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**Date of Issue:** October 4, 2007 **Effective:** Until revoked or modified

**Subject:** THE PROVINCIAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND SCHOOL BOARD  
CODES OF CONDUCT

**Application:** Directors of Education  
Superintendents of School Authorities  
Principals of Elementary Schools  
Principals of Secondary Schools  
Principals of Provincial Schools  
Chairs of Special Education Advisory Committees

**Reference:** This memorandum replaces Policy/Program Memorandum No. 128,  
November 14, 2000.

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## INTRODUCTION

The provincial Code of Conduct has been revised to reflect changes made in the Education Act that pertain to suspension and expulsion of students. On June 4, 2007, the Education Amendment Act (Progressive Discipline and School Safety), 2007, was passed, amending Part XIII of the Education Act dealing with behaviour, discipline, and safety. These amendments come into force February 1, 2008.

The revised provincial Code of Conduct is communicated in this memorandum.<sup>1</sup>

This memorandum also gives direction to school boards<sup>2</sup> 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 provincial Code of Conduct, and must have necessary revisions in place by February 1, 2008.

Boards should note that subsection 301(2) of Part XIII of the Education Act, which outlines the purposes of the provincial Code of Conduct, remains unchanged. The rest of section 301, which relates to the Minister's powers, and all of section 302, which authorizes school board policies, also remain largely unchanged.

For excerpts from the relevant sections of the legislation, see the Appendix to this memorandum.

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 *Ontario Schools – Code of Conduct*, a booklet published by the Ministry of Education in 2000, is superseded by the Code of Conduct communicated in this memorandum.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

All students,<sup>3</sup> parents,<sup>4</sup> teachers, and staff members 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 academic achievement for 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.

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145, “Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour”, October 4, 2007, provides an overview of the progressive discipline approach to be used when addressing issues of student conduct. When inappropriate behaviour occurs, Ontario schools will be required to utilize a range of interventions, supports, and consequences that are developmentally appropriate, that include opportunities for students to learn from mistakes, and that focus on improving behaviour. In some circumstances, short-term suspension may be a useful tool. In the case of a serious incident, long-term suspension or expulsion, which is further along the continuum of progressive discipline, may be the response that is required.

The provincial Code of Conduct sets clear provincial standards of behaviour. These standards of behaviour apply not only to students, but also to all individuals involved in the publicly funded school system – parents, volunteers, teachers, and other staff members – 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.

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, if applicable, require principals<sup>5</sup> to engage in reviews of school codes of conduct to incorporate changes in the provincial Code of Conduct, as outlined in this memorandum;

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3. The term *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). Parental involvement applies, except in cases where the student is eighteen years of age or over or is sixteen or seventeen years of age and has “withdrawn from parental control”.

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

- inform staff members, students, parents, and the school community of the terms of the revised provincial Code of Conduct and school board codes of conduct.

### **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 Committee, their Special Education Advisory Committee, community partners, community agencies,<sup>6</sup> members of Aboriginal communities (e.g., Elders), and those groups 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 cellphones 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 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 must be conducted at least every three years).

### **Development or Revision of Local Codes of Conduct in Schools**

School boards may continue to require principals to develop additional 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 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.

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6. Community agencies include a range of community service agencies, local organizations, and programs.

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

## **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.

### **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 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;
- review these policies regularly with students, staff, parents, volunteers, and the community;
- seek input from school councils, their Parent Involvement Committee, their Special Education Advisory Committee, parents, students, staff members, and the school community;
- establish a process that clearly communicates the provincial Code of Conduct and school board codes of conduct to all parents, students, staff members, and members of the school community in order to obtain their commitment and support;
- 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 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.

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### *Teachers and Other School Staff Members*

Under the leadership of their principals, teachers and other school staff members 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 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 the 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 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 agencies and members of the community (e.g., Aboriginal Elders) may also be created. Community agencies are resources that boards can use to deliver prevention or intervention programs. Protocols are effective ways of establishing linkages between boards and community agencies 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 developed by the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Education.

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**APPENDIX: EXCERPTS FROM THE LEGISLATION****Education Act**

Part XIII contains the following requirements that apply to school boards and schools:

- Every board shall take such steps as the Minister directs to bring the code of conduct to the attention of pupils, parents and guardians of pupils and others who may be present in schools under the jurisdiction of the board. s. 301(3)
- Every board shall establish policies and guidelines with respect to the conduct of persons in schools within the board's jurisdiction and the policies and guidelines must address such matters and include such requirements as the Minister may specify. s. 302(1)
- When establishing policies and guidelines under [section 302], a board shall consider the views of school councils with respect to the contents of the policies and guidelines. s. 302(8)
- The board shall periodically review its policies and guidelines established under [section 302] and shall solicit the views of pupils, teachers, staff, volunteers working in the schools, parents and guardians, school councils and the public. s. 302(9)
- A board may direct the principal of a school to establish a local code of conduct governing the behaviour of all persons in the school, and the local code must be consistent with the provincial code established under subsection 301(1) and must address such matters and include such requirements as the board may specify. s. 303(1)
- A board shall direct a principal to establish a local code of conduct if the board is required to do so by the Minister, and the local code must address such matters and include such requirements as the Minister may specify. s. 303(2)
- When establishing or reviewing a local code of conduct, the principal shall consider the views of the school council with respect to its contents. s. 303(3)

**Education Act, as amended by the Education Amendment Act (Progressive Discipline and School Safety), 2007**

Relevant excerpts from the sections of the Education Act, as amended by the Education Amendment Act (Progressive Discipline and School Safety), 2007, are provided below for reference.

**SUSPENSION****Activities leading to possible suspension**

**306.** (1) A principal shall consider whether to suspend a pupil if he or she believes that the pupil has engaged in any of the following activities while at school, at a school-related activity or in other circumstances where engaging in the activity will have an impact on the school climate:

1. Uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm on another person.
2. Possessing alcohol or illegal drugs.
3. Being under the influence of alcohol.

4. Swearing at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority.
5. Committing an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property at the pupil's school or to property located on the premises of the pupil's school.
6. Bullying.
7. Any other activity that is an activity for which a principal may suspend a pupil under a policy of the board.

### **SUSPENSION, INVESTIGATION AND POSSIBLE EXPULSION**

#### **Activities leading to suspension**

**310.** (1) A principal shall suspend a pupil if he or she believes that the pupil has engaged in any of the following activities while at school, at a school-related activity or in other circumstances where engaging in the activity will have an impact on the school climate:

1. Possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm.
2. Using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person.
3. Committing physical assault on another person that causes bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner.
4. Committing sexual assault.
5. Trafficking in weapons or in illegal drugs.
6. Committing robbery.
7. Giving alcohol to a minor.
8. Any other activity that, under a policy of a board, is an activity for which a principal must suspend a pupil and, therefore in accordance with this Part, conduct an investigation to determine whether to recommend to the board that the pupil be expelled.