

Revised Safe Schools Policy Focuses on Safe and Nurturing Schools

(February 5, 2008) – In June 2007, the provincial government passed Bill 212, the *Education Amendment Act, (Progressive Discipline and School Safety)*. Its provisions took effect on Feb. 1, 2008. Thanks to the great work of its schools—the Rainy River District School Board is well-positioned for the implementation of this bill, which amends, but does not completely repeal the “safe school” provisions of the *Education Act*.

In implementing this new legislation, the Board will be building on the strong commitment to student success that has been the board's hallmark. The Rainy River District School Board has recently updated its Safe Schools policy and created the new Student Discipline Policy to reflect this new legislation. These policies are based on the provincial *Education Act* and the Ontario Code of Conduct, setting clear standards of behaviour for students, staff, parents, volunteers and all other individuals involved in public education.

The following are highlights of the changes being made to the board's policies as a result of this new legislation:

- Bullying has been added to the list of behaviours for which students can be suspended.
- A progressive discipline approach will be taken when determining consequences for inappropriate behaviour.
- When determining consequences for inappropriate student behaviour, Bill 212 requires principals to consider mitigating and other factors.
- Only principals may suspend students between one and 20 school days.
- Principals no longer have the authority to expel students. Principals may recommend that a student be expelled, but only the school board is able to issue an expulsion.
- Suspensions and expulsions may result from activities that do not take place at school or while a student is engaged in a school-related activity. Students may be suspended or expelled for engaging in activities that may have a negative impact on the school climate, such as inappropriate online behaviour, including cyber-bullying.
- School boards are required to provide alternative programs for long-term suspended and expelled students.

For a copy of the board's Safe Schools and/or Student Discipline Policies, visit <http://www.rdsb.com> or contact the school office. If you have questions about the policy or its implementation, please contact the principal at your child's school.