School: St. Thomas High School

Goal: To prevent and stop all forms of bullying and violence targeting a student, a teacher or any other staff member.

Definitions:

Bullying: Refers to any repeated direct or indirect behavior, comment, act, or gesture, whether deliberate or not, including in cyberspace, which occurs in a context where there is a power imbalance between the persons concerned and which causes distress and injuries, hurts, oppresses, intimidates or ostracizes.

Violence: Refers to any intentional demonstration of verbal, written, physical, psychological or sexual force which causes distress and injures, hurts, or oppresses a person by attacking their psychological or physical integrity or well-being, or their rights or property.

This plan is a formalization of what is presently in place at St. Thomas High School.

Members of the anti-bullying and anti-violence team:

Avril Kent               David Abracen          Christine Dane
Tamara Beach            Sue Lariviere           Glenn Katz
Joanne Fafoutis         Nadia Laccitiello

Governing Board approval (date): ________________________________

_________________________________                        _________________________________
Signature Governing Board Chair         Signature Principal
1. **Analysis of the School's Situation:**

The St. Thomas High School Community pledges its support for the position of the Lester B. Pearson School Board's Safe and Caring Schools policy. To that end, St. Thomas High School is committed to working towards eliminating all forms of bullying and violence in its community and to taking a regular measure of its school climate as it relates to these particular issues.

**Procedure**

- St. Thomas High School will poll the student population twice per year through its Tell Them From Me survey to identify the student perception of bullying and violence and other related issues.
- St. Thomas High School commits to having standard written reports completed by staff, students and parents regarding reported incidents of violence or bullying.
- St. Thomas High School will include Transportation/Bus Reports related to acts of bullying or violence as part of its general snapshot of the school’s situation.
- Out-of-school suspensions and any other disciplinary actions related to bullying and violent behaviour will be recorded and included in the snapshot.
- St. Thomas High School will keep a general tally of referrals to the office for bullying or violent behaviours for reporting purposes.

2. **Prevention Measures:**

The St. Thomas High School Community holds firm in the conviction that awareness, prevention, education, and dialogue are the keys to changing attitudes towards issues of bullying and violence in schools. As educators, we are committed to providing opportunities for all members of our community to explore these issues, share experiences, move towards a greater understanding of their underlying causes and build the capacity to rise above them. We acknowledge that changing attitudes and culture is a long-term and on-going process. The focus will be on creating a safe, welcoming environment in the cafeteria where students can gather and feel safe and secure. To that end, established measures such as those listed below should be considered as part of a general plan to promote a safe and caring school environment.
Proposed steps

- The St. Thomas High School Code of Conduct will be distributed to all school members and a parent annually via the agenda book and is accessible on the school website. Highlights of the Code of Conduct will be made periodically throughout the year to students in assemblies as the need arises.
- St. Thomas High School is committed to the goals and objectives of the LBPSB Digital Citizenship Project and its implication in this plan.
- St. Thomas High School will continue to implement programs related to anti-violence and anti-bullying over the course of each school year. These programs may include:
  - Gay Straight Alliance
  - Peer mentoring
  - Purposing the cafeteria, spiritual animator’s room, TLC, Games Room and numerous classrooms during both cycle 1 and 2 lunch hours as safe spaces for students to spend their lunch hours.
  - St. Thomas High School will be vigilant with regard to ‘hot spots’ for bullying and violence.
  - St. Thomas High School will commit to a minimum of one presentation annually by an outside speaker/ organization. (play, team building activity, concert, etc.) which focuses on the theme of anti-violence or anti-bullying
  - St. Thomas High School will engage in providing information/education, etc. to students, staff, Governing Board.
  - St. Thomas High School commits to including messages, announcements and “Shout-Outs” regarding anti-violence, anti-bullying and initiatives to increase kindness and civility over the course of the year. This will be done through the student agenda, during student assemblies, through leadership classes and class visits. Cyber bullying will be addressed through Assemblies for all Sec 1 & 2 students.

3. Measures to Encourage Parental Collaboration:

Parent collaboration and cooperation is critical to the success of any plan to eliminate bullying and violence in schools. The St. Thomas High School Community includes parents and, as a consequence, it is understood that parents are committed to the goals and objectives of this plan. It is critical that parents work with the school and engage in constructive dialogue on issues as they arise.

"The Lester B. Pearson School Board (also) believes that the school board's administrators, staff, parent, students and all those present in the school’s environment have a responsibility to ensure that the right to be safe and secure is upheld."

Introduction, LBPSB Policy on Safe and Caring Schools, November 2008, p.4
Proposed Steps

- St. Thomas High School shall review and make available the LBPSB Anti-bullying, Anti-Violence plan on an annual basis. A permanent link to this document will be maintained on the St. Thomas High School website.

- St. Thomas High School will commit itself to including references to anti-bullying/anti-violence themes at gatherings such as Curriculum Night. References are displayed throughout the building. Positive messages are displayed prominently in cafeteria. The Secondary 1 parents evening will have a session relating to parental responsibility regarding positive on-line behaviours.

- In collaboration with its Governing Board, Home and School or Parent Participation Organization, St. Thomas High School will present parent information sessions on specific topics of bullying and violence. (i.e. Lecture series)

- St. Thomas High School commits to ongoing communication between school personnel and the parents of children who are being bullied and those who engage in bullying behaviours, until complete resolution of the problem. Additionally, St. Thomas High School commits to periodic follow-up communication with the victim of bullying, and/or his/her parents to ensure that the measures taken have been successful.

- Possible interventions to establish partnerships with parents: identify students with behavioural difficulties – school Administration/teacher makes initial contact at the beginning of the year to discuss how ‘we’ want the year to be successful for the student.

  The School Board will post information or links on its school website with relevant parent information regarding bullying, being a responsible bystander, internet safety, cyber-bullying, etc.

4. Procedures for Reporting:

All members of the St. Thomas High School Community are entitled to a safe, non-threatening and easily accessible process for reporting incidents of bullying or violent behavior regardless of whether they are victims, witnesses or a reporting party. It is understood that our process is designed to facilitate and encourage, not impede, the reporting of incidents.

Proposed Steps (Students)

- St. Thomas High School has a policy of confidentiality for parties reporting incidents of bullying and/or violence. At the same time, the identified perpetrator is fully apprised of the details of the report made against him/her relating to the school.

- Any St. Thomas High School student who witnesses an act of bullying or violence is encouraged to tell a staff member at school, and an adult at home so as to allow those adults to follow-up with reporting as they see fit and necessary.
• Once a student has made a verbal report of a bullying or violent incident, he/she provides a written report of what has taken place with a verbal account provided to an adult. This is providing the student is capable of producing said report.

• St. Thomas High School confirms that any verbal report given to a staff member from a student must be documented and followed-up as needed.

Proposed Steps (Parents)

• Members of the St. Thomas High School parent community who are made aware of a bullying situation or act of violence involving either their own child or another student of the school are obliged to contact the school Principal, their designate or classroom teacher. This contact and subsequent follow-up will be documented by St. Thomas High School personnel.

• Acknowledgement of receipt of a report will be done within 2 days, The reporting parent will be contacted by the school, to be assured that the situation is being investigated and that appropriate action(s) is being taken. Further details will be limited in order to insure confidentiality of parties involved.

5. Actions to Be Taken When Observing a Bullying or Violent Act:

No member of the St. Thomas High School Community will be indifferent towards reported or witnessed acts of violence and bullying. We are committed to responding to and investigating any report we receive which suggests that an incident of violence and/or bullying has taken place amongst our population. Furthermore, we are committed to considering all available facts in a timely and efficient manner.

Proposed Steps:

• All St. Thomas High School staff will be committed to a zero indifference policy with respect to acts of violence or bullying or reports of said acts. All acts or reports will be investigated.

• A St. Thomas High School staff member who observes or is made aware of a possible act of bullying or violence must intervene to assess the situation and take action if deemed necessary.

  • If the situation does not threaten the staff member who is a witness or who has been told of an incident, he/she must intervene immediately.
  • If the staff member considers his/her intervention in the situation successful, student is not referred to administration. However, an intervention report must be filed and submitted to principal if the staff member considers the incident to be one of violence or bullying.
  • The staff member may determine that the student involved in the bullying and/or violent behaviour should be sent directly to administration.
  • At the discretion of the school principal or his/her delegate, police intervention may be requested in the form of a 911 emergency call or a call for support from the school’s Socio-Community Officer.
• A St. Thomas High School student may intervene if the situation does not threaten his/her well-being and/or may choose to seek the assistance of a staff member.

• Any St. Thomas High School student who witnesses an incident of violence or bullying must report the incident to the appropriate staff member in the school using the established protocols (refer to 4 in this plan).

• Any member of the St. Thomas High School Parent Community who is witness to an act of bullying or violence is obliged to report that incident directly to the school administration. The steps that are undertaken include investigation of the report, appropriate measures taken and appropriate follow-up as per Section 4 of this plan.

Note: All St. Thomas High School reports regarding incidents of violence and/or bullying must be forwarded to the appropriate Regional Director in cases where students are excluded from their regular course of studies as a consequence of their actions.

6. **Measures to Protect Confidentiality:**

As part of the investigative and follow-up processes, St. Thomas High School is committed to maintaining fair, accurate and confidential records of each reported incident of bullying or violence, regardless of the investigative outcome. These records will include specific details on the incidents in question, the steps taken by the school as a consequence of its investigation and indication of intended follow-up. St. Thomas High School is committed to keeping these records confidential and secure so as to protect all parties regardless of their role in the incident.

Proposed Steps:

• The St. Thomas High School anti-violence/anti-bullying plan will be reviewed annually and all staff are reminded that every incident and the follow-up must be kept confidential.

• The above named reports will be kept in a file separate from the Cumulative File or Confidential File of an individual student.

• In all cases involving minor students information shared should be on a need to know basis only.

7. **Supervisory or Support Measure for Victims, Witness, and Perpetrator:**

All members of the St. Thomas High School Community will be thorough in their treatment of reported cases of bullying or violence.

Proposed Steps (Victim):

• Students will be encouraged to speak to a staff member with whom they feel comfortable.
• A St. Thomas High School staff member (namely Administration) will conduct follow-up meetings with the student to ensure the bullying or violence has stopped and to provide support to the student.
• In all cases, a determination will be made as to which members of the school staff must be made aware of the incident to ensure that the student is safe.
• The student will be required to work through a written reflection process.
• Parents will be informed following the incident, and updated with information.
• The St. Thomas High School team may refer to in-school counselling and/or an outside agency.

Proposed Steps (Bystander):
• Following the incident, an intervention may be held with any bystanders to determine their role in the incident.
• Consequences are applied, if appropriate for students who are actively involved in encouraging the incident.
• The student may be required to work through a written reflection process.
• St. Thomas High School reserves the right to contact the parents of bystanders.

Proposed Steps (Perpetrator):
• The initial intervention with the perpetrator is addressed by the St. Thomas High School staff member who intervened and the incident is reported to the office.
• The perpetrator’s parents are called and informed of the incident and the consequences. The parents may be asked to come to school for a follow-up meeting.
• In cases where it is deemed necessary and appropriate, St. Thomas High School may refer the perpetrator and his/her parents to support services available to the school.
• It is expected that following any intervention, the perpetrator must report to principal or designate for follow-up discussion concerning the incident in question.
• The student will be required to work through a written reflection process.

8. **Disciplinary Sanctions:**

"Any disciplinary action must be fair, equitable and consistent with the general aims and goals of education. Whenever possible, the disciplinary action should allow for effective learning."

LBPSB Policy on Safe and Caring Schools, Section 3, June 2013.
Proposed Steps:

- The perpetrator will engage in a discussion with the adult who witnesses or is told of the incident. Adult decides no further follow-up is required. A report goes to the Principal.
- Appropriate consequences will be applied as per the school Code of Conduct and the Safe and Caring School Policy.

In all instances these measures are applied at the discretion of the principal or his/her delegate taking into account the circumstances and severity and number of offenses.

Any and all disciplinary measures included in the school’s Code of Conduct must be in alignment with the LBPSB Safe and Caring Schools Policy.

9. Required Follow-Ups:

The St. Thomas High School Community recognizes that once the initial investigation and response process has been completed, supervisory or support measures may need to be put in place for the perpetrator, the victim and, when deemed necessary, the witnesses to an act of bullying or violence. The extent of these follow-up measures will depend upon the nature of the incident and the degree to which it is believed that long-term intervention is necessary.

- A summary report of the incident and follow-up measures taken are sent to the Director General or his/her delegate.

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