

## Calgary Board of Education Review

### Practices and Policies Addressing Bullying in the Calgary Board of Education

October 3, 2019

#### INTRODUCTION

In June of 2019, the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) engaged a review of its practices and policies addressing student-on-student bullying and identify any gaps in policies, training, or supporting processes.<sup>1</sup> In June, July, and August of 2019, focus groups were conducted with elementary, middle, and high school teachers;<sup>2</sup> school administrators from all three levels; area and learning directors;<sup>3</sup> and learning specialists.

Six review questions were asked in the focus groups:

1. What is the nature, scope, and frequency of bullying in your schools?
2. What characteristics generally describe the victims and perpetrators of bullying in your schools?
3. Given your responses above, is the CBE policy regarding bullying effective?
4. Given your responses above, are the practices in your schools effective in dealing with bullying?
5. Given your lived experiences with bullying and CBE policies, how might those policies be amended to better address bullying?
6. Given your lived experiences with bullying and your school practices, how might those practices be changed to better address bullying?

Interviews were also conducted with CBE representatives working in the areas of communications, policy, psychology, and law. Conversations centered around individuals' experiences with and perceptions of student-on-student bullying related to their CBE positions. Overall, 150 CBE employees provided their input into this review during approximately 23 hours of dialogue.

The focus groups and interviews were divided into three groups for independent analysis. With the help of three review assistants (two doctoral students and a master's degree graduate), each focus group and interview were independently analyzed by the reviewer and by one of the review assistants. The analysis applied in all cases was inductive and related to the review

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<sup>1</sup> "CBE Launches Independent Review of Processes and Policies Related to Bullying," Calgary Board of Education, May 29, 2019, <https://cbe.ab.ca/news-centre/Pages/cbe-launches-independent-review-of-processes-and-policies-related-to-bullying.aspx>. *Bullying*, for the purposes of this review, relates solely to student-on-student bullying.

<sup>2</sup> There were variations in the grades represented by schools in each of the three categories: elementary K–3, K–4, K–5, and K–9; middle 4–9, 5–9, 6–9, and 7–9; and high 10–12. Some participants were from K–12 schools.

<sup>3</sup> Effective July 15, 2019 Area Directors and Learning Directors were renamed as Education Directors.

questions. Through comparison and coding, we explicated the participants' understandings of the issue within their life world, be it within their classrooms, schools, area, or the central office.

Following the above analysis, we aligned the key administrative regulations (ARs) identified by the CBE as being associated with bullying<sup>4</sup> with the findings from the focus groups and interviews to determine if the participants had identified, directly or indirectly, any gaps in those policies. The review questions allowed the participants to go quite deeply into their experiences with bullying, providing data to answer three key review questions:

1. Are current administrative regulations adequate to address bullying?
2. Are CBE employees receiving adequate training to deal with bullying effectively?
3. Are current institutional supports sufficient to handle bullying?

Parts I, II, and III of this review address these three questions, respectively. Part IV provides recommendations the CBE may consider in dealing with student-on-student bullying.

Before moving to Part I, it is appropriate to present the CBE definition of bullying, which comes from the Alberta *School Act*<sup>5</sup> and was used in the focus groups and interviews:

Bullying: means repeated and hostile or demeaning behaviour by an individual in the school community where the behaviour is intended to cause harm, fear or distress to one or more other individuals in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to an individual's reputation.

Bullying can take different forms including:

- Physical—pushing, hitting
- Verbal—name calling, threats
- Social—exclusion, rumours
- Cyber—using digital technology to harass, demean or threaten<sup>6</sup>

## **PART I: ADEQUACY OF ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS**

This section examines the six regulations that deal with bullying and asks if they are sufficient to address that phenomenon. Commentary is based upon the focus group conversations and the individual interviews.

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<sup>4</sup> Focus group and interview participants referred to the CBE ARs as *policies*, but this review uses the term *regulations* to refer to them. The CBE ARs referred to in this review are AR 3010 (*Student Suicide Intervention*), AR 5007 (*Concerns and Complaints*), AR 6005 (*Student Code of Conduct*), AR 6006 (*Progressive Student Discipline*), AR 6007 (*Suspension and Expulsion*), and AR 6031 (*Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning and Work Environments*).

<sup>5</sup> At the time of this review, the *School Act* was in force. It has since been replaced by the *Education Act*. The definition of bullying in the *Education Act* is the same as in the *School Act*.

<sup>6</sup> *Student Code of Conduct*, AR 6005 (2018), Section 4. The relevant section in the *Education Act* is 1(1) (d).

### Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning and Work Environments (AR 6031)

The document that appears to be the fountainhead of regulations related to bullying is AR 6031, *Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning and Work Environments* (2018).<sup>7</sup> This document defines bullying, lays out the responsibilities of all CBE employees in relation to the regulation, and specifically mentions the responsibilities of principals, students, and parents under the regulation and the *School Act*. Principals have a list of responsibilities under the regulation; notably, the following relate to bullying:

A principal . . . must model, foster and maintain a welcoming, caring respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for all members of the school community through measures which include:

- a) developing the support of students, staff and parents for the conditions which characterize a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning and work environment;
- b) developing positive student attitudes towards the school, [and] the community; . . .
- d) assisting students in developing skill to understand different approaches to solving problems and resolving conflicts and be positive members of the school community; and
- e) making students, staff and parents participating in school-related activities aware of expectations regarding their conduct and the consequences established for misconduct.<sup>8</sup>

Students are noted in that “CBE students share in the responsibility for maintaining a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment.”<sup>9</sup> And, reflecting Section 16.2 of the *School Act*,

a parent of a student has the responsibility

- . . . b) to ensure that the parent’s conduct contributes to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment; [and]
- . . . d) to encourage, foster and advance collaborative, positive and respectful relationships with teachers, principals, other school staff and professionals providing supports and services in the school.<sup>10</sup>

There was unanimous support and appreciation for AR 6031 from all participants.

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<sup>7</sup> Section 1 of AR 6031 states, “The purpose of this Administrative Regulation is: To outline the roles and expectations related to meeting the CBE’s responsibility to provide students and staff with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning and work environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for all members. To affirm the rights of each student and employee provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.”

<sup>8</sup> AR 6031 Section 6(4).

<sup>9</sup> AR 6031 Section 5(7).

<sup>10</sup> *School Act*, Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000 Chapter S-3, <http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/s03.pdf>.

Of note, Alberta Education also has expectations of students and parents with regard to bullying.<sup>11</sup>

### **Student Code of Conduct (AR 6005)**

AR 6005, the *Student Code of Conduct* (2018),<sup>12</sup> outlines the institutional expectations for student conduct and the remedies available when the school environment is disrupted by a breach of that conduct. The consensus among teachers, school administrators, and central office employees was that bullying as defined in AR 6005 is rare. The point was made that although a student may intend to commit an offensive act, rarely is there an accompanying intention to cause harm, fear, or distress, or alternatively, the act is not done repetitively. Indeed, in elementary schools, the consensus of teachers and principals was that in the technical sense, bullying rarely takes place.

In middle and high schools, incidents of bullying were also described as being very infrequent, although others mentioned a high frequency of bullying in their schools. This discrepancy may be due to two factors: the external stress experienced by the school community, and teachers' knowledge of the CBE definition of bullying. Of note, one principal stated that having one bully among a population of 400 students, which was the case in his school, had a pronounced negative effect on the school community.<sup>13</sup> In that sense, the amount of bullying in CBE schools, as defined by the CBE and when understood by teachers and school administrators according to that definition, is minimal.

That said, elementary, middle, and high school teachers, as well as school administrators, agreed that although bullying as defined by the CBE was rare, parents, students,<sup>14</sup> and many teachers had a different understanding or little understanding of the definition and little understanding of how the regulation should be applied. There was a general concern among teachers that policies dealing with bullying were complex and legalistic, leaving teachers confused as to how, exactly, CBE school administrators and central office staff conceived of bullying. This complication resulted in an impression that the default position for many teachers is that "bad behaviour by one student towards another student" is bullying. All participants in the school-based focus groups said that parents equated bullying with any bad behaviour towards their child by another child.

Are the regulations sufficiently proactive in addressing bullying in CBE schools? The consensus among school administrators was that because schools stress the welcoming, caring, respectful,

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<sup>11</sup> "School Culture & Environment: Bullying Prevention," Calgary Board of Education, last modified June 26, 2019, <https://cbe.ab.ca/about-us/school-culture-and-environment/Pages/Healthy-Relationships.aspx>.

<sup>12</sup> Section 1 of AR 6005 states, "The purpose of this Administrative Regulation is: To promote positive learning environments for each student. To help students learn how to *develop empathy and become good citizens* both within and outside of the school community. To meet the CBE's responsibility to provide students and staff with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for all members of our school community. To outline the roles and expectations related to student conduct. To explain the consequences when a student's disruptive behaviour negatively affects the learning environment" (emphasis added).

<sup>13</sup> This is not to suggest that there is one bully per every 400 students in CBE schools.

<sup>14</sup> Parents and students were not interviewed; thus, the perspectives attributed to them are not confirmed. This is the case wherever this review attributes a particular understanding to them.

and safe learning aspects of AR 6031 throughout the school year, and because the specific topic of bullying is addressed with school staff at least once each year, bullying is proactively addressed. A few principals dissented, saying that although they tried to be proactive, they were in fact reactive. School administrators generally agreed that with parents, and system-wide, actions were reactive.

Teachers had more nuanced concerns. They agreed that schools are proactive to a degree but were not always sure which actions constituted bullying. If they reported bullying, they sometimes did not hear back from the school administration, leaving them to wonder if there was a point in reporting incidents. In defence of principals, some teachers noted that at times, information concerning a student or situation may be confidential. Nevertheless, the absence of a school policy stipulating that school administrators report back to teachers was a concern.

The question remains as to whether a generic proactive approach to bullying is sufficient to adequately address the phenomenon.

### **Concerns and Complaints (AR 5007)**

When a possible or actual bullying incident is to be addressed, AR 5007, *Concerns and Complaints* (2014),<sup>15</sup> may be invoked. School principals felt this regulation was useful for cases of bullying: it not only provides for the involvement of parents and students but also outlines a clear and respectful process. Principals expressed a strong desire for matters to be dealt with at Level One—within the school and by the teacher. Indeed, there was general agreement among principals that the collaborative dispute resolution mechanism suggested in AR 6006, *Progressive Student Discipline*, was extremely positive.

For matters that progress to Level Two and involve the principal, the preference was naturally to have the matter resolved within the school. Central office staff expressed some concern that at this level, teachers and principals may not have sufficient dispute resolution training. As one system staff member stated with regard to a case, “I don’t know if they had specific conflict mediation training and utilized that training. There was a point in time in our system when conflict mediation training was available for folks.” Another system staff member said, “I don’t think our principals’ minds jump to it [mediation] first.” Even if principals prefer mediation, they may not have specific training in the use of mediation or healing circles, which were seen as useful and beneficial approaches in many cases. Indeed, in the central office focus group, there was a clear preference for healing circles and restorative practice in cases of bullying.

Beyond Level Two, the general feeling of teachers and school administrators was that the process was fair and effective in a reactive sense.

When a concern or complaint related to bullying is lodged, the relationship of bullying to AR 6005, *Student Code of Conduct*, is at the heart of the issue. As noted, bullying is defined in this AR. Two of its principles are as follows:

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<sup>15</sup> Section 1 of AR 5007 states, “The purpose of this Administrative Regulation is: to provide a process to resolve concerns and complaints identified by parents, students or community members in a candid, cooperative and timely manner.”

- All members of the CBE school community have a right to learn and work in an environment free of discrimination, harassment, *bullying*, and harm.
- Schools will adopt a whole school approach that supports student development, character and citizenship by managing discipline through a progression of *proactive*, *preventative*, and *restorative* strategies.<sup>16</sup>

The *Student Code of Conduct* is broad and deep, dealing with a great deal more than bullying. It extends the reach of the school beyond the geographical and temporal limits of the school and school day respectively. Consider the following provisions:

Students may be held accountable for behaviour that impacts the school beyond the hours of school operation when their conduct detrimentally affects the personal safety and well-being of individuals, the learning environment, or the effective operation of the school.

Students engaging in conduct that does not contribute to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe environment may be subject to discipline up to and including suspension or expulsion.<sup>17</sup>

The regulation puts the responsibility on students not only to desist from bullying but also to not “tolerate bullying while on school property, participating in school events, traveling to and from school, or in any circumstances that may impact the school environment.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, students who witness bullying “should report that conduct to a classroom teacher, an advisor, guidance counsellor, or any other staff member with whom they feel comfortable.”<sup>19</sup>

These provisions are on their face supportive of the no-tolerance position taken by the CBE toward bullying. Further sections of AR 6005 stress the flexibility of the school administrator in assessing possible cases of bullying and fashioning a response to an allegation.<sup>20</sup> If the complaint is found to be valid, the principal must determine an appropriate remedy considering “the student’s age, maturity, and individual circumstances in accordance with the *Progressive Student Discipline Administrative Regulation*.”<sup>21</sup>

Overall, teachers and school administrators found that *Concerns and Complaints*, in conjunction with the *Student Code of Conduct*, properly address matters of bullying except that, as noted above, the language regarding bullying is a bit difficult to understand and thus difficult to put into practice for some teachers, and certainly the use of statutory language is not friendly for students. In other words, the process is good but unclear: some teachers have difficulty understanding what bullying is and how it should be addressed in their classrooms, notwithstanding the definition.

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<sup>16</sup> *Student Code of Conduct*, AR 6005 (2018), Section 3; emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Sections 5(10) and (11).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 5(13).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 5(14).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Sections 5(16)–5(19).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 5(18).

### Progressive Student Discipline (AR 6006)

AR 6006, *Progressive Student Discipline*,<sup>22</sup> was raised by teachers and school administrators with regard to bullying. The definition of bullying as stated in the *Student Code of Conduct* is repeated in this regulation. Progressive student discipline is defined as

a whole school approach that utilizes a continuum of intervention, supports, and consequences to address inappropriate and unacceptable student behaviour and builds upon strategies that promote positive behaviours contributing to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment.<sup>23</sup>

As a whole, teachers and school administrators agreed that AR 6006 is effective in responding to cases of bullying. However, teachers were concerned that once they had reported an incident of student misbehavior (bullying or not), they were removed from the information loop and did not know what, if any, administrative actions had been taken. Some teachers said that their school administrative team gave them little specific direction on how to deal with instances of bullying in the classroom, although it is important to note that this was not a common theme among teachers. It is fair to say that some teachers were unsure of the meaning of the formal definition of bullying, unfamiliar with the relevant policies, unsure how policies related to one another, and confused as to how they should be operationalized. It is notable that in this regulation, principals are to “ensure that *all reports* of . . . bullying behaviours and/or incidents are assessed, investigated, and responded to,”<sup>24</sup> but some teachers felt a resistance on the part of some administrators to act on what their administrators considered minor incidents of bullying.

The regulation also requires that principals “ensure the student code of conduct is publicly available for all stakeholders.”<sup>25</sup> However, as stated previously, all participants agreed that although parents have access to the definition of bullying, they do not know its meaning. Therefore, confusion was evident with both parents and teachers regarding the definition of bullying, which it to become a catch-all term applied to all bad behaviour between students. One elementary teacher stated there is “a disconnect between how parents talk to kids about bullying and what our school tries to do. . . . We really make an effort to make clear the difference between normal conflict and the repeated nature of bullying.”

Teachers and principals also stated that students suffered, as stated above, from the same confusion and would claim to have been bullied when in fact the action(s) complained of did not fit the CBE definition.

Teachers and school administrators noted a concern that CBE student records may document past instances of bullying and bad conduct. It is true that student records are kept but the CBE’s

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<sup>22</sup> Section 1 of AR 6006 states, “The purpose of this Administrative Regulation is: To support the creation of welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments for students that respect diversity and foster a sense of belonging for all members of our school community. To create the conditions to help student to engage in their learning. To identify key responsibilities and accountabilities for CBE students. To outline the expectations for responses to student behaviour. To provide guidelines and expectations supporting an effective school-wide approach to progressive student discipline.”

<sup>23</sup> *Progressive Student Discipline*, AR 6006 (2016), Section 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 6(1)(j); emphasis added.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 6(1)(f).

practice is to hold the information in an administrative file for the year the student is attending a school and for one following that year. Thereafter the file is to be destroyed.

Teachers and school administrators appreciated that AR 6006 referenced alternative measures such as “restorative strategies,”<sup>26</sup> which would ensure that victims and witnesses of alleged bullying would have a voice in the process. A community healing process was important to teachers, as they saw the incident<sup>27</sup> of bullying as affecting observers and others who would hear about it. School administrators acknowledged that an incident of bullying deleteriously affects individuals directly and indirectly. Restorative strategies were the preferred course of action mentioned by all participants in this review.

A significant part of the regulation discussed by both teachers and school administrators related to the responsibility of parents. Teachers and school administrators fully appreciated the concern and emotional state of parents who believed that their child had been bullied, and empathized with them when they telephoned or visited the school. However, in many cases, no bullying had occurred—as defined by the CBE regulations—and thus discussion would ensue between parents and school administrators on the nature of the complaint. Teachers and school administrators expressed some frustration in explaining to parents that under the regulation a parent had a responsibility to

- b) assist the student in complying with the Student Code of Conduct;
- c) promote the prevention of bullying;
- d) assist the school in addressing disciplinary issues involving their child; and
- e) ensure the parent’s conduct contributes to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment.<sup>28</sup>

Compliance with this aspect of the regulation was seen as a tall order when parents either deny the allegation that their child has bullied someone or believe their child has been bullied irrespective of the CBE’s definition. As this particular regulation is not generally known to parents, advising them of their responsibilities on the telephone or in person in an emotionally heated situation is challenging.

Of note, some participants in the central office focus group expressed the view that the regulation does not account for some immigrant populations, among whom bullying is seen as a rite of passage to adulthood and thus not of great significance when it occurs. Also, given the horrors from which a number of immigrant families have fled, some of these families do not regard bullying as a major issue. Moreover, the language used in the regulation is not easily accessible to those whose first language is not English. The wider consideration for the CBE is that when school administrators deal with immigrant families, they can learn of a family’s framing of the issue only through dialogue and should not merely default to matching an act with a remedy in the regulations without knowing more about the context.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Section 4. Restorative practice is also reflected in AR 6007, *Suspension and Expulsion*, Section 5, and is discussed further in the section on that regulation.

<sup>27</sup> The use of the word *incident* means a bullying incident, which would, by definition, involve more than one action, as it must be repeated according to the CBE definition of bullying.

<sup>28</sup> *Progressive Student Discipline*, AR 6006 (2016), Section 25(b)–(e).



It is worthwhile noting that bullying occurs mostly within peer friend groups, or on the group periphery, not as a group led by one person or one person alone targeting individuals in a particularly vulnerable subset of the school population. Bullies usually target fellow students within their own group. Moreover, as one teacher said, with regard to students with physical or mental challenges, “bullies don’t go anywhere near them. . . . They are, like, hands-off. It’s almost a sacred thing.”

### **Suspension and Expulsion (AR 6007)**

At the level of student suspension and expulsion under AR 6007,<sup>29</sup> several definitions are pertinent:

**Suspend/Suspension:** means the removal of a student from school, from one or more class periods, courses or education programs, or from riding in a school bus, for a period of up to and including 10 instructional days.

**Expel/Expulsion:** means the removal of a student from school, one or more class periods, courses or education programs, or from riding in a school bus, for a period of more than 10 instructional days.

**Restorative practice:** means extending discipline measures to allow students the opportunity to repair harm and mend relationships.<sup>30</sup>

Teachers, school administrators, and central office personnel all agreed that there was a need to bring harmony into the school community and that remedies such as First Nations Elder Time<sup>31</sup> and restorative practice would be positive in bullying cases. Restorative practice is also alluded to in AR 6006, *Progressive Student Discipline*. Elementary teachers and school administrators said that this is exactly what is done in their schools with regard to bad student behaviour. Middle and high school teachers did not normally see this method used in their schools due to the time and cost involved, as well as the fact that few are trained in how to use restorative practice.

### **Student Suicide Intervention (AR 3010)**

*Student Suicide Intervention*, AR 3010 (2014),<sup>32</sup> does not specifically refer to bullying. However, it does stipulate that suicide prevention plans will consist of three components, two of which are as follows:

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<sup>29</sup> Section 1 of AR 6007 states, “The purpose of this Administrative Regulation is: To provide guidelines for the administration of suspensions and expulsions within CBE. To outline the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the suspension and expulsion processes.”

<sup>30</sup> *Suspension and Expulsion*, AR 6007 (2016), Section 5.

<sup>31</sup> First Nations Elder Time was described as having an Elder in the school to speak with—rather than to—students and staff. Elders have a respectful and gentle approach, which contributes to harmony and peace within a school.

<sup>32</sup> Section 1 of AR 3020 states, “The purpose of this Administrative Regulation is: To provide guidelines for each school site to develop and maintain procedures for response to suicide which include: prevention, intervention and postvention.”

- a) Prevention: Provincial curricular inputs which educate students regarding coping with stress, problem-solving strategies and healthy responses to mental distress; [and]
- b) Intervention: Provision for the early recognition of suicide potential, direct contact with the student involved, and referral to system and outside resources as necessary for assessment and care.<sup>33</sup>

Bullying may originate due to or be exacerbated by mental illness, and it certainly causes extreme stress to victims. As such, this regulation is relevant to the issue.

Teachers and school administrators all noted that a student's sense of resiliency in the face of bullying could be strengthened if the teaching of resiliency were part of the school's proactive response; in other words, if resiliency were in the curriculum. It is true that *Progressive Student Discipline* and *Suspension and Expulsion* provide for reconciliation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism, but it should be asked if there is also a socio-medical element to dealing with bullying. Victims need psychological support, and bullies also need psychological assistance, as implicitly suggested in *Progressive Student Discipline*.<sup>34</sup> It may be a question of the framing the issue. In any event, participants did not express any concerns about this regulation.

## **PART II: ADEQUACY OF STAFF TRAINING**

Elementary, middle, and high school teachers all expressed concern that the definition of bullying in the regulations is too legalistic and therefore confusing in practice. Moreover, this confusion is compounded given that several regulations are involved with bullying. Teachers stated that they were provided with information on bullying at a staff meeting each year but they did not consider that session to constitute training, nor was the session sufficient, in their view, to clarify the definition of bullying or how to deal with the phenomenon in classrooms. When asked about the double intent expressed in the definition, neither the teachers nor many administrators knew what was being asked.

Individuals who are about to become principals take a preparatory course in school administration through the CBE. Bullying is addressed in this course, although there is no formal follow-up to determine its efficacy. School administrators indicated that experience prepared them to deal with matters of bullying.

## **PART III: ADEQUACY OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS**

Teachers raised two concerns in regard to institutional supports for dealing with bullying. The first was the lack of full-time school counsellors trained to deal with bullying. The opinion was that an itinerant counsellor or psychologist was insufficient to address bullying—as well as other daily bad behaviour—in schools. Notably, teachers expressed that they too needed counselling on how to deal with problematic student situations, including bullying.

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<sup>33</sup> *Student Suicide Intervention*, AR 3010 (2014), Section 5(5).

<sup>34</sup> *Progressive Student Discipline*, AR 6006 (2016), Sections 4, 6, 7.

The second concern was financial. To be proactive in preventing bullying, some schools have engaged the anti-bullying program Dare to Care,<sup>35</sup> with the cost absorbed by parents. That benefit is not available to students whose parents do not have the funds to purchase the service for their school. This disparity was raised by many teachers as being fundamentally unfair – but no example was given where such a service was requested by parents but turned down due to a lack of school funding. Moreover, it is important to note that school principals have some discretion regarding the spending of school funds in their schools and must prioritize the same.

## **PART IV: RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Administrative Regulation Recommendations**

1. The language in the regulations should be left as is and clarified using examples to help teachers, administrators, parents, and students understand the regulations in practice.
2. The regulations should state that the preferred course of action in cases of bullying is restorative practice. This preference would involve ongoing training for teachers and school personnel in restorative practice.
3. School administrators should inform teachers who report a bullying incident what follow-up has been taken, or explain, if relevant, that for reasons of confidentiality they cannot provide further information. A regulation related to practice that reflects the importance of school administration following up with teachers who report incidents would be helpful in instilling trust in the process.
4. In order to reduce the number regulations dealing with bullying, AR 6007 (*Suspension and Expulsion*) could be contained within AR 6006 (*Progressive Student Discipline*), as they are not conceptually distinct areas. Further, in AR 6031 (*Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning and Work Environments*), readers could be directed to AR 6005 (*Student Code of Conduct*), which deals with behaviour. Regarding students breaches of AR 6005, readers could be directed to the newly expanded AR 6006. This would simplify and clarify the issue for teachers and others.

### **Training Recommendations**

1. Time from teaching should be made available to train both teachers and school administrators on how to deal with bullying and its associated behaviours, in particular student mental health.
2. Time should be made available to ensure that all school administrators have training in restorative strategies and practices.
3. Adults who supervise in schools at lunchtime should receive training in conflict management and remediation for bullying.
4. Time should be given to families who face linguistic or cultural barriers in relation to understanding and thus abiding by the regulations.

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<sup>35</sup> For more information, visit <https://www.daretocare.ca/>. It is important to note that the reviewer is neither recommending or discouraging the use of this particular program as there may be many other similar third-party programs or internal CBE programs which could offer, in essence, the same service.

5. The CBE should work with the Alberta Government to have student resiliency, anger management, and de-escalation of volatile situations taught as specific items in the school curriculum beginning at the earliest grades. This education is significant, as the question of students' mental health was a concern raised by most teachers and administrators.
6. Teachers should be advised on the law regarding when student cellular phone searches are permitted, including the extent of the search and the use of the data collected.
7. Bullying may involve intimate images being shared among students. Therefore, teachers should be very familiar with the *Education Act*, which deals with intimate images,<sup>36</sup> as well as Alberta's *Protecting Victims of Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act*, and Section 162.1 of the *Criminal Code*. It is also suggested that these statutes be reviewed, at the middle school and high school levels, with all students.

### Support Recommendations

1. A communication strategy should be in place to convey what the CBE defines as bullying, how it is addressed, and who should be involved in a proactive manner before incidents arise. This strategy should include a strong statement about parental and student involvement in the educative process.
2. As bullying is seen as a serious institutional problem, it warrants statistics being kept on its nature, scope, and prevalence in schools. Data are required to deal with the issue from an evidence-based perspective.
3. The CBE should strive to make available to all schools, programs which address bullying.
4. Whenever the media contacts a CBE administrator with regard to bullying it should be made clear to the media what the CBE definition of bullying is and why it is so.

### Conclusion

After three months of hearing from 150 CBE employees—teachers, school principals, area and learning directors, learning specialists, and representatives in communications, policy, and law—and after 200 hours of analysis of the information by the primary reviewer and three additional reviewers, it has been found that the CBE administration regulations dealing with bullying address the phenomenon in a comprehensive, effective, and respectful manner. Nevertheless, a few amendments to those regulations along with training and support are suggested.

Lastly, the reviewer finds that the CBE teachers, school administrators, area and learning directors and central office staff who participated in this review are a committed, professional, and caring group of individuals who collectively and efficaciously act for the welfare of students, who may be victims or perpetrators of bullying. No CBE employee in this review ever “gives up” on a student.

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<sup>36</sup> In the *Education Act*, “intimate image” means an intimate image as defined in the *Protecting Victims of Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act*.

This document is respectfully submitted October 3, 2019.

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