

# Keeping Your School Safe



*“The Toronto District School Board values the contribution of all members of our diverse community of students, staff, parents, and community groups to our mission and goals. We believe that equity of opportunity and equity of access to our programs, services, and resources are critical to the achievement of successful outcomes for all those whom we serve, and for those who serve our school system.”*

~ from the **TDSB Equity Foundation Statement**

Visit [www.tdsb.on.ca](http://www.tdsb.on.ca) to learn more about our commitment to Equitable Schools.

## Bullying

Bullying is an issue the TDSB takes seriously. In 2008, the Board adopted the **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy (P065)** because we understand that bullying:

- adversely affects a student’s ability to learn;
- adversely affects healthy relationships and the school climate; and
- adversely affects a school’s ability to educate its students.

Bullying can be verbal or physical. It can happen “in your face,” behind the victim’s back or even on-line. Cyberbullying is when a bully uses electronic tools like instant messaging, cell phones, blogs or chat rooms to intimidate, harm, exclude others or ruin a reputation.

Bullying is usually not a one-time event but rather a pattern of continued harassment over an extended period of time. Boys and girls are equally involved in bullying incidents.

We believe that bullying is a learned behaviour and it can be unlearned. That’s why our schools emphasize positive, socially-responsible behaviour. Violence-prevention and anti-bullying programs are incorporated in all areas of the curriculum. Parents and families are encouraged to speak to school staff about any concerns they have.

To learn more about bullying, prevention programs, and the **TDSB Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy**, visit [www.tdsb.on.ca/safeschools](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/safeschools).

## Helping Make Schools Safer

### Serious Incident Reporting Requirements

Even one incident of bullying or harassment in school is one too many. Schools must be places where everyone feels welcome, safe and respected. The Ministry of Education’s ***Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act*** sets out how all school boards handle incidents at school.

All school staff report serious incidents that could lead to suspension or expulsion to their principal and that principals notify parents of victims when a student has been harmed. In addition, all staff who work directly with students, for example teachers or educational assistants, must respond not only to serious incidents but also to inappropriate or disrespectful behaviour among students. This could include racist or sexist comments, graffiti or vandalism, behaviours and activities that are unacceptable in Ontario schools.

All of us have a part to play in making schools safe spaces.

For further information about ***Keeping our Kids Safe at School Act*** and Ontario’s strategy to help make schools safer, please visit the Ministry of Education web site at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools).

## Gender-Based Violence

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, Policy (PO71) States: “Gender-Based Violence is any aggressive action that threatens safety, causes physical, social or emotional harm and denigrates a person because of his or her gender identity, perceived gender, sexual identity, biological sex or sexual behaviour. Gender-based violence operates on a societal imbalance of power and control based on social constructions of sexual identity, sexual orientation, gender, perceived gender and sexual behaviour. This imbalance may manifest in multiple forms as aggressive and discriminatory behaviours and expressions of hatred.”

The Gender-Based Violence Prevention Office is comprised of an interdisciplinary team available to staff and students. It offers resources, support and school-based programming to help educate about and prevent gender-based violence.

If you think you have experienced some form of gender-based violence you should speak to your school principal, teacher, or guidance counsellor immediately.

For more information about programs or to contact the **Gender-Based Violence Prevention Office**, visit [www.tdsb.on.ca/gbvp](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/gbvp) or call 416-393-9667.

## Code of Conduct

TDSB is committed to making our schools safe, welcoming learning environments where everyone feels valued. The TDSB **Code of Conduct** serves as the foundation for respect, civility, responsible citizenship and safety in all of our schools and workplaces. It sets out standards of behaviour for all members of the school community, including students, parents and guardians, teachers or other school staff members, Board members, volunteers and visitors.

**The Code of Conduct Policy (P044) states:**

“Students are to be treated with respect and dignity. In return, they shall demonstrate respect for themselves, for others, and for the responsibilities of citizenship by:

- coming to school prepared, on time, and ready to learn;
- showing respect for themselves, for others, and for those in authority;
- refraining from bringing anything to school that may compromise the safety of others;
- following the established rules and taking responsibility for their own actions”.

Visit [www.tdsb.on.ca/safeschools](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/safeschools) to find out more about the TDSB **Code of Conduct Policy (P044)** and the steps taken to make every school a safe, welcoming and caring learning environment for all our students.

## Consequences of Inappropriate Student Behaviour

Before taking disciplinary action, the principal will conduct an investigation and document the process. The **Education Act** sets out the circumstances and mitigating factors that principals must take into consideration, including:

- the pupil’s age, history, and whether a progressive discipline approach has been used;
- whether the pupil has the ability to control his or her behaviour, and to understand the foreseeable consequences of that behaviour;
- whether the behaviour was related to harassment of the pupil because of race, ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation, or any other harassment;
- whether the pupil’s continuing presence in the school creates an unacceptable safety risk;
- how the suspension or expulsion would affect the pupil’s ongoing education;
- factors related to an Individual Education Plan, where one has been developed for the pupil.

The following **Chart of Consequences of Inappropriate Student Behaviour** outlines the progressive discipline approach, with consequences ranging from loss of privileges to expulsion for behaviours that breach the **Code of Conduct**. The most serious consequences, suspension and expulsion, are reserved for incidents of serious misconduct.