

Parents' Guide to the Ontario Code of Conduct

Introduction

A positive school climate and a safe learning and teaching environment are essential if students are to succeed in school. A positive school climate means everyone feels they are safe, welcome and respected.

All students, parents,¹ teachers, staff and community members have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in their school community. With this right comes the responsibility for everyone to be accountable for their actions and contribute to a positive school climate.

Why is there a provincial code of conduct?

Ontario's provincial code of conduct sets clear standards of behaviour for individual school boards to follow, so that they can develop their own codes of conduct. The standards of behaviour in school board codes of conduct must be consistent with the requirements outlined in the provincial code of conduct.

Who is included in the code and where does it apply?

The code of conduct applies not only to students, but to everyone involved in the publicly funded school system, including parents, volunteers, teachers, early childhood educators and other staff members. The code applies whether on school property, on school buses, at school-related events or activities, before and/or after school programs or in other circumstances that could have an impact on the school climate.

Fundamental beliefs

- Everyone has a responsibility to promote a safe environment.
- Everyone should be aware of their rights, as active and engaged citizens. More importantly, everyone should also accept responsibility for protecting their rights and the rights of others. Responsible citizenship involves taking part in the civic life of the school.

1. In this document, parent(s) refers to parent(s) and guardian(s) as used in the *Education Act*. It may also be taken to include caregivers or close family members who are responsible for raising the child.

- All members of the school community are to be treated with respect and dignity, especially those in positions of authority.
- Everyone has a responsibility to resolve conflicts in a way that is civil and respectful. Insults, hurtful acts and a lack of respect for others disrupt learning and teaching in a school community.
- Everyone is expected to resolve conflicts without using violence. Physical aggression is not a responsible way to deal with other people. No one should use an object to injure another person, or even threaten to use an object to injure another person. This is unacceptable and puts everyone's safety at risk.

Standards of Behaviour

Respect, civility and responsible citizenship

All school members must:

- respect and follow all applicable laws
- demonstrate honesty and integrity
- respect differences in people
- treat one another with dignity and respect at all times, especially when there is disagreement
- respect and treat others fairly, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, creed, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or disability
- respect the rights of others
- show care and respect for school property and the property of others
- take the proper steps to help those in need
- respect all members of the school community, especially those in a position of authority
- respect the need of others to work in an environment that encourages learning and teaching
- seek help from school staff, if necessary, to resolve conflict peacefully
- not swear at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority.

Safety

School community members must not:

- engage in any form of bullying, whether it is in person or through technology, like email or cell phones
- commit sexual assault
- traffic weapons or illegal drugs
- commit robbery
- give alcohol or cannabis to a minor
- be in possession of a weapon, including firearms
- use any object to threaten or intimidate another person

- injure anyone with an object
- be in possession of alcohol, cannabis (except by an individual who is authorized to use cannabis for medical purposes), or illegal drugs
- be under the influence of alcohol, cannabis (except by an individual who is authorized to use cannabis for medical purposes), or illegal drugs
- provide others with alcohol, illegal drugs, or cannabis (unless the recipient is an individual who has been authorized to use cannabis for medical purposes)
- inflict or encourage others to inflict bodily harm
- engage in hate propaganda or other types of behaviour caused by hate or bias
- commit an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property at the student's school or to property on the school premises.

Roles and Responsibilities

School boards provide direction to their schools to ensure opportunity, excellence and accountability in the education system.

School boards must:

- develop policies that set out how their schools will implement and enforce the provincial code of conduct and all other rules that they develop as related to the provincial standards that promote and support respect, civility, responsible citizenship and safety
- seek input from school councils, Parent Involvement Committees, Special Education Advisory Committee, Indigenous Education Advisory Council, students, staff, parents, volunteers and the community members
- review these policies regularly with students, staff, parents, volunteers and the community members
- establish a process that clearly communicates the provincial code of conduct to all parents, students, staff and members of the school community to gain their commitment and support
- ensure an effective approach to intervene and respond to all violations that relate to the standards for respect, civility, responsible citizenship and safety
- provide opportunities for all staff to gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to promote student achievement and well-being in a safe, inclusive and accepting learning environment.

Principals, under the direction of their school board, take a leadership role in the daily operation of a school.

They provide this leadership by:

- demonstrating care for the school community and commitment to student achievement and well-being in a safe, inclusive and accepting learning environment

- holding everyone under their authority responsible for their 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 school staff, under the leadership of their principals, help maintain a positive learning environment and are expected to hold everyone to the highest standard of respectful and responsible behaviour.

As role models, staff uphold these high standards when they:

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

Students are to be treated with respect and dignity. In return, they must demonstrate respect for themselves and for others.

Respect and responsibility are demonstrated when a student:

- comes to school prepared, on time and ready to learn
- shows respect for themselves, for others and for those in authority
- refrains from bringing anything to school that may put the safety of others at risk
- follows the established rules and takes responsibility for their own actions.

Parents play an important role in the education of their children and can support the efforts of school staff in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment for all students.

Parents fulfill this responsibility when they:

- are engaged in their child's school work and progress
- communicate regularly with the school
- make sure their child is properly dressed and prepared for school
- ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time
- inform the school promptly about their child's absence or late arrival
- become familiar with the provincial code of conduct, the board's code of conduct and school rules
- encourage and help their child follow the rules of behaviour
- help school staff deal with disciplinary issues involving their child.

Community partners

Partnerships already in place may be enhanced and new partnerships with community agencies and members of the community may also be created. Community agencies offer resources that school boards can use to deliver prevention or intervention programs. Community members need to support and respect the rules of their local schools.

Police

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

Visit www.ontario.ca/safeschools to learn more about Ontario's new approach to making schools safer.

*This document is derived largely from **Policy/Program Memorandum Number 128:** The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct, available on the ministry's website. Please note that the wording in this document is not identical to the wording in the Memorandum and this brochure is not intended to replace it.*