

## **New Changes to Legislation Regarding Safe Schools**

We believe that every student deserves to feel and be safe in school, on the school grounds, in school buses or at school events and activities. We know that safety is essential to good learning and students learn and teachers teach more successfully when schools are safe.

Last fall, the Government of Ontario introduced legislation in support of Safe Schools, scheduled to take effect on February 1, 2008.

### **What is the Education Amendment Act? (Bill 212)**

Bill 212 is an update to the Education Act, Part XIII (Education Amendment Act). The Act is designed to enhance ongoing efforts in support of student safety and well-being that provides guidelines with regard to appropriate behaviour for all members of the school community and discipline for students. The changes include prevention and intervention components and a focus on responding with individual student needs in mind.

### **What are some of the changes in the Education Amendment Act?**

On February 1, 2008, a number of changes will come into effect governing a school's response to inappropriate behaviour. Here are some highlights:

- Bullying has been added to the list of behaviours for which suspension must be considered;
- Updated Codes of Conduct setting behaviour expectations for students, staff, parents, and others in the school community;
- A school's right to discipline extends to events occurring off school property and / or outside of school-related activities where there is a resulting impact on school climate;
- The need to consider all relevant factors when investigating an incident and determining a course of action including, but not limited to, a student's age, history, disability, learning needs, along with other circumstances that surround the incident or impact the student's education;
- Programs will be offered to all students serving long-term suspensions or expulsions.

The legislation is designed to ensure that even when consequences for inappropriate behaviour are put into place, students will be afforded the opportunity to maintain their connection to academic programs.

### **Next Steps**

Board documents will be revised to align with the new legislation after appropriate consultation with stakeholder groups and program details will be shared through local schools with councils, students, parents, and other members of the school community.

