

NEWS RELEASE

October 18, 2019

Hazing Prevention Program Offered in Schools

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) is introducing a new hazing prevention education program in schools throughout the province. Hazing Prevention NLESD was developed in partnership with the provincial Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador, and Sport Newfoundland and Labrador. It was piloted in select schools last year.

“This program is on the leading edge in Canada. Our District, and our partners, feel strongly that hazing prevention education is necessary for students, staff, coaches and others within the school community,” said Goronwy Price, Chair of the Board of Trustees of NLESD. “As such, representatives from schools offering Grades 7-12 are being offered a full day of training this year, with the intent that they subsequently conduct sessions in their respective schools.”

With the advent of this program, the District will reinforce the Board’s Student Athletics Policy (PROG-324), and send a clear message that hazing will not be tolerated among student athletes, teams, clubs or organized groups within school communities.

For more information on Hazing Prevention NLESD, see: www.nlesd.ca/families/hazing.jsp.

Chair Price said the hazing prevention program is just one of a number of policies, programs and initiatives taken to prevent and address harassment and violence (of any nature) in District schools and school communities. More information is available in the Backgrounder below.

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District represents approximately 64,000 students, more than 8,200 employees, over 250 schools, including 5 alternate sites throughout the province.

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BACKGROUNDER

Responses to Violence in Schools

Hazing Prevention NLESD is the latest in a series of policies, programs and initiatives implemented by the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District which are designed to prevent all forms of violence and harassment in school environments and communities.

When violence does occur, there are protocols in place, policies in place, and resources in place to address the unique issues associated with each incident. Some are very complex. The ultimate goal, however, is to prevent reoccurrence, accept responsibility and consequences (if appropriate), repair relationships, and provide **all** involved with the supports they need to move forward and be successful in their learning environment.

Some of the policies, initiatives, programs and actions, designed to prevent and address these issues are listed below. This is not an exhaustive list.

- **Safe and Caring Schools Policy** - The District is responsible for implementing the provincial Safe and Caring School Policy (2013), which is enshrined in the *Schools Act*. It outlines specific responsibilities and protocols - including [Positive Behaviour Supports](#), [Codes of Conduct](#), a [Bullying Intervention Protocol](#), [Guidelines for LGBTQ Inclusive Practices](#), and more. A comprehensive package of information relating to the elements of the policy, and how it is implemented at the school and District level, can be accessed here: [Safe and Caring Schools Policy](#).
- **Review 360** - Reports of violence in a school environment are communicated to the school administrator and recorded in Review 360. This includes incidents involving students with exceptionalities. It is a tool designed to record behavioural incidents and interventions, and note trends for further reflection and action. It is further designed to inform individual School Development Plans with respect to preventing further incidents and responding appropriately if and when they do occur. Professional learning/training continues as the District works to ensure Review 360 is used consistently across the regions.
- **Gender-based Violence Committee** - A District-wide Gender-based Violence Committee is actively looking at potential policies/protocols/programming which can further address sexual incidents of a potentially criminal nature - whether they occur on or off school property.
- **Consent Curriculum** - In addition to the established health curriculum, the District has also developed a suite of lessons focused on consent education (Grades 7-9) to be introduced this school year.
- **Guidelines for Administrators** - Administrators have been provided with updated guidelines for responding to a report of sexual assault.
- **District Policies/Administrative Regulations** - In addition to the overarching provincial Safe and Caring Schools Policy, there are District-wide policies and administrative regulations which include sections related to inappropriate student behaviours. All Board policies, administrative regulations and associated documents can be found at: <https://www.nlesd.ca/about/policies.jsp>. These include, but are not limited to:



- **Refusal of School Admission (PROG-325)** - This policy was approved in November 2018 to address situations where a student's presence in school is detrimental to the physical or mental well-being of students and staff - and the situation cannot be addressed through safeguards in the school. The criteria for enacting the policy involves there being a serious incident which allegedly occurred, on or off school property, which law enforcement is investigating and/or for which charges have been laid. The *Schools Act, 1997* was amended to allow this policy to be enacted. See: [Policy](#) and [administrative procedures](#).
- **Student Suspensions (GOV-100)** - In accordance with the *Schools Act, 1997*, principals have the authority to suspend a student from school. The District supports the suspension of students as required in response to inappropriate, disruptive or dangerous student behaviour. However, the District also recognizes the need to balance discipline and deterrence with interventions and programming to encourage a successful re-entry to school for the suspended student. See: [Policy](#) and [administrative procedures](#).
- **Student Athletics Policy (PROG-324)** - Students who represent their school on athletic teams are required to sign a School Athletic Contract, developed in partnership with School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador, which speaks to the consequences of inappropriate behaviours. See: [NLESD-SSNL Athletic Contract](#).
- **Acceptable Use of Technology Policy (FIN-500)** - This policy speaks to the appropriate and inappropriate use of technology within the school environment and includes a requirement for students and parents to sign an [Acceptable Use of Technology Agreement](#).
- **Social Media Policy (FIN-502)** - The District's Social Media Policy includes [Terms and Conditions for Student Use](#).
- **Other Relevant Policies** - In preventing and responding to issues of inappropriate behaviour, violence, or the safety of students - whether responding within the school environment, or in public - the District is also guided by the following policies: [Protection of Children and Youth](#) (and [administrative regulations](#)), [Traumatic-Critical Incidents](#) (and [administrative procedures](#)), [Student Records](#) (and [administrative procedures](#)), [Police Investigations](#) (and [administrative procedures](#)), [Bomb Threats](#) and ([administrative procedures](#)), [Weapons](#) (and [administrative procedures](#)), [Lockdown-Secure Schools](#) (and [administrative procedures](#)), [Media Relations](#) and more.
- **Legislation** - In matters related to behavioural incidents involving students, including serious incidents which may involve law enforcement, the District is also bound by the provisions of the *Schools Act, 1997*, the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and the *Criminal Youth Justice Act*, among others.
- **Programs/Initiatives** - The District has introduced a number of internal and external programs in schools designed to promote social-emotional learning, mental health and respect for others. These include, but are not limited to:
 - **Students Taking Responsibility in Violence Education (STRIVE)** - This is a program offered by the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) to empower students to take ownership of youth violence and work within their schools to find solutions to problems encountered. It helps inform students on the effects of their own behaviour and that of other students.



- **Beyond the Hurt** - Offered to Grades 6-7 students, Beyond the Hurt is a student-led bullying and harassment prevention program coordinated through the Canadian Red Cross.
- **Hazy Love Program** - Offered to Grade 7 students, Hazy Love is a program about making choices while affected by other influences.
- **Relationships First** - This is a restorative justice education program that focuses on addressing the harm caused by hurtful behaviour or crime; holding the offender responsible for their actions, and rebuilding relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. It provides an opportunity for the parties directly affected to identify and address their needs.
- **Social Media and Internet Safety** - In recognition of the increasing challenges and pressures facing students from social media and the Internet, the District provides teachers with age-appropriate Internet and Social Media Safety (ISMS) lesson plans. These plans are designed to ensure students receive a foundational level of instruction on the elements of digital citizenship, and to help them to make good decisions - in real life, and online. All ISMS lessons are reviewed annually to ensure they address current issues. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document supports administrators, and is updated regularly.
- **LGBTQ Focus** - District staff provides LGBTQ awareness sessions and address concerns on student wellness days, wellness cafés, drama festivals, and diversity events. Online resources are available for teachers to help integrate LGBTQ inclusive practices into classrooms and schools, and staff supports each school in the review of Guidelines for LGBTQ Inclusive Practices. The District provides ongoing support for teachers in lesson plan development that includes integrating LGBTQ resources across curriculum areas, and a Google Group for Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) facilitators in Newfoundland and Labrador is available to support teachers to connect and share information and resources across the province. The District also provides information sessions for students, upon request, to help build empathy and understanding with school communities.
- **Roots of Empathy** - A program focused on reducing levels of aggression among school children (K-8), while raising social-emotional competence and increasing empathy.
- **Wellness Days** - School wellness days have been used to promote positive mental health, anti-bullying, healthy lifestyles, and other relevant issues. To be most effective, schools have worked with District staff to develop days that reflect issues included in the school's School Growth and Development Plan and address the issues identified in school climate surveys.
- **Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum** - The District has been working with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to integrate social-emotional learning and mental health resources into specific aspects of the K-12 curriculum. For example, a PATHS (Promotion of Alternative Thinking Strategies) program covers five domains of social and emotional development in K-6: self-control, emotional understanding, positive self-esteem, relationships and interpersonal problem-solving skills.

