



**Safe and Inclusive
Schools**

A Grand Erie Program

Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week: November 17-23, 2019

“Bullying is wrong and hurtful. It is a relationship problem. To truly understand bullying as a relationship problem, we need to focus on the whole child: their strengths and challenges, their environment, as well as their relationships within the family, peer group, school and community.” -Pprevnet

- For more information about the Bullying Presentation and the Safe Schools program in Grand Erie, visit any one of the following sites: [Cyberbullying](#), [Bullying Prevention](#), and [Safe Schools Code of Conduct](#).

The issue of bullying continues to be a concern of educators, students, parents and community members. With the role of social media in our student’s lives, cyberbullying has become a common space for young people and adults to harm one another. There are recent events in our communities across Grand Erie and beyond that have impacted our concern about bullying and how we as adults are dealing with this serious social issue.

In Grand Erie, it is recognized that all of us have a responsibility to work together to create healthy and safe school environments. Safe and inclusive school and work environments promote learning and positive social growth. Additionally, an inclusive school is a safe school. When people feel they belong, they feel more of an investment in the well being of their school.

Building healthy and respectful relationships creates an environment where bullying is less likely to occur. However, within human relationships there are imbalances of power, which can set the stage for bullying behaviour. Bullying behaviour has an impact on everyone involved, not only the students who are victimized, but also the bystanders, other students and adults in the school and community.

Over the years, bullying has become more understood and defined and is not accepted as a “harmless” part of growing up. Bullying behaviour takes many forms, such as physical, verbal, emotional, or cyberbullying. It can be subtle, or it can be direct, and is often hidden from adults. Those who use bullying behaviour are essentially using their power in controlling and/or hurtful ways. We see this behaviour being used throughout the life span of many individuals in our communities. In adults, bullying behaviour may be seen in family violence or workplace harassment.

According to PrevNet, Canada's experts on bullying prevention, bullying is essentially a relationship problem. Therefore, to successfully prevent bullying, we need relationship solutions. We need to teach our students about healthy relationships and help them develop social skills and empathy. We need to teach assertiveness skills and help students learn to stand up for themselves and others. We need to teach students problem solving skills, so that they can learn to solve problems without aggression. We need to help our students develop resiliency, to withstand the challenges of life and learn to cope with the ups and downs of life. As a school and community, we need to develop a sense of social responsibility to one another, and a commitment to promote healthy relationships and eliminate violence.

Unfortunately, bullying continues to happen in schools and in our communities. For that reason, Grand Erie has several policies and programs to help address when problems arise.

The Safe Schools Team in Grand Erie provides intervention for those students directly involved in long term suspensions or expulsions, which may result from serious bullying behaviour. Bullying behaviour is dealt with through progressive discipline, which seeks to change the behaviour of the student through both disciplinary measures and offering supports. Working collaboratively with the school, Police, court and community agencies, the program seeks to ensure that students are given opportunities to both correct and change their behaviour.

The Grand Erie District School Board also has a protocol for responding to students who are exhibiting worrisome or high-risk behaviour. This includes assessing threats, risk of violence, and threats of self-harm. The School and Community Threat and Risk Assessment and Intervention Protocol outlines the process for school teams to assess student safety. The protocol includes several community partners, including Police, Child Welfare Agencies, Children's Mental Health and Women's services, to mention a few. This protocol allows schools and agencies to quickly collaborate to gather and assess information related to threats to student safety, or risks of elevated violence.

Prevention

Safe Schools also continues to promote training in effective bullying prevention, through offering up to date training and resources. Classroom sessions are designed to support teaching our students about the potential risks involved in online communication, such as cyberbullying, social media, and fraud. The importance of understanding responsible digital citizenship will also help students prepare for their future. Parents are encouraged to know what their students are doing online, as well as who they are communicating with and following on social media.

The broader Safe and Inclusive Schools Committee of Grand Erie meets regularly to promote integration of safety and inclusion in Board policies, procedures and practices. In addition, a variety of professional development sessions are offered to help teachers bring these conversations to the classroom. Awareness of bias, celebrating diversity and having courageous conversations to confront hurtful and harmful behaviour is essential to reducing racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, ableism and other forms of marginalization.

Safe Schools continues to promote "restorative practices", where students can have an opportunity to come together and resolve relationship problems through a respectful and

reflective process. Students are invited to be part of this process and have a choice to participate. Through asking a series of questions, students are encouraged to develop skills of empathy as well as consider the impact of their actions on other people. Many administrators in Grand Erie have taken the Restorative Practices workshop through Safe Schools and are using these approaches daily in their work with students.

If you are interested in more information, please contact Safe Schools through Michelle Galbraith, Office Administrator michelle.galbraith@granderie.ca