

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Report 19-087

05 NOVEMBER 2019

Safe Schools and Code of Conduct Policy Revision Plan

**Key Contact: Mary Jane Farrish, Superintendent of Instruction, ext.
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PURPOSE:

1. To seek approval of the consultation plan to review P.032.SCO Safe Schools and P.125.SCO School District Code of Conduct.

CONTEXT:

2. At its 20 November 2018 meeting, the Board approved the consolidation of four of safe schools policies into Policy P.032.SCO Safe Schools to attain a number of efficiencies including reduced redundancy and better streamlined guiding principles. No consultations were undertaken at this point as no substantive changes were made to the content of the consolidated policies, which were last reviewed when developed in 2008. To bring the consolidated policy up to date, the Board moved a motion directing staff to bring a plan of the review of and consultation on Policy P.032.SCO by 30 November 2019.

In response to this motion and acknowledging the complexity of safe schools domain, staff examined all policies and procedures that are related to Safe School Policy and created a comprehensive chart (Appendix A) with a view of bringing clarity to the thinking moving forward and efficiency to the consultation plan (Appendix B).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. Student-centered Safe Schools Chart
In response to the Board's request to update the safe school policy and acknowledging the complexity of a domain governed by over 30 policies and procedures, staff has laid out all documents related to safe schools in a chart, attached as Appendix A. The intent of presenting the breadth of policy and procedural documentation is to provide a context that will be the backdrop of the consultation process for the two policy reviews: P.032.SCO Safe Schools and P.125.SCO School District Code of Conduct. During the consultation process, feedback and input will be considered within the full realm of the related policies and procedures listed within the chart (Appendix A). As a result of the

consultation process, we anticipate that modifications to our current menu of safe schools related documents will follow to represent responsive and relevant policy and procedure changes.

This chart (appendix A) provides an overview of the existing safe schools related policies and procedures through categorizing them in five areas as follows:

1. Child Protection;
2. Promoting Safe Schools Operations;
3. Managing Student Behaviour;
4. Appeals; and
5. Emergency Preparedness and Response.

The policies and procedures included in appendix A centre on students and therefore the majority of the listed governance documents are School Operations (SCO). Policies and procedures that speak to the safety of employees, such as P.009.HR respectful Workplace (Harassment Prevention), do not belong to this chart and mostly fall under labour relations and Human Resources (HR).

In examination of the policies and procedures included in the chart (appendix A) we have identified a number of shortcomings including the following:

- Incorrect language - a number of procedures currently require schools to develop their own policy and procedure;
- Gaps - Our current policies and procedures fall short to address non-disciplinary interventions, i.e. modified days and exclusions, which are commonly used in practice;
- Considerable duplication - e.g. Safe schools policy repeating a number of the code of conduct guiding principles, and the duplication amongst the suspension appeal policy and procedure;
- Out of date content - e.g. the current understanding of a dress code and what it should constitute varies widely from what is in the current policy that was developed in 2004; and

4. Next steps

To accommodate the Board's motion to review safe schools policy, staff will start with the revisions to P.032.SCO Safe Schools through a multiphased consultation plan (Attached as Appendix B). The first phase of the consultation plan will aim at soliciting stakeholder feedback on safety in schools in general and what is important to them to require and/or prohibit in a policy so that they feel safe in school. At this point, there will be no discussions over a policy. The feedback from this first phase will inform the drafting of the updated Safe Schools policy, as well as potential revisions to the School District Code of Conduct.

The second phase of the consultation will afford the public and the advisory committees the opportunity to comment on the draft policies. Staff has chosen to adopt this participatory approach to address stakeholder concerns about giving feedback on pre-determined revisions.

Staff will continue to update the documents listed in Appendix A or develop new ones to address the shortcomings listed above and to bring the following efficiencies to policies and procedures:

- reducing duplication;
- bridging gaps (i.e. exclusions and modified days);
- bringing clarity to processes;
- simplifying the implementation for schools;
- updating the practice, language and processes;
- bringing an equity lens;
- ensuring sustaining policy language; and
- aligning with legislative and policy requirements.

5. P.125.SCO School District Code of Conduct

Schools have been requesting an update to the District Code of Conduct which has not been revised since its development in 2008. The requests were mainly around:

- embedding the Dress Code of Conduct Policy in the P.125.SCO and refraining from directing schools to have their own dress code;
- writing P.125.SCO in a positive language that focuses on education, rather than discipline; and
- identifying some guiding principles.

Staff anticipates that feedback from the first phase of the consultation will inform potential revisions to P.125.SCO School District Code of Conduct, which widely overlaps with the Safe Schools Policy for the following reasons:

- Safe Schools Policy covers a number of prohibited behaviours compromising safety in schools. These are also listed in the code of conduct as per the requirements of the provincial code of conduct and PPM 128;
- The two policies are directed by the same guiding Ministry memoranda; and
- The two policies share the same background research documents.

The outcome of this consultation plan will be production of a draft of the revised School District Code of Conduct along with the draft Safe Schools Policy. The two policies are anticipated to be presented for Board's approval in June 2020.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6. Estimated costs for consultation include printing of materials, interpretation services for community meetings, and refreshments. In addition, human resource support will be required and contracted to coordinate and facilitate the engagement and input sessions with stakeholder groups as well as to collate and theme the data for analysis. All costs will be covered through department funds.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

7. The participatory approach staff has chosen to adopt in bringing revisions to safe schools policies will engage a variety of stakeholders who are most affected by our policies on the ground. Students, parents/guardians, and staff will be the audience of the first phase of consultations. Staff will be mindful of the geographic representation of schools as well as a fair representation of students concerned (e.g. students harmed as well as students receiving progressive discipline interventions).

School staff will help facilitate communication with stakeholders about opportunities for contributing feedback and will facilitate accommodation for translation and interpretation. General communications about the consultation plan will be shared via the OCDSB multi-media platforms.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

8. A participatory approach to consultation on revised policies aims at an increased community partnership and ownership of Board governance in alignment with the cultures of caring and social responsibility pillars of the OCDSB 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.

Staff intend to apply an equity lens to the upcoming revision of the Safe Schools and the Code of Conduct policies contributing to the desired outcomes of the Culture of Caring.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT the the Consultation Plan, attached as Appendix B to Report 19-087, be approved.

Mary Jane Farrish
Superintendent of Instruction
(ext. 882)

Camille Williams-Taylor
Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

APPENDICES

Appendix A - OCDSB Student-centered Safe Schools Policy Chart
Appendix B - Safe Schools Consultation Plan