DDSB character traits
- Implement activities/strategies that promote positive collaboration
- Support students in identifying their emotions, and facilitate positive emotional responses
- Encourage parents be aware of their child's social interactions, positive or negative, and help them understand their stressors and resolve conflict



## PRO-SOCIAL DOMAIN

Some of the stressors in the Pro-Social Domain that may impact a student's behaviour include:

- The student's development of sympathy/empathy when observing stress in others e.g., observing a punitive approach, the use of competition that emphasizes individual achievements at the expense of others
- Inconsistent messages on maintaining safe, inclusive and caring environments e.g., condoning or ignoring bullying behaviours

To support students' self-regulation in the Pro-Social Domain while riding the bus, schools may:

- Building positive relationships
- Incorporate bullying prevention and intervention strategies
- Encourage empathy, active listening, leadership and the importance of helping one another
- Encourage parents to promote kindness and empathetic behaviour towards others, to help their child consider the feelings and needs of both self and others while recognizing personal strengths



*(Adapted from Calm, Alert, and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation, Dr. Shanker, 2013)*

# BIAS-AWARE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline is a Whole School Approach that uses a continuum of prevention strategies, interventions, supports and consequences to promote positive behaviours and address inappropriate behaviours. The purpose of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline is to support a shared vision and ensure a common practice that encourages positive behaviour and promotes healthy

## PROACTIVELY CREATING A POSITIVE SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM CLIMATE

### POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

- Foster a safe and accepting school environment by establishing rules and routines that can be implemented by all staff
- Build healthy, respectful relationships
- Review the School Code of Conduct regularly
- Engage and communicate with all stakeholders in school community
- Focus on a restorative mindset
- Implement a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, the DDSB Well-Being and Mental Health Strategy and equitable, inclusive and culturally responsive initiatives
- Establish a Safe and Accepting Schools Team that uses data to create a Safe Schools Plan
- Foster and develop relationships with and among students
- Focus on equitable programming and classroom management strategies that are mindful of students' individual identities
- Co-construct, communicate and reinforce classroom expectations that align with School Code of Conduct
- Be mindful of stressors that affect student well-being
- Implement Self-Regulation strategies
- Recognize and celebrate students' accomplishments of all kinds
- Teach and support restorative conflict resolution and problem-solving strategies
- Have ongoing communication with parents

### EARLY INTERVENTIONS

- Redirect inappropriate behaviours
- Develop a Support and Responsibility Agreement to transition students (Refer to the Safe Schools Portal)
- Create and use a Behaviour Safety Plan for students with special needs
- Use Reflection Sheets that include Restorative Questions
- Reflect upon, recognize and reward improved behaviour
- Use "natural consequences" that align with the behaviour
- Collect data and consult with the School Team to develop a plan to improve behaviour
- Collaborate with parents

# E CONTINUUM

relationships and social-emotional development among all students. This step-by-step process involves taking proactive, individualized and progressive approaches to discipline. However, it doesn't preclude the ability of staff to repeat a step if necessary, such as in situations where there has been a time lag since the last incident, or to move directly to a serious consequence if the incident is significant (e.g. the student's behaviour has put the safety of others in jeopardy).

## ONGOING INTERVENTIONS

- Implement behaviour "agreements" with relevant and achievable goals
- Create a Safe Schools Plan  
*(Refer to the Safe Schools Portal)*
- Use responsive programming based on students' changing circumstances
- Consult with the Area Team for assistance from Support Staff and outside agencies

## STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOURS

- Use appropriate strategies and consequences that foster learning. Examples include:
  - Restorative Practice
  - Restitution
  - Community Service
  - Loss of Privileges
  - Detentions
- Suspensions and Expulsions  
*(Refer to Procedure 5500 Code of Conduct and Discipline for Students)*
- Prior to Suspension or Expulsion, consider Mitigating, Human Rights and other factors *(Refer to Procedure 5500 Code of Conduct and Discipline for Students)*

## RESTORATION & RECONCILIATION

Restoration and reconciliation are an integral part of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline. Restoration and reconciliation should occur during all stages of discipline and include support for both victims and offenders involved in any school-based incident. When harm is done, students should have the opportunity to understand the full impact of their actions, to take responsibility for those actions, to do what is necessary to make it right, and to learn from the experience.

# SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS

When used within the framework of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline, suspensions and expulsions are appropriate, and in some cases mandatory. That being said, when these consequences are overused, students may be denied learning opportunities. In addition, unless there is an effective transition back to classes that includes a restorative component the underlying problem remains unresolved.

**REGULATION #5500 - Code of Conduct and Discipline for Students outlines the expectations for suspensions and expulsions.**

A suspension is defined in the regulation as "a consequence imposed upon a student whereby he or she is prohibited from attending his or her school and from engaging in all school-related activities for a defined period of time".

A suspension is most effective when it is used as a part of the continuum of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline along with the use of age-appropriate interventions and supports. For the most part, suspensions should be used to withdraw students when their behaviour places their safety or the safety of others in jeopardy. A suspension gives the school time to conduct a team meeting, and to create a plan to ensure the student's safe return. After a suspension occurs it is important that the student and supportive adults create and implement a plan to help the student successfully transition back to classes.

Regulation #5500 lists the reasons why a Principal or Vice-Principal shall consider whether to suspend a student. These reasons apply if the student is at school, at a school-related activity or in other circumstances where engaging in the activity will have an impact on the school climate. In addition, Regulation #5500, states when a reason requires mandatory police involvement or when the police involvement is discretionary (as outlined in the Policy and Procedure #3041 - Police/School Board Protocol)

Regulation #5500 states that an expulsion "is a consequence imposed upon a student, by the Board, for an activity that is determined to warrant that the student be excluded from his or her school, or from all schools in the Board, and from engaging in all school-related activities, for an undefined period of time". In addition, if the Board expels a pupil, the Board shall assign the student to a program for expelled students. In the DDSB, this program is called Return Ticket. The Return Ticket program is a restorative, alternative education program employing a multidisciplinary team

committed to providing a safe and supportive learning environment. Students in the Return Ticket program develop positive decision-making skills with a focus on both academic and non-academic curriculum. The second component to Return Ticket is the Long-Term Suspension program (LTS) for students who are suspended from 11 to 20 days. In this voluntary and supportive environment, students continue their academic courses with an individualized non-academic program. In addition, staff assist students with transition plans for the successful return to their community schools.

Regulation #5500 lists the reasons why a Principal or Vice-Principal shall consider a suspension and a recommendation for the Board to expel. These reasons apply if the student is at school, at a school-related activity or in other circumstances where engaging in the activity will have an impact on the school climate. In addition, Regulation #5500, specifies when a reason requires mandatory police involvement or when the police involvement is discretionary (as outlined in the Policy and Procedure #3041 - Police/School Board Protocol)

Prior to implementing a suspension or a suspension pending a recommendation to expel, the Principal or Vice-Principal must consider Mitigating, Other and Human Rights Factors (*Please refer to the section on Mitigating, Other and Human Rights Factors*).



# ENGAGING AND INFORMING PARENTS IN THE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCESS

To help parents understand and support Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline, staff should engage parents in the follow ways:

- Foster positive, respectful relationships with parents
- Create a school-learning environment in which parents are welcomed, respected and valued as partners in their child's education and safety
- Collaborate with parents to create and promote a positive school climate by ensuring safety, inclusion and respect for all school and community members
- Informed parents of School Board Policies, Regulations, Procedures and practices regarding relevant issues that pertain to a parent's concern, e.g., If a parent has a question about bullying prevention the Principal or Vice Principal can refer them to the Bullying Prevention and Intervention resources on the board website
- Use Board resources to help resolve issues with parents (both human and material resources), e.g., resources on Restorative Practice, positive Mental Health and Well-Being, and/or connecting with your Safe Schools Officer/Facilitator
- Incorporate the expectations of the DDSB Equity and Diversity Strategic Plan into the School Code of Conduct, and when implementing Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline
- Understand the school community, including socio-economic status, race and religion, and determine how these factors influence the development and implementation of your School Code of Conduct and Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline
- Be aware of how culture and the diversity of your school community can potentially impact school/parent relations. Demonstrate respect, care and personal regard for parents, especially when problem-solving incidents involving their children
- Manage situations that occur in a timely manner; and don't "ignore" or "over-react" in any situation
- Have meaningful interactions with parents that demonstrate that you are interested in their concerns and questions. Be an empathetic, active listener
- Ensure that you are visible and accessible, and that you fully communicate expectations for Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline to parents
- Share and communicate the expectations for a positive, safe learning environment and Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline with parents through newsletters, e-mails and social media
- Ensure that parents know that your goal is to help every child follow the expectations in the School Code of Conduct as it pertains to Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline. Refer to the School Code of Conduct, and let parents know that it applies to "all stakeholders", including parents

# SUPPORTING RESOURCES – BIAS-AWARE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

## SAFE SCHOOLS

- Policy and Procedure 4255: *Security and Safety*
- Policy, Regulation and Procedure 5500: *Code of Conduct and Discipline for Students*
- Policy, Regulation and Procedure 5148: *Positive School Climate*
- Procedure 3041: *Police School Board Protocol*

## RESOURCES ON THE SAFE SCHOOLS PORTAL

- *Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA)*
- *Safe Schools Safety Plan*
- *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan*
- *Progressive Discipline: A Bias-Aware Approach*
- *Restorative Practice: Healthy Relationships for Living and Learning*

## HEALTH & SAFETY

- Procedure 3050: *911 Emergency Response Guidelines*
- Procedure 4146: *Workplace Violence Management Program*

## RESOURCES ON THE HEALTH & SAFETY PORTAL

- *Workplace Violence Policy*
- *Workplace Violence Information Pamphlet*

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

- Procedure 5127: *Management Process for Risk-of-Injury (Ri) Behaviours*

## RESOURCES ON THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PORTAL

- *Behaviour Safety Plan*
- *Student Brief*
- *Transportation Plan*

## EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PORTAL

- *Equity and Diversity Strategic Plan*
- *Accommodating Creed in Schools*
- *Compendium of Action for Black Student Success*
- *Police Reported Hate Crimes, Statistics Canada*

## RESOURCES ON THE EQUITY & INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PORTAL

- *Supporting Inclusive Schools*
- *Dates of Significance*



**The purpose of Bias-Aware Progressive Discipline is to support a shared vision and ensure a common practice that encourages positive behaviour, promotes healthy relationships and social-emotional development among all students.**

DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

**AN EQUITABLE FRAMEWORK for**  
**PROGRESSIVE**  
**DISCIPLINE**

