

The Joke's  
OVER

A Tool Kit for Action

Still  
NOT  
Laughing

Challenging Sexual Harassment  
In Our Schools



# Still NOT Laughing

**A PROJECT OF OSSTF/FEESO**

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Still Not Laughing: Challenging Sexual Harassment in Our Schools* is the second part of a new project by OSSTF/FEESO. This toolkit begins with a look at current challenges and legislation related to sexual and gender-based harassment in our schools, both as learning environments and as workplaces. Subsequent sections offer a framework for developing effective strategies aimed at changing attitudes and behaviour, as well as some ideas that can be used as a starting point for action.

An annotated bibliography was also published by OSSTF/FEESO in November 2010. This companion document serves as a reference for a wide range of resources suitable for use by educational workers, including curriculum and program ideas, interactive websites, support services, government documents, audio-visual materials and advocacy opportunities.

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation/Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario (OSSTF/FEESO) is committed to safe and equitable learning and working environments. It is our hope that both the *Still Not Laughing* toolkit, and our earlier resource list, will be of assistance to educators seeking to challenge sexual and gender-based harassment in our schools.

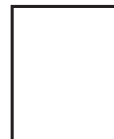


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## INTRODUCTION

*Still Not Laughing: Challenging Sexual Harassment in our Schools* is a new project by OSSTF/FEESO. It follows in the footsteps of an earlier resource for educators entitled *The Joke's Over: Student to Student Sexual Harassment in Secondary Schools (The Joke's Over)* which was produced in 1995 by OSSTF/FEESO, in partnership with the Ontario Women's Directorate and the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training.

The impetus for *The Joke's Over* came from the findings of a confidential survey of Ontario secondary students done in 1994, in which over 80% of female students reported they had been sexually harassed in a school setting. The pervasiveness of sexual harassment in the lives of girls and young women was re-confirmed in a 2002 Canada-wide study led by Helene Berman<sup>1</sup>.

At the time, *The Joke's Over* broke new ground, drawing the attention of the education community to the seriousness of sexual harassment and offering strategies to stop it. Unfortunately much of the material still remains useful and relevant more than fifteen years later. The prevalence of sexual harassment and gender-based violence affecting students in our schools is still alarmingly high.

We also face new challenges including a proliferation of personal electronic devices and social media which are increasingly being used to victimize individuals, a phenomenon known as cyberbullying. In addition, we have a more developed understanding of sexual harassment as part of a spectrum of sexual and gender-based discrimination and violence that includes harassment based on sexual orientation and homophobia. Moreover, there is growing awareness of the intersection between sexual discrimination and the prejudices facing women and girls from Aboriginal<sup>2</sup>, racialized and immigrant communities, as well as those with disabilities.

There is also greater recognition of the frequency and seriousness of workplace sexual and gender-based harassment and violence, including incidents affecting those working in educational institutions.

*The Joke's Over* was unambiguous in recognizing sexual harassment as a serious problem in our communities and our schools. It offered educators both a framework for understanding the issue and strategies to address it. *Still Not Laughing* aims to build on that foundation by re-addressing sexual harassment in our schools within the context of current research and understandings, as well as changes in education, human rights and health and safety legislation, and the mandated roles of educational workers.

Together with the annotated bibliography of resources released in the fall of 2010, this new document is intended as a toolkit for those in education today who wish to develop comprehensive strategies to push back against sexual harassment and to build safer learning and working conditions in our schools.

**"Sexual harassment is not a joke. It hurts and it is illegal."**  
*The Joke's Over (1995)*

**"Sexual and gender-based harassment is not only wrong, it is against the law."**  
Barbara Hall, Chief Commissioner,  
Ontario Human Rights  
Commission.  
March 8, 2011

**"The growth of technology has created an unprecedented potential for the viral spread of online comment, photographs, video images...The anonymity afforded by many forms of online communication...make it a vehicle of choice for harassers."**  
Ontario Human Rights  
Commission.  
*Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment (2011)*

## What is Sexual Harassment?

**Reference:** Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment*, January 2011<sup>3</sup>

Sexual harassment is “engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought to be known to be unwelcome.” In some cases, one incident could be serious enough to be sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is “a form of discrimination based on sex.” It is against the law.

Gender-based harassment is a subset of sexual harassment and may be defined as “any behaviour that polices and reinforces traditional heterosexual gender norms.” Gender-based harassment is “more often based on gender-based hostility” and “is meant to demean or cause personal humiliation and/or embarrassment.”

International human rights conventions and Canadian legal decisions have recognized sexual harassment as an abuse of power that may reinforce a woman’s historic lower status in relation to men.

Sexual harassment may take various forms ranging from more subtle transgressions, such as sexual jokes and innuendo, to severe behaviour such as stalking, physical assault, attempted rape and murder. It can include comment or conduct related to sexual solicitation and advances, a poisoned environment, gender-based harassment, and violence.

It is well-established that sexual harassment may include behaviour that is not overtly sexual in nature.

Some examples of sexual harassment are invading personal space; unnecessary physical contact; unwanted touching; demeaning nicknames; derogatory language toward women; leering or inappropriate staring; gender-related comment about a person’s physical characteristics or mannerisms; treating someone badly because they don’t conform to sex-role stereotypes; displaying or circulating pornography or sexual pictures, cartoons, graffiti or images; sexual comment used to bully; spreading sexual rumours; propositions of physical intimacy; gender-related verbal abuse; threats or taunting; bragging about sexual prowess; questions or discussions about sexual activities; and threats to penalize a person who refuses to comply with sexual advances.

# A CURRENT SNAPSHOT

## OUR WORK IS FAR FROM DONE

### SCHOOLS AS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Sexual harassment continues to have a significant and negative impact on the well-being and learning of students. Those directly targeted report experiencing fear, loss of self-esteem, intimidation, anger, and isolation. Incidents also create a poisoned environment that undermines the sense of safety and comfort of others in our schools.

Over fifteen years ago, *The Joke's Over* recognized sexual harassment and inappropriate gender-related comments as involving attempts to assert power. Five years later, researcher Helene Berman<sup>4</sup> and her colleagues noted that the prevalence of sexual harassment in the lives of girls and women makes every female vulnerable and at risk. Berman's article outlines how this form of violence erodes young women's self-confidence and serves to silence the expression of their own needs and desires. Despite this, sexual harassment has become normalized in everyday life, and is often an expected and accepted part of being female.

Current research confirms this has not changed. It continues to place sexual harassment on a continuum of negative attitudes and behaviour towards women and girls that is not only damaging to their well-being, but is also used to make young men who don't conform to the social norms defining masculinity feel unwelcome. If unaddressed, this sexual and gender-based harassment can also progress to violence.

The recent Ontario Human Rights Commission *Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment (2011)* reaffirms that sexual harassment is "a form of discrimination based on sex" and an abuse of power. In the section addressing education, the policy specifically notes that sexual harassment remains widespread and largely unreported in education settings. The situation in Ontario's secondary schools has also been clearly documented in reports such as a 2008 study by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and *The Road to Health: A Final Report on School Safety (2008)*. At the post-secondary level, research published by the American Association of University Women<sup>5</sup> reveals that almost two-thirds of college students experience some type of sexual harassment, but less than 10 percent report the experience.

**"Sexual harassment is a serious problem in our communities and our schools. It is a form of violence that impairs the right of students to learn and interact in a safe, affirming environment."**  
*The Joke's Over (1995)*

### EFFECTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

**"Victims of sexual harassment can have physical and emotional effects, including anxiety, depression, fatigue, weight loss, nausea and stomach problems, inability to sleep, withdrawal from relationships, self-blame, reduced self-esteem, and post-traumatic stress disorder.**

**The effects of sexual and gender-based harassment on young people may be particularly harsh. As well as feeling the effects listed above, they may back off from school work and all school-related activities, they may skip or drop classes, or they may drop out of school entirely. They may also abuse drugs and/or alcohol to cope. In extreme cases, they may think about or attempt suicide."**

Ontario Human Rights Commission.

*Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment (2011)*

The CAMH study (2008) found that “there is ample evidence to conclude that harassment and abuse are occurring at high rates among high school students.”

“Sexual harassment at the beginning of high school is a strong predictor of future victimization by peers and dating partners for both girls and boys, and warrants greater prevention and intervention efforts.”

CAMH study (2008)

“The Panel has found that all female students are at risk of gender-based violence.”

Falconer Report, 2008

The Falconer report identified the need to have a gender analysis of harassment and bullying, and pointed to gender-neutral harassment and bullying policies as failing female students because they do not address the root causes of violence against girls and women.

## The CAMH Study

In early 2008, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) released the results of research<sup>6</sup> it had completed as part of a study examining how adolescents become involved in risk behaviours. In this study, CAMH investigators summarized findings regarding sexual harassment and related behaviours from 23 schools in southern Ontario, where they surveyed students from Grades 9 to 11.

Specifically, the study cited the following:

- 43% of Grade 9 students reported being the victim of sexual harassment
- Girls were much more likely to report being the victim of unwanted sexual attention
- Girls experienced considerably more forms of harassment that involved sexual comments, unwanted looks or touches, or having parts of their bodies commented upon and rated
- More than one quarter of Grade 11 girls were pressed into an unwanted sexual act
- Boys were much more likely to be targets of homophobic insults
- Boys reported they were more often the perpetrators of harassing behaviours
- Negative long-term effects were experienced by both girls and boys, but were more severe in girls
- Both boys and girls had an elevated risk of suicidal thoughts, early dating, substance use, relationship violence, and feeling unsafe at school. Additionally, girls presented risk of self-harm and maladaptive dieting.

A discussion of the CAMH study appeared in OSSTF/FEESO’s publication *Education Forum* in the fall of 2008. In *Preventing Violence Against Girls*,<sup>7</sup> Dr. Peter Jaffe and Ray Hughes provide additional analysis of the CAMH findings. They note how sexual harassment is used to reinforce socially-constructed gender roles and is linked to homophobia, saying “it is interesting to note that girls are harassed because they are girls and boys are most likely to be harassed because they don’t conform to the perceptions of ideal masculinity and are perceived to be too feminine or to be gay”. The authors also highlight the troubling long-term effects of sexual harassment on students, including unhealthy relationships, drug and alcohol abuse, and ultimately, poor grades.

## The Falconer Report

In January 2008, the Toronto District School Board’s School Community Safety Advisory Panel, chaired by lawyer Julian Falconer, released its report entitled *The Road to Health: A Final Report on School Safety*.<sup>8</sup> Commonly referred to as the *Falconer Report*, the document framed sexual harassment as a form of gender-based violence, and determined that all female students are at risk. The report asserted that “gender-based violence, including sexual assault and sexual harassment, is occurring at alarming rates and is going largely unreported.” At one school, one out of every three female students claimed to have been a victim of sexual harassment, and one out of every 14 girls stated they had been forced to have sex at school against their will. By contrast, 8.6% of boys claimed to have been sexually harassed.

The Panel identified the need to have a gender analysis of harassment and bullying, and pointed to gender-neutral harassment and bullying policies as failing female students because they do not address the root causes of violence against girls and women. The report further stressed that race, sexuality, and class compound the way in which gender-based violence is experienced by students.

In particular, the analysis provided in the *Falconer Report* demonstrated how gender-based violence and homophobia are intertwined. Both serve to maintain systems of power that impose socially-constructed definitions of femininity and masculinity upon individuals.

The *Falconer Report* also highlighted how sexual harassment can be perpetrated online via social media and through the use of electronic devices. As a result, harassment that in the past would take place only while students were physically at school is increasingly spilling over into their online lives well past the school day. The anonymity of the online world has made cyberbullying and harassment much more tempting for perpetrators, and the speed at which online information can be spread has greatly upped the urgency for immediate action to be taken when harassment is reported.

## Conclusion

The findings of both the CAMH and Falconer reports led to renewed calls for action on sexual and gender-based violence, bullying, and harassment and resulted in new Ministry of Education legislation and policies directed at building safe learning environments for students.

In 2008, the Safe Schools Action Team was regrouped by the Ministry to provide an examination of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual behaviour in schools. Their resulting report, *Shaping a Culture of Respect in our Schools: Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships*<sup>9</sup> called for action to address these serious issues, including recommendations on curriculum initiatives and removing the barriers to reporting.



The following year, the Ministry also produced *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Realizing the Promise of Diversity*<sup>10</sup> mandating the implementation of school board policies that deal with equity and inclusion by September 2010. The report noted that an equitable, inclusive education system, based on a culture of respect and designed to promote human rights, is fundamental to student achievement.

These government documents, and related legislation and policies, provide an important framework and new openings for educators seeking to develop a strategy to challenge sexual and gender-based harassment in our schools.

## SCHOOLS AS WORKPLACES

Ontario's educational institutions are workplaces as well as learning environments and educational workers are also targets of sexual and gender-based harassment. Such incidents encompass direct forms of harassing behaviour ranging from the less obvious, such as personal comments about appearance or sexual rumours, to the overtly threatening, including sexual demands, stalking, and intimidation. They can also include conduct or behaviour that creates a poisoned, or hostile, workplace environment. In some situations, sexual harassment is used as a tool to maintain traditional roles and positions by reinforcing gender stereotypes or damaging a person's credibility and professionalism.

Harassment in the education workplace may involve administrators, co-workers, students, parents, and/or members of the community. It may also originate in a domestic relationship that crosses into the workplace. But whatever the source, sexual and gender-based harassment in the workplace is illegal. It directly undermines the well-being and safety of those affected and violates the right of all workers to a safe work environment and one free of discrimination.

A failure to address the sexual and gender-based harassment of educational workers also contributes to a hostile and unsafe atmosphere that negatively impacts other members of the school community. Workplace harassment and violence affect students by creating an unsafe space for learning. They can reinforce discrimination based on traditional gender stereotypes and roles. And educational workers who are themselves feeling harassed and intimidated will not be well-equipped to deal with student issues of violence and harassment.

### **Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**

Data compiled through the Statistics Canada *Violence Against Women Survey (1993)*<sup>11</sup> provided an important framework for understanding the prevalence and nature of sexual harassment in the workplace. The study revealed that 2.4 million (23%) women had experienced at least one incident of sexual harassment during their working lives. The rate for younger women was higher than for older women, but it was also the case that single women of all ages faced a higher incidence of sexual harassment than those who were married.

Many women were also subjected to more than one type of sexual harassment at work. The most common (77%) was inappropriate comments about their bodies or sex lives, while the next most frequent (73%) involved men getting too close, leaning in unnecessarily, or cornering them. Eighteen percent (18%) reported experiencing threats about losing their jobs, or their employment situation getting worse if they did not have a sexual relationship.

Most incidents of sexual harassment at work involved a co-worker, but close to 40% involved harassment by a boss. In the 1993 StatsCan survey, 3% of teachers also reported sexual harassment by a student.

Research since the groundbreaking StatsCan study in 1993 continues to identify workplace sexual harassment as a significant concern. In recent years numerous studies, news articles and media stories have also covered this growing problem. In 2010, a *Toronto Star* piece on sexual harassment as a workplace hazard noted that sexual harassment complaints are increasing more quickly than other types of complaints brought to the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

The evidence also demonstrates that the effects of workplace sexual harassment are significant. For the individual employee, the personal consequences can include absences from work, increased fear, ongoing anxiety, loss of sleep and/or appetite, decreased self-confidence and sense of dignity, post-traumatic stress disorder, physical illness, and depression. It can also have a negative - and frequently unrecognized - effect on work performance. Some employees may leave, or lose, their jobs.

**“While unequal power relationships exist in many sectors of society, they tend to appear the most in the workplace, where hierarchies are common.”**

Ontario Human Rights Commission.

*Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment (2011)*

**"Violence is often the culmination of ongoing acts of harassment. This connection is quite clear in the case of sexual harassment and violence."**

Ontario Human Rights Commission.

*Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment (2011)*

**In its landmark decision in *Janzen v. Platy Enterprises Ltd.*, 1989 1 SCR 1252, the Supreme Court of Canada defined sexual harassment in the workplace as "unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that detrimentally affects the work environment or leads to adverse job related consequences for the victims of the harassment. By requiring an employee, male or female, to contend with unwelcome sexual actions or explicit sexual demands, sexual harassment in the workplace attacks the dignity and self respect of the victim both as an employee and as a human being."**

## **Bullying in the Education Workplace**

In 2005, *Bullying in the Workplace*, a survey of Ontario's elementary and secondary teachers and educational workers was released. This study, commissioned by OSSTF/FEESO, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), documented the incidence of bullying by parents, students, administrators and co-workers. According to the research, over one-half of elementary and secondary teachers have been personally bullied during their professional careers.

Other educational workers report similar incidents. Their experiences often reflect the hierarchy within education and the school system where women are more likely to hold the jobs that are lower paying and with less authority.

While the 2005 study looked at all forms of bullying and did not focus on sexual and gender-based harassment, it should be noted that 38% of respondents reported being bullied by a student. This included persistent verbal abuse (16%), including repeated racial, sexual or religious slurs (11%).

The *Falconer Report* also highlighted troubling findings of female school staff being subjected to sexual harassment by students. As well, their investigation into school safety revealed that staff felt they would be targeted if they came forward to report incidents of violence and harassment of students at school.

## **Sexual harassment and violence**

The inquests into the workplace murders of Teresa Vince (1997), Gillian Hadley (2002) and Lori Dupont (2007) shone a spotlight on workplace sexual harassment as a serious concern that can escalate to violence and even result in death. While the specific circumstances in each of these tragic deaths were different, the recommendations in all three inquests pointed to the clear need for workplace policies, training, supports and procedures to address sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace, including situations of domestic harassment and violence that may enter into the workplace.

## **Conclusion**

The Supreme Court decision in *Janzen vs. Platy* (1989) recognized sexual harassment in the workplace as a form of sex discrimination. This landmark case opened the door for labour and women's groups to address issues of workplace sexual and gender-based harassment.

There have been steps forward in our understanding of workplace sexual harassment and its impacts, and in human rights policy and decisions over the past two decades. However, it took the tragic murder of Lori Dupont to push open the door to government action on amending Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to address workplace harassment and violence. Finally, following an intensive campaign organized by labour and women's groups, Bill 168 was passed into law in December 2009.

More recently, the Ontario Human Rights Commission released its new policy statement *Preventing sexual and gender-based harassment* (2011). This document focuses directly on the areas of employment, education and housing, and identifies clearly the obligations of responsible parties in each of these areas to maintain an environment free from sexual harassment.

Both these developments provide new ways to address issues of workplace sexual and gender-based harassment in our schools. But it will require a concerted effort to ensure the new obligations regarding harassment and violence imposed under the *OHS Act* and the *OHRC* policy are acted on, and that effective training, policies and procedures become an everyday reality.

## **If you or a co-worker is experiencing sexual or gender-based harassment, or there is a poisoned workplace environment:**

Workplace sexual and gender-based harassment should be taken seriously and not ignored. Take immediate action to inform and protect yourself and to support the safety and respectful treatment of others in the workplace. Your first step should be to contact your OSSTF/FEESO or other bargaining unit for advice.

You have a right to a harassment-free workplace. Protections are provided through Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and *Human Rights Code*. In some cases, the *Criminal Code* may also apply.

## KEY LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Recent legislation and human rights policies in Ontario acknowledge the pervasiveness and seriousness of sexual and gender-based harassment and send a strong message that it cannot be tolerated. They also clearly establish that responsible parties have a duty to take steps to prevent and respond to this form of violence.

These measures provide those working in education with welcome and new opportunities to challenge sexual harassment in our schools, both on behalf of our students and ourselves. Additional tools are now available to use in pressing school administrations/education employers to take action. At the same time, educational workers themselves also have legal responsibilities to fulfil.

The following summary is intended to provide a brief overview of the current context, including relevant legislation and policy, as well as the obligations established through professional colleges.

### ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS CODE

The revised Ontario Human Rights Commission's *Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment* (2011) explicitly reminds us that the Code prohibits all forms of discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment. It notes that international human rights conventions and Canadian legal decisions have recognized sexual harassment as an abuse of power that may reinforce women's historic lower status compared to men.

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* (OHRC) "applies to five social areas: services, goods and facilities (including education); housing; contracts; employment; and membership in vocational associations such as trade unions." In all these areas, organizations and institutions have a legal responsibility to keep a poison-free environment, and responsible parties have a duty to prevent and respond to sexual harassment.

In an educational setting, educators must provide students with "an educational environment that does not expose them to discriminatory treatment." It is expected that educators will put policies and strategies in place to prevent sexual harassment and will take steps to address bullying and harassing behaviour where educators know or ought to know that harassment may be taking place. In such circumstances, failure to take action to prevent or stop sexual harassment may mean the educator is liable in a human rights claim.

Employers also have a duty under the policy to keep the education workplace a poison-free environment and to deal with sexual harassment affecting employees. This may include responsibility for sexual harassment by third parties, or at events outside work hours or off premises when these are linked to employment. This means that educational workers have the right to expect that they will not be subjected to sexual harassment from students, parents, staff members, management, agents, or others.

Unions, vocational associations and professional organizations of workers must also make sure they are not causing or contributing to discriminatory action in the workplace, including sexual harassment, and they do not discriminate against or harass their members.

### CRIMINAL CODE OF CANADA

The *Criminal Code* may be applicable in situations of sexual harassment linked to criminal harassment/stalking or sexual assault. Both students and educational workers could be victims in such situations.

Under the *Criminal Code*, it is considered sexual assault to force any form of sexual activity on another person without that person's consent. Sexual activity includes kissing, touching and oral sex, as well as various forms of intercourse. Consent involves voluntary agreement given freely. This means that silence or a lack of resistance cannot be equated with consent. It also means it is an offence for someone to abuse a position of trust, power or authority to induce sexual contact by offering rewards, or to threaten retaliation.

The crime of stalking, or criminal harassment, involves actions that cause fear for one's safety and may also be an extension of sexual harassment. Stalking could involve following, calling or writing someone repeatedly, watching a person's home or workplace, or doing something threatening to a person or their family.

**"If left unchecked, sexual harassment can limit a person's ability to earn a living, get housing, get an education, feel safe and secure, and otherwise take part fully in society."**

Ontario Human Rights Commission.

*Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment (2011)*

**"The ultimate responsibility for maintaining an environment free from sexual harassment rests with employers, housing providers, educators and other responsible parties covered by the Code. From a human rights perspective, it is not acceptable to choose to stay unaware of sexual harassment, whether or not a human rights claim has been made."**

Ontario Human Rights Commission.

*Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment (2011)*

### Calling the Police

**Permission of the employer is not required to call the police. This includes situations in which an education worker or student is the target of sexual assault or criminal harassment.**



## CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES ACT

The *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) requires a person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is, or may be, in need of protection to promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based directly to a Children's Aid Society. This person must not rely on anyone else to report on his/her behalf. S/he also has an ongoing duty to make further reports if s/he has additional reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection.

Under the provisions of the CFSA, a professional person is defined and subject to an offence if they fail to report information related to a child in need of protection obtained in the course of their professional duties. This includes filing a child protection report involving a colleague.

While all members of the public are responsible for the protection, care and safety of Ontario's children, OSSTF/FEESO members in our elementary and secondary schools should be familiar with their duties, rights and responsibilities associated with the CFSA, given their professional role with children.

## BILL 157: KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE AT SCHOOL ACT

New education legislation introduced through *Bill 157* came into effect on February 1, 2010. This act made changes to the *Education Act* in the area of Behaviour, Discipline and Safety of Pupils. Two Policy/Program Memorandums, 144 (Bullying Prevention and Intervention) and 145 (Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour) were also released by the Ministry to outline additional legislative and policy requirements. Bill 157 and the resulting policy requirements have important implications for educational workers in dealing with issues of sexual and gender-based harassment and violence.

The following is a brief summary of what all educational workers need to know about their responsibilities under Bill 157:

- School staff working directly with students must respond to any behaviour that has a negative impact on the school climate. Such behaviour includes all inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour. This includes sexual harassment, homophobic/racist/sexist remarks, jokes, slurs, and graffiti, etc.
- Responses can include speaking to the student, naming the inappropriate behaviour, and/or taking appropriate corrective action.
- Board employees must respond and report to the Principal all student incidents that must be considered for suspension or expulsion. Sexual assault would be an example of such an incident. Note that incidents of bullying must be considered for suspension.
- This report must be made as soon as possible, and at the very least by the end of the school day. It can be a verbal report initially. Employees must consider the safety of others and the urgency of the situation in reporting the incident.
- This must be followed by a written report to the Principal, on a ministry-mandated form (Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form.) Employees cannot keep a copy, but are to be provided with the receipt portion by the Principal.
- Where an employee feels it is unsafe to respond to an incident that must be considered for suspension or expulsion, s/he is expected to inform the Principal verbally as soon as possible.

Bill 157 has entrenched into legislation the responsibility of educational workers to respond to/report all forms of student violence and bullying in schools, including sexual and gender-based harassment. Properly implemented, it could prove to be an effective tool in reducing barriers to reporting, encouraging pro-active and early intervention, and fostering effective responses to dealing with these forms of violence. At the same time, educational workers must be aware that a failure on their part to meet these obligations could result in being disciplined themselves.

## BILL 168: VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

*Bill 168* amended the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHS) effective June 15, 2010. The intent of these amendments was to strengthen protection for workers from workplace violence and address harassment at work, including sexual harassment and violence.

The following is a brief summary of the changes made to the OHS by Bill 168:

- **New definitions.** New definitions of workplace harassment and workplace violence were added to the OHS.
- **Workplace policies.** Employers must prepare policies to address workplace violence and harassment and provide training for employees. These policies must be reviewed at least once per year, and posted in conspicuous places in the workplace.
- **Workplace programs.** Employers must develop and maintain programs to implement their workplace violence and harassment policies. These programs must include procedures for workers to report incidents of harassment or violence and must set out how the employer will investigate such incidents. Workplace violence programs must also include procedures to

control the risk of workplace violence and to summon assistance when required. Employers must provide training about the content of these programs.

- **Violence assessments.** Employers must assess the risk of workplace violence in their workplaces with regard to the nature of the workplace, the type of work and the conditions of work. The employer must provide the results of the assessment and a copy of the assessment to the workplace health and safety committee or representative. Following the initial risk assessment, employers must reassess the risk of workplace violence as often as necessary to ensure that workers remain protected.
- **Addressing domestic violence at work.** Employers must take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect workers from domestic violence. This obligation arises when the employer becomes aware, or ought reasonably to be aware, that domestic violence may occur in the workplace and would likely expose workers to physical injury.
- **Information about violent individuals.** Employers and supervisors must provide information, including personal information, to workers about a person with a history of violent behaviour. This duty applies where a worker can be expected to encounter that person in the course of his or her work and the risk of workplace violence is likely to expose the worker to physical injury.
- **Right to refuse work.** Workers can refuse to work where they have reason to believe that workplace violence will likely put them into danger. The OHSA sets out rules governing the investigation of such work refusals.
- **Reporting obligations.** Employers have specific reporting obligations when a worker is disabled from performing his/her regular work or requires medical attention as a result of workplace violence.

*Bill 168* now mandates employers to deal with harassment and violence in the workplace. However, workers also have a joint responsibility under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to work with employers to maintain a harassment and violence-free workplace. Clear policies must be developed, and all workers should receive training on these issues. Joint health and safety committees comprised of management and worker representatives are well-positioned to provide leadership and support for dealing with sexual harassment and violence in workplaces.

## PROFESSIONAL COLLEGES

All those working in education are held to the highest standards of professional conduct when working with students. Additionally, many educational workers belong to professional colleges that outline standards of practice and ethical expectations for their members. These colleges include:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Early Childhood Educators
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers
- Ontario College of Teachers
- Ontario College of Trades.

It is important for members to understand their responsibilities for maintaining safe environments for their clients, as well as the boundaries involved in preserving professional relationships.

The Ontario College of Teachers is unique in that it specifically addresses the relationship between teachers and students. *Foundations of Professional Practice* outlines the role of teachers in maintaining learning communities that are safe for all students:

- Be responsive pedagogical leaders who are respectful of equity and diversity within Ontario's classrooms and schools
- Promote and participate in the creation of collaborative, safe, and supportive learning communities
- Understand and reflect on ethics, educational research, and related policies and legislation to inform professional judgement in practice.

In an educational setting, all workers have the right to expect that they will not be subjected to sexual harassment from students, parents, other staff members, management, union representatives, or others.

# DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL-BASED ACTION

## UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGE

### CHANGE IS NOT SIMPLE

Sexual harassment is an enormously complex issue deeply rooted in sexual discrimination in our society. It is promoted and normalized by myriad overt and subtle messages that reinforce gender stereotypes and power relationships. These messages permeate all areas of our students' and our own daily lives, from music to movies, advertising to sports, computer games and children's toys to fashion. They are often reinforced in our families and workplaces.

Because sexual harassment is so profoundly embedded in our culture, designing a strategy to challenge it can often feel overwhelming and even futile. It is important that educational workers begin this work with a clear understanding that:

- **Substantive change takes time and persistence.** Shifting attitudes and behaviour – particularly when they are so entrenched – requires more than a one-time action, no matter how successful or effective.
- **Change is not an “all or nothing” proposition.** Even small steps can make a real difference in students' lives and each additional step helps move the situation forward.
- **One size does not fit all.** Design your strategy based on a realistic appraisal of your specific situation, taking into account the barriers and opportunities it presents, as well as available resources.
- **Allies are crucial.** The more people in all areas of the school community that you can get engaged, the greater the information, skills and outreach available to meet the challenge.
- **Action is required.** Getting organized is important, but planning should not become a barrier to action. Even the best ideas are not worth much if they never get off the page.

### PREPARE FOR RESISTANCE

In their article for OSSTF/FEESO's magazine *Education Forum*, experts Dr. Peter Jaffe and Ray Hughes note the difficulty of even discussing harassment and violence against girls in our schools without provoking resistance and backlash. There are similar reactions when concerns are raised about sexual harassment in the workplace.

Backlash and resistance can take many forms, including:

- Trivializing the action (“it's just a joke”)
- Blaming the victim (“she brought it on herself”)
- Reinforcing gender stereotypes (“boys will be boys”)
- Deflecting the issue (“boys are victims too”)
- Normalizing the behaviour (“it's just hormones talking”)
- Neutralizing the impact (“it's meant as a compliment”)
- Changing the topic (“you're taking political correctness too far”)
- Denying the problem (“it's not very common/most complaints are exaggerated”)
- Playing into gender, racial and ethnic prejudices (“that's normal for them”).

Those reporting an incident, or speaking out about their concern, may find themselves the target of rudeness and hostility, social isolation, gossip, or sabotage. At times, the situation may even escalate to threats to personal safety, cyberstalking, or other acts of violence and direct retaliation.

Resistance may come from administrators, co-workers, students, parents, and others in the community. It may be direct or indirect, deliberate or not. But whatever the form, source or intention, the effect is to put roadblocks in the way of those seeking change and it should not be ignored or underestimated.

“Employers...educators and other responsible parties must make sure they maintain poison-free environments that respect human rights. This takes commitment and work, but is worth it.”

Ontario Human Rights Commission.

*Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment (2011)*

“The first resistance to social change is to say it's not necessary.”

Gloria Steinem

“Teachers and parents alike tend to downplay this behaviour and treat it as far less serious than it is...Too often the response is: boys will be boys.”

Marion Boyd, Ontario Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. *Statement to Legislature.*

(May 1994)



## A NOTE ON “SAFE SPACES”

The negative consequences of sexual harassment are well documented and our understanding of building “safe spaces” has now grown beyond the need for physical protection to include emotional and social safety as well. This involves paying attention to and reflecting on how words, actions, and covert messages can undermine an individual’s or group’s sense of security and self-worth, and severely disrupt their capacity to learn or work in an educational setting.

It is also important to create a “safe space” for those within the school community who want to discuss the issues related to sexual and gender-based harassment and create a plan to address it. This includes a meeting place where like-minded staff and/or students can congregate, and where the expectation of respectful discussion and confidentiality is clearly laid out.

## THE STRATEGY “CYCLE”

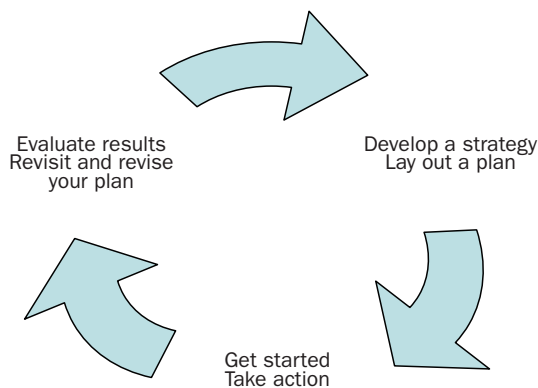
### CIRCLING: A CORE CONCEPT

The process of equity work in general is multi-faceted and must be seen as a continual process that involves an ongoing cycle of strategizing, taking action, evaluating and reviewing, then moving forward again. This “circling” allows us to reflect on what we have achieved and to reconsider where we are going as our understanding develops, further issues come to light, resources and engagement grows, and new openings for action emerge.

Challenging sexual and gender-based harassment is no exception: as with all equity work, the concept of “circling” is the underpinning to any successful strategy. The pervasiveness of this form of discrimination means it is essential to keep revisiting what we are doing and developing our capacity for effective action.

Educational settings in particular call for an emphasis on adaptability and strategic renewal due to the fluidity of school environments. The people involved are always shifting as students graduate or leave and new ones arrive, and staff members and administration change. Meanwhile educational policy is also being revised regularly, and popular culture and social contexts are constantly shifting.

Ask yourself what needs to be done now, but also ensure you keep revisiting your strategy to evaluate how it is working, keep it effective, and build on what has been accomplished. What you are doing to challenge sexual and gender-based harassment five years from now may not, and probably should not, look like what you are doing today. At the same time, remember this means it will be necessary to keep returning to core principles and re-establishing a strong foundation of understanding and commitment to action within the school community.



**“The culture of an educational setting will usually mirror the values and attitudes of the broader society it exists in.”**  
Ontario Human Rights Commission.  
*Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment (2011)*

## GETTING STARTED

### CONSIDER THE FULL PICTURE

Every school includes several different environments that must be taken into account when developing a comprehensive action plan to address sexual harassment. Your strategy should look at the following:

- Learning environment (students)
- Working environment (staff)
- Community environment (parents and others in the community).

It is important to remember that these environments overlap in significant ways, and the beliefs and behaviours prevalent in one area can reinforce practices in another. For example, as noted earlier, sexual and gender-based prejudices embedded in popular culture play out within both the learning and working environments of our schools.

Similarly, a failure to address sexual harassment in the learning environment is also likely to affect the working environment, and vice versa. This relationship was identified in the *Falconer Report*<sup>1,2</sup>, which noted not only the significant level of sexual harassment and violence among students, but also reported that thirty-nine percent (39%) of staff members at C.W. Jefferys indicated they had been sexually harassed by a student in the past two years while twenty-one percent (21%) had been sexually harassed by a student on multiple occasions.

It may be practical to focus your action plan on one area of school life as a starting point. However, over time, it will be necessary to expand your perspective and to incorporate strategies addressing all environments.

### ASSESS THE SITUATION

Every effective strategy must start with a realistic appraisal of the current situation, including barriers and opportunities, as well as available resources. Bear in mind that each milieu has distinct features, relationships, and concerns that require specific consideration, and that different avenues and tools are available—and appropriate—for each of the different settings. It is also possible to exercise a more direct influence on some of the school environments than on others.

#### ***Evaluate the problem***

Before you can develop an appropriate plan of action, you will need to have an accurate sense of the nature and scope of sexual and gender-harassment within the specific environment of your school, worksite and community. How prevalent is it? What does it look like? Where does it occur? Who is affected? How is it reinforced or offset within the community and culture? These are all questions that require some answers.

Remember there are many experts available to consult. School custodians will have a good idea of problem areas in the school, including those that are rarely travelled, isolated or hidden and more vulnerable to graffiti, acts of bullying or hazing incidents. Child and youth workers, social workers and psychologists are important sources of information regarding board resources and community agencies, as well as the types and number of incidents and targeted individuals or groups. Those working in Special Education programs possess insight into the vulnerabilities and needs of persons with learning and other disabilities in the school.

And don't forget the students themselves. When they are provided with a safe environment for input or discussion, such as a survey or with trusted staff, they are often the best and most informed sources of all.

#### ***Determine the barriers***

It's essential that you know what you will be up against. Sexual and gender-based harassment is pervasive in our society; it is complex and multi-layered. Recognize there may be resistance and a lack of understanding, especially at first. Understand that you will probably come up against strongly held views and practices embedded in our society and normalized in our culture.

There are also the practical barriers of time, money, people and competing demands to consider. There are many expectations for schools and school staff in today's world and it can be difficult for even the most well-intentioned to give focused attention to addressing this concern. Consider carefully where and how you can most effectively start to open doors.

## **Uncover the opportunities**

Current legislation and policies covering both the learning and working environment in schools provide a new and significant opening to challenge sexual and gender-based harassment. While it will still take work to turn these policies into a living reality on the ground, the fact is that boards of education and school administrators now have a clear legal responsibility to ensure a safe setting, free of discrimination, for both students and staff.

There are also many other openings to be creative and take action, including curriculum and classroom activities, assemblies and announcements, extra-curricular organizations and initiatives, posters and displays, involvement with parent councils and community groups, and much more.

## **Assess available resources**

Resources include the people, information, services, time and money that may be available through the school, board, government, and community. Consider all options and leave no stone unturned. Bear in mind that your action plan will involve a number of different components and will also change over time, and this may involve new and different resources and skills.

People are perhaps the most important resource of all. Look at numbers since the more you can engage, the more you can do. But also consider who has expertise such as that offered by counselling, safe schools and equity staff, as well as who has influence since winning over the Director of Education, your school administration, trustees or parents active on the School Council can open a lot of doors.

## **SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK**

- Are you the lone voice speaking out about sexual harassment, or are there others you can team up with in the school/worksite? At the Board? With parents? In the community?
- Where do the school, working and community environments overlap? Are there potential conflicts among these environments?
- Is there a relationship between the individual incidents of harassment that occur at school, and an overall “culture” that allows them to continue?
- Do people feel safe speaking out on the issue? With students? Amongst staff?
- Are there existing Board policies and procedures dealing with sexual harassment in the learning/working environment? Are there equity policies?
- Does your school currently promote and/or comply with these policies?
- Is administration supportive? If not currently, are there openings to engage the support of one or all for a plan of action and/or individual steps?
- What actions/steps/practices are already taking place, including curriculum, awareness campaigns and education for both staff and students, dialogue with parents, and school/Board events and programs?
- Have staff members received any training on understanding and dealing with sexual and gender-based harassment in the learning/working environment? If yes, was it effective? If no, is there training available? Is training ongoing?
- What other resources at the school/Board/Ministry level could you draw on?
- What support are you getting/can you obtain from your union?
- Are there parent/community partners that you could work with/draw on for support or resources?
- Overall, where is your school at on this issue?

## **SET CLEAR GOALS AND A PLAN OF ACTION**

You’ve recognized the many intersections between the learning, working and community environments impacting your school. You have also made a realistic appraisal of the barriers and opportunities you face and the resources available. Now you are ready to set goals and create a plan of action.

Clear goals are essential. They set the direction that helps you to stay on track and focus available resources and effort. They foster greater “buy-in” by members of the school community who can see what you are trying to accomplish and how they can fit in and contribute. Goals also establish a framework for assessing results.



Tackling sexual and gender-based harassment calls for a multi-layered approach and plan of action. But, as you set goals, remember that trying to achieve everything at once can be overwhelming and may even be a recipe for failure. Work on incremental steps one at a time, celebrate each success, and move forward.

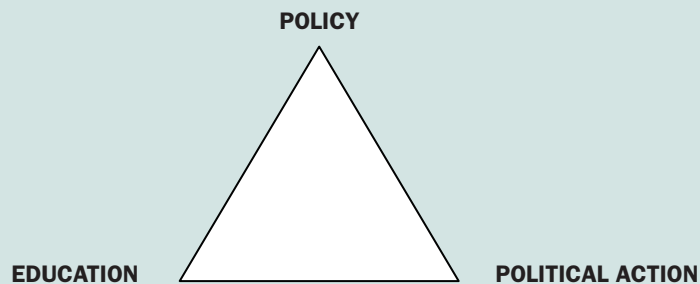
Goals should be divided into the following categories:

- **Immediate Goals:** These are goals that you can meet fairly quickly. They are usually fairly specific in nature and may be numerous. Often they involve individual events or activities and, although they may appear short-lived or isolated, these initiatives help open the door and build momentum leading to long-term change in the school community over time. For example, an immediate goal may be to learn how to intervene safely and effectively to stop incidents of harassment as they occur. This could be a personal goal and starting point, or it could involve training for all members of staff. This type of intervention, especially if consistently carried out, will not only protect individual victims of harassment at the time, but will eventually send a wider message that harassment will not be tolerated. Significant dates such as December 6th National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, the White Ribbon Campaign, Sexual Harassment Awareness Week, and Day of Pink also provide specific opportunities to educate the school community and highlight the issues of sexual and gender-based harassment.
- **Transitional Goals:** These goals are the bridge from specific or isolated actions to comprehensive involvement and substantive change. This includes turning isolated projects into ongoing ones, opening the door to new initiatives, and building links from one area to another. One example might be working with students to create a Young Women's Group and/or a Gay-Straight Alliance. Another might be lobbying the employer for curriculum resources and training on equity issues, including sexual discrimination and harassment. This would help create a stronger foundation for inclusive programs in all areas of school life.
- **Long-Term Goals:** These are the big-picture goals, the ones that result from a comprehensive and multi-layered approach. Although they may be highly idealistic in nature, they serve to guide the everyday steps you need to take to get things moving. They are the foundation of why you do what you do. An example of a long-term goal would be to change the culture of the school learning, working and community environments, so that sexual harassment becomes unacceptable and an uncommon occurrence.

Put all your goals and your plan of action for achieving them in writing and take time for regular review and revisions.

## THE “BUILDING BLOCKS” OF CHANGE

There are three key “building blocks” to developing an effective strategy to push back against sexual harassment in our schools. These are policy, education and political action. They are illustrated below in a triangle, as they are all of equal importance.



IDEAS FOR ACTION (p. 25) provides many specific suggestions for each of the three “BUILDING BLOCKS” OF CHANGE.

- **Policy** refers to policies and procedures that set out the organization's commitment to address sexual harassment and the response it will make.
- **Education** speaks to the need to communicate information, provide training, and raise awareness and understanding.
- **Political Action** consists of reaching out to members of the school and wider community to work together for change.

While they will be considered separately below, it is important to recognize these “building blocks” overlap in many areas and should be used in combination with each other. Nor is there just one way to move forward. Some of the many different and specific ideas that can be used to implement effective policies and procedures, educate all members of the school community, and bring about change will be explored in the next section of this booklet.

## ESTABLISH CLEAR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Current Ministry of Education legislation has mandated that all Ontario school boards must have policies and procedures to deal with violence and harassment in schools. Additionally, the Ministry of Labour now requires these policies and procedures in all Ontario workplaces.

Effective policies make it explicit for everyone that violence and harassment will not be tolerated. They outline not only an organization’s beliefs about harassment and violence, but the process to be used to deal with incidents. They protect persons reporting harassment from reprisal or threat of reprisal, provide for professional help for victims, outline confidentiality, and make clear the responsibilities of those who must deal with harassment complaints. Policies also offer an opportunity to review expectations and initiate discussion with students and others in the school community.

The *Falconer Report* was very specific in stating that anti-harassment, bullying, and violence policies must provide a clear foundation for dealing with gender-based violence in schools, and that the most successful policies are built upon equity principles.

Strong support from administration is a key component in building a harassment-free environment. Educational workers concerned with issues of sexual and gender-based harassment and violence in their school and/or workplace should approach their principal/supervisor using government and employer policies as a way to begin discussion about a school-based plan of action.

### CLEAR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES WILL:

- Set the framework regarding expectations and boundaries
- Establish clarity regarding types of actions and consequences
- Create more confidence on the part of staff regarding organizational support and backup.

## ENSURE EDUCATION AND TRAINING TAKES PLACE

Education and training programs must involve all members of the school community. This includes staff, students, parents and other members of the community. Such initiatives are the foundation for challenging prejudices, changing attitudes and behaviour, and creating a safer and more respectful environment in our schools. At a minimum, there must be education to raise awareness about the issues and existing board/school policies and procedures.

### **Empower Staff**

Education and training initiatives for school staff should be focused on developing a clear understanding of sexual and gender-based harassment, and equipping them to address these issues in all areas of school life, including through the curriculum. They must also provide a real opportunity for building skills to respond effectively to incidents involving students, other staff and members of the community.

Education and training programs should strengthen the capacity of all staff to:

- Recognize sexual harassment when it occurs
- Acknowledge sexual harassment as a serious issue, and be prepared to name and address it when it occurs
- Understand the issue and the dynamics surrounding it, including how different forms of discrimination may intersect
- Understand that the impact of harassing behaviour is what matters, not the intent
- Be aware of their personal and professional responsibilities under Ministry and Board policies regarding prevention of, response to, and reporting of incidents of harassment
- Provide positive role models in interactions with others
- Effectively integrate issues of equity, discrimination and harassment in curriculum and classroom activities
- Understand how to access Board and community resources, programs, and initiatives for their own professional growth, and to support students.

“...educators and other responsible parties can go a long way toward promoting a harassment-free environment for individuals protected by the Code by having a clear, comprehensive anti-sexual harassment policy in place.”

Ontario Human Rights Commission.

*Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment (2011)*

OSSTF/FEESO offers a number of workshops on bullying, and sexual and gender-based harassment. Our presenters are available to travel across Ontario to bring them directly to our members and other school board personnel. Descriptions can be found online at [www.osstf.on.ca](http://www.osstf.on.ca) or call 1-800-267-7867 to ask for more information.

More specialized training should be provided for professional staff at both the school and board levels who provide direct counselling and support services. School administration must also receive training regarding their responsibilities and roles, including how to handle incidents in the learning and working environments.

### ***Engage Students***

There are numerous opportunities to raise awareness among students about the issue of sexual and gender-based harassment, as well as the steps they can take to protect themselves and others. These include distributing information about school/board policies and procedures, making use of special assemblies and events, promoting anti-bullying initiatives, and encouraging related curriculum and classroom activities. Providing opportunities and support for student-led initiatives and training as mentors or mediators will also encourage students to step in to provide leadership and to learn from each other.

### ***Inform Parents***

Parents can play a significant role in recognizing and responding to warning signs that their child may be a target of sexual and gender-based harassment, or a perpetrator. The increasing use of technology as an instrument of harassment outside school makes it even more important to reach out to provide information, education and training for parents.

This could involve the use of simple communication tools such as fact sheets, pamphlets or phone calls, as well as more interactive venues such as parent information nights, conferences and workshops. Where feasible, the School Council should be part of developing strategies for reaching out to parents. Information and training should be offered in the first language of parents/guardians.

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING MUST:**

- Involve everyone, including administration, all staff, students and parents
- Examine policies, including the roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community
- Build a more developed understanding of sexual and gender-based harassment
- Highlight the need for action, including alternative approaches to conflict resolution and equity education
- Develop skills for dealing with situations of harassment
- Be ongoing to foster commitment and consistency
- Build the confidence needed to take action.

## **GET INVOLVED IN POLITICAL ACTION**

Political action is the third building block of change. It involves bringing people together to decide what needs to be done and then take steps to make it happen.

### ***Form a School Team/Design a School Plan***

The most effective strategies begin by creating a team of like-minded staff who can work together and support each other. Sometimes this can be quite formal and top-down in approach, with a supportive administrator leading a school team. But even where there isn't support from management, staff can band together to get things moving.

The benefits of having a team are numerous. A team offers varied perspectives, a greater number of people to strategize and do the work, a larger support system, and the ability to implement a more comprehensive plan. If needed, a large and strong collective of staff can also be effective in pressing reluctant administrators into action.

Educational sites employ a large range of people who work directly and indirectly with students, including clerical staff, custodians, educational assistants, lunchroom/hall monitors, social workers, child and youth workers, library technicians, teachers, and administrators. Pulling all these members of the educational team together could be as simple as a morning announcement about a meeting of staff to discuss the issue, or it could require person-to-person outreach.

However it is important to persist if the initial attempt does not do the trick. A more varied educational team invites multiple avenues and approaches to creating a harassment-free environment, with every team member incorporating equity work into their individual role.

A more varied educational team invites multiple avenues and approaches to creating a harassment-free environment, with every team member incorporating equity work into his/her individual role.

The ultimate goal is to create an environment where disrespectful interactions in all aspects of school life are the exception rather than the norm, and where everyone is involved in building and maintaining a positive setting for all.

### **Build Support Among Youth**

Students play a pivotal role in the success or failure of any strategy to challenge sexual and gender-based harassment. They are the experts on popular culture and what is happening in our schools; they are also the authority on what will work with students. It is essential they not only see themselves as part of recognizing and speaking up about harassment, but also as leaders in developing and carrying out programs involving their peers. Student-led clubs and initiatives, youth representatives on school/board committees, and student-to-student mentoring and conflict management teams are only a few of the ways that students can be empowered to help create a positive, non-discriminatory school environment. Bear in mind that the most effective student programs are ones that engage those likely to be perpetrators or on the margins, as well as those who are already acknowledged leaders.

### **Create Community Networks**

“Community” can mean many things. It can refer to a network of individuals of a specific religious affiliation or cultural background. It can mean those living and working in the surrounding neighbourhood, or defined by a job class or socio-economic status. It may be used to refer collectively to the parents of all students in the school.

Take the time to identify all the different types of formal and informal “communities” linked to your school environment, and examine how working with these communities could strengthen your strategy to challenge sexual and gender-based harassment.

Remember that parent and school councils are particularly important allies in working on school issues. They can assist in communicating with the larger parent community and offer advice as to what parents require in order to get involved. They also serve as a forum for regular communication between school administration, educational workers, and parents. Having parents onsite means they are able to reinforce at home the work being done in school.

Look also to see what organizations offer community based programs and services that are pertinent to dealing with sexual harassment in schools. For example, your local Sexual Assault Crisis Centre will have information on dating violence. Some groups have an education coordinator on staff, or a volunteer, who will visit your school and speak with students.

## **POLITICAL ACTION SHOULD:**

- Engage people individually and collectively in taking steps to change the status quo
- Reach out to include many hands/levels of involvement
- Involve youth, parents, and the community to be fully effective
- Be built around clearly articulated goals.

## **CONCLUSION**

Tackling sexual harassment must be grounded within the larger scope of equity work, which many educational workers already incorporate into their practices every day. This work can be demanding because it requires individuals to push against the status quo. It challenges both ourselves and others to view normalized behaviours through a new set of lenses, and can initially take people out of their comfort zones.

For many of us this type of work is the beginning of a journey, and it is essential that we see ourselves and others as learners in the process. Equity work demands a continual process of self-reflection and “checking-in”, even for those who have been engaged in it for a long time. It is also important to support one another as we move forward. Re-examine things that don’t work together. Celebrate collectively the things that are successful.

Experience and research has demonstrated that effective change can only be achieved when a number of key components are in place. A team approach to political action and change will be a source of strength and also provide a support system as individuals come together to tackle issues



of harassment. Education and training that addresses the roots of harassment and violence, and builds the understanding and skills to address it, is essential for all members of the school and larger community. Finally, policies that prohibit sexual harassment provide a necessary foundation for understanding the issue and how complaints will be addressed. Such policies must be clearly articulated to management, staff, and students, as well as the community, and must be consistently enforced.

Educational workers can use these “building blocks” to address individual cases of sexual harassment as well as to begin developing a systematic and comprehensive strategy to challenge a culture that permits, and even fosters, sexual harassment.

## MAKING CHANGE: THE “7 C’s” CHECKLIST

Consider each of the following elements as you design and re-design your strategy for change. They are intended to inform your thinking as you consider how best to move forward to reach your goals.

### Competence

Remember that competence breeds confidence. People who feel competent are more likely to take action.

- Take steps to provide information, answer questions, get training and build skills
- Get the support of administration and parents
- Get student support by inviting rather than dictating, and addressing the need for safe spaces and privacy

### Comprehensiveness

Take a wide ranging and thorough approach.

- Involve the whole school, whole staff, and whole community
- Consider a variety of opportunities for action
- Consider all elements of school life – classroom, halls, assemblies, sports/clubs, etc.
- Remember sexual harassment is not only a ‘girls’ issue’ so engage both girls and boys

### Clarity

Understand clearly where you are going and how you will get there.

- Identify and understand both your immediate and long-term goals
- Understand your policies and procedures and make sure they are clear
- Understand your action plan and encourage staff, students and parents to “buy in”

### Communication

Inform others about what you are doing and why.

- Get the message out in as many different ways as you can
- Ensure the message is clear, persistent and consistent
- Repetition of your message is essential

### Consistency

Be reliable. Your words and your actions must reflect and reinforce your goals on a regular basis.

- Build a team
- Walk the walk
- Commit for the long term
- Follow through

### Creativity

Be creative to reach out to a wide audience and engage interest.

- Don’t throw away the tried and true, but do keep it fresh
- Try new things - avoid boring and ‘same old/same old’ strategies
- Encourage creative input and ideas from others

### Community-based

Bring others onside. You can’t do it alone and others are more likely to take ownership if their participation is valued.

- Invite and engage
- Involve youth, staff, parents, community/neighbours
- Listen, listen, listen!

## IDEAS FOR ACTION

The following section provides educational workers with a range of ideas for addressing sexual harassment in their schools and workplaces. These suggestions are neither exhaustive nor fully-developed; rather, they are intended as a 'jumping-off' point to stimulate your thinking and provoke discussion. Some direct references and links have been provided below, in addition to the examples included in the Appendices. You can also access a more comprehensive range of resources in our *Still Not Laughing* resource list<sup>13</sup>. This annotated bibliography includes curriculum ideas, interactive websites, support services, government documents, advocacy organizations and campaigns, and audio-visual materials.

The ideas in this section are also not intended to be one-size-fits-all. Each of us is an expert on our own environment and what that environment demands. Readers should choose those they believe will work best for them and adapt them as needed.

For your convenience, ideas are grouped according to the three "building blocks" identified in the previous section: Policy, Education and Political Action. However, you will find there is considerable overlap, and many listed in one area could easily be modified for another. Different actions can – and should – also be used to reinforce each other.

Finally, as you consider your options and put together a plan of action, remember the importance of "circling" - that is, the process by which we choose ideas, implement them, evaluate their effectiveness, then circle back to build upon what we have done.

### POLICY

Policy refers to policies and procedures that set out an organization's commitment to address sexual harassment and the response it will make. This establishes a transparent framework of expectations and responsibility for action.

#### PUT CLEAR POLICIES IN PLACE

Provincial legislation now requires that policies and procedures for dealing with sexual harassment must be in place to cover both the learning and the working environments.

- If policies and procedures are not already in place, advocate this be done immediately.
- Check policies and procedures for consistency with relevant legislation and regulations, including the *Ontario Health and Safety Act* (Bill 168), *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and *Education Act* (Bill 157, Safe at School amendment).
- Ensure the content of anti-harassment policies and procedures is both comprehensive and clear.
- Review current policies and procedures regularly to make sure they meet the needs of staff and students. Follow up on any issues that emerge and seek improvements.
- Use school climate<sup>14</sup> or other locally-created surveys periodically to evaluate school safety, the incidence of sexual and gender-based harassment, and the effectiveness of existing policies and procedures.
- Work with students to generate a meaningful "plain language" version of the sexual harassment policy, such as a Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for your classroom, extra-curricular group or team. Include the right to learn, work and play in a harassment-free environment.

#### RAISE AWARENESS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Take steps to ensure all members of the school community are aware of, and understand existing anti-harassment policies and procedures. Ensure the full policies and procedures are readily available, but also identify key messages to highlight in your communications.

- Distribute information on anti-harassment policies and procedures, including updates, to all relevant parties. This includes employees, trustees, parents, students, personnel from the community/outside agencies, volunteers, and vendors/contractors.

**"I decided it is better to scream. Silence is the real crime against humanity."**

Nadezhda Mandelstam

**Much of this section focuses on sexual harassment as it affects students. Additional information and resources on addressing sexual harassment in the workplace can be found at:**

- **Ontario Health and Safety Act**  
[www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/wvps\\_guide/guide\\_8.php](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/wvps_guide/guide_8.php)
- **Ontario Women's Directorate**  
[www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd/english/resources/education/ohsco/index.shtml](http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd/english/resources/education/ohsco/index.shtml)
- **Ontario Ministry of Labour**
  - *Preventing Workplace Violence and Workplace Harassment*  
[www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pdf/fs\\_workplaceviolence.pdf](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pdf/fs_workplaceviolence.pdf)
  - *Protecting workers from workplace violence and workplace harassment*  
[www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pdf/br\\_wpvh.pdf](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pdf/br_wpvh.pdf)

**In the case of workplace anti-harassment policies, work with your union representatives on issues of employer compliance and enforcement.**

## SUGGESTED CONTENTS OF AN ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

Excerpted from the Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment (2011)*

1. A vision setting out the organization's commitment to maintaining a fair and equitable environment free of sexual and gender-based harassment, and stating that the organization will not tolerate sexual and gender-based harassment.
2. A statement of rights and obligations under the Ontario *Human Rights Code*.
3. A list of the prohibited grounds of discrimination listed in the *Code*.
4. The *Code* definition of "sexual harassment" and a definition of "gender-based harassment".
5. An explanation of the concept of a "poisoned environment" as a violation of the *Code*, and examples of a poisoned environment that are meaningful in that organization's context.
6. A description of unacceptable behaviour, such as:
  - Examples of sexual harassment, as listed in the OHRC's *Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment*.
7. A description of who the policy applies to (such as employers, employees, third party service providers, etc.).
8. How internal complaints will be handled with details on:
  - Who to complain to
  - An assurance that the person handling complaint will be independent, expert, etc.
  - Confidentiality
  - Reassurance that the person making the complaint will be protected from reprisal, or threat of reprisal
  - Help that is available for parties to a complaint
  - The availability of Alternative Dispute Resolution, such as mediation, to resolve a complaint
  - How the complaint will be investigated
  - How long the process will take
  - Steps that will be taken if it is not appropriate for the person making the complaint to continue working with the person/people being complained about.
9. Remedies that will be available if the claim of sexual harassment is proven, such as:
  - Disciplinary measures to be applied (for example, in employment, measures could range from a verbal warning or a letter of reprimand to termination)
  - Compensation to the person who made the complaint.
10. A statement reinforcing the right of individuals to file other types of complaints, such as:
  - A human rights application with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario at any time during the internal process, as well as an explanation of the one-year time limit in the *Code*
  - A complaint under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, if applicable
  - A grievance under a collective agreement, if applicable
  - Criminal charges, if applicable.

- Provide information to those who are new to the school community, including recent employees, students, trustees and parents.
  - Include copies in orientation packages.
  - Develop a short brochure that can be handed out routinely.
- Reinforce key messages of the policies and procedures regularly, using a variety of approaches and communication tools to reach all parts of the wider school community.
  - Circulate information at Meet the Teacher/Open House events.
  - Put on the agenda of School Council meetings.
  - Include information in the school handbook and student planners.
  - Go over with students in all homeroom classes and opening assemblies at the start of each semester/school year.
  - Discuss with members of school teams, clubs, groups, and Student Council.
  - Advise those coming into the school, such as school volunteers, vendors, contractors, and personnel from the community/outside agencies.
  - Inform employers at student co-op placement sites.
  - Review/highlight policies and procedures at staff meetings.
  - Post policies in key areas where they will be seen, such as hallways, classrooms, gyms, and cafeterias, as well as staff bulletin boards.
  - Highlight policy information in the Board/school newsletter.
  - Post a link on the Board/ school website.
  - Have students create posters to highlight key messages.
  - Consider using a school or Board Facebook page, or Twitter to “message” the policies/updates.
  - Condense the main points into a bookmark and distribute to students, staff and parents.
  - Make use of PA and other school/student media for “public service announcements”.

## SUPPORT EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

We all know that having a policy on the books is not the same as having an effective policy that is actively supported by the parties affected. A framework of strong communication, good interaction, and solid backing involving all members of the school community is key to implementing anti-harassment policies and procedures successfully.

- Encourage and facilitate reporting of incidents by all members of the school community.
  - Make sure all parties, including staff, students, and administration are aware of their obligations and the process for reporting.
  - Look at the best ways to make reporting forms readily accessible to all those who may require them. Consider online copies as well as suitable location(s) for printed forms.
  - Remind and support staff to complete and submit the necessary paperwork as required under Bill 157 and Bill 168. A receipt for reports should be provided routinely as part of the process.
  - Develop a clear approach to ensure reports are followed up appropriately and staff is kept apprised.
- Strengthen capacity to prevent and respond to incidents.
  - Lobby for meaningful training and resources for school administrators regarding their roles and responsibilities with respect to both school and workplace legislation on sexual harassment and equity.
  - Arrange for training and skill-building workshops for staff.
  - Suggest staff have the opportunity at a staff meeting to become familiar with the HHHH3 protocol (see page 28).
  - Set up departmental teams, or work in pairs, to increase safety and provide support to address incidents.
  - Set up school hotlines for students.
  - Provide tip sheets for parents on understanding sexual harassment and recognizing signs their child may be a target or perpetrator. Identify the supports available to address situations.

**Work directly with the employer/ administration, where possible, since they have the responsibility and the authority to put policies and procedures in place and to enforce them. However, there are also openings for individual or groups of staff, as well as others in the school community, to take the initiative in developing their own strategies and to advocate for action.**

**A framework of strong communication, good interaction, and solid backing involving all members of the school community is key to implementing anti-harassment policies and procedures successfully.**

**The union has an important role to play in providing information and representation to members regarding their obligations to respond to and report sexual harassment involving students.**



## HOW TO HANDLE HARASSMENT IN THE HALLWAYS IN THREE MINUTES (HHH3)

From *Shaping a Culture of Respect in our Schools: Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships* (2008). Ministry of Education: Ontario.

Originally developed by the Toronto District School Board

### 1. **STOP the harassment.**

- Interrupt the comment/halt the physical harassment.
- DO NOT pull students aside for confidentiality unless absolutely necessary.
- Make sure all the students in the area hear your comments.
- It is important that all students, whether onlookers, potential targets, or potential harassers, get the message that students are safe and protected in this school.

### 2. **IDENTIFY the harassment.**

- Label the form of harassment: “You just made a harassing comment/put-down based upon race (religion, ethnicity, abilities, gender, age, sexual orientation, economic status, size, etc.).”
- Do not imply that the victim is a member of that identifiable group.
- A major goal is to take the “spotlight” off the target and turn the focus to the behaviour. Students should realize what was said, regardless of what was meant (e.g., kidding).

### 3. **BROADEN the response.**

- Do not personalize your response at this stage: “At this school we do not harass people.” “Our community does not appreciate hateful/thoughtless behaviour.”
- Re-identify the offensive behaviour: “This name calling can also be hurtful to others who overhear it.”
- “We don’t do put-downs at this school” specifically includes those listening, as well as the school community in general. Even if they were “only kidding”, harassers must realize the possible ramifications of their actions.

### 4. **ASK for change in future behaviour.**

- Personalize the response: “Chris, please pause and think before you act.”
- Check in with the victim at this time: “If this continues, please tell me, and I will take further action. We want everyone to be safe at this school.”
- Now turn the “spotlight” on the harasser specifically, asking for accountability. Again, be sure not to treat the target like a helpless victim. Rather, plainly give him/her this responsibility on behalf of others.

## EDUCATION

Education speaks to the need to communicate information, provide training, develop skills, and raise awareness and understanding among all members of the education community. It must be ongoing.

### ENGAGE OUR STUDENTS

Sexual harassment, gender equity and gender-based violence can be integrated into a wide variety of student learning environments. Keep in mind that education happens in multiple ways in addition to formal lessons and in the classroom.

#### **Make Use of Opportunities in the Classroom**

- Take steps to integrate issues of sexual harassment and gender equity into the curriculum across different subject areas. Some ideas include:
  - Use the Board's policies and procedures as an example when doing an analysis of non-fiction writing.
  - Draw on research/administer student surveys about sexual harassment and violence when doing data collection and statistical analysis. Have students evaluate various study results, as well as create and analyze the results of peer surveys on attitudes, knowledge and number/types of incidents.
  - Integrate issues of women's equality rights and their development, including issues of sexual harassment and violence, into history, business, sociology, politics, and law classes.
  - Investigate characteristics of healthy relationships in family studies and health classes.
  - Examine human rights and workplace sexual harassment legislation in law, business, workplace and co-op classes.
  - Explore the portrayal of women in literature, media, art, music, and drama classes.
  - Use student quizzes to raise personal awareness about sexually harassing behaviours, positive relationships, and personal safety.
  - Talk with students about cyber-safety with respect to sexual harassment and violence.
  - Lobby your school and/or board to offer women's and gender studies classes based on recent Ministry guidelines.
- Use assignments as independent openings for students to research and create projects/presentations of their own on issues of sexual and gender-based discrimination and harassment.
  - Create posters, pamphlets and/or public service announcements aimed at different audiences. Consider partnering with a community agency or local media.
  - Review and evaluate images and messages conveyed through current media, movies, music, writing and art.
  - Write their own poetry, short stories, plays, letters to the editor, or essays.
  - Use photography, video, music, and artwork.
  - Survey peers and family members and analyse the results.
  - Make use of online tools to post information, link to other sites, and/or moderate a discussion.
- Take steps to ensure both male and female students are able to participate to their fullest potential. Assess formal and informal structures, practices and/or norms in the school/classroom to make sure they do not provide one gender with more opportunities than the other. Look at the types of activities offered, nature of classroom discussions, and division of responsibilities.
- Make use of "teachable" moments to address language, images, and stereotypes. This could be initiated by you or done in response to specific situations that may arise.
  - Deal directly with inappropriate comments or terms, such as "that's so gay", "bitch" or "ho", and reinforce that these types of comments will not be tolerated.
  - Address gender bias and stereotypes found in classroom texts, literature, music, and media, etc., as well as in materials students may bring into the classroom.
  - Help students deconstruct the use of inappropriate stereotypes, imagery, media, lyrics and language. If students include these references in assignments, offer specific feedback and an opportunity to "fix" it.
- Role model respectful interaction and discussion with students.
  - Use appropriate terminology and inclusive language in your own interactions with students and others.
  - Create a Bill of Rights for your classroom and other school activities based on discussion with your students.

**"Ideas must permeate across all curriculum."**

Safe Schools Action Team.  
*Shaping a Culture of Respect in our Schools: Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships.* (2008).

**Sexual harassment is first identified in the Grade 5 Health and Physical Education curriculum:** "C3.2 explain how a person's actions (e.g., negative actions such as name calling, making homophobic or racist remarks, mocking appearance or ability, excluding, bullying, sexual harassment; positive actions such as praising, supporting, including) can affect the feelings, self-concept, emotional well-being, and reputation of themselves and others [PS, IS]."<sup>15</sup>

**Specific references to sexual harassment can also be found in the curriculum strands of a number of secondary courses; for example, *Exploring the Workplace, Navigating the Workplace and Business Leadership.***

**For more curriculum ideas and resources dealing with sexual and gender-based harassment, including websites offering examples of student quizzes, check out**  
[www.osstf.on.ca/snI](http://www.osstf.on.ca/snI)  
[www.safeatschool.ca/](http://www.safeatschool.ca/)

**Information and links on cyber-safety are posted on the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres website under *Teens, Sexual Violence & Internet Safety: The Facts***  
[www.sexualassaultsupport.ca/Default.aspx?pageId=535940](http://www.sexualassaultsupport.ca/Default.aspx?pageId=535940)

**Short statistical overviews on sexual harassment and violence affecting women and girls can be found on the following websites:**

- Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres  
[www.sexualassaultsupport.ca/Default.aspx?pageId=535883](http://www.sexualassaultsupport.ca/Default.aspx?pageId=535883)
- White Ribbon Campaign  
[www.whiteribbon.ca/ciab/chapters/chap01.pdf](http://www.whiteribbon.ca/ciab/chapters/chap01.pdf)

Bystander campaigns can be an effective way to engage students and staff who don't believe they will be directly involved as victims or perpetrators of sexual harassment/violence. Some "best practice" tips for these types of campaigns include<sup>16</sup>:

- Make messaging gender specific.
- Teach people how they can respond as bystanders and provide them with opportunities to practice these skills.
- Involve and educate all community members for effective change.
- Remember that the right messenger is as important as the right message. Trust is key.

The YWCA offers several ongoing programs for girls and young women:

- *GirlsSpace* is an "on-line community for tween and teen girls."  
[www.ywcagirlspace.ca/](http://www.ywcagirlspace.ca/)
- *Power of Being a Girl Conferences*.  
<http://ywcacanada.ca/data/documents/00000080.pdf>

Programs for boys and young men include:

- *It starts with you. It stays with him*: White Ribbon Campaign.  
[www.itstartswithyou.ca/](http://www.itstartswithyou.ca/)
- *I am a Kind Man*. This program was created to engage Aboriginal men and youth in understanding violence against Aboriginal girls and women, and their role in ending it.  
[www.iamakindman.ca/IAKM/](http://www.iamakindman.ca/IAKM/)
- *Men of Strength*. This US program could be useful as a model for developing programs using a similar approach.  
[www.mencanstoprape.org](http://www.mencanstoprape.org)

## Organize School Activities and Special Events

- Support students to develop personal skills in addressing sexual harassment and violence, and to become leaders with other students.
  - Recruit and train students to act as mentors, role models, and peer counsellors.
  - Encourage students to make presentations and lead workshops with students, staff, community groups and parents.
  - Organize a young men's group, or link up with established campaigns working on harassment and violence, such as the White Ribbon Campaign.
  - Create a young women's group or arrange for girls/young women at your school to take part in community based programs such as the YWCA GirlsSpace and Power of Being a Girl.
  - Start a storytelling group that provides students with a safe place to share their experiences with each other.
  - Assist students to plan and run an equity conference for your school/family of schools.
  - Arrange for student field trips centred on equity/social justice issues, such as viewing a play dealing with gender roles.
- Work with staff and student groups to build awareness within the school community, using a variety of approaches to get the message out.
  - Run school campaigns to coincide with special dates, including Day of Pink, December 6th National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, and Sexual Harassment Awareness Week.
  - Put up posters and circulate materials dealing with sexual harassment and gender-based violence. You can obtain materials from a wide range of women's organizations, as well as the White Ribbon Campaign, government sources, unions and community groups.
  - Develop school-based brochures/cards/stickers about sexual harassment, healthy relationships and available support services. An example of a "wallet card" on dating violence produced for students in the Greater Essex County DSB is shown in Appendix D.
  - Create buttons/t-shirts with appropriate and catchy messages for students and staff to wear.
  - Include regular prevention messages, information on support services, and statistics about sexual and gender-based harassment and violence as part of your school's daily announcements.
  - Arrange an assembly or performance for students on sexual harassment and gender-based violence. Invite guest speakers from local organizations; for example, from a sexual assault crisis centre, LEAF, YWCA or White Ribbon Campaign.
  - Hold a "No Name-Calling" week. Turn the school or Board into an NPD (No Put Down) zone.
  - Organize a poetry slam or a poster, video or public service announcement contest.
  - Create a positive graffiti space where students and staff can write about what they will do to stop sexual harassment.

## Provide Support and Services

- Raise awareness of students, staff and parents about available counselling services/other supports.
  - Find out who to contact in the Board to address issues/disclosures and provide support to students, educators and parents. If there is no trained and/or designated staff at the Board, request this be set up right away.
  - Develop a comprehensive and approved bank of resources and services available through the school board and/or community to assist students on issues of sexual harassment and assault, other issues of violence, and equity.
  - Circulate information and direction on recommended supports/counselling services for students to all school staff.
  - Arrange for speakers from appropriate community-based services to speak at School Council and staff meetings to raise awareness about the issues as well as the supports available.
  - Post posters, and make brochures and cards available, with contact information for organizations providing confidential counselling and other support services to students.
  - Provide information for online and phone supports available through Kids Help Phone at [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca).

## ENHANCE STAFF AWARENESS AND SKILLS

As educational workers we need to be aware of our own attitudes, expectations and behaviours, as well as prevailing norms and discriminatory stereotypes and practices. It is also essential there be training on recognizing sexual and gender-based harassment, and steps we can take to prevent and respond effectively to incidents involving ourselves and others.

## **Build Professional Development Resources And Opportunities**

- Create a network of staff concerned about issues of sexual harassment and equity and interested in working together for change.
  - Reach out to include all interested members of staff to participate, including educational support staff, teachers and administrators.
  - Organize opportunities and a safe space to come together to share concerns and ideas.
  - Share resources and expertise at face-to-face meetings or via email or approved social media sites.
  - Set up partnerships/arrange mentors to provide support to colleagues in dealing with concerns/incidents.
- Seek out personal opportunities for training and professional development on issues of sexual harassment and gender-based violence.
  - Make it a personal professional development/growth goal to learn more about issues of sexual harassment and take specific steps to integrate these issues into the curriculum.
  - Seek a partner to work with on curriculum development, skill building, community links, school events, and/or professional development activities. This could be someone also starting out, or a more experienced person who could act as a mentor.
  - Look for on-line training that can be done on an individual basis or with a small group; for example, the *Sexual Harassment Online Training* course is available from Queen's University at [www.queensu.ca/humanrights/harassmentmodules/sex2/index.php](http://www.queensu.ca/humanrights/harassmentmodules/sex2/index.php)
  - Consider setting a goal to take action on sexual harassment prevention as part of your annual action plan. Look for others who share your goal and can work with you.
  - Work with your union to find allies and to access relevant professional and political resources. Contact your Status of Women or Human Rights Committee for connections.
- Develop a stronger capacity within your school/Board to address these issues. Note that government legislation from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour already mandates such training.
  - Work with school administrators to organize speakers, training and professional development workshops within the school for all staff.
  - Advocate for staff to participate in other professional or community conferences.
  - Take advantage of the many OSSTF/FEESO workshops on challenging sexual and gender-based harassment (See Appendix E for a current listing) or one of the community organizations identified in our *Still Not Laughing* annotated bibliography of resources.
  - Seek allies to work on a school-wide and/or departmental plan to incorporate anti-harassment strategies across subject-specific areas.
  - Advocate for the creation/strengthening of an equity department at your Board with a mandate to work on issues of gender discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence. This could include curriculum and resource development, staff and student training, and board-wide initiatives.
  - Lobby with the Board to develop a system-wide program of materials and workshops to be provided to all school staffs.
  - Build a bank of resources within your school and/or encourage the Board to create a section in the system library. Include a wide range of resources on equity and social justice issues, bullying, and approaches to conflict resolution, as well as the specific issues of sexual and gender-based harassment and violence.

## **Make Use of Available Supports**

- Encourage staff who have been targeted directly by sexual or gender-based violence and harassment, or who have been involved in incidents affecting others, to seek protection and support.
  - Work with union representatives to raise member awareness of the right to a safe workplace free of sexual harassment and violence and what to do if targeted.
  - Make sure all staff are aware of existing supports and counselling available through EAP, as well as other sources through the Board or community programs.
  - Advocate with school administration to ensure measures are put in place to protect and support staff.

The Ministry of Education highlights the importance of staff training in *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools (2009)*:

- Professional learning activities must be ongoing and based on evidence of positive results.
- A board is expected to provide opportunities for teachers, including guidance counsellors, and support staff, administrators, and trustees to participate in training on topics such as antiracism, antidiscrimination, and gender-based violence, and to provide information for students and parents to increase their knowledge and understanding of equity and inclusive education.
- A board is also expected to provide sensitivity training in the areas of gender and sexual orientation, as well as training in effective early intervention and prevention strategies and practices to deal with incidents related to racism, gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

## REACH OUT TO OUR COMMUNITIES

Parents and others in the community can play a significant role in recognizing, preventing and responding to issues of sexual harassment and violence involving young people. It is important to lay the foundation for this through greater awareness of the signs to look for, as well as the underlying issues of sexual and gender stereotypes and prejudice.

- Invite guest speakers from the Board and/or local organizations to present at school council meetings, school open houses or forums, or community events.
  - Ensure speakers and resources reflect the different cultural and language communities represented in the school and can address issues of sexual harassment from those perspectives.
- Highlight board policies and procedures in school newsletters and at School Council meetings.
- Provide information and tip sheets for parents.
  - Explain what sexual and gender-based harassment involves.
  - Identify warning signs to look for.
  - Provide strategies for prevention and/or responding to situations.
  - List school, community and online resources and supports.
- Feature student work, posters, and/or school events on these topics in school newsletters and on school websites.
- Reach out to build relationships with community-based organizations working on issues of sexual and gender-based harassment and violence.

## POLITICAL ACTION

Political Action consists of reaching out to other members within the school and wider community and working together to bring about change. This can include seeking greater awareness and support at the leadership level, as well as systemic change at all levels.

### MOTIVATE STUDENTS TO GET INVOLVED

Empowering students to speak up about sexual and gender-based harassment and violence is critical. Their voices provide much needed insight into what is going on and what steps must be taken. Students are also more likely to pay attention to what their peers have to say.

- Have students review government policies on human rights and sexual harassment as part of the curriculum and discuss how policies apply to them as students, citizens and workers.
- Hold all-candidates meetings during election periods, including trustee elections, and have students develop questions on gender-equity and gender-based violence.
- Invite students to create safe spaces where they can congregate, discuss issues, and strategize. For example, a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) may serve as a vehicle for students to deal with LGBTQ issues and homophobia. You can find resources at [MyGSA.ca](http://MyGSA.ca)
- Encourage students to adopt a cause, such as the Sisters in Spirit vigils<sup>17</sup>, White Ribbon Campaign, Day of Pink, or Take Back the Night events.
  - Publicize the campaign and organize support within the school or community, using a variety of approaches such as posters, buttons, t-shirts, PA announcements, assemblies, presentations to local groups, and articles in the community paper.
  - Hold fundraising events to raise money for organizations committed to dealing with violence against women or related issues.
- Set up an equity/school safety committee that involves both staff and students.
  - Identify areas for action, prepare recommendations and communicate ideas for change to parents, administration, staff, and trustees.
  - Host a special conference for students with an equity-based theme. This could be held at one large venue, or be a series of rotating workshops that students attend throughout the day. The conference could involve students from the school, family of schools, or across the system.

## WORK WITH SCHOOL/SYSTEM PARTNERS

The more people we can get active on this issue, the more effective we will be in making change. Aim to engage people working at all levels across the school system, inside government, and within the community.

- Identify school and system leaders likely to be interested/have a stake in addressing issues of sexual and gender-based harassment and who you can work with. This includes administrators, superintendents, school/student safety leaders, equity department staff, and instructional coordinators.
- Encourage the School Board to give official recognition of and support for dates and campaigns linked to sexual and gender discrimination as well as harassment/violence, including Sexual Harassment Awareness Week, December 6th, International Day Against Homophobia, and the White Ribbon Campaign.
  - Publicize official recognition through a press release, website, and other communications tools.
  - Highlight the issue at a trustee meeting or through a special event.
  - Provide support and resources to draw attention to the issues, such as system-wide posters, curriculum development and funding for school initiatives.
- Advocate for a committee of students, parents, and staff to review school/system practices and develop recommendations for change.
  - Examine names and practices of school groups and events, including sports teams, spirit assemblies or initiation activities that perpetuate gender or racial stereotypes and support/promote discriminatory treatment and harassment.
  - Recognize social justice involvement as well as academic and athletic achievements through school assemblies and awards.
- Work with the School Council or Home and Schools Association to engage parents in developing a plan of action to address issues of sexual and gender-based harassment.
  - Host an evening or series of events where parents can discuss sexual harassment and gender-based violence amongst teens.
  - Invite a guest speaker or panel to address issues and possible approaches. Look at including speakers from a variety of cultural and language communities represented in the school.
  - Set up meetings between parents and trustees, the Director's office and other board officials to discuss concerns and recommendations for a plan of action.
  - Challenge parents to get involved in a White Ribbon campaign or fundraising drive for a local women's shelter or related organization.
  - Ask the community police officer assigned to your school to meet with representatives to discuss how your school and the police can work together to target harassment and violence.
- Lobby for a strong and well-resourced Equity Department/designated staff with a mandate to develop and provide supports, training and materials.

## CONCLUSION

This resource package is based on the belief that education can be a primary source for social justice and change. But while we have identified a number of short and long-term ideas to get you started on a plan of action to challenge sexual harassment in your school, this is only a beginning and we encourage educational workers to continue to tap into your collective creativity.

At the same time, we acknowledge that implementing many of these ideas will take time and resources, things that can be difficult to access. We encourage you to step forward to ask for the support and resources you need from administration and/or management. More complex initiatives may entail release time; they may require a budget line; they may involve support and resources that your principal and/or manager may have to obtain at a superintendent level.

However, don't get discouraged if it takes time to get things off the ground. Remember that seemingly little things can have a direct impact on the lives of our students and ourselves and can also be a starting point on which to build. For example, modelling inclusive language in class and in the school community is a no-cost strategy that can help create safe spaces. Taking the small amount of time necessary to review the anti-harassment policy with students on a regular basis would also emphasize a consistent message and reinforce that harassment will not be tolerated.

Educational workers positively impact learning communities and the individual lives of young people they work with in multiple ways, every day. We thank you for making a difference.

## SIGNIFICANT DATES

### September

Take Back the Night events

### October

Women's History Month, YWCA Week Against Violence Campaign, and Sisters in Spirit Vigils

### November

Woman Abuse Prevention Month

### November 25

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

### November 25 - December 6

White Ribbon Campaign

### December 6

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

### March 8

International Women's Day

### March 21

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

### May

Sexual Assault Prevention Month

### May 17

International Day Against Homophobia

### June 1-7

Sexual Harassment Awareness Week

### June 21

National Aboriginal Day

**"Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning."**

Gloria Steinem

## APPENDIX A: SURVEYS

TAKEN FROM THE JOKE'S OVER (1995)

### The Sexual Harassment Survey - Try it in your classroom

1. In your opinion, why do you think someone sexually harasses another person?
2. In your opinion, what is the effect of sexual harassment on a student?
3. Would the effect of sexual harassment be the same for a male as for a female?
4. a) Are you aware of sexual harassment in your school setting?      yes     no   
  
b) If yes, where does sexual harassment usually take place in your school? (check whatever applies)
  - In the hall
  - In the classroom
  - In the gym, playing field or pool area
  - In the cafeteria
  - In the locker rooms
  - Outside the school on the school grounds
  - In the parking lot
  - On school transportation on the way to school, on the way home or on a school trip
  - At a field trip location, an outdoor education centre, or at other schools for away games
  - Other location:
5. a) Have you ever been sexually harassed in your school setting?      yes     no   
  
b) If yes, check the types of sexual harassment you have experienced: (do not use any names)
  - Sexual comments, jokes, gestures or looks.  
- was this: by a male  by a female
  - Touched, grabbed or pinched in a sexual way.  
- was this: by a male  by a female
  - Intentionally brushed up against in a sexual way.  
- was this: by a male  by a female
  - Flashed or mooned.  
- was this: by a male  by a female
  - Had sexual rumors spread about you.  
- was this: by a male  by a female
  - Had clothing pulled at in a sexual way.  
- was this: by a male  by a female
  - Shown, given or left sexual pictures, photos, illustrations, messages or notes.  
- was this: by a male  by a female
  - Had your way blocked in a sexual way.  
- was this: by a male  by a female
  - Had sexual messages/graffiti written about you on bathroom walls, in lockers, etc.  
- was this: by a male  by a female
5. b) continued
  - Forced to kiss someone.  
- was this: by a male  by a female
  - Called Gay or Lesbian  
- was this: by a male  by a female
  - Negative comments made about your gender.  
- was this: by a male  by a female
- c) If yes, what effect has the sexual harassment experience had on you?
- d) If yes, what effect has the sexual harassment experience had on your education?
6. Are you ever afraid of being sexually harassed?  
yes     no
7. Have you ever sexually harassed another student in your school setting?      yes     no
8. Why do people who sexually harass others think that it is OK?
9. Who would you be most likely to tell about an incident of sexual harassment that happened to you?
  - A friend
  - A parent or other family member
  - A teacher or counselor
  - No one
  - Other:
10. In your school, is there a sexual harassment policy?  
yes     no     don't know
11. In your school, is it clear to whom you would report a complaints of sexual harassment  
yes     no     don't know
12. What is your opinion about how sexual harassment complaints are handled by administrators?
13. What could be done in your school to help deal with the problem of sexual harassment?

## APPENDIX B: CURRICULUM RESOURCES

### SAMPLE LESSON PLANS

**The STOP Program** (Lavoie, Vézina, Gosselin and Robitaille, 1993, 1994):

This is a dating violence prevention program that targets 14- and 15-year old students enrolled in their third year of secondary school. It is made up of two 75-minute sessions dealing with dating relationships including supplementary activities such as writing a letter of support to a victim. The two primary themes are: 1) abusive behaviour within dating relationships with examples and 2) the rights of the two dating partners.

[http://viraj.psy.ulaval.ca/english/HTML/frmAnimateur\\_3.html](http://viraj.psy.ulaval.ca/english/HTML/frmAnimateur_3.html)

**The PASSAJ Program** (Lavoie, Pacaud, Roy and Lebossé, 2004, 1994)

In the PASSAJ Program students explore three main themes: 1) control in dating relationships, 2) sexual abuse in dating relationships and friendships and 3) sexual harassment in work and study situations. The program is comprised of three sessions which can be presented to mixed-gender groups and was developed to take place within the time frame of a 75-minute class period. Although the program was conceived primarily for use within school settings, it may also be used by youth centres, recreational groups, etc.

[http://viraj.psy.ulaval.ca/english/HTML/frmAnimateur\\_3.html](http://viraj.psy.ulaval.ca/english/HTML/frmAnimateur_3.html)

**The Education and Action Kit** (White Ribbon Campaign):

This kit contains lesson plans and materials for middle and secondary school students, as well as:

- In class exercises that promote healthy relationships and gender equality.
- A never-before used in Canada social norms exercise that provides accurate information about real and perceived group attitudes and behaviour towards gender equality, healthy relationships and violence against women.
- Facilitation notes and backgrounders for teachers on how to teach on the issues of violence against women.
- A specially designed approach that speaks to boys and young men on their role to end violence against women.
- Suggested activities and action for planning White Ribbon Days in school communities.
- Spiral binding for easy photocopying.

Free sample lesson plans can be found at:

[www.whiteribbon.ca/educational\\_materials/exercise1.pdf](http://www.whiteribbon.ca/educational_materials/exercise1.pdf) (not available in French)

[www.whiteribbon.ca/educational\\_materials/exercise6.pdf](http://www.whiteribbon.ca/educational_materials/exercise6.pdf) (not available in French)

**The Joke's Over** (OSSTF/FEESO, 1995)

This resource booklet contains several student activities and lesson plans, including ones aimed at defining sexual harassment, analyzing scenarios, what to do if harassed, and making videos. There are also materials, including posters and a brochure on how to help a friend and yourself if sexually harassed. Activities and materials may require updating to reflect new definitions and understandings, but provide a helpful starting point.

**Creating Spaces: Embedding Equity in Education** (OSSTF/FEESO, 2010)

This resource book addresses seven different issues related to equity. The following two lesson plans were created to accompany the chapter on sexual harassment, gender-equity and gender violence.

**LESSON 1 • Stereotyping + Gender Roles**

From *Creating Spaces: Embedding Equity in Education*. (2010). OSSTF

*Pages 45, 46, 49-52 from Creating Spaces*

**LESSON 2 • Putting an End to Sexual Harassment**

From *Creating Spaces: Embedding Equity in Education*. (2010). OSSTF

*Pages 47, 48, 53-57*



## LESSON 1 • Stereotyping + Gender Roles

This lesson is designed to start a discussion about gender roles, biases and stereotypes. Students will be presented with the opportunity to reflect on their personal attitudes regarding traditional gender roles and the way in which society's attitudes toward men and women are evolving. Curriculum-specific student expectations addressed in this lesson can be found on page 38.

### Introductory Activity

Ask your students to stand up. Designate two opposing walls in the classroom as being “male” and “female”. After you read each of the following behaviour statements (page 39), ask students to decide whether they believe the statement describes male behaviour or female behaviour. If they believe it describes female behaviour, they must walk to the female side of the room and place their hand on the wall. If, on the other hand, they believe the statement describes male behaviour, they must place their hand on the male wall of the classroom. • **Note:** Depending on how energetic your students are, you may choose to establish behaviour expectations before you begin the activity. No name-calling or physical contact is permitted while changing sides between statements.

### Behaviour Statements • Primarily Male or Female Behaviour?

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| ▶ They are very shallow when they're hanging out with their friends. | ▶ They lie constantly.                                      | ▶ They use the Internet to gossip and/or make fun of people.                                    |
| ▶ They wear ridiculous clothes.                                      | ▶ They waste money on trivial things.                       | ▶ They act like they want attention, but as soon as you give them attention, they act offended. |
| ▶ They are never up-front about their true feelings.                 | ▶ They talk endlessly about themselves.                     | ▶ They are bad drivers and don't even know it. They're a risk to everyone else on the road.     |
| ▶ They are always trying to act older than they really are.          | ▶ They think they're so mature but really they aren't.      |   |
| ▶ They try way too hard to be cool.                                  | ▶ They don't listen.  |   |
|  | ▶ They have a hard time being accountable for what they do. |   |

After you have finished reading the above activity, ask everyone to return to their seats.

### Teacher-Led Discussion • Reflecting on our Biases

Before starting the discussion, ask students to comment on any patterns that may have emerged during the Introductory Activity. For example:

- ▶ Did the males in the class mostly stick together?
- ▶ Were there questions that divided the class into similar proportions of male and female students on either side?
- ▶ Did many students change their minds, or did most stay at their chosen wall once they got there?

Use an overhead projector to display the overhead note titled “Behaviour Statements” (Appendix 3 • 1B) so that students can make specific references to them during the discussion.

- ▶ Which statements were definitely associated with males? Why?
- ▶ Which statements seemed to be about females? Why?

### Think, Pair and Share • Bias vs. Stereotype

- Divide your class into pairs, and ask each pair to distinguish between a bias and a stereotype. While these terms are certainly related, challenge them to define the subtle differences between the two.
- Next, ask each pair to compare definitions with those arrived at by another pair of students.
- Ask the groups of four to share their ideas before providing the following definitions:
  - ▶ **Bias:** A tendency or preference toward a particular perspective that interferes with the ability to be impartial, unprejudiced, or objective.
  - ▶ **Stereotype:** A preconceived idea that attributes certain characteristics to all the members of class or set. The term is often used when referring to an oversimplified, exaggerated, or demeaning assumption.

The key difference is that biases often accompany decisions or choices, whereas stereotypes are generalizations that presume every member of a given demographic will display the same personal characteristics.

- ▶ If you think that women cannot drive as well as men, or that men never stop to ask for directions when they're lost, you are buying into common gender-related stereotypes. However, if you choose to do your math homework with a guy in your class instead of a girl because you think guys are better at math than girls, you are biased.
- ▶ If you think that all women with blonde hair are dumb, you are perpetuating a stereotype. If you hire a brunette employee over a blonde employee because you believe in this stereotype, you are demonstrating a bias and the stereotype was the deciding factor.

### **Teacher-Led Discussion • Reconsidering the Behaviour Statements**

Revisit the behaviour statements from the Introductory Activity. Tell the class that they are not gender-specific, but were actually written by a 30-year-old man asked his opinion about teens in general. Ask students to share their reactions in light of this new information.

### **Rapid Writing • Stereotyping Teenagers**

Instruct your students to take out a piece of paper and something to write with. Tell them that you are about to give them two minutes in which to do a rapid-writing activity. The goal will be to disprove any one of the behaviour statements about teenagers covered during the introductory activity. Ask them to write about life experiences that would serve as arguments against the selected behaviour statements describing teenagers.

Before they begin, review the rules of rapid writing:

- ▶ Your pen or pencil must keep moving. You are not allowed to stop writing. If you can't think of anything to write, just write what you are thinking and then pick up your train of thought as soon as you get a new idea.
- ▶ References to specific persons (students or staff) are not allowed in this exercise. Also, swearing or other content that is inappropriate for sharing in school cannot be included.

After the two minutes have elapsed, ask for volunteers to read what they have written to the class. On the blackboard, record some of the stronger arguments or ideas. • **Note:** If you have no volunteers, collect three or four samples from the class, shuffle them, and read them anonymously. Shuffle them again before handing them back.

### **Recap • Underscoring and Reviewing Important Information**

After the rapid-writing activity, take a few minutes to review learning to date and to reinforce the following message:

*Stereotypes persist because of the human tendency to exclusively remember and/or focus on examples that validate the stereotype in question. There is not behavioural tendency that can be universally attributed to any large demographic group. It is fruitless to live your life expecting people to fall into convenient categories. While some teens may exhibit certain behaviours identified in the behaviour statements discussed earlier, some adults certainly do as well. It is a mistake to assume that one can reliably infer an individual's personality traits based on race, ethnicity, gender or other group membership.*

### **Individual Writing Assignment • Persuasive Writing**

Invite your students to choose any of the behaviour statements from the introductory activity (even the one that they chose earlier for the rapid write) and compose a 500 word persuasive commentary that addresses and argues against stereotyping from a teenager's perspective. The audience for this piece of writing would be a group of adults who strongly believe in the stereotype. The tone of the writing can be informal; however, the writing must attempt to convey serious ideas in a calm and coherent delivery; i.e. students should attempt to persuade and not berate the reader. • **Note:** If your school has a computer lab, you may consider creating a webpage or blog and allowing students to publish their finished work as a collection of teenage voices that stand against age-related stereotypes.

### **Assessment • Informal and/or Formal Assessment**

The assessment focus for this lesson is primarily on the written assignment. • **Note:** You may use the checklist titled "Persuasive Writing Checklist" (page 40) to informally evaluate your students' self-assessment skills. Writing skills and critical thinking skills can be more formally assessed using the "Persuasive Essay: Assessment Rubric" (page 41).

## **CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS** CHAPTER 3 • Lesson 1

This lesson addresses student expectations specified for the following courses:

### **Grade 11 Workplace Preparation English • ENG3E**

#### *Critical Literacy*

By the end of this course, students will:

- Identify the perspectives and/or biases evident in both simple and complex texts and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power.

#### *Interpersonal Speaking Strategies*

By the end of this course, students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of several different interpersonal speaking strategies and adapt them to suit the purpose, situation, and audience, exhibiting sensitivity to cultural differences (e.g., use direct, strong, yet polite language and tone when registering a complaint with customer service about a faulty product; acknowledge others' ideas before challenging their views; avoid the use of personal, defamatory, and prejudicial comments; recognize and adhere to time limits and other constraints).

### **Grade 11 University Preparation English • ENG3U**

#### *Critical Literacy*

By the end of this course, students will:

- Explain, with increasing insight, how their own beliefs, values, and experiences are revealed in their writing (e.g., examine their writing to check for bias and to determine whether their language and ideas are inclusive and non-discriminatory; explain how their description of a specific event reveals their values, even if these values are not stated explicitly).

### **Grade 10 Civics • CHV20**

#### *Overall Expectations*

By the end of this course, students will:

- Describe the diversity of beliefs and values of various individuals and groups in Canadian society.

## BEHAVIOUR STATEMENTS • Primarily True of Males or Females?

	They are very shallow when they're hanging out with their friends.
	They wear ridiculous clothes.
	They are never up-front about their true feelings.
	They are always trying to act older than they really are.
	They are bad drivers and don't even know it. They're a risk to everyone else on the road.
	They try way too hard to be cool.
	They lie constantly.
	They waste their money on trivial things.
	They talk endlessly about themselves.
	They think they're so mature but really they aren't.
	They don't listen.
	They have a hard time being accountable for what they do.
	They use the Internet to gossip and/or make fun of people.
	They act like they don't want attention, but as soon as you give them attention they act offended.

## PERSUASIVE WRITING • Checklist

STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ACTIVITY \_\_\_\_\_

Before you submit your writing assignment, complete the following checklist. Your teacher will use the items in this checklist to assess your performance on this assignment. Place a check mark beside each criterion you have met in your persuasive essay.

Have I met the criteria for a persuasive essay?	
1	My persuasive essay clearly identifies my intended audience.
2	The introductory paragraph includes my main argument.
3	My body paragraph outlines my supporting arguments.
4	There are no spelling errors in my proposal.
5	The tone of my proposal is professional and respectful.
6	There is a specific example to support each of my arguments.
7	The concluding paragraph summarizes my supporting arguments and states my conclusion.
8	There are no grammatical errors in my proposal.
9	The writing is compelling and persuasive.
10	The persuasive essay is typewritten.



## PERSUASIVE ESSAY • Assessment Rubric

STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ACTIVITY \_\_\_\_\_

Your teacher will use the following criteria to assess your persuasive essay for this lesson:

CATEGORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	SATISFACTORY	GOOD	EXCELLENT
<b>Thinking</b> use of processing skills	use of few examples to support arguments limits persuasiveness	use of some specific examples to support arguments hinders persuasiveness	use of several specific examples to support arguments builds persuasiveness	persuasiveness is enhanced by the use of many specific examples to support arguments
<b>Thinking</b> use of planning skills • introduction identifies audience • introduces main argument • conclusion summarizes	ideas are arranged in some parts of the essay to add focus	the arrangement of ideas in the essay adds some focus	the arrangement of ideas in the essay adds impact	the arrangement of ideas in the essay adds focus, impact and expansion on concepts
<b>Communication</b> use of conventions	many spelling and grammar errors	some spelling and grammar errors	a few minor spelling or grammar errors	no significant spelling or grammar errors
<b>Communication</b> expression and organization of ideas and information	limited sentence variety or repetitive sentences	a moderate variety of sentence structures provide some fluency in writing	a variety of sentence structures provide fluency in writing	a wide variety of sentence structures provide fluency in writing
<b>Application</b> making connections within and between various contexts	identifies strategies to deal with stereotyping for the intended audience	illustrates strategies to deal with stereotyping in a somewhat persuasive manner for the intended audience	explains strategies to deal with stereotyping in a persuasive manner for the intended audience	explains strategies to deal with stereotyping in a compelling and persuasive manner for the intended audience

## LESSON 2 • Putting an End to Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is often considered a problem that adults may face when entering the work place; however, students also deal with this issue in our schools. As educators, we must be diligent in stopping, and even preventing, the harassment of our students. This lesson aims to develop strategies to discourage sexual harassment in our classrooms. Curriculum-specific student expectations addressed in this lesson can be found on page 44.

### Introductory Activity • Shapes and Scripts

- **Note:** Do not tell your students that this lesson will be about sexual harassment. Allow them to participate in the introductory activity first.
- Give each student one of the shape cards (page 45) together with the corresponding script from the “Shapes and Scripts” handout (page 46).
- Tell your students to imagine that the shapes on the cards they have been given represent their identities, and that this shape is the only aspect of themselves discernable to the person with whom conversations will soon begin to take place.
- Instruct students to circulate and initiate discussions with the other “shapes.” Upon meeting a new shape, each student must read the script. Students can supply an appropriate impromptu answer to a question or can simply wait for the next question, if no suitable response comes to mind.

### Teacher-Led Discussion • Debriefing

- ▶ Poll the class and ask those to raise a hand who felt they were asked or told something rude, uncomfortable, or mean. Ask them what it was about the scripted comment that seemed inappropriate.
- ▶ Extend the discussion by asking what kinds of reactions were created by their scripted comments. Characterize these on the blackboard under the heading “Reactions” (e.g. offended, insulted, creeped-out, puzzled).
- ▶ Ask the class for suggestions as to what all of the scripted comments they heard during this exercise had in common.
- ▶ Ask the students to imagine what this activity would have been like if they were to circulate through the room and make similar comments about each other’s bodies.

### Recap • Underscoring and Reviewing Important Information

At the end of the teacher-led discussion, take a few minutes to review learning to date and to reinforce the following message:

*Today’s lesson concerns sexual harassment. Our goal today is to think about the nature of sexually-oriented behaviour that is inappropriate in private or in public places. Sexual harassment is often treated as a joke, but can actually lead to serious consequences. Sexual harassment occurs when one person’s sexually-oriented comments or behaviours objectify or demean another person. If left unaddressed, sexual harassment can poison the emotional climate of the school.*

### Teacher-Led Discussion • What Does Sexual Harassment Look Like?

Use the overhead projector to display the chart titled, “What Does Sexual Harassment Look Like?” (page 47). Take time to read through the first two columns with the class and identify some of the types of sexual harassment that students may have encountered at school. Ask them to raise their hands if they have witnessed this type of behaviour. After you have finished reading the list, most hands will probably be up. This show of hands can be expected to demonstrate the prevalence of sexual harassment in our very schools.

### Short Writing Task • Consequences

Instruct your class to choose three of the situations from the overhead “What Does Sexual Harassment Look Like?” (page 47). For each situation selected, ask students to write a short paragraph about the potential consequences or outcomes if the behaviour is not stopped. Ask for volunteers to share their answers before moving on to the next activity. • **Note:** It is worth mentioning that there have been cases in which teens have committed suicide because of sexual harassment experienced at school. Cell phones are now being used to take and send provocative pictures (aka “Sexting”), and this has created a new realm of sexual harassment in high schools.

### Overhead • What Does Sexual Harassment Look Like?

Return to the overhead chart “What Does Sexual Harassment Look Like?” (page 47). As a class, suggest solutions to the situations posed in the overhead chart. Consider some of the following principles if students’ suggestions remain superficial or vague:

- ▶ Address the behaviour immediately and directly.
- ▶ Don’t make an excuse for the harasser, or accept the excuse that “It was only a joke.”
- ▶ Use strong body language to support your position against sexual harassment.
- ▶ Speak on behalf of the oppressed group, e.g. “Girls think guys who say that/do that are gross.”

### Teacher-Led Discussion • So What's the Difference?

Make a T-Chart on the blackboard, and ask the class to distinguish between flirting and sexual harassment. Consider the following differences:

#### Flirting

- ▶ Is respectful of the other person
- ▶ Goes back and forth
- ▶ Compliments the recipient
- ▶ Involves parties sharing power
- ▶ Is often encouraged after it starts by the recipient
- ▶ Is harmless
- ▶ Leads to relationships/friendships
- ▶ Makes the recipient feel good

#### Sexual Harassment

- ▶ Makes the harassed person feel powerless
- ▶ Is uni-directional, initiated by one person against another
- ▶ Makes the recipient feel degraded
- ▶ Harasser retains all the power
- ▶ Is never encouraged after it starts by the person targeted
- ▶ Is harmful and illegal
- ▶ Leads to serious emotional anguish for the recipient
- ▶ Makes the recipient feel demeaned and devalued

### Extending the Learning • E-mail/Letter Writing

Write a 300-word e-mail or a letter to a victim of sexual harassment. Include helpful strategies gathered from today's discussion that could help the victim confront the person who is harassing him or her, and ultimately bring an end to the harassment. The tone of your letter should be friendly but serious.

### Assessment • Informal and/or Formal Assessment

The assessment focus for this lesson is primarily on critical thinking as evidenced in the final writing assignment. • Note: You may assess students' writing and critical thinking skills using the "Email/Letter Writing Assessment Rubric" (Appendix 3 • 2E).

## **CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS** CHAPTER 3 • Lesson 2

This lesson addresses student expectations specified for the following courses:

### **Navigating the Workplace** • Grade 12 Open • GLN40

*Working With and Others*

By the end of this course, students will:

- Describe self-management skills (e.g., prioritizing, stress management, problem solving), and use them to deal effectively with challenging situations in the school, community, or workplace (e.g., situations involving harassment, unreliability of others);
- Describe and use strategies for managing conflict (e.g., negotiation, mediation), and explain the issues and difficulties that may be encountered when resolving conflict.

### **Canadian Politics and Citizenship** • Grade 11 Open • CPC30

*Conflict Resolution Strategies*

By the end of this course, students will:

- Identify the key stages in resolving conflicts (e.g., gathering information, identifying points of view and values, recommending solutions, identifying potential consequences and alternative courses of action, taking action).

### **Individuals and Families in a Diverse Society** • Grade 12 University/College Preparation • HHS4M

*Diverse Roles of Individuals*

By the end of this course, students will:

- Analyse male and female roles in various societies and historical periods, taking into consideration societal norms and ideals, individuals' perceptions of roles, and actual behaviours.

### **Challenge and Change in Society** • Grade 12 University/College Preparation • HSB4M

*Prejudice and Discrimination*

By the end of this course, students will:

- Assess the role of stereotyping as a barrier to full participation in society.

### **Academic English** • Grade 9 • ENG1D

*Voice*

By the end of this course, students will:

- Establish an identifiable voice in their writing, modifying language and tone to suit the form, audience, and purpose for writing.

### **Academic English** • Grade 9 • ENG1P

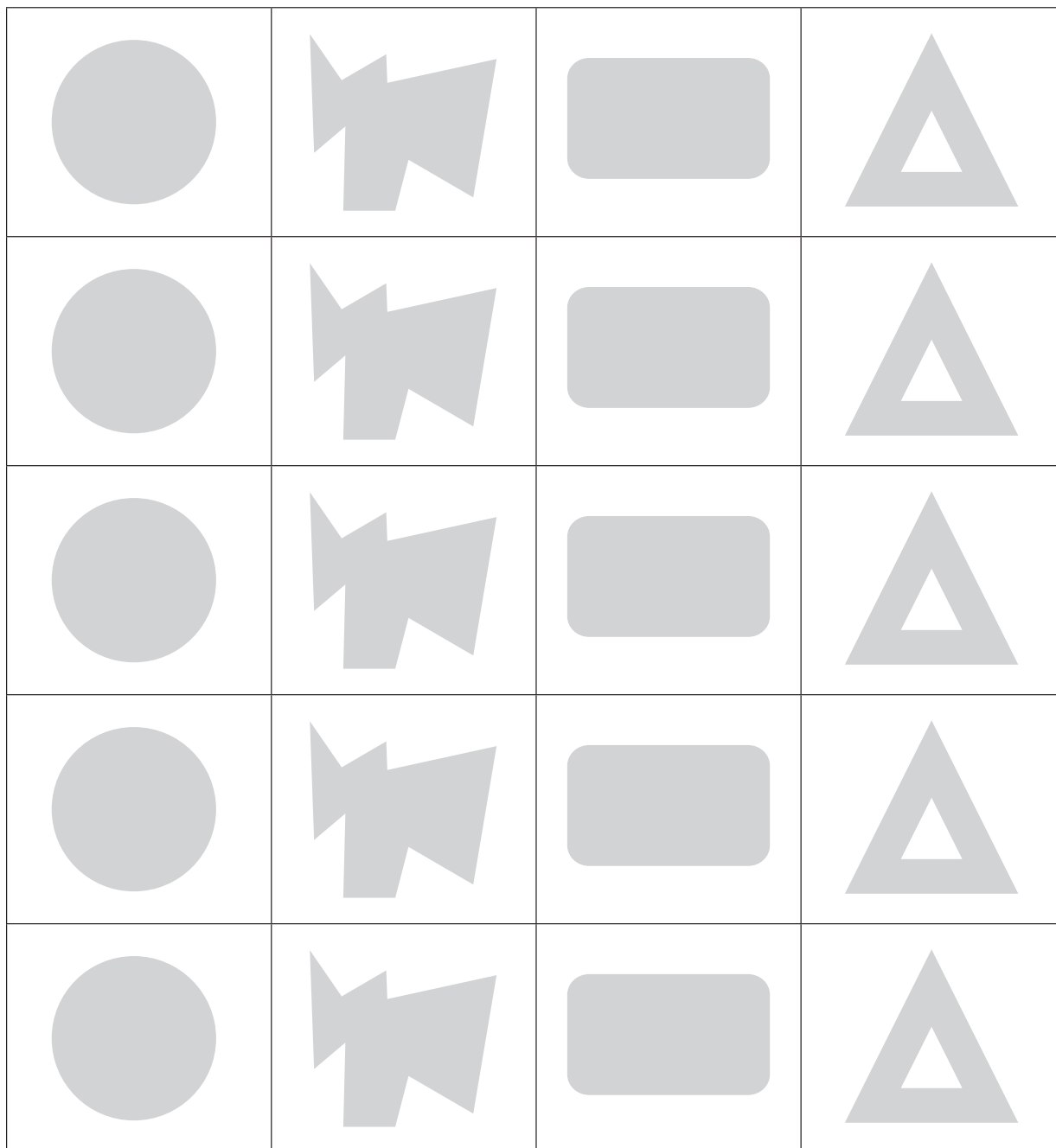
*Identifying Topic, Purpose, and Audience*

By the end of this course, students will:

- Identify the topic, purpose, and audience for a few different types of writing tasks (e.g., a promotional flyer advertising their school for Grade 8 students in another school; a formal paragraph stating and explaining an opinion on a topic for the teacher; a newspaper article and accompanying photograph for the local newspaper).

## SHAPES AND SCRIPTS • Game Cards

The following cards are designed to be photocopied, cut out and laminated for classroom use:





## SHAPES AND SCRIPTS

### THE CIRCLE

When meeting a triangle, may say or ask:	Wow, your edges are really pointy.	Why is that piece missing from your middle?	I think your edges aren't exactly straight.
When meeting a rounded rectangle, may ask or say:	Why aren't your corners straight?	You look kind of like a fat square.	I think dark rounded squares are hot.
When meeting the irregular object, may say or ask:	You look weird.	Do you want to hang out with a real shape?	It must be hard to be so different.

### THE TRIANGLE

When meeting a circle, may ask or say:	What happened to your edges?	You would look good if the pieces weren't missing.	Do you want to roll with me?
When meeting the rounded rectangle, may ask or say:	Why aren't your corners straight?	You look kind of like a fat square.	I think dark rounded squares are hot.
When meeting the irregular object, may say or ask:	You look weird.	Do you want to hang out with a real shape?	It must be hard to be so different.

### THE IRREGULAR OBJECT

When meeting a circle, may ask or say:	What happened to your edges?	You would look good if the pieces weren't missing.	Do you want to roll with me?
When meeting the rounded rectangle, may ask or say:	Why aren't your corners straight?	You look kind of like a fat square.	I think dark rounded squares are hot.
When meeting the triangle, may say or ask:	Wow, your edges are really pointy.	Why is that piece missing from your middle?	I think your edges aren't exactly straight.

### THE ROUNDED RECTANGLE

When meeting the irregular object, may say or ask:	You look weird.	Do you want to hang out with a real shape?	It must be hard to be so different.
When meeting a circle, may ask or say:	What happened to your edges?	You would look good if the pieces weren't missing.	Do you want to roll with me?
When meeting the triangle, may say or ask:	Wow, your edges are really pointy.	Why is that piece missing from your middle?	I think your edges aren't exactly straight.

## WHAT DOES SEXUAL HARASSMENT LOOK LIKE?

TYPE	EXAMPLE	HOW DO YOU STOP IT?
<b>Staring</b>	It's June. Amy wears shorts and a tank top to school because her homeroom is really hot, even in the morning. Pat is sitting beside her. Every time Amy looks over at Pat, he is staring at her body.	
<b>Sexual jokes</b>	Classes are changing. Your locker is beside a group of students who are really loud. They often say really rude and vulgar things to each other. You hear one member of the group telling a joke about a sex act. The person turns to you and smiles while saying, "Am I right?"	
<b>Sexual innuendo</b>	You're sitting with a group of students. One of the guys keeps telling a girl in your group that she has nice "markers" and asks her if he can touch them later. She laughs but you can tell she's really uncomfortable.	
<b>Spreading rumours</b>	It's the day after a long week-end. One of your friends comes up to you and starts to tell you a story about his ex-girlfriend. He says that he heard that she was drunk and making out with another girl from the school during a party that happened during the weekend.	
<b>Unwelcome touching</b>	Another student seems to genuinely like talking to you. Every time this student approaches you, she or he tries to hug you or put his/her arm around your waist.	
<b>Internet gossiping</b>	You're on Facebook or MySpace. A student that you know, but who is not a friend, posts a sexual comment about another student from your school.	
<b>Pornography in a public place</b>	You're sitting in class and a student ahead of you is showing a friend some pictures on a cellphone. One of the pictures is of a naked person in a sexual pose. The student passes the phone around and laughs.	
<b>Whistling/gestures</b>	Every time you walk down a certain hallway in the school, a group of students whistle at you and at other students as well. At the same time, they make obscene gestures with their hands.	
<b>Sharing sexual stories</b>	A friend starts asking you about what you are up to sexually with your boyfriend or girlfriend. He/she insists that friends tell each other about this kind of stuff, and won't take no for an answer.	
<b>Using inappropriate terms</b>	A student of the opposite sex addresses you with pet names during class, such as: "Honey", "Baby" or "Sexy."	

## EMAIL/LETTER WRITING • Assessment Rubric

STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ACTIVITY \_\_\_\_\_

Your teacher will use the following criteria to assess your written proposal for this lesson:

CATEGORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	SATISFACTORY	GOOD	EXCELLENT
<b>Thinking</b> use of processing skills	suggested strategies could logically produce negative or harmful reactions	suggested strategies could logically produce some negative responses	suggested strategies could logically produce a positive result	suggested strategies would logically produce positive results
<b>Communication</b> communication for different audiences and purposes	diction and word choice begin to create a tone that is either friendly or serious	diction and word choice produce a tone that is either friendly or serious	careful diction and word choice produce a tone that is both friendly and serious	thoughtful diction and word choice produce a tone that balances 'friendly' and 'serious'
<b>Communication</b> use of conventions	many spelling and grammar errors contribute to a lack of clarity	some spelling and grammar errors, some interference with clarity	a few minor spelling and/or grammar errors, no significant loss of clarity	no significant spelling or grammar errors and writing is complex and concise
<b>Communication</b> expression and organization of ideas and information	few ideas in the letter/email are organized and summarized in the conclusion	some ideas in the letter/email are organized and summarized in the conclusion	most of ideas in the letter/email are well organized and summarized in the conclusion	all ideas in the letter/email are expertly organized and thoroughly summarized in the conclusion
<b>Application</b> making connections within and between various contexts	connects classroom discussion to one strategy suggested in the letter/email	connects classroom discussion to two strategies suggested in the letter/email	connects classroom discussion to three strategies suggested in the letter/email	thoughtfully connects classroom discussion to four or more strategies suggested in the letter/email

## APPENDIX C: CAMPAIGNS

Campaigns developed by other education, human rights, community and advocacy groups working to address issues of sexual and gender-based harassment and violence are good sources to tap into. They can provide ideas, speakers, educational materials, and other resources, such as surveys, posters, buttons, book marks, public service announcements, pamphlets, and videos. These materials are frequently available on-line or for minimal cost and may be reproduced, or adapted for local use.

### ADDITIONAL CAMPAIGN WEBSITES

In addition to those already identified in the *Still Not Laughing* annotated bibliography of resources and organizations, check out the following websites and campaigns:

*Be the Solution* (see sample below).  
<http://wasaam.org/> (not available in French)

*I KNOW SOMEONE...*  
[www.iknowsosomeoneuwo.ca](http://www.iknowsosomeoneuwo.ca) (not available in French)

*Addressing Sexual Violence and Sexual Violence Myths through Community-Based Education.*  
[www.sexualassaultsupport.ca](http://www.sexualassaultsupport.ca)

*Don't be that guy*  
[www.sexualassaultvoices.com/our-campaign.html](http://www.sexualassaultvoices.com/our-campaign.html)

*Empowering Youth against Hypersexualisation*  
[www.hypersexualisationdesjeunes.uqam.ca](http://www.hypersexualisationdesjeunes.uqam.ca) (not yet available in English)

*Know Your Power™*  
[www.know-your-power.org/](http://www.know-your-power.org/) (not available in French)

**I am anti sexual violence  
and pro**

---

**Ending sexual violence takes all of us.**

**What will you do?**

 tweet your solution to  
**#iampro • wasaam.org**

**BE THE  
SOLUTION**

## APPENDIX D: INFORMATION PAMPHLETS

The following text is taken from a sample wallet card created by the Greater Essex County District School Board. It offers a starting point that can be adapted and updated for local use. Designing such materials could be done on a school or board-wide basis, or as a student project.

### DATING VIOLENCE • HANDOUT FOR STUDENTS

#### DATING VIOLENCE

Adolescents and young adults frequently encounter the problem of sexual violence in dating relationships. Almost all incidents of dating violence that occur, involve someone the victim knows and/or trusts. As in other forms of violence, power and control are the central issues.

#### DEFINITION:

Dating violence includes the emotional, physical or sexual abuse of one partner by the other in a dating relationship where the individual partners are not living together.

**Emotional or verbal abuse** may include threatening, humiliating, insulting, pressuring, isolating, blaming, yelling, smashing things, and other expressions of anger, jealousy and possessiveness.

**Physical abuse** involves the use of force and may include restraining, slapping, punching, kicking, hitting, shoving, biting, choking or use of a weapon.

**Sexual abuse** occurs when sexual behaviour is unwanted and without consent. It includes date rape which is now a term legally defined as sexual assault. Threats, force or pressure are often used to gain the compliance of the victim. It does not matter if there has been consenting sexual behaviour prior to the abuse.

#### WARNING SIGNS

Usually dating violence starts with emotional abuse and escalates over time to verbal, physical and sexual abuse.

The following behaviours can be early warning signs of dating violence:

- Acting jealous or possessive;
- Controlling contact with friends/family/outside activities;
- Making all the decisions;
- Driving fast or doing other dangerous risk behaviours;
- Making accusations of lying;
- Becoming angry or violent after drinking or taking drugs;
- Not taking “no” for an answer;
- “Put downs” concerning ideas, friends, family, appearance.

Other warning signs include behaviour that is:

- Threatening;
- Manipulative and controlling;
- Embarrassing;
- Blaming.

#### TIPS FOR SAFE DATING

Here are some tips that you, or someone you know, may find helpful when dating:

- Trust your instincts about the behaviour of others;
- Meet in public places for the first few dates;
- Be assertive: leave if you feel uncomfortable;
- Get to know your date: are your date's values similar to yours?
- Get informal references: talk to others who have dated your date;
- Keep in touch with family and friends;
- Have a safety plan;
- Know the address of where you are;
- Tell someone where you are going and with whom;
- Be able to leave: have money for bus, taxi and phone call;
- Pay your own way: avoid obligation;
- Give clear messages: let your voice and body language be the same.



## WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

What can you do if you or someone you know is involved in an abusive dating situation? The most important step is to recognize that the situation is abusive and then take action.

Here are some suggestions:

- Recognize that no one has the right to control another person;
- Put the blame where it belongs, on the abuser;
- Tell someone trustworthy about the violence;
- End the relationship as soon as possible;
- Consider reporting a date rape or a physical assault to the police.

## YOUR COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES:

FOR CRISIS INTERVENTION, COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT

### Sexual Assault Crisis Centre

24 Hour Crisis Centre: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Line: \_\_\_\_\_

FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT FOLLOWING A SEXUAL ASSAULT  
OR FOR ON-GOING MEDICAL INTERVENTION CALL THE HOSPITAL BASED PROGRAM

Sexual Assault Treatment Centre \_\_\_\_\_

## HELPFUL NUMBERS

Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868

Local Police 911

*It's important to realize that the pattern of control and abuse will become worse over time, not better.*

Health Canada – Adapted from: *Dating Violence: An Issue At Any Age.* (1996)

## REMEMBER:

*If you feel you are  
“walking on  
eggshells”  
to keep your  
partner from getting  
angry, there is  
trouble ahead.*

## DATING VIOLENCE

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## YOUR COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES:

For **Crisis Intervention,  
Counselling and Support**

### Sexual Assault Crisis Centre

24 Hour Crisis Centre: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Line: \_\_\_\_\_

For **Emergency Medical  
Treatment** following a sexual  
assault or for **ongoing medical  
intervention** call the hospital  
based program

**Sexual Assault  
Treatment Centre**

## HELPFUL NUMBERS

Kids Help Phone

1-800-668-6868

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**DATING  
VIOLENCE  
HANDOUT  
FOR  
STUDENTS**

## APPENDIX E: WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING

### OSSTF/FEESO WORKSHOPS

For more information on workshop content and booking arrangements, contact the provincial office at 1.800.267.7867.

#### Still Not Laughing: Challenging Sexual Harassment in Our Schools (2 Hours)

This workshop will present educational workers with a conceptual framework to increase their awareness and understanding of sexual harassment and provide them with an opportunity to use this framework to develop strategies that challenge sexual violence and harassment in their schools and workplaces.

#### From PAIN to PRIDE - Gender Based Violence & Homophobia (3-5 hours)

This challenging full or half day workshop will provide participants with the definitions, understanding and strategies necessary to address the impact of gender-based violence and homophobia. With recent research identifying the alarming rate of these forms of harassment and assault in school settings, it is up to everyone to take ownership of the rights and responsibilities we share. Only then will we understand the seriousness of gender-based violence and homophobia, and work to stop it.

#### Beyond Bullying: Building Safe Schools (3 hours)

Participants in this interactive workshop will explore the issues around student bullying: how to identify bullying, the types of bullying, the consequences of bullying and strategies for preventing and dealing with bullying behaviour. A package of resources will be provided to participants.

#### EQUIP (Engaging Quality Understandings of Inclusive Practices) (3 hours)

During this workshop participants will explore issues of equity and inclusivity. The group will explore how to practise inclusion and will receive practical resources/strategies in how to effect change by creating equitable environments within their educational workplaces.

#### Beyond Bullying: Building Safe Workplaces (3 hours)

This interactive workshop will explore the issues around workplace bullying: the types of bullying, the consequences of bullying and strategies for preventing and dealing with bullying behaviour. A package of resources will also be provided to participants.

#### Cyber Bullying (2 hours)

Cyber Bullying is a growing phenomenon with the popularity of websites such as Facebook, YouTube, and RateMyTeacher, and the expansion of new technologies such as iPods, cell phones, digital cameras, MP3 players and other electronic devices that can clandestinely capture pictures, videos, and sound files to be quickly uploaded to the Internet. This workshop will explain the different types of cyber bullying and provide strategies for dealing with them.

### OTHER WORKSHOPS

Many other advocacy and service organizations and community agencies also offer workshops and training on sexual and gender-based harassment, as well as other issues of discrimination. A number of those most appropriate to a school setting/working with youth are identified in the annotated bibliography of resources produced by OSSTF/FEESO in the fall of 2010 as part of our *Still Not Laughing: Challenging Sexual Harassment in Our Schools* project.

#### DATING VIOLENCE

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- Controlling contact with friends/family/outside activities;
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- Making accusations of lying;

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- Get informal references: talk to others who have dated your date;
- Keep in touch with family and friends;
- Have a safety plan;
- Know the address of where you are;
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- Put the blame where it belongs, on the abuser;
- Tell someone trustworthy about the violence;
- End the relationship as soon as possible;
- Consider reporting a date rape or a physical assault to police.

*It's important to realize that the pattern of control and abuse will become worse over time, not better.*

Health Canada — Adapted from: *Dating violence: An Issue At Any Age*, 1996.

**Remember: If you feel you are "walking on eggshells" to keep your partner from getting angry, there is trouble ahead.**

## TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS RESOURCE

**Bullying:** Repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation (Ministry of Education). Bullying is a form of aggression used from a position of power. It can be physical, sexual, psychological/social, verbal, and/or cyber. (OSSTF/FEESO)

**Gender-based violence:** The Ministry of Education defines gender-based violence as any form of behaviour—including psychological, physical, and sexual behaviour—that is based on an individual's gender and is intended to control, humiliate, or harm the individual.

OSSTF/FEESO has developed our own definition to expand upon the roots of this form of violence, and we use this definition in OSSTF/FEESO workshops. We believe that gender-based violence encompasses any actions (physical, sexual, psychological, or systemic) whether intentional or unintentional, that are informed by the notion that femaleness, as a social construct, is inherently inferior to the social construct of maleness.

Some school boards have also begun to create their own definitions of gender-based violence in order to write appropriate policy. The Toronto District School Board is one of the first in this regard, and has defined gender-based violence as “any aggressive action that threatens safety, causes physical, social, or emotional harm, and denigrates a person because of his or her gender identity, perceived gender, sexual identity, biological sex, or sexual behaviour”.

**Homophobia:** A disparaging or hostile attitude or negative bias, which may be overt or unspoken and which exists on the individual or systemic level, towards people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (LGBT). (Ontario Ministry of Education.)

**Poisoned Environment:** A poisoned environment is one that is hostile, intimidating, demeaning or offensive for one or more persons. It is created when comments or actions based on grounds listed in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* result in an atmosphere that make a person feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. This could involve demeaning remarks, terms of endearment, jokes, gossip or innuendo, as well as graffiti, pictures, cartoons or photographs. The comments or actions do not have to be directed at any specific person, nor does a person have to be a member of a Code-protected group to experience a poisoned environment. In some cases, a single statement or action is all it takes to poison the environment.

**Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome comments and/or actions of a sexual or gender-based nature directed at an individual by someone whose conduct or comments are, or should reasonably be known to be, offensive, inappropriate, intimidating, hostile, and unwelcome. Sexual harassment can include: inappropriate touching, offensive jokes or remarks, sexual requests or suggestions, catcalls, unwelcome stares/leering and uncomfortable comments about one's body, the display of sexually offensive images, demeaning nicknames, or verbal abuse towards an individual because of their gender. Sexual harassment is a form of gender-based violence, and includes unwanted actions and comments rooted in homophobia and transphobia. (Adapted from the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and OSSTF/FEESO, *The Joke's Over*).

**Social Construction:** A social construction or social construct is any phenomenon invented or constructed by participants in a particular culture or society; it occurs because people agree to behave as if it exists or follow certain conventional rules. (OSSTF/FEESO)

**Transphobia:** Transphobia is the negative valuing and discriminatory treatment of individuals who do not conform in presentation and/or identity to conventional conceptions of gender. Lesbians, two-spirited people, gay men, bisexuals, and trans-identified individuals are typically the targets of transphobia. Transphobia and homophobia are closely linked and interdependent. As with any form of discrimination, transphobia can be personal or systemic, intentional or unintentional. (Adapted from the Queen's University Positive Space program.)

**Workplace Harassment:** Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome and not already protected under the Human Rights Code. It should be noted that this definition expands upon that included in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, which is limited to harassment based upon race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, age, record of offences, marital status, family status, or disability. (Ontario Ministry of Labour, Bill 168).

**Workplace Violence:** The exercise of physical force by a person against a worker in a workplace that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker; an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker; or a statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker. (Ontario Ministry of Labour, Bill 168).

## ENDNOTES

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- 3• Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2011). *Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment*. The complete policy document is available on Ontario Human Rights Commission website. [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/issues/sexual\\_harassment](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/issues/sexual_harassment)
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- 9• Safe Schools Action Team. Ministry of Education: Ontario (2008). *Shaping a Culture of Respect in our Schools: Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships*. [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/RespectCulture.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/RespectCulture.pdf)
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- 13• OSSTF/FEESO (2010) *A Resource List: Still Not Laughing: Challenging Sexual Harassment in Our School*. This annotated bibliography of resources is available in printed form and is also available at [www.osstf.on.ca/SNL](http://www.osstf.on.ca/SNL)
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