

Positive Program Environment Policy

1. Purpose/Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Waterdown District Children Centre, and all members of the WDCC community foster a safe and inclusive environment for all children, families, staff, and other key members of the WDCC community, and to cultivate a positive environment where all members feel welcome. A positive program environment is a key component in the prevention and reduction of harmful and negative behaviours in all parties. A positive environment is achieved when all members feel safe, included and respected, and is most successfully achieved when all parties encourage positive interactions, behaviours, and activities for all members of the community.

2. Each member of the WDCC program is responsible for upholding a positive environment that fosters growth and development.

1. Administration Responsibilities

- a. Maintain a friendly and welcoming environment and ensure all children, families, employees and community members feel safe, comfortable and appreciated.
- b. Develop strong positive relationships with children, families, employees and community members, and encourage the development of positive relationships between all members of the Waterdown District Children's Centre program.
- c. Provide continued opportunities to staff for professional development in many areas of child care, to ensure the most up-to-date practices and being implemented and staff are aware of and are carrying out new and emerging initiatives with proper training.
- d. Provide guidance to staff when concerns arise, and assist the staff members in addressing the concerns appropriately and promptly.
- e. Provide information and feedback to appropriate parties in a prompt and professional manner following reports of concerns or issues from staff, family, and community members.
- f. Ensure they are acting in a manner consistent with the staff responsibilities listed below, and ensure that staff are held accountable for upholding their responsibilities within the centre.

2. Staff Responsibilities

- a. Maintain a friendly and welcoming environment, and a program that has fun and engaging activities which are aimed at creating a sense of belonging and well-being.
- b. Develop strong positive relationships with children in the program, and use these positive relationships to further strengthen the positive atmosphere of the program.
- c. Encourage children to develop positive relationships with other members of the program, and discourage negative or harmful behaviours that impact the climate of the program.

- d. Maintain amiable and respectful relationships when working with children who are exhibiting challenging negative behaviours.
- e. Express concerns or issues to involved parties (ie., family members) in a clear, concise and accurate manner, that is not accusatory. Maintain a positive outlook when discussing child concerns, or other issues, with parents/guardians. Ask for help or support from another staff member if needed.
- f. Maintain pleasant, friendly and positive relationships with other staff members throughout the program. Bring questions or concerns about staff or program matters to the appropriate person in a positive, non-accusatory manner.

3. Child Responsibilities

- a. Develop and maintain strong positive relationships with staff and children involved with the program to the fullest extent they can.
- b. Encourage positive and friendly behaviours from their peers, and discourage harmful or negative behaviours, if safe to do so.
- c. Report any negative or harmful behaviours they experience to a staff member they feel comfortable speaking to.

4. Family Member Responsibilities

- a. Maintain positive and friendly relationships with staff and other members of the community.
- b. Address any program issues, concerns or questions when they arise, to the appropriate staff member, and in a positive, non-accusatory manner. With appropriate, prompt and constructive feedback, our program can only improve! Please address your child's site supervisor, or our executive director with any concerns you may have, so we can work through these concerns with you.
- c. Communicate regularly with the program, encourage and help your child to comply with appropriate behaviour standards, and help deal with any disciplinary actions involving your child.
- d. Be involved and engaged in your child's program! With so many great activities happening at our programs, it's a perfect opportunity to get involved and have fun with your child!

5. Community Member Responsibilities

- a. Any person entering the program from the community or an outside organization has the responsibility to maintain a positive and friendly relationship with staff members working in the program, the children within the program, and any other member of the program they may encounter.
- b. Address any program issues, concerns or questions when they arise, to the appropriate staff member, in a positive, non-accusatory manner.
- c. Communicate regularly with the program, and encourage positive interactions between children, community members, employees of WDC and all other parties involved in WDC.

Inappropriate Behaviour Policy

1. Purpose/Rationale

This document aims to emphasize that Waterdown District Children's Centre (WDCC) is a bullying-free behaviour program that runs with the expectation that all staff, parents/guardians and children in the program foster a community of safe and positive interactions. Bullying behaviour will not be tolerated on any property where WDCC runs programs, or at any program-related activities, or other circumstances that have a negative impact on the positive climate that Waterdown District Children's Centre promotes.

As a child care centre, WDCC aims to actively create an environment where everyone involved in the program can interact positively. WDCC promotes and supports positive interaction between staff, between children, and between staff and children.

2. Intended Outcomes

WDCC recognizes that bullying behaviour and inappropriate behaviour adversely affects the environment of the program, and can have short and long term negative outcomes for all children present within an environment of inappropriate behaviour. The intended outcomes of this document are to:

- Foster a positive environment at all levels of Waterdown District Children's Centre's programs
- Work with schools to promote and support a positive climate
- Acknowledge that WDCC has a shared responsibility to stop bullying behaviour and inappropriate behaviour from happening within the program's larger communities
- Set guidelines for prevention and intervention of inappropriate and bullying behaviour
- Have a common understanding of the definition of bullying behaviour

3. Terminology

As a member of the Ontario Ministry of Education, Waterdown District Children's Centre follows the same definition and description of inappropriate/bullying behaviour as laid out in the Ministry's Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144. For the purposes of this policy:

- 3.1 "**bullying**" means aggressive and typically repeated or persistent behaviour by a pupil where,
- (a) the behaviour is intended by the pupil to have the effect of, or the pupil ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to have the effect of,
 - (i) causing harm, fear or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm, harm to the individual's reputation or harm to the individual's property, or
 - (ii) creating a negative environment at a school for another individual, and
 - (b) the behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the pupil and the individual based on factors such as size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability or the receipt of special education;

Bullying behaviour includes the use of physical, verbal, written, electronic, social or other means of communication and can be intentional, unintentional, direct or indirect. Bullying behaviours, and inappropriate behaviours can have adverse developmental effects on long term social and emotional outcomes for the person who bullies, the person who is targeted, and those who witness the behaviours. Children who bully learn to use power and aggression in order to cause harm or distress to others, or to control others. Types of power that students use include, but are not limited to:

- Size, strength, intelligence, age
- Social status
- Economic status
- Knowledge of another person's vulnerability
- Membership in a dominant group

3.2 **“Harm”** for the purposes of this document, is defined as anything that causes hurt, distress, or injury to a person and can be experienced in a number of different ways, including but not limited to physical, mental, emotional or psychological harm.

3.3 **“Serious Bullying Incidents”** are defined for the purposes of this document, from the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's “Bullying Prevention and Intervention Directive”, as including but are not limited to:

Racist, sexual, sexist and homophobic remarks, slurs, jokes, or graffiti, prolonged or repeated social and cyberbullying, as well as incidents that could lead to suspensions and/or expulsions from the child's school.

To determine if a child's behaviour requires suspension or expulsion consideration, reference should be made to Page 4 (Activities Leading to Possible Suspension or Expulsion) of HWDSB's Student Behaviour and Discipline Policy No. 5.7.

Activities that require suspension consideration include, but are not limited to:

- Uttering threats of bodily harm
- Possessing or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or cannabis
- Swearing at individuals in positions of authority
- Acts of vandalism that commit extensive damage
- Bullying
- Non-consensual sharing of intimate images
- Physical violence and assault not resulting in injury

Activities that require expulsion consideration include, but are not limited to:

- Possessing or using a weapon
- Committing physical assault that results in harm
- Sexual assault
- Robbery
- Bullying if the student has previously been suspended for bullying
- Continuous behaviour injurious to learning or safety

Waterdown District Children's Centre has the obligation to have joint communication between the school age Before and After School program staff and the principal of the school. If a serious bullying incident occurs at WDC's program, but does not occur during school hours, WDC staff have the right, and the responsibility to communicate these incidents to the principal of the school, for consideration for discipline by the principal.

3.4 "**Inappropriate Behaviour**" is any behaviour that is not suitable for the present circumstances, that does not necessarily need to cause harm to another person, but that damages the positive climate of the program.

4. Types of Bullying

The Hamilton Wentworth District School Board's Policy 5.2 "Bullying Prevention and Intervention" defines the different types of bullying as follows. For the purpose of this document, Waterdown District Children's Centre will use the same definitions.

Physical: physical bullying includes any physical harm to a person, or a person's objects, and may include but is not limited to hitting, kicking, punching, slapping, biting, stealing, or damaging another person's property

Verbal: verbal bullying includes any harm to a person using words, and may include but is not limited to name-calling, mocking, taunting, teasing, insults, threats, sexist or racist comments

Written: written bullying includes any harm to a person through written means, and may include but is not limited to notes, posters, pictures, and artwork

Electronic: electronic (also known as cyber) bullying, includes any harm to a person using electronic means, and may include but is not limited to:

- a. Creating a webpage or a blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person
- b. Impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the internet
- c. Communicating negative material about another person electronically to one or more than one individual, or posting negative material about another person on a website that may be accessed by one or more individual
- d. Use of any social or electronic media such as e-mail, cell phones, text, internet and websites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, damage reputations or friendships,
- e. Or any other type of social bullying using electronic media

Social: social (also known as relational) bullying, includes any harm to a person that damages their social or interpersonal relationships with others, and may include but is not limited to eye rolling, excluding others, gossiping, spreading rumours or images, humiliating others, making hurtful comments verbally, electronically or written, and damaging another person's friendships

Other: includes racial, religious, sexual, sexual orientation, disability

- a. **Racial:** aggression, or repeatedly saying negative things, or repeated name calling directed to a person or persons because of their race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, religious beliefs or background
- b. **Religious:** aggression, exclusion or negative comments directed to a person or persons because of their religious beliefs, background, dress code, or observances; repeatedly

calling a person or persons names or making fun of their religious beliefs, background, dress code or observances

- c. **Sexual:** leaving a person or persons out or treating them badly because of their gender, gender identity, or gender expression; repeatedly making sexist or transphobic comments or jokes, touching or grabbing someone in a sexual way; repeatedly spreading sexual rumours about a person or persons
- d. **Sexual Orientation:** leaving a person or persons out or treating them badly because of their sexual orientation; repeatedly making crude comments about a person or persons' sexual behaviour; repeatedly calling a person or persons derogatory or inappropriate names regarding their sexual orientation
- e. **Disability:** excluding a person or persons or by treating them badly because of a disability or need for special education; repeatedly making comments or jokes to hurt a person or persons with a disability; mocking or teasing those who use assistive technology

Bullying Prevention Policy

Staff/Program

1. Positive Program Environment

A positive program approach is a crucial component to the prevention and reduction of inappropriate behaviour. WDCC's climate is the environment in which the programs are carried out, and all the relationships found within the program and the program's community. A positive program climate is achieved when all members of the program feel safe, included and respected, and when all the members are actively working to promote positive interactions, behaviours, and activities throughout the program. A culture of mutual respect between all members of the program community in order to promote and ensure inclusiveness and equity for all members in the program. Because WDCC is a large program, and continues to grow and expand each year, a whole-program approach to a positive program climate is necessary in order to ensure the success throughout all programs WDCC offers. Respectful relationships between staff, between children, and between staff and children at all programs is a core concept of the development of a whole-program approach. Because a whole-program approach ensures that the program is safe, inclusive and accepting, and includes all aspects of program life (ie. programming, policies and procedures, staff practices, etc.), a whole-program approach can be valuable when addressing issues of racism, bullying,, homophobia, gender-based violence, and discrimination based on religion or disability.

2. Code of Conduct

WDCC, as a member of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School board, is required under the Ontario Education Act to follow standards that are consistent with the provincial Code of Conduct. The provincial Code of Conduct can be found on the Ministry of Education website if further inquiry is needed. In addition to these standards, WDCC has implemented a Code of Conduct that all members of WDCC are to adhere to. WDCC's Code of Conduct is closely related to, and follows the standards set out by, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's own Code of Conduct, for consistent standards of behaviour, and seamless transitions between WDCC's program and the school system. Implementation of a Code of Conduct at WDCC allows for prevention of inappropriate or bullying behaviours in a number of ways. Overall, WDCC's Code of Conduct aims to set out appropriate standards of behaviour that are to be adhered to by all members of the WDCC community. These standards of behaviour are in place to enhance the positive environment that is cultivated at WDCC and to ensure that all programs are safe, welcoming environments that allow all members to thrive.

3. Physical Environment

A safe and inclusive environment can contribute to the overall positive climate of the program, and the reduction of inappropriate behaviours. The actual physical environment of the program can be enhanced to foster pride and caring about the surroundings of the program. Additionally, aspects of the physical environments of each program can be monitored by staff to ensure safety for all members of the program. This could include flexible use of the spaces provided for the program, organizational considerations of space and time to reduce potential

conflicts (eg. transition times). Additionally, staff should aim to create an inclusive physical environment to maintain positivity throughout the program, as well as to give every student an equal opportunity to engage meaningfully in the program and all desired activities. _____

4. Professional Development/Staff Training

In order to help prevent bullying behaviour from occurring, it is important that staff have continued professional development or training, in order to provide the best possible care to children, while using the most up-to-date, relevant, and important practices in child care. With the increase in mental health issues in children, it is important that staff are kept up to date on the newest emerging policies, and procedures for helping care for and create a positive and inclusive environment for all children. Workshops and professional development for continuing education in anxiety, mindfulness, mental health concerns, and other emerging areas of child care will be provided to ensure that staff are trained in best practices for helping children, and promoting a safe and positive environment for all children.

5. Classroom Management

Classroom management is extremely important to foster positive interactions between peers, and create a warm environment that discourages inappropriate, bullying behaviour. Effective classroom management combines a safe and positive environment, with elements of self-reg based classroom design. Educators can effectively manage their classrooms by:

- Creating genuine, positive, and reciprocal relationships with children and parents in the group
- Creating a safe space in which children feel comfortable to discuss their anxieties with a trusted adult
- Adopt and promote a self-regulation and mindfulness philosophy that guides programming, peer interactions, and physical classroom environments
- When challenging behaviour occurs, remain calm and quiet, do not over-react, or use punishment strategies or feedback that is disproportionate to the actions of the child
- Keep in mind the specifics of the situation and student(s) in the class - differences in child temperament, personal environments, culture, etc.. can all affect the way children deal with situations, and should influence the way that educators help them work through challenges
- Point out positives – it is important to tell children and their families when they have done things positive. It is not always necessary to tell parents the negatives, and it is just as important to recognize and praise positive choices

6. Self-Regulation and Mindfulness:

- a. **Self-regulation** refers to the way that individuals respond to stress. Stress is a biological response in the body, when the brain detects threats or dangers. It includes the way the body changes how energy is used and expended while experiencing stress. Stress can occur through 5 interrelated domains (biological, cognitive, social, prosocial and emotional) and each can have different long and short term effects on the body. Self-

Regulation is the practice of recognizing all stress, positive or negative, and responding to and managing stress to reduce the effects it has on our body. Very often, stress behaviour (or behaviour in response to one or more stressors), is recognized as misbehaviour.

Misbehaviour: is a behaviour in which the child was aware of what they were doing, knew it was wrong, and was capable of acting differently, but chose to continue the negative behaviour

Stress Behaviour: is a behaviour in which the child was not fully aware of what they were doing, and had little or no ability to change or stop the behaviour. In this case, the behaviour is an impulsive reaction to a high stress load, and biological fight, flight, or freeze responses take over the child's ability to react appropriately. The key to stress behaviour is to determine why the child's stress is so high, and teach adaptive coping strategies to effectively manage stress.

Some effective self-regulation strategies that staff can use to create positive environments, and help develop self-regulation strategies in children are:

- **Micro-environments:** Micro-environments are spaces inside the classroom environment where children can have their various needs met, in different ways. Micro-environments are similar to sensory areas, in that they are designed to meet different sensory needs of children. Every child should have access to the micro-environment when they need. Micro-environments do not, and should not, only be used when a child is already overstimulated and acting impulsively. Micro-environments should be used by children when they feel they need the comfort that an environment brings, to help them self-regulate before they enter a state of heightened stress. Micro-environments can include spaces that:
 - a. Allow a child to change body position
 - i. Different height tables, chairs, bookcases
 - ii. Bean bag chairs, couches, pillows
 - iii. Alternative seating (standing work area, chairs with bike pedals, etc.,)
 - b. Allow a child to down-regulate from an excited/hyper-aroused state, to a stable emotional state
 - i. Fabric over desk, comfortable chair, "comfy corner"
 - c. Allow a child to up-regulate from a hypo-aroused state, to a stable emotional state
 - i. Stationary bikes under chairs
 - ii. Sit and wiggle
 - iii. Chair leg stretch bands
- **Classroom Environment Considerations:** many children spend a large part of their day in a school, or preschool environment. These environments, for the most part, are typically bright, loud, and busy with adults, other children, toys and games, and wall decorations. For many children, these stimuli can be

overwhelming. Additionally, a child who does not typically find these environments overwhelming, may find themselves overstimulated unpredictably by these environments, if they are under a particularly high level of stress or tension. Accounting for the various stimuli in a classroom, and making an effort to change the level of stimuli throughout the day/week/month, can create spaces that help children regulate themselves effectively. It is important to remember that some children may benefit from brighter lights, or louder noises, based on their particular affect, and sensory processing capabilities, so care should be taken to provide both types of environments in the program. Environmental changes to the classroom can include:

- a. Alternative lighting options: lights off, lamps, battery powered candles, flashlights, natural lighting
- b. Noise considerations: volume, types of noises and when they are present, music choices for certain times of day
- c. Temperature: too hot or too cold and providing children with options to regulate their temperature
- d. Visual Stimuli: consider decluttering walls, shelves, bulletin boards, or have a designated section in the room with reduced visual stimuli

- b. **Mindfulness** is the practice of paying close attention to what is happening inside your body, physically, emotionally and mentally, in the present situation. It can be used to calm and quiet your mind, especially when it is busy and full of different thoughts. Mindfulness uses focused concentration, and promotes calmness and positive changes in the brain. A goal of mindfulness is to take the thoughts and feelings in your brain, reflect on them and ultimately attend to and accept our wants, needs and feelings. Being mindful is being in a state without worry or fear, because we are not thinking of what situations have been, or could be, but are accepting them presently exactly as they are. It allows us to openly express and focus on our emotions, and to separate ourselves from our anxious feelings and feel calm. There is ample research that illustrates the benefits of mindfulness in children. Mindfulness can help children:

- Improve self-control, self-regulation skills and emotional regulation skills
- Lower anxiety and stress
- Increase positive mood, social skills, communication skills
- Improve decision making
- Increase self-esteem, health and body image

Implementation of WDCC's program-wide mindfulness program will ensure children engage in mindful practice in their own way at WDCC each day. Basic staff training on successful mindfulness practices to ensure mindfulness is being implemented consistently and correctly at each program should be provided and updated as the field grows. Professional development opportunities for learning more about the practice of mindfulness should also be available to those staff who wish to continue to learn more.

7. Go-To Staff Member

Having a “go-to” staff member at each program to assist with managing inappropriate or bullying behaviours may be a beneficial way to help change the trajectory of a child’s behaviour. This staff member should be someone caring, and able to establish strong and meaningful relationships with children and their families. A go-to staff member makes the response to inappropriate behaviour firm, fair, and consistent with the behaviour, which is extremely important when dealing with individuals who continually exhibit difficult behaviours. This reduces the risk of inconsistent punishment (ie. too harsh a punishment from some staff, too weak a response from others). Having a go-to staff member also reduces the risk for paperwork being misplaced when being passed from staff to staff. Additionally, having a go-to staff member reduces the risk for miscommunication between staff members attempting to relay information about the incident between each other and other involved parties (ie. families, principal, teachers, director). This staff member would also be there to help staff debrief after a difficult situation, and could support the needs of staff while dealing with challenging situations.

Student

1. Social Competencies:

Social competencies are skills in cognitive, emotional, and behavioural facets that help people engage and socialize with others effectively and positively. In the Stuart Shanker method of Self-Regulation, social engagement is defined as “behaviours that reduce social and emotional distance between individuals, while promoting and supporting positive social interaction. Social engagement is the highest of the four neurally-based mechanisms humans have for dealing with stress.” Helping children learn basic social engagement skills is incredibly important to encourage the development of positive peer relationships, and can help children to effectively manage the stress they experience in their lives. From Adam Kennedy’s chapter on Promoting Social Competencies is an organized list of social competency skills in early childhood:

Skill area	Social skills
Emotional understanding and empathy	Communicating emotions to others Expressing emotions in adaptive ways Recognizing that one's actions affect others Acknowledging and responding to others emotions
Initiation of play	Initiating social interactions Entering others' play Responding to the initiations or invitations of others Managing impulses through self-control
Maintaining social interaction	Turn-taking Engaging in parallel play Making attempts at cooperative play
Social problem-solving	Coping with the inevitability of limited resources (e.g., materials/manipulatives) Communicating a social problem Cooperating in talking through a social problem Accepting and acting upon potential solutions to social problems Making choices that defuse or prevent conflict

These social competency skills can be developed in children with the educators help easily, when the educator interacts directly with the children throughout the day, and by encouraging children to engage positively with peers and use these skills to successfully interact and problem solve with others.

Kennedy, A. (2018). Promoting the Social Competence of Each and Every Child in Inclusive Early Childhood Classrooms. In *Early Childhood Education* (pp. 1–16). London: Intechopen.

2. Self-Regulation and Mindfulness Strategies:

Self-regulation is an extremely important skill that all children should learn to help them cope with stress and develop social, emotional, and behavioural skills necessary to positively interact with their peers.

Implementation of WDCC's program-wide mindfulness program will ensure children engage in mindful practice in their own way at WDCC each day. Some simple mindfulness strategies that children can be taught, and can use on their own each day are:

- Focus on breathing
- Guided relaxation or meditation
- artistic/creative expression of feelings/emotions (eg. drawing, painting, beading, glitter jars)
- Mindful eating at snack time
- Change in sensory stimulation (eg. music, darken lights, lower volume of group, relax body sensations)

There are many variations to these strategies, and many other strategies that can be used to increase mindfulness in children. The key to all these strategies is to calm the child, bring them into the present to focus on current things, feelings around and inside them, and help them to reflect and let go of their anxious, stressful, nervous or other negative thoughts and feelings.

3. Character Development

Helping children to develop a strong and moral character early in their lives is an effective way to promote positive behaviours and social interactions, and limiting negative, or inappropriate bullying behaviour. Through modelling, educators can help children develop their character, and teach them important life skills. Beginning at a young age, educators can model and teach children to empathize with others, compromise and negotiate effectively and positively, take ownership of their actions and choices, and express their feelings, wants and needs using appropriate language, as opposed to impulsive negative behaviours. Each of these skills can help facilitate the reduction and prevention of bullying behaviours, by helping teach children from a young age how to positively interact and negotiate with their peers. Educators at WDCC should take special care in modelling appropriate behaviour, and helping children learn appropriate ways of interacting with all peers they encounter.

4. Student Leadership

Providing students with opportunities to be leaders in their group is extremely important for the growth and development of children's abilities. Leadership opportunities enable children to learn how to effectively manage and complete tasks, build their self-confidence, and help them build strong relationships with effective communication skills. It also provides opportunities for them to take responsibility for their actions and decisions, and teaches them to be accountable. Children can learn how to become strong and effective leaders from the example their educators set for them, and how their educator chooses to teach them about what leadership means. It is also a good way to encourage working as a team. By assigning a few student leaders each day, those individuals learn to take a leadership role in a team setting, and how to effectively complete a task with those around them. Additionally, student leaders learn responsibility. Not only are they responsible for making sure the necessary tasks are completed, but they also are responsible for making sure each team member is doing their part, and that each team member has everything they need to complete the task. Ways that you can incorporate student leaders into your program are:

- Assigning job teams with a leader for each of the major tasks in your class (snack, cleaning, organization of materials, etc.)
- "Mini Educator" - assign a child(ren) in your group to be mini educators. When other students in the group have questions or needs, they will go to the mini educator first to see if they can help. If the child(ren) still need help, they can go to the educator.
- Assign a small amount of children to be decision makers for the day. Allow them to make small decisions for the activities that day (eg., when should it be time to tidy, what activities the group could do)

5. Peer Mentors

Similar to student leadership, peer mentors aim to help students build healthy relationships, improve communication skills and give students a chance to engage meaningfully with peers. Peer mentors can occur in a wide variety of situations and can help to provide students with opportunities to develop key social, prosocial and emotional skills that can lead to more positive social interactions among peers. Older and younger students can be paired up as peer

mentors, in a situation where the older student assists the younger student with tasks they are interested in. It can be informal, with peer buddies paired up during the day to engage in play activities together, or more formal as the older buddy helps younger children in learning opportunities and skill development. Both children in the peer mentor relationship have the opportunity to learn to develop important skills such as leadership skills, communication skills, empathy, responsibility and respect towards peers. Research shows that peer mentoring programs (such as Beatbullying in England) raised awareness, understanding and reporting of bullying behaviours, and that bullying was significantly reduced in schools which used the program.

*Banerjee, R., Robinson, C., & Smalley, D. (n.d.). *Evaluation of the Beatbullying Peer Mentoring Programme. Evaluation of the Beatbullying Peer Mentoring Programme* (pp. 1–5). Sussex: University of Sussex.

Bullying Intervention/Progressive Discipline

1. To respond to incidents of bullying behaviours and inappropriate behaviour, WDCC will use interventions and progressive discipline strategies to help ensure that a safe and positive environment is kept up in all programs. WDCC will use a 5 step intervention program focusing on Prevention, Detection, Responding, Intervention, and Reporting to respond and intervene in instances of bullying behaviour.
 - 1.1. **Prevention:** The first and most important step in targeting inappropriate and bullying behaviour is a focus on prevention. Preventative measures should be taken at all program locations to ensure that a positive environment is maintained. Reference should be made to WDCC's Positive Program Climate Policy in order to cultivate a positive environment. Each member of the WDCC community has specific responsibilities to encourage and maintain a positive environment that fosters growth, learning, and development of crucial social-emotional skills. WDCC has zero-tolerance for bullying behaviours. Any instance of bullying behaviour will be reported to the necessary parties involved, including the principal of the child's school. Continued instances of bullying behaviour will result in further action taken by appropriate WDCC in accordance with the Progressive Discipline Policy, and any mitigating factors surrounding the particular situation.
 - 1.2. **Detection:** All members of the WDCC community have a responsibility to report bullying behaviour or inappropriate behaviour to the appropriate staff members, as well as to fill out the appropriate reporting forms (see the reporting section below). Children, staff, parents and all other members of the community should be involved in maintaining the safety of the program, and should report all instances of bullying behaviour immediately to a staff member who can respond to the situation. Additionally, staff should monitor the climate of their group, and the program as a whole, to detect changes to a child's attitude and behaviour, and program climate. If concerned about a significant change in group or child attitude, staff are encouraged to inform appropriate parties, in order to effectively manage the group dynamic, as well as to address potential concerns that could lead to negative or bullying behaviours.
 - 1.3. **Responding:** Once detected, all staff should refer to the progressive discipline model for potential and appropriate next steps. It is required that staff complete necessary documentation, for WDCC's own child care program, as well as any documents required by HWDSB. Additionally, the appropriate staff member should approach the involved parties directly, to gather information about the incident, address next steps in dealing with the behaviour, and have an informed and meaningful discussion about appropriate and inappropriate behaviours and ways to manage their feelings.
 - 1.4. **Reporting:** All incidents of inappropriate and bullying behaviour are required to be reported in accordance with the Progressive Discipline Policy outlined below. Verbal and written reports will be made as necessary to the site supervisor, program director, and school officials. Verbal reports will be made to the site supervisor of the child's program for all instances of bullying behaviours that occur, and should be made to the child's school principal for instances of bullying behaviours that do not require suspension or expulsion consideration. Written reports will be made for all instances of bullying

behaviours using WDC's Inappropriate Behaviour Reporting form, and will be made using HWDSB's Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form for all instances of bullying behaviours that requires suspension or expulsion consideration.

- 1.5. **Intervention:** Upon repeated or the particular nature and severity of bullying behaviours or inappropriate behaviour displayed, specific intervention plans will be drawn up with consultation of one or more of the following parties: group leader, site supervisor, program director, school principal, parents/families and any other relevant people. These specific intervention plans will be child specific and will address the particular needs and future next steps for the child. Additionally, restorative justice and progressive discipline interventions will be included in the intervention plan, as well as will be considered for intervention at each new instance of bullying behaviours or inappropriate behaviour.

The following mitigating factors must be taken into consideration when addressing inappropriate or bullying behaviour:

- Particular student(s) and circumstances
- Age and developmental level of those involved
- Nature and severity of the behaviour
- Mental health related issues
- Impact on the school climate
- Involvement of support personnel
- For students with special needs, disciplinary intervention, supports and consequences must be consistent with the students' strengths, needs, goals and expectations contained in the Individual Education Plan (IEP);
- Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, gender based violence, sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual behaviours must be addressed
- Opportunities for the student to learn from the choices he or she makes
- Appropriateness and availability of parental involvement in discussions concerning disciplinary actions

2. Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a way to respond to harm that involves the person or people who harmed others, as well as the person or people who have been harmed. Restorative justice holds those who cause harm to others accountable for their actions, and allows them to be involved in making amends for the harm their actions have caused. Restorative justice practices also allows those who have been harmed the chance to be heard, and gives them a chance to be involved in the resolution. The three main groups that need to be considered when using restorative justice practices are the people who have been harmed, the person who caused the harm, and the community. Restorative justice practices allow for respectful, and non-blaming communication, with a problem-solving approach, between all those involved. Restorative justice practices can be tailored to the specific incidents or circumstances. These practices also help to build a sense of community by fostering a positive and supportive environment. A restorative justice approach:

- gives anyone the opportunity to ask to use restorative justice methods

- can voluntarily include all the persons who have been affected
- focuses on repairing relationships and strengthening community
- supports the person who is harmed as well as the person who has harmed another person
- helps repair damaged relationships
- holds people accountable while finding ways to move forward
- does not replace consequences, but can replace or reduce the need for consequences

A restorative justice approach allows the individuals involved in the incidents to:

- Share perspectives and find solutions that can help repair harm in a meaningful way
- Be reintegrated back into their school and community as healthy, cooperative members of society
- Be supported in a safe and inclusive environment

Progressive Discipline

At WDC Level
<p>Verbal Warning - a verbal report will be made for any instance of bullying behaviour, as defined above, to the site supervisor of the child's program. When continuing through later steps of the progressive discipline model, verbal and written reports will continue.</p>
<p>Written Report - a written report will accompany all verbal reports of bullying behaviour, and will be filled out for both the individual who behaved inappropriately, and the person who was the target of the inappropriate behaviour. The form will be signed by the staff member who completed the report, the parent/guardian of the child, and the principal of the school. This report will be made using WDC's Inappropriate Behaviour Form.</p>
<p>Problem Solving Model Reflection Activity - the first step to responding to continued inappropriate or bullying behaviour will be that both parties involved in the behaviour (the person that harmed, and the person that did the harming) will complete, and have signed by a parent or guardian, a problem solving reflection activity. This form will include written sections including "what is the problem", "how did the problem make me feel", "what was the result", "how could I have better solved the problem", "how could I have prevented the problem all together"</p>
<p>1:1 Conference with Student/Group - meeting between staff member directly involved with the incident (group leader, initial staff who responded) will meet one on one with the individual or group who acted inappropriately, and again with the individual or group who was targeted in the incident. Both meetings should focus on gaining information about the event (triggers, consequences, specifics about the situation), as well as involve the individuals in potential solutions, consequences, or resolutions to the issue.</p>
<p>Contract - based on the information gained in the one on one meetings, as well as the individual's input on solutions/resolutions/consequences, everyone involved in the incident will have input on, and sign, an agreed-upon contract which holds individuals accountable for their future behaviour and actions. These contracts should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What to do when an inappropriate behaviour begins (ie. report to teacher/report to parents/etc) ● Agreed-upon and appropriate consequences when an inappropriate behaviour occurs ● Next steps for helping children learn more appropriate behaviours/responses to triggers/etc ● Steps of progressive discipline for specific situation which will be taken should behaviour continue ● Potential mitigating factors and how those will be dealt with
<p>Loss of Privileges - with repeated incidents of inappropriate or bullying behaviour, child(ren) will lose the privileges they usually receive in their specific program. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Loss of electronic free time ● Loss of special group/club participation

- Reduced or loss of special responsibilities (eg. helping leader with snack, being a kinder helper, etc...)

The loss of privileges will be at the discretion of the site supervisor. Mitigating factors (such as “does the privilege benefit the child’s well being”, “will losing the responsibility hurt the child”, or “will losing the privilege hinder positive behavioural development”) will be taken into account before the privilege is removed from the child.

Restorative Justice Strategies - types of restorative justice practices include:

- Restorative Conversation: Day to day conversations, develop a sense of community
- Restorative Practice Classroom Circle: Helps teach restorative justice skills and language development
- Restorative Conference: Impromptu meeting for challenging minor behaviour
- Restorative Justice Formal Circle: major incidents impacting wider-audience, with the involvement of community members
- Other strategies include:
 - Classroom circles
 - Questioning for reflective thinking and problem solving
 - Lessons about student responsibility
 - Circles that develop oral language skills
 - Peer mentorship
 - Promoting and teaching empathy

Family Meeting and Family Strategies - a family meeting between the Director of WDCC, the involved staff (site supervisor/group leader) and the family of the individual exhibiting inappropriate behaviour will be called when the impact of the behaviour begins to frequently and intensely (measured at the discretion of the site supervisor) impact the climate of the program negatively, regardless of the previous progressive discipline steps that may or may not have been taken.

HWDSB Student Support Services - through HWDSB’s Progressive Discipline in School Interventions and Strategies (Procedure for Policy 5.7, Appendix B), the school board offers student support services. If inappropriate or bullying behaviours continue, and occur regularly at school, the school may request the child use the student support services. WDCC may consult with HWDSB’s student support services for strategies or techniques that may benefit the child, while keeping all personal information confidential.

Referral suggestions - if the inappropriate, or bullying behaviours continue to the point where the behaviours are outside the scope of what staff at WDCC can help with, suggestions to outside organizations with more specialized assistance available may be provided to parents or guardians. These types of referrals may also be given early in the progressive discipline steps at the discretion of the supervisor, or if requested by the parents or guardians.

At School Level

Verbal Warning - a verbal report will be made for any instance of bullying behaviour, as defined above, to the principal of the child’s school, that should not be considered for suspension or expulsion

Written Warning - a written report will be made for any instance of bullying behaviour, as defined above, to the principal of the child’s school, that must be considered for suspension or expulsion. This report will be made using the Ministry of Education’s Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form