Safe & Caring Schools
POLICY

1. Background and Purpose

Increased public awareness and concern regarding the societal issues of bullying and violent behaviour among youth prompted the Department of Education to initiate an external review of the *Provincial Safe & Caring Schools Policy, 2006* and its implementation in schools. The resulting considerations, documented in the *Report on the Evaluation of The Department of Education's Safe & Caring Schools Policy and its Implementation, 2012*, coupled with the input from public consultations on current legislation, policy and practices related to safe and caring schools, have guided the development of this revised *Safe & Caring Schools Policy, 2013*.

> *"Leadership is demanded from the Department, districts and schools to ensure that this vision becomes a reality and that school environments truly become safe for teaching and learning and contribute to building caring and empathetic communities."*
>
> - Report on the Evaluation of The Department of Education's Safe & Caring Schools Policy and its Implementation (2012)

This policy provides guidance to educational stakeholders, particularly to schools and districts, in the development and maintenance of a safe, caring and inclusive learning environment. As well, it outlines a structure for the collection and analysis of data to inform school development plans, to shape practice and to ensure accountability. Stakeholders include the Department of Education, districts and school staff, parents/guardians and students and other professionals and volunteers in our schools.

1.1 The goal of policy is to:

- Establish clear expectations and set direction for all members of the school community.
- Encourage appropriate action.
- Encourage pro-active and preventive endeavors as well as remedial and restorative approaches when problems do occur.

2. Foundation of the Safe & Caring Schools Initiative

2.1. Creating safe and caring schools is a process which requires ongoing support, direction and attention from all stakeholders. To date, the Safe & Caring Schools Policy has provided an important foundation for creating welcoming, inclusive and safe learning environments.

2.2. Building on this foundation requires stronger and broader collaborative efforts among all stakeholders, a belief reflected in the previous Safe & Caring Schools Policy:

> *"All children deserve to learn and grow in peaceful schools and communities. Ensuring our young people have the opportunity to be successful in school - and ultimately, in life - requires safe and caring schools where teachers, students, parents and the broader community work together to respect and support each other."*
>
> - Department of Education, Safe & Caring Schools Policy (2006)

2.3. A safe, caring and inclusive school is a necessary condition for student success. Students cannot be expected to reach their potential in an environment where they feel insecure, intimidated or excluded.

2.4. All members of the school community are responsible for the positive culture of the school. Student, teacher, parent and community engagement must be encouraged, nurtured and expected.

2.5. The school community consists of students, parents/guardians, volunteers, teachers, and other adults who are in contact with students and school staff, in any school setting or school related activity.

2.6. The positive nature of relationships within the school community, and the consistent, inclusive and nurturing nature of the school permit students to build healthy relationships, to create a strong and supportive social network, to develop emotional well-being and to achieve academically to the best of their ability.

2.7. A safe school has:

- an environment free from bullying, harassment, intimidation and discrimination
- an orderly environment
- a Code of Conduct with consistent expectations and consequences
- procedures and guidelines implemented as intended
- active adult supervision
- security procedures which are resistant to intrusion
- response protocols for adverse and crisis situations.

2.8. A caring and inclusive school promotes:

- positive and supportive relationships
- inclusive educational practices
- recognition and acknowledgement of efforts and accomplishments
- celebration of diversity
- advocacy for student well-being
- courtesy and respect
- belonging and connectedness
- equity and equality
- a constant focus on student achievement.

3. Guiding Principles

Safe, caring and inclusive learning environments are built on the following principles:

3.1. Everyone has a role and responsibilities in building a safe, caring and inclusive school climate. Success depends on the active involvement of all stakeholders who are committed to a shared vision, common goals and the on-going work required in achieving them.

3.2. Building a safe, caring and inclusive school environment requires a focus on developing respectful and caring relationships throughout the school community – among students, among adults and between students and adults.

3.3. Inclusive educational practices must be embedded in all aspects of the learning environment to support the well-being and achievement of all students.

3.4. Fair and consistently implemented school policies and Codes of Conduct contribute to positive learning environments and reduce bullying, harassment, intimidation and discrimination.

3.5. Positive social behaviours must be taught, modelled and reinforced throughout the curriculum and imbedded in all aspects of school life.

3.6. Inter-agency collaboration and community partnerships are essential components of building and maintaining a safe, caring and inclusive school environment.

3.7. The creation and maintenance of a safe, caring and inclusive school requires creativity, on-going collaboration and recognition of the complexities involved. For example, the size, population and location of a school will affect school climate and community partnerships.

4. Policy Statements

4.1. Stakeholder Responsibilities

All stakeholders of a school community have responsibility for developing and maintaining a safe, caring and inclusive environment.

4.1.1. Department of Education responsibilities:

4.1.1.1. Establish policy and direction for safe and caring schools.

4.1.1.2. Demonstrate leadership by emphasizing and prioritizing safe, caring and inclusive schools in future Department of Education strategic plans and ensure that future district strategic plans and school development plans formally incorporate a safe and caring schools goal.

4.1.1.3. Promote a safe, caring and inclusive schools focus within the school development process; throughout the curriculum; within all other policies, resources and training initiatives; and across divisions of the Department of Education and school districts.

4.1.1.4. Enhance communication and collaboration among government departments and with community agencies.

4.1.1.5. Identify resources to support policy implementation.

4.1.1.6. Promote professional learning opportunities and provide guidance for policy implementation at district and school levels.

4.1.1.7. Support districts with safe and caring schools initiatives.

4.1.1.8. Acknowledge need for district level safe and caring schools itinerants.

4.1.1.9. Define role of safe and caring schools itinerant.

4.1.1.10. Promote an enhanced focus on positive behaviour supports and character education.

4.1.1.11. Establish and monitor a systematic process for the collection, analysis and reporting of data related to policy implementation and inappropriate student behaviour.

4.1.1.12. Host regular meetings with itinerants to provide direction, seek updates on district and school progress, share challenges and best practices, and conduct other safe and caring schools business.

4.1.1.13. Create a database of curriculum outcomes for safe and caring schools policy implementation (the SCS Curriculum Database).

4.1.1.14. Identify opportunities for integrating safe and caring schools outcomes as new curriculum is developed.

4.1.1.15. Encourage community partners to utilize the SCS Curriculum Database by providing information on resources and services which will support or complement specific curriculum outcomes.

4.1.1.16. Build public awareness of the safe and caring schools initiative though on-going communication efforts.

4.1.2. **School District responsibilities:**

4.1.2.1. Emphasize and prioritize safe and caring schools in future district strategic plans and ensure school development plans formally incorporate a safe and caring schools goal.

4.1.2.2. Ensure the development and implementation of district lockdown and secure school procedures that safeguard students, staff, and school property, from dangerous situations such as a weapon in the school, a dangerous intruder or a bomb threat.

4.1.2.3. Develop and regularly review protocols or practices that guide the implementation and enforcement of the provincial Safe & Caring Schools Policy and it's procedures.

4.1.2.4. Promote and communicate the guiding principles of the provincial Safe & Caring Schools Policy in order to establish an understanding of its underlying philosophy.

4.1.2.5. Promote a safe and caring schools focus within the school development process, within all policies, resources and training initiatives, and across divisions of the school district.

4.1.2.6. Ensure that all district programs staff share the responsibility for Safe & Caring Schools Policy implementation and monitoring at the school level.

4.1.2.7. Demonstrate leadership by providing sufficient guidance to schools for policy implementation, data collection, evaluation and reporting in regard to safe and caring schools.

4.1.2.8. Assign a safe and caring schools itinerant(s) with responsibilities as defined by the Department of Education.

4.1.2.9. Collaborate with the Department of Education and school administrators to determine and support the training needs of district and school level staff.

4.1.2.10. Provide all stakeholders with efficient and easy access to safe and caring schools information and resources.

4.1.2.11. Enhance communication and collaboration among district office, schools, parents and community partners.

4.1.2.12. Promote the use of resources that support policy implementation, and explore additional resources and practices.

4.1.2.13. Support safe and caring schools initiatives at the school level.

4.1.2.14. Explore effective positive behaviour support practices, and facilitate their implementation.

4.1.2.15. Support schools in modeling and promoting positive social behaviours both in person and online.

4.1.2.16. Identify and facilitate the sharing of successful school initiatives and best practices that support *Safe & Caring Schools Policy* implementation.

4.1.2.17. Promote and provide professional learning opportunities at the school level, that support implementation of the *Safe & Caring Schools Policy*.

4.1.2.18. Build public awareness of the safe and caring schools initiative though on-going communication.

4.1.2.19. Ensure and monitor school participation in the collection, analysis and reporting of data regarding policy implementation and inappropriate student behaviour, as outlined by the Department of Education.

4.1.2.20. Encourage schools to access the Safe and Caring Schools Curriculum Database in order to enhance opportunities for learning and community partnerships.

4.1.3. **School responsibilities:**

4.1.3.1. Emphasize and prioritize safe and caring schools in future school development plans by formally incorporating a safe and caring schools goal.

4.1.3.2. Review school-based policies, procedures and practices to align them with the provincial *Safe & Caring Schools Policy* and its procedures, district protocols and the district safe and caring schools action plan.

4.1.3.3. Develop a school-based Code of Conduct, in line with the provincial *Code of Conduct Guidelines and Template,* and ensure its ongoing and consistent implementation.

4.1.3.4. Consistently respond to bullying, and other inappropriate behaviours which occur within the school community or affect the teaching and learning environment, as outlined in the school's Code of Conduct.

4.1.3.5. Collaborate with the district on policy implementation, evaluation and reporting of progress.

4.1.3.6. Engage in safe and caring schools data collection and analysis, utilizing the procedures outlined in the *Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 1 - A School-Wide Approach - Positive Behaviour Supports and Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 6 - Safe & Caring Schools Policy Implementation Progress*, and use these data to inform daily practice, decision-making and professional learning needs.

4.1.3.7. Report inappropriate student behaviour to district office on a monthly basis, as outlined in the *Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 1 - A School-Wide Approach - Positive Behaviour Supports.*

4.1.3.8. Encourage all stakeholders to access safe and caring schools information and resources.

4.1.3.9. Collaborate with the district in determining and supporting the training needs of school staff.

4.1.3.10. Identify and facilitate the sharing of successful school initiatives and best practices that support *Safe & Caring Schools Policy* implementation.

4.1.3.11. Implement school-wide positive behaviour supports.

4.1.3.12. Support safe and caring initiatives at the school and classroom level.

4.1.3.13. Ensure that all staff share the responsibility for Safe & Caring Schools Policy implementation and monitoring at the school level.

4.1.3.14. Avail of the services of the district safe and caring schools itinerant(s) to support implementation of the Safe & Caring Schools Policy and professional learning.

4.1.3.15. Make a concerted effort to connect safe and caring schools initiatives with curriculum outcomes.

4.1.3.16. Teach, model and practice positive social behaviours both in person and online.

4.1.3.17. Engage the students in the implementation of the Safe & Caring Schools Policy and the creation of a safe, caring and inclusive school.

4.1.3.18. Enhance communication with parents and community partners to build public awareness of safe and caring schools initiatives and encourage them to be actively involved with implementation.

4.1.4. **Student responsibilities:**

4.1.4.1. Be actively engaged in the creation and maintenance of a safe, caring and inclusive school.

4.1.4.2. Abide by the school's Code of Conduct and take responsibility for their own actions.

4.1.4.3. Demonstrate respect for self, others and their school environment.

4.1.4.4. Advocate for self and others to maintain physical safety and emotional wellbeing.

4.1.4.5. Appreciate and respect diversity.

4.1.4.6. Practice positive social behaviours both in person and online.

4.1.4.7. Engage in nonviolent conflict resolution. (Examples are available in *Safe & Caring Schools Best Practices*.)

4.1.5. **Parent responsibilities:**

4.1.5.1. Support the efforts of the school in creating and maintaining a safe, caring and inclusive learning environment.

4.1.5.2. Participate in the implementation of the provincial Safe & Caring Schools Policy and the school's Code of Conduct.

4.1.5.3. Model positive social behaviours both in person and online.

4.1.5.4. Be familiar with the provincial Safe and Caring Schools Policy and the school's Code of Conduct.

4.1.5.5. Encourage and assist their children to abide by the school's Code of Conduct.

4.1.5.6. Practice positive social interactions both in person and online.

4.1.5.7. Engage in positive, nonviolent conflict resolution.

4.2. **School-wide Positive Behaviour Supports (SWPBS)**

SWPBS is a decision making framework, not a curriculum, intervention, or program.

4.2.1. Schools will implement SWPBS. This operational framework, implemented with integrity and consistency, will improve student academic and behaviour outcomes by:

4.2.1.1. Fostering preventative approaches to inappropriate behaviour and creating or maintaining an inclusive, engaging, responsive and productive environment.

4.2.1.2. Addressing classroom management and disciplinary issues.

4.2.1.3. Supporting students whose behaviours require more specialized assistance (e.g., emotional and behavioural disorders, mental health).

4.2.1.4. Maximizing academic engagement and achievement for all students.

4.2.2. Schools will use SWPBS to guide the selection, integration, and implementation of evidence-based academic and behavioural practices in order to improve academic and behaviour outcomes for students.

4.2.3. In their practice of SWPBS, schools will utilize:

4.2.3.1. Data for decision making.

4.2.3.2. Measurable outcomes that are supported and evaluated by data.

4.2.3.3. Evidence-based practices that are achievable.

4.2.3.4. Systems that efficiently and effectively support the implementation of these practices.

4.2.4. The practice of SWPBS will be guided by six important components:

4.2.4.1 A school-based continuum of evidence-based interventions and supports for academic and behavioural excellence are developed.

4.2.4.2 Data are used to make decisions and solve problems.

4.2.4.3 The environment is arranged to prevent the development and occurrence of problem behaviour.

4.2.4.4 Prosocial skills and behaviours are taught and encouraged.

4.2.4.5 Behavioural practices are implemented with fidelity and accountability.

4.2.4.6 Student performance & progress are monitored regularly.

4.2.5. A continuum of interventions and supports for behavioural excellence will follow a three-tiered prevention model which requires that all students receive supports at the primary tier or level 1. If the behaviour of some students is not responsive, more intensive behavioural supports are provided, in the form of a group contingency (secondary tier or level 2) or a highly individualized plan (tertiary tier or level 3). Details for implementing the three-tier practice of SWPBS are outlined in *Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 1 - A School-Wide Approach - Positive Behaviour Supports.*

4.3. Code of Conduct

4.3.1. All members of the school community (including students, parents/guardians, school staff, volunteers and visitors) have the right to feel safe and secure in all school-related activities and share in the responsibility for ensuring this is the case.

4.3.2. It is expected that all members of the school community will promote safe, caring and inclusive practice by exhibiting behaviours that:

4.3.2.1. Promote an orderly, productive work and learning environment free from aggression or disrespectful behaviour.

4.3.2.2. Engage in activities and behaviour that promote health and personal well-being.

4.3.2.3. Relate to one another in a positive and supportive manner, with dignity and respect.

4.3.2.4. Embrace the diversity of all peoples, regardless of economic status, national or ethnic origin, religion, culture, body image, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or ability.

4.3.2.5. Support non-violent conflict resolution.

4.3.3. Schools will have a Code of Conduct which is consistent with the *Code of Conduct Guidelines and Template (available in Safe & Caring Schools Procedure* 2). The school's Code of Conduct will identify the behavioural expectations of students (appropriate student behaviours and inappropriate student behaviours) and the responsibilities of school staff (proactive school and/or classroom based strategies and possible consequences for inappropriate student behaviours).

4.3.4. A school's Code of Conduct will apply to all members of the school community when:

4.3.4.1. On school property.

4.3.4.2. Traveling on a school bus that is under contract to the school and/or school board, and/or owned by the school board.

4.3.4.3. Participating in extra-curricular activities.

4.3.4.4. Participating in off-site school-sponsored activities.

4.3.4.5. An individual is acting on behalf of, or is representing the school.

4.3.4.6. In all communications related to school events (meetings, phone calls, written and electronic correspondence).

4.3.4.7. Engaging in an activity which will have a negative effect on the teaching and learning environment of the school.

4.3.5. The school's Code of Conduct will identify the proactive school-based strategies which encourage positive student behaviour in a safe, caring and inclusive learning environment.

4.4. Violence and Bullying Prevention

"Violence is defined by the World Health Organization (2004) as 'the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.' This includes neglect and all types of physical, sexual and psychological abuse, as well as suicide and other self-abusive acts. By implementing programs to prevent violence, it is possible to reduce the long term effects associated with it."

- World Health Organization (2004). Preventing violence: A guide to implementing the recommendations of the World Report on Violence and Health. Geneva: WHO

4.4.1. Schools will implement violence prevention initiative(s). Examples of best practices are available in Safe & Caring Schools Best Practices.

4.4.2. Schools, and their community partners, are invited to participate in the "Violence Prevention Week" activities, sponsored by the Department of Education.

4.4.3. Schools, and their community partners, are invited to use the violence and bullying prevention information available on the Department of Education website.

- www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/bullying/index.html
- www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/safeandcaring/index.html
- www.cdli.ca/bullying/

4.4.4. Schools will adopt the Department of Education's definition of bullying. In order to ensure consistent interpretation, further discussion of the definition of bullying is available in *Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 3 - Bullying Intervention Protocol.*

"Bullying is typically repeated behaviour that is intended to cause harm to another person(s). A person participates in bullying if he or she directly carries out, assists or encourages the behaviour in any way. Those that engage in bullying behaviour are perceived to be in a position of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal, social and/or electronic. In some circumstances bullying is an illegal activity."

- Department of Education (2013)

4.4.5. Schools will follow the Bullying Intervention Protocol (*Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 3 - Bullying Intervention Protocol)* when bullying incidents occur on the school property, during a school activity off school property, and when a bullying behaviour negatively affects the school climate.

4.4.6. Schools will promote the prevention of bullying and violence through strategies which encourage safe and responsible intervention, and reporting, as outlined in *Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 1- Positive Behaviour Supports - Inappropriate Student Behaviour Documentation Form, Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 2- Code of Conduct Guidelines and Template, and Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 3 - Bullying Intervention Protocol.*

4.4.7. When a team response to potential violent behaviours is required, public schools in Newfoundland and Labrador will practice Nonviolent Crisis Intervention ®, as defined by the Crisis Prevention Institute and the Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 4 - Department of Education Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Guidelines.

4.5. **Digital Citizenship**

Digital citizenship can be defined as the norms of safe, respectful and responsible behaviour with regard to the use of technology.

4.5.1. Schools will develop and implement a plan to teach digital citizenship. Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 5 - Teaching Digital Citizenship provides information and resources to support school and district planning and implementation.

4.6. **Inclusive Educational Practices**

4.6.1. The following beliefs, central to inclusive education, are fundamental to Safe and Caring Schools:

4.6.1.1. All students can learn.

4.6.1.2. Students are the responsibility of all teachers.

4.6.1.3. A student is removed from the classroom only to the extent required to meet his or her needs.

4.6.1.4. Differentiated instruction is imbedded in the classroom.

4.6.1.5. Partnerships are established with families and the community.

4.6.2. District office personnel, school administrators, and program planning teams will consider Department of Education guidelines which outline inclusive practices. Guidelines which may be pertinent include, but are not limited to:

- *Service Delivery Model for Students with Exceptionalities (2011)*.
- *Guidelines for Inclusive Practices (2011)* (Available to schools participating in the Inclusive Education Initiative).
- *Guidelines for Partial Day Programming (2012).*
- *Guidelines for Suspension and Expulsion (To be developed in consultation with the school districts in 2014).*

4.6.3. Schools will promote the acceptance and the inclusion of all individuals, regardless of economic status, national or ethnic origin, religion, culture, body image, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or ability.

4.6.4. Schools will ensure that classroom and school-based practices are inclusive. Examples of inclusive practices include:

- A welcoming school culture in which all members of the school community feel they belong, have the opportunity to realize their potential, and contribute to the life of the school.
- A strong partnership with families and outside agencies to promote the celebration of diversity.
- A network of resources and supports in place to address diversity.
- Forms which require parental identification request parent/guardian information rather than mother/father.
- The availability of a non-gender single toilet bathroom for students, staff, and visitors to the school.
- Opportunities for collaboration and team building for all educators within the school community.
- Curriculum, literature and resources available for teachers and students which represent the many faces of diversity (ethnicity, ability, family composition, sexual identity, etc.).

- Class profiles reflecting student diversity including learning styles, interests, needs and learning readiness.
- Differentiated instruction implementation in classrooms.
- Effective instructional strategies and ongoing assessment to meet student needs.
- School-based forms which require only pertinent information.

4.6.5. Schools with junior and/or senior high students will encourage the development of a student-led club, such as a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), with the goal of making their school community a safe and welcoming environment for all students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. The Department of Education's resource, *MyGSA.ca Equity and Inclusive Education Resource Kit for Newfoundland and Labrador, Grades 7-12 (2013)* is available to support schools. It has been provided to all junior and senior high schools and is available online at www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/safeandcaring/gsa/index.html.

4.7. Social-Emotional Learning

Social emotional learning (or character education) is a process for developing life skills, such as:

- Respecting self and others.
- Appreciating differences.
- Recognizing our emotions and learning how to manage feelings.
- Recognizing the emotions and perspectives of others, and developing empathy.
- Maintaining healthy, positive relationships.
- Resisting negative peer pressure.
- Working effectively with others.
- Cooperating, negotiating, and managing conflict.
- Listening and communicating accurately and clearly.
- Setting positive and realistic goals.
- Problem solving, decision making, and planning.
- Help-seeking and help-giving.
- Showing ethical and social responsibility

4.7.1. Schools will purposefully promote the social and emotional learning of students. This will be accomplished through curriculum instruction and safe and caring schools initiatives.

4.7.2. Best practices for social and emotional learning are available within Safe & Caring Schools Best . Practices.

4.7.3. The school development process will guide school-based initiatives that meet the requirement for the social and emotional learning of students.

4.7.4. The SCS Curriculum Database includes character education outcomes and outlines where these and other safe and caring schools outcomes are found within the curriculum. The database also provides information regarding community resources and services, which can support the promotion of these social and emotional learning outcomes.

4.8. Data Collection

The school development process has been designed to guide and focus school-based efforts in order to enhance student learning. A School Development Plan reflects the uniqueness of the school environment and is a process that involves collective reflection, analysis, problem solving, planning, and continuous improvement. The goal of all safe and caring schools initiatives is to enhance student learning.

4.8.1. All school-based decisions concerning safe and caring schools initiatives are made through the school development process.

4.8.2. Schools will document their progress integrating the safe and caring schools initiative through an approved Department of Education procedure. (*Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 6 – Safe & Caring Schools Policy Implementation Progress*).

4.8.3. Data regarding inappropriate student behaviour will be collected through an approved Department of Education procedure. (*Safe & Caring Schools Procedure 1 - A School-Wide Approach - Positive Behaviour Supports*).

4.8.4. Districts and schools will annually evaluate their implementation of the safe and caring schools policy, and make plans accordingly.