

Appendix B: Guiding Questions

The questions that follow are designed to facilitate discussion, to assist in bringing focus to key elements of safe, caring and orderly schools, and to prompt actions that will lead to continually improving policies, procedures and practices in support of school safety.

Policies establish clear expectations and set direction for all members of the school community, encourage appropriate action and provide a basis for sanctions in response to inappropriate action. They encourage pro-active and preventive endeavours as well as remedial and restorative approaches when problems do occur. Effective policy is developed in collaboration with the entire community, widely communicated, consistently implemented and regularly reviewed.

Policies

- How well do current school board and school policies establish clear expectations for safe schools and set the direction for effective practice in schools?
- How well do existing policies reflect and respond to the beliefs, customs, practices, languages, behaviours and physical differences of individuals and groups in the school community?
- In what ways are all community members – school employees, parents, students and interested others – encouraged to contribute to policy development?
- How effectively are policies communicated to members of the school community?
- Are the day-to-day practices of schools consistent with policies?
- How are questions and concerns about policies addressed?
- What processes are in place for regular policy review and revision?
- What evidence indicates that existing policies are supporting district efforts to maintain safe, caring and orderly schools?

Procedures are official, school-wide protocols and mechanisms that establish and communicate a way of doing things. Procedures describe the method for carrying out policy directions – the steps to be followed in conducting the business of maintaining safe, caring and orderly schools. They provide the formal operational guidelines for staff, students and visitors in the school. Effective procedures support the actions of individuals and groups working together to realize the goals of the school community.

Procedures

- Does the district/school have clear procedures for addressing key elements of safe, caring and orderly schools?
- Are procedures consistent with school district policies?
- How do school procedures reflect and respond to the beliefs, customs, practices, languages, behaviours and physical differences of individuals and groups in the school community?
- In what ways are all members of the school community encouraged to contribute to the development of effective procedures in the school?
- What measures are in place to encourage individuals to report when they are aware of unsafe conditions or when they suspect or witness incidents or potential acts of violence? What measures provide such individuals with confidence that their reports will lead to appropriate action and that necessary support will be provided to them, as well as to others involved?
- What measures are in place to create and maintain a positive school climate that supports student achievement?
- How are training activities in the school aligned with safety goals?
- How is diversity reflected in all aspects of the life of the school?
- How are partnerships with community agencies fostered? How are members of the school community supported in learning about the services these agencies provide?
- What are the expectations for student conduct and the conduct of others in the school community? How are these expectations promoted on a consistent basis?
- How can members of the school community obtain information about key safety concerns and the way the school addresses them?
- What evidence indicates that existing procedures are supporting the school's efforts to maintain a safe, caring and orderly learning environment?

Practices describe the day-to-day actions and experiences of individuals at school. Effective practices reflect guidelines for safe, caring and orderly schools. They foster positive and healthy school cultures, nurturing social and emotional environments and success for all members of the school community.

Practices

- How do people treat one another at school? Is the school climate respectful, courteous, positive and inclusive?
- Do individuals know their rights and responsibilities as members of the school community?
- To what degree do students feel they belong to the school community? How do students express pride in the school?
- How do members of the school community promote socially responsible behaviour and keep the school environment free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and other forms of violence? Are these practices carried out in ways that are preventive and restorative, as well as remedial?
- In what ways do teachers employ strategies that take into account the differing interests and needs of students, and their different learning styles and strengths?
- How does the school encourage students to become responsible leaders in the school? What are some examples of students serving as leaders in areas that support school safety?
- How does the school encourage students to report unsafe conditions, actions or potential incidents? Do students report with consistency?
- How quickly and effectively are concerns addressed when individuals describe what they believe to be unfair or insensitive treatment?
- What evidence is used to determine if the school is becoming more safe, caring and orderly?