
Date of Issue:	December 5, 2012	Effective: Until revoked or modified
Subject:	THE PROVINCIAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND SCHOOL BOARD CODES OF CONDUCT	
Application:	Directors of Education Supervisory Officers and Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities Principals of Elementary Schools Principals of Secondary Schools Principals of Provincial and Demonstration Schools Chairs of Special Education Advisory Committees	
Reference:	This memorandum replaces Policy/Program Memorandum No. 128, October 4, 2007.	

INTRODUCTION

On June 5, 2012, Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, was passed, amending the Education Act. The amendments came into force September 1, 2012.

The provincial Code of Conduct has been revised to reflect Bill 13 amendments to the Education Act that pertain to the promotion of a safe, inclusive, and accepting school climate. The revised provincial Code of Conduct is communicated in this memorandum.¹

This memorandum also gives direction to school boards² on reviewing their own codes of conduct and the local codes of conduct in their schools. Boards must review their codes of conduct to ensure that they are consistent with the revised provincial Code of Conduct, and must have necessary revisions in place by February 1, 2013.

Boards should note that subsection 301(2) of Part XIII of the Education Act, which outlines the purposes of the provincial Code of Conduct, has been revised to include prevention of bullying in schools. If a board enters into an agreement with a third party with respect to rental of school space, the board must include in the agreement a requirement that the other party follow standards that are consistent with the provincial Code of Conduct, in accordance with subsection 301(3.1).

1. *Ontario Schools – Code of Conduct*, a booklet published by the Ministry of Education in 2000, is superseded by the Code of Conduct communicated in this memorandum.

2. In this memorandum, *school board(s)* and *board(s)* refer to district school boards and school authorities.

A school should be a place that promotes responsibility, respect, civility, and academic excellence in a safe learning and teaching environment. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. Building and sustaining a positive school climate is a complex challenge requiring evidence-informed solutions. A whole-school approach, which involves all members of the school community, is also important in supporting efforts to ensure that schools are safe, inclusive, and accepting. It is an effective approach to making systemic changes that will benefit all students and the broader community.

All students,³ parents,⁴ and teachers and other school staff⁵ have the right to be safe, and to feel safe, in their school community. With this right comes the responsibility to contribute to a positive school climate. The promotion of strategies and initiatives such as Student Success and character development, along with the employment of prevention and intervention strategies to address inappropriate behaviour, fosters a positive school climate that supports student achievement and the well-being of all students. Boards and schools should therefore focus on prevention and early intervention as the key to maintaining a positive school environment in which students can learn and teachers can teach.

The provincial Code of Conduct sets clear provincial standards of behaviour. These standards of behaviour apply to students whether they are on school property, on school buses, at school-related events or activities, or in other circumstances that could have an impact on the school climate. They also apply to all individuals involved in the publicly funded school system – principals, teachers, other school staff, parents, volunteers, and community groups.

Responsible citizenship involves appropriate participation in the civic life of the school community. Active and engaged citizens are aware of their rights, but more importantly, they accept responsibility for protecting their rights and the rights of others.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL BOARDS

Boards are required to:

- revise their board code of conduct and require principals⁶ to engage in reviews of school codes of conduct to incorporate changes in the provincial Code of Conduct, as outlined in this memorandum;
- inform students, parents, teachers and other school staff, and other members of the school community of the terms of the revised provincial Code of Conduct and school board codes of conduct.

3. *Student*, as used in this memorandum, refers to *pupil*, as used in the Education Act.

4. In this memorandum, *parent(s)* refers to parent(s) and guardian(s). For the purposes of Part XIII of the Education Act, students who are 18 years of age or older, and students who are 16 or 17 years of age but have withdrawn from parental control, are to be treated as adults.

5. Other school staff include, but are not limited to, staff in social work, child and youth work, psychology, and related areas; early childhood educators; educational assistants; attendance counsellors; and Aboriginal education counsellors. Even though the term *school staff* is used in this memorandum, it is understood that staff at the school are employed by the board.

6. In this memorandum, *principal* refers to the principal or to a person designated by the principal or by the board.

Revision of School Board Codes of Conduct

The standards of behaviour in school board codes of conduct must be consistent with the requirements set out in this memorandum. In reviewing their codes of conduct, school boards must consult with school councils. They should also consult with a wide variety of stakeholders, including parents, principals, teachers, students, their Parent Involvement Committees, their Special Education Advisory Committee, community partners, community-based service providers,⁷ members of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities (e.g., Elders), and other relevant groups (e.g., providers of child care) that are traditionally not consulted. School board codes of conduct must:

- include the standards stated in the provincial Code of Conduct;
- set out standards of behaviour for all members of the school community (e.g., parents, students, staff, visitors, volunteers);
- link locally developed standards to the relevant provincial standards (e.g., school board rules for the use of electronic devices such as cell phones could be linked to the provincial standard requiring those at school to “respect the need of others to work in an environment that is conducive to learning and teaching” [see “Respect, Civility, and Responsible Citizenship” on page 4]);
- indicate where and/or when these standards will apply (e.g., in school sports activities, on school buses, in off-site school-sponsored activities, or in circumstances where engaging in an activity could have a negative impact on the school climate);
- include procedures and timelines for review (reviews should be conducted at least every three years).

Development or Revision of Local Codes of Conduct in Schools

School boards may require principals to develop codes of conduct tailored expressly for their schools. Where local codes have been developed, they must be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with the provincial Code of Conduct and other requirements in this memorandum. These codes must set out clearly what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour for all members of the elementary or secondary school community (e.g., parents, students, staff, visitors, volunteers), and must also be consistent with the school board’s code of conduct.

In developing or reviewing these local standards of behaviour, the principal must take into consideration the views of the school council. In addition, he or she should:

- seek input from students, staff, parents, and other members of the school community;
- include procedures and timelines for review, in accordance with school board policy;
- develop a communications plan that outlines how these standards will be made clear to everyone, including parents whose first language is a language other than English or French.

School boards should assist principals in developing or reviewing their local codes of conduct by creating clear guidelines for the development of such codes, in keeping with provincial policy.

These local codes of conduct should also be communicated to all members of the school community.

7. Community-based service providers include a range of community service agencies, mental health agencies/services, local organizations, and community programs.

THE PROVINCIAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Purposes of the Code

Subsection 301(1) of Part XIII of the Education Act states that “the Minister may establish a code of conduct governing the behaviour of all persons in schools”. Subsection 301(2) sets out the purposes of this provincial code of conduct, as follows:

1. To ensure that all members of the school community, especially people in positions of authority, are treated with respect and dignity.
2. To promote responsible citizenship by encouraging appropriate participation in the civic life of the school community.
3. To maintain an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect and civility.
4. To encourage the use of non-violent means to resolve conflict.
5. To promote the safety of people in the schools.
6. To discourage the use of alcohol and illegal drugs.
7. To prevent bullying in schools.

Standards of Behaviour

Respect, Civility, and Responsible Citizenship

All members of the school community must:

- respect and comply with all applicable federal, provincial, and municipal laws;
- demonstrate honesty and integrity;
- respect differences in people, their ideas, and their opinions;
- treat one another with dignity and respect at all times, and especially when there is disagreement;
- respect and treat others fairly, regardless of, for example, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability;
- respect the rights of others;
- show proper care and regard for school property and the property of others;
- take appropriate measures to help those in need;
- seek assistance from a member of the school staff, if necessary, to resolve conflict peacefully;
- respect all members of the school community, especially persons in positions of authority;
- respect the need of others to work in an environment that is conducive to learning and teaching;
- not swear at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority.

Safety

All members of the school community must not:

- engage in bullying behaviours;
- commit sexual assault;
- traffic in weapons or illegal drugs;
- give alcohol to a minor;

- commit robbery;
- be in possession of any weapon, including firearms;
- use any object to threaten or intimidate another person;
- cause injury to any person with an object;
- be in possession of, or be under the influence of, or provide others with alcohol or illegal drugs;
- inflict or encourage others to inflict bodily harm on another person;
- engage in hate propaganda and other forms of behaviour motivated by hate or bias;
- commit an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property or to property located on the premises of the school.

Roles and Responsibilities

School Boards

School boards provide direction to their schools to ensure opportunity, academic excellence, and accountability in the education system. It is the responsibility of school boards to:

- develop policies that set out how their schools will implement and enforce the provincial Code of Conduct and all other rules that they develop that are related to the provincial standards that promote and support respect, civility, responsible citizenship, and safety;
- establish a process that clearly communicates the provincial Code of Conduct and school board codes of conduct to all parents, students, principals, teachers, other school staff, and members of the school community in order to obtain their commitment and support;
- review these policies regularly with those listed above;
- seek input from school councils, their Parent Involvement Committees, and their Special Education Advisory Committee;
- develop effective intervention strategies and respond to all infractions related to the standards for respect, civility, responsible citizenship, and safety;
- provide opportunities for all of the staff to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to develop and maintain academic excellence in a safe learning and teaching environment.

Wherever possible, boards should collaborate to provide coordinated prevention and intervention programs and services, and should endeavour to share effective practices.

Principals

Under the direction of their school boards, principals take a leadership role in the daily operation of a school. They provide this leadership by:

- demonstrating care for the school community and a commitment to academic excellence in a safe, inclusive, and accepting teaching and learning environment;
- holding everyone under their authority accountable for his or her behaviour and actions;
- empowering students to be positive leaders in their school and community;
- communicating regularly and meaningfully with all members of their school community.

Teachers and Other School Staff

Under the leadership of their principals, teachers and other school staff maintain order in the school and are expected to hold everyone to the highest standard of respectful and responsible behaviour. As role models, teachers and other school staff uphold these high standards when they:

- help students work to their full potential and develop their sense of self-worth;
- empower students to be positive leaders in their classroom, school, and community;
- communicate regularly and meaningfully with parents;
- maintain consistent standards of behaviour for all students;
- demonstrate respect for all students, staff, parents, volunteers, and other members of the school community;
- prepare students for the full responsibilities of citizenship.

Students

Students are to be treated with respect and dignity. In return, they must demonstrate respect for themselves, for others, and for the responsibilities of citizenship through acceptable behaviour. Respect and responsibility are demonstrated when a student:

- comes to school prepared, on time, and ready to learn;
- shows respect for himself or herself, for others, and for those in authority;
- refrains from bringing anything to school that may compromise the safety of others;
- follows the established rules and takes responsibility for his or her own actions.

Parents

Parents play an important role in the education of their children, and can support the efforts of school staff in maintaining a safe, inclusive, accepting, and respectful learning environment for all students. Parents fulfil their role when they:

- show an active interest in their child's school work and progress;
- communicate regularly with the school;
- help their child be neat, appropriately dressed, and prepared for school;
- ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time;
- promptly report to the school their child's absence or late arrival;
- show that they are familiar with the provincial Code of Conduct, the board's code of conduct, and school rules;
- encourage and assist their child in following the rules of behaviour;
- assist school staff in dealing with disciplinary issues involving their child.

Community Partners and the Police

Through outreach, partnerships already in place may be enhanced and new partnerships with community-based service providers and members of the community (e.g., Aboriginal Elders) may also be created. Community-based service providers are resources that boards can use to deliver prevention

or intervention programs. Protocols are effective ways of establishing linkages between boards and community-based service providers and of formalizing the relationship between them. These partnerships must respect all applicable collective agreements.

The police play an essential role in making our schools and communities safer. The police investigate incidents in accordance with the protocol developed with the local school board. These protocols are based on a provincial model that was revised in 2011 by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Ministry of Education.