

Making Ontario's Schools Safer

What Parents Need to Know

Ontario has a new approach to making schools safer. It focuses on:

- Promoting positive student behaviour
- Providing early and ongoing intervention
- Preventing inappropriate behaviour
- Addressing inappropriate behaviour with appropriate consequences

This fact sheet tells you what these changes mean for you and your child.

Ontario has shifted away from an approach that is solely punitive towards **progressive discipline**, a new approach that corrects inappropriate behaviour and offers multiple supports.

Progressive discipline means:

- Principals will consider the most appropriate way to respond to each situation.
- Students will have more opportunities to learn from the choices they make.
- Parents will be made aware sooner and will have more opportunities to be involved.
- More social workers, counsellors and psychologists will be working with school boards to offer support and counselling to students.

What is the code of conduct?

Every school board has a code of conduct based on the Provincial Code of Conduct. It promotes respect and sets clear standards of behaviour for the school community.

The code of conduct applies:

- to everyone – students, school staff, parents, community partners and the police.
- at school or school-related events, and to activities that happen outside of school but might have an impact on the school climate. This includes cyberbullying.

What are schools doing to prevent bullying?

Bullying is a serious issue and is not acceptable on school property, at school activities or online (cyberbullying).

- Students can be suspended from school for bullying, including cyberbullying.
- Every school board has a policy and every school has a plan to help prevent bullying at school.
- Every school has a safe school team. The team includes the principal and at least one student, parent, teacher, support staff member and community partner.
- Parents can find out what to watch for, what to do, and where to get help. This information is available in 22 different languages through your school or on the Ministry of Education website.

What happens when a student behaves inappropriately?

With progressive discipline, parents will be more involved and principals will respond to each situation in the most appropriate way.

- The principal will consider a range of options to address the behaviour and help students learn from their choices. This could include a meeting with parents, a detention, suggesting the student talk with someone about anger management, or suspension or expulsion.
- The principal will consider factors like the student's age and academic, personal and discipline history.
- Parents will be more involved in finding solutions to deal with the behaviour.

What happens if a student is suspended or expelled?

Suspensions and expulsions now more effectively combine discipline with opportunities for students to keep learning.

- Only the principal can suspend a student. Students who are suspended are removed from school temporarily for a specific period of time, between 1 and 20 school days. Suspended students cannot attend school or take part in school activities.
- The principal can recommend expulsion but only the school board can expel a student. Students can be expelled from their school or from all schools within the board.
- Students who are expelled only from their school must be assigned to another school within the board.
- Students who are expelled from all schools within the board are allowed to re-enter when they have successfully completed appropriate programming. Expulsion occurs only in the most serious situations.
- The principal will make every effort to let parents know within 24 hours that a student is suspended.
- Students who are suspended for more than 5 school days are offered an academic program that will help them keep learning. This program could be run in the school or at another location.
- Students who are suspended for more than 10 school days are offered academic programs, as well as non-academic services like anger management or career counselling that help develop more positive behaviour.
- Students who are expelled will be offered both academic and non-academic programs, including services like anger management or career counselling.

What else is happening in Ontario to help make schools safer?

Programs like character development are helping to promote positive student behaviour. The government's partnership with Kids Help Phone offers students counselling and support.

Find out what else Ontario is doing to make schools safer, including information on bullying prevention, at www.ontario.ca/safeschools