

Parent Resource

Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week

Questions and Answers

Q. What is Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week?

A. The Legislative Assembly of Ontario passed a resolution to recognize the week beginning on the third Sunday of November as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. The purpose of the week is to heighten awareness in schools of what constitutes bullying and the impact it can have on the overall school environment.

Q. What is bullying?

A. Bullying is defined as typically a form of repeated, persistent and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.

Students may attain or maintain power over others in the school through real or perceived differences. Some areas of difference may be size, strength, age, intelligence, economic status, social status, solidarity of peer group, religion, ethnicity, disability, need for special education, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender and race.

Q. What forms does bullying take?

A. Bullying can take many forms, such as:

- Physical – hitting, shoving, stealing or damaging property
- Verbal – name calling, mocking, or making sexist, racist or homophobic comments
- Social – excluding others from a group or spreading gossip or rumours about them
- Electronic (commonly known as **cyberbullying**) – spreading rumours and hurtful comments through the use of cellphones, e-mail, text messaging and social networking sites

Q. Why is it important for schools to participate in Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week?

A. By participating in Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, schools will be affecting positive change in student learning, achievement and well-being by promoting a safer learning environment, which is essential to their success. By planning an activity, schools can:

- Help students, parents and school staff become more aware of what constitutes bullying and where and when it may be happening.
- Help students know where to turn for help if they experience or know about acts of bullying.
- Help students succeed — research shows that a healthy school environment helps to support student success.
- Increase student and community engagement in this important issue.

Q. What are “Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools Teams”?

A. Each school has a Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools Team responsible for school safety that is composed of at least one student (where appropriate), one parent, one teacher, one non-teaching staff member, one community partner and the principal.

Q. What role can Safe Schools Teams play?

A. Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools Teams are encouraged to take on a leadership role in the school by planning activities that are relevant to bullying awareness and prevention and that engage the whole school community. Below are some ideas for school-wide activities that can involve students, parents, teachers and school staff:

- Organize campaigns such as Pink t-shirt day that promote tolerance and inclusiveness and an end to bullying.
- Organize an assembly that features student-produced drama presentations about the impact of bullying.
- Organize a poster-making campaign based on the theme of bullying prevention and present the final posters at a Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week assembly.
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Q. What role can students, parents, teachers and school staff play?

A. All are encouraged to work with their Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools Team, school council, student council and community partners to promote and facilitate participation in Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. It is also important for schools to address bullying throughout the year. Schools that have bullying prevention and intervention strategies in place foster a positive learning and teaching environment that supports academic achievement for all students and helps students reach their full potential.

Q. How can schools share what they did to recognize Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week?

A. The ministry wants to hear how your school marked Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. To tell us what your school did, simply fill out a [feedback form](#). The ministry will feature a selection of success stories on the safe schools website.

Q. What resources are available to schools to address bullying on an ongoing basis?

A. The ministry has made available a number of resources, including:

- Two million copies of the [parent pamphlet](#), in both English and French, on bullying prevention were distributed to schools and sent home to every elementary and secondary parent at the beginning of the 2006-07 school year. These pamphlets have been translated into 22 languages and are posted on the ministry's public website.
- The WRDSB [School Climate Surveys](#) have been expanded to include questions related to equity and inclusive education and issues such as gender-based bullying, sexual harassment and homophobia. Schools are now required to administer the school climate survey annually. Access to the surveys is available on the WRDSB website.

- The ministry has expanded the Registry of Bullying Prevention Programs to include a wider range of products and resources including those intended to foster safe and inclusive schools. The registry is continually updated.
- A \$1 million per year partnership with Kids Help Phone, since 2005-06, to provide 24/7 online and phone counselling for issues including bullying and cyber-bullying.