

Bullying Prevention & Intervention

Bullying will not be tolerated on HHA property, at school related activities, on school trips, or via any form of electronic devices / web media.

Through the shared understanding of the definition of bullying, communicated to all within the school environment, the Hamilton Hebrew Academy promotes a safe, caring, and orderly environment.

1. What is Bullying?

Bullying is typically a form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals, which causes fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is real or perceived power imbalance.

Students who bully use power to control and distress others. The victim becomes increasingly powerless and finds himself or herself trapped in an abusive relationship. Bullying is not mutual conflict or social rejection without the above elements present. Bullying tactics that reinforce the power imbalance include:

- Physical Acts: Repeated hitting or shoving, stealing, or damaging another person's property;
- Verbal Statements: Repeated name-calling, mocking, humiliating, teasing, or threatening comments;
- Social Damage: Repeated and deliberate attempts to exclude others from the group and/or damage another person's friendships; and
- Electronic/Cyber Abuse: The repeated use of e-mail, cell phones, text, internet images and websites to threaten, harass, embarrass, spread rumours socially, exclude or damage reputations or friendships.

2. Partnership Triangle: A Systemic Approach to Bullying

A positive school climate is defined by the Ministry of Education of Ontario as "the sum total of all the personal relationships within a school." When these relationships are founded in mutual

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acceptance and inclusion, and modeled by all, a culture of respect becomes the norm. A positive school climate exists when all members of a school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted.

Our belief is that a positive school culture is fostered by an effective "Partnership Triangle" consisting of our staff, our students, and our parents.

All members of the school's Partnership Triangle have a responsibility for the prevention of bullying and for addressing bullying when it occurs. The following details the roles of all members of the school community.

a. All staff members within the Hamilton Hebrew Academy will:

- Model caring, respectful interactions;
- Raise awareness of bullying behaviour and its long-term effect on all students;
- Take every report of bullying seriously;
- Encourage students to report bullying behaviours and teach students the difference between "tattling" (getting someone into trouble) and "telling" (helping someone who is in trouble);
- Respond to all incidents of bullying;
- Provide support to new students to ensure that they understand expectations and routines;
- Provide opportunities for positive student leadership;
- Report incidents of bullying to the Principal;
- Work with students and parents to resolve bullying issues in a timely and developmentally appropriate manner;
- Teach students pro-social behaviours. Prompt and reinforce them throughout the school day; and
- Provide intervention and support to assist students who engage in bullying to change their behaviours.

In addition the administration will:

- Implement resolutions for students who are bullied;
- Communicate to students and parents that a student who is engaged in bullying conduct will be subject to a range of interventions, including suspension;

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- Provide professional development and training for teachers to support anti-bullying policies and programs;
- Include bullying prevention as a regular item on staff meeting agendas;
- Provide a "Suggestion Box" in the school office where students can discretely report bullying; and
- Make students aware that they can e-mail the school with any concerns that they may have.

b. All students at the Hamilton Hebrew Academy will:

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect;
- Increase their awareness and understanding of bullying behaviour and its long-term effects;
- Realize that bullying behaviour is never acceptable;
- Report incidents of bullying behaviour whenever they see it;
- Engage in positive leadership opportunities;
- Provide support to new students or students who are in need of friends;
- Endeavour to disengage from being a bystander to bullying behaviours;
- Actively support our school's bullying prevention and intervention programs; and
- Support a positive school climate.

c. All parents of students at the Hamilton Hebrew Academy will:

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect;
- Report incidents of bullying behaviour;
- Raise their awareness and understanding of bullying behaviour and its long-term effects;
- Create awareness among their children that bullying is never acceptable;
- Endeavour to get appropriate social/emotional help for their child if necessary;
- Support our school's anti-bullying initiatives;
- Encourage their children to report incidents of bullying behaviour;
- Model caring and respectful interactions; and
- Teach their children to be respectful and caring.

3. Prevention & Intervention Strategies

Bullying in its earlier stages often goes undetected by both teachers and parents. The most important reason for developing a school-wide bullying prevention program is to sensitize and engage the students who regularly witness bullying at school. Therefore:

- The COC will be actively taught in all grades;
- Students will sign the Partnership Agreement consenting to uphold the COC;
- Teachers will facilitate class meetings to focus on social interactions and problem solving of academic and social situations
- Prevention of bullying programs will be introduced in kindergarten and continued throughout elementary and middle school;
- Curriculum units will be developed in each grade to promote social skills, anger management and conflict resolution; Anti-bullying themes and activities will be incorporated into the curriculum with discussions of how bullying affects everyone, ways students can help one another, and assertiveness training;
- A "Suggestion Box" in the school office will enable students to report incidents anonymously;
- School wide themes will emphasize the impact of our words and actions on others (e.g. Goodness Footprint, Circle of Friends, etc.);
- Professional development workshops will be provided for teachers that support the social skill development of students;
- There will be heightened staff awareness of student interactions during group games and recess play, with a minimum presence of two staff members at all times;
- Bullying will be a regular agenda item at staff meetings;
- Students will be encouraged to befriend those who may be isolated;
- The Circle of Friends program will help prevent repeated aggression;
- The HHA will participate in Hamilton Wentworth programs on bullying prevention; and
- The HHA will engage in community partnerships with organizations and individuals that strive toward eliminating bullying.

In an effort to promote collaboration with the parental body, the school will provide:

- Access to the school social worker upon recommendation of the Principal;
- Development of an online survey for parents to provide anonymous feedback regarding school policies;
- Encouragement of parents to contact teachers and administrators if bullying is suspected or observed; and
- Resource materials for parents that will be available at the school office.

4. Reporting of Bullying

Every effort will be made to guide students in a fair and consistent manner. All discipline will be determined by a COC Incident Investigative Process in accordance with the HHA Progressive Discipline Continuum.

a. COC Incident Investigative Process (IIP)

The IIP is a standardized process which addresses all breaches of the Code of Conduct. The process includes formalized documentation of the investigative process conducted by the Principal or a designated staff member trained in COC incidences. In cases where a designated staff member completes the IIP, the Principal will be presented with all findings.

An IIP can be initiated through information provided by a staff member, student, parents concerned about the well-being of their own child (see 4.b), or witness to an incident. All incidents of a serious nature must be reported by staff members to the Principal no later than the end of the school day.

Each IIP will include two elements:

1. An interviewing process of all children involved as well as any relevant staff member or witness; and
2. The completion of a standardized Incident Report Form that will include:

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- The nature of the incident;
- Relevant background information;
- The initial source of information;
- Details of all interviews; and
- All resolutions or consequences in accordance with the HHA Progressive Discipline Continuum.

b. Parental Bullying Complaint

It is a parental right to report incidents of bullying of their child to the Principal. All reports from parents to the Principal regarding bullying must be presented by the parent in writing, detailing the incidents with dates. If the Principal perceives that the student is in imminent danger the Principal will take immediate action to secure the safety of that student. In all instances, the matter will be investigated in a timely manner within three business days of the Principal receiving the documentation. Within that time frame the parent who has filed the bullying complaint will receive a response from the school as to what action, if any, is being taken and the reasons for it. The parent of the child against whom the complaint has been brought, will be informed promptly should the claim be substantiated.

c. Confidentiality & the IIP

All Incident Report Forms will be filed in the school office and will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. As part of the IIP, it may be required to provide identifying information regarding students involved in Code of Conduct issues to the other relevant parties. In such instances, the information will be specific to the Code of Conduct incident only.

d. Principal's Notice to Parents

The Principal will inform the parents of a student who has been hurt as a result of a physical, sexual, or emotional incident of a concerning nature or any other action listed above (See COC VI.b) for which suspension or expulsion must be considered.

When notifying the parent, the Principal must disclose:

- The nature of the incident;
- The nature of the harm to the student; and

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- The steps taken to protect the student's safety

5. Staff Responsibilities

Staff responsibilities include:

- Taking every report seriously;
- Protecting students as a first priority;
- Asking involved students whether similar incidents have happened before and how often;
- Promptly submitting a report to Principal in writing if bullying has been confirmed or suspected;
- Watching for incidents while on playground duty;
- Encourage students to develop friendships.
- Conducting in-class meetings & education for students (See #3 Prevention & Intervention Strategies); and
- Contacting students and parents on a regular basis.

6. What to do if your child is being bullied

If your child has been bullied the following steps should be taken:

- Talk with your child to gain more information;
- Listen to their description of their day, including trip to and from school and any events happening at school;
- Speak to the teacher or Principal if you think your child is being bullied;
- Teach your child to trust adults who can help stop the bullying;
- Encourage your child to be independent;
- Teach your child social skills, including confidence, needed to make new friends; and
- Seek help if you are concerned about your child's psychological or emotional wellbeing. (The school can provide recommendations.)

7. What to do if your child is bullying

If you suspect that your child is bullying:

- Take the problem seriously to prevent your child from having challenges in relationships with others;

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- Talk to your child about the bullying behaviour, keeping in mind that children who bully often place the blame on others;
- Tell your child that you will not accept this type of behaviour and arrange for non-violent consequences which fit the seriousness of what your child has done;
- Discuss the negative impact this behaviour has on others;
- When dealing with others, model positive behaviour show your children the importance of being considerate, kind & courageous;
- Teach them ways to resolve conflict without violent words or actions;
- Do not let them witness violent behaviour between family members;
- Spend time with your child. Avoid activities that promote violence or aggression (ie. in the media);
- Increase your supervision when your child is with friends;
- Speak to the teacher or Principal if you think your child is having difficulty accepting responsibility for his/her behaviour;
- Seek help if you are concerned about your child's mental health;
- Explain the long term negative social effects that the bullied child will have if the bullying does not stop; and
- Encourage your child to make friends with others who are respectful and kind.