

According to the *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* (MEECL, 2022), “School divisions must provide all students with the same minimum number of hours of instruction, and document in the student-specific plan (SSP) any reduction or alternations in the school day, including a plan to return to full-time instruction” (p. 9).

When removals from the classroom and/or school form a recurring pattern, the student-specific planning process should be initiated to identify a student’s learning needs and develop, implement, and evaluate appropriate educational interventions.

## GUIDELINE 2: ENHANCING PROACTIVE AND PREVENTATIVE PRACTICES

Policies must identify preventative practices that promote positive and proactive strategies in order to limit, reduce, and phase out exclusionary practices.

In Manitoba, all schools are expected to engage in preventative practices, emphasizing positive and proactive strategies to foster student learning (Manitoba Education and Training, *Provincial Code of Conduct*, 2017; Manitoba Education, *Safe and Caring Schools: Enhancing Proactive Supports to Minimize the Use of Seclusion*, 2021;

Manitoba Education, *Towards Inclusion: Supporting Positive Behaviour in Manitoba Classrooms*, 2011). Schools and school divisions should seek a proactive approach that supports students by identifying and solving problems early.

**By establishing common values, vision, and practices, a whole-school approach “promotes a sense of belonging to the school community and builds trusting relationships” (Kidde & Alfred, as cited in Passarella, 2017).**

The department provides a model for a whole-school approach to planning for safety and belonging that is based on four perspectives that include comprehensive school health, social-ecological systems, three-tiered planning, and strengths-based practices (Manitoba Education and Training, *Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole-School Approach to Planning for Safety and Belonging*, 2017).

This model outlines a planning process based on research and evidence-based practices in planning for—and sustaining—positive, healthy, and safe schools while aligning with school planning systems already in use in Manitoba schools and school divisions.

Planning in this way helps school communities create a positive and inclusive school culture and meets the *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* (MEECL, 2022), which affirms, “School division policy on student discipline must incorporate a continuum of supports, including positive and preventative approaches and strategies, as well as consequences corresponding to the nature, severity, and

frequency of the behaviour or infraction” (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Student Discipline*, p. 19). Similarly, the student-specific planning process should be utilized to meet the unique needs of individual students and to determine, implement, and evaluate appropriate educational interventions (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Planning in Education; Student-Specific Planning*, 2022).

**The support document *Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole-School Approach to Planning for Safety and Belonging* is a valuable tool [and] is an example of best practices for creating positive school environments. “When enacted, the approach and strategies in that document will improve the school—and life—experiences of young people and give educators more tools to support young people in the school community” (MACY, *The Slow Disappearance of Matthew*, 2020, p. 13).**

Just as school teams plan and use practices to meet the diversity of individual academic programming needs, so too do they need to plan for safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environments where all students have a sense of belonging.

Many strategies can be used in a variety of settings, circumstances, and combinations to improve student presence and engagement (MEECL, [School Attendance: Information for Educators](#), 2023). A system change or enhancement should be culturally relevant and further truth and reconciliation while influencing ways of knowing, being, and doing from the entire school community (MEECL, *Mamàhtawisiwin*, 2022).

Adopting these strategies may require a paradigm shift. This shift requires looking ahead to the preventative and proactive ways schools can perform their function and influence the behaviour of all students in a positive way. These measures allow for intervention before the conduct reaches the point of suspension, thus leading to fewer incidents where suspension might be considered.