Progressive Discipline:

A new approach to help make schools safer

A positive school climate and a safe learning and teaching environment are essential if students are to succeed in school.

Positive School Climate

A positive school climate means everyone — parents, students, staff and community members — feels they are welcome and respected.

Ontario's New Approach

Ontario's new approach to making schools safer involves the whole school. It focuses on:

- Promoting positive student behaviour
- Preventing inappropriate behaviour
- Providing early and ongoing intervention
- Practicing progressive discipline by addressing inappropriate behaviour with appropriate consequences.

What is Progressive Discipline?

Progressive discipline is an approach that promotes positive student behaviour and enables the principal to choose the appropriate consequences to address inappropriate student behaviour. It has several important elements, including:

- **Engaging parents** — ongoing dialogue with parents about students' achievement and behaviour must be part of the school board's progressive discipline plan.
- **Helping students learn** — students will have more opportunities to learn from the choices they make.
- **Offering more supports** — Ontario is providing funding for more social workers, psychologists and child and youth workers to work with the school boards. They can offer support, counselling and early intervention to students.

What Does This Mean in Practice?

Positive student behaviour is promoted at school through programs like character and citizenship development.

Schools help **prevent inappropriate behaviour** through programs like bullying prevention. For example, every school board must now have policies and procedures in place for bullying prevention and intervention.

Ontario

Early and ongoing intervention can also help prevent inappropriate behaviour from escalating. For example, social workers and psychologists can work with schools to offer students counselling to assist with anger management or substance abuse to help them get back on track.

Students can also be offered alternatives like volunteer activities or career counselling to help encourage positive behaviour, and engage and motivate them. Career counselling, for example, can help students set goals and develop a career path.

When a student behaves inappropriately, principals will consider **mitigating factors** like the student's age, the circumstances of the behaviour, and the student's history before determining the **most appropriate way to respond** to each situation. They will consider a range of options to address the behaviour and help the student learn from his or her choices.

These **options** could include:

- A meeting with parents
- Career counselling
- Anger management counselling
- Withdrawal of privileges, such as participation in a field trip or sporting event
- Suspension
- Recommending expulsion from the student's school or all schools within the board.

Students who are suspended for more than five school days, or who are expelled from all schools in the board will now be given more opportunities to keep learning.

Does My School Board Use Progressive Discipline?

Every school board in Ontario must have a progressive discipline policy. School boards are also encouraged to build partnerships with community agencies (e.g. mental health providers or child and family services) and local police to support prevention and early intervention.

More Resources

Parents:

- Do you know how to help prevent bullying? Learn what to watch for and what you can do at **www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/bullying.html**. This pamphlet is available in 22 languages.
- What else is Ontario doing to help make schools safer? Visit **www.ontario.ca/safeschools** to learn more.

Students:

- Need someone to talk to? Visit **www.kidshelpphone.ca** or call 1-800-668-6868 to find out how Kids Help Phone can help you. This confidential service is available 24/7.
- What do other students think about technology and online respect? Visit **www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/respect.html** to find out more.

Fall 2008

reach every student

Ontario