



FIVE STEPS IN PLANNING
FOR SAFETY AND BELONGING



Five Steps in Planning for Safety and Belonging

The following model illustrates **five steps** in planning for a safe and caring school. The steps use the four evidence-based perspectives in a whole-school approach outlined in the previous section: **comprehensive school health, three-tiered planning, social-ecological approach, and strengths-based practice**. In this section each step in creating a school plan for safety and belonging is outlined, along with suggested planning points.



Figure 1: A Whole-School Approach to Planning for Safety and Belonging



A **Plan for Safe and Caring Schools** is provided to support a coordination committee in outlining and documenting a school plan (see Appendix D for the **Template**; see Appendix E for a **Sample Plan**).

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Step 1

Coordination

STEP 1: COORDINATION

Promote and facilitate leadership and responsibility

School safety is a key factor in school success. School leaders, through shared and collaborative action, plan for safety and belonging as part of ongoing school improvement. A whole-school approach to planning addresses the specific strengths and needs of the school community. The steps and processes provided in this section, while presented from a school perspective, can also be used at a school division level to support and coordinate planning for school safety with other priorities of public education.

The goal of **Step 1: Coordination** is to promote and facilitate leadership and responsibility in the provision of school safety. Developing and implementing a plan for a safe and caring school is an ongoing process. This planning process is facilitated by the school principal working with a coordination committee that includes collaboration with and staff commitment to the identified outcomes.

Planning points are outlined to help guide the process. The assumption is that the safe school plan links into comprehensive school health in a broader school plan and is guided by school division policies and initiatives.

“Bullying prevention is more effective in schools where people follow a leader who empowers them with the knowledge and skills to accept responsibility for and make a commitment to stop bullying and to improve overall school climate.” (Dillon 2)



In Step 1: Coordination, consider the following points:

1.1 Role of School Principal

- Clarify purpose and initiate planning process (e.g., frame questions, collate data, establish and bring together a coordination committee, schedule meetings, and determine resource allocations).
- Review current policies, procedures, and protocols:
 - Provincial Code of Conduct
 - *Safe and Caring Schools: Taking Action Against Bullying*
 - Respect for Diversity Policy
 - *Safe and Caring Schools: A Resource for Equity and Inclusion in Manitoba Schools (MB MYGSA)*
 - *Best Practices in School-based Suicide Prevention: A Comprehensive Approach*
- Review and align planning with current school and division plans and initiatives (e.g., update existing plan or develop new plan).
- Develop awareness and engage staff to plan proactively and responsively (e.g., plan statement, use evidence, collaborative inquiry).
- Facilitate voice of the school community in the identification of needs, priorities, and commitments (e.g., students, parents, staff, and community).
- Develop professional capacity through awareness, skills, and knowledge to support students in a safe and caring school.
- Track implementation timelines and measure impact.
- Report to the school community.
- Acknowledge and celebrate success.
- Plan for safety and belonging as part of the school culture.

1.2 Coordination Committee

At the school level, establish a core coordination committee.

- Core committee representatives suggested:
 - principal
 - students
 - specialists with expertise in improving outcomes:
 - teacher (e.g., SEL outcomes)
 - school counsellor
 - resource teacher

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- positive behaviour support lead teacher
- curriculum and LICT leader
- Parent Advisory Council member
- Supplement with expertise as needed (e.g., data collector, clinician, school/home liaison, police and community services).

Note: To avoid duplication of resources, the coordination committee may include, represent, or report to the Safe School Advisory Committee (see *The Education Administration Act* (C.C.S.M. c.E10) Safe Schools Regulation found at https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/_pdf-regs.php?reg=77/2005).

1.2.1 Coordination Committee Member Roles

Members of the coordination committee take on the following roles:



Indicate members and their roles in Plan Template (Appendix D).

- Share leadership and responsibility in planning.
- Take ownership for school safety and working with the school community in seeking solutions.
- Ask questions and explore to identify needs.
- Gather and use evidence to inform decisions.
- Listen, share ideas, and embrace diverse thinking to focus goals for identified priorities.
- Reflect on evidence to monitor and evaluate plan.

Leadership, shared and collaborative, develops commitment and understanding of a whole-school approach to planning for safety and response. School principals facilitate participation of students, parents, school staff, and the community in planning for safe and caring schools. Engaging these voices and empowering members of the school community develops ownership and contributes to successful implementation. The roles and responsibilities indicated in Step 1: Coordination continue throughout the planning process.

In Step 2, a **needs assessment** is conducted to identify current strengths, needs, and priorities through a whole-school perspective. The results of the needs assessment will inform the plan.



Smith, J. D. "Improving School Climate to Reduce Bullying." *Education Canada* 52.3 (2014): 39–42. www.cea-ace.ca/education-canada/article/improving-school-climate-reduce-bullying

STEP 2: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Select and interpret evidence to identify needs and establish priorities

A **needs assessment** conducted by the coordination committee will assess the current school context to identify needs and establish priorities.

Areas to consider may include the following:

- Review policies and protocols to determine if they reflect current legislative requirements.
- Monitor evidence and stage of implementation of any existing plan.
- Conduct a review of services and resources, evidence-based practices, and programming.
- Gather and explore data to describe current school climate and perceptions of safety (e.g., demographics, sense of safety, type of bullying involvement, location, prevalence, duration, frequency, severity, patterns of bullying/concerning behaviours in the school, and/or responses to those behaviours from various perspectives).
- Ask questions and explore evidence to understand needs and seek solutions.
- Use existing data and compile evidence to inform the planning process.
- Identify possible roadblocks.

Note: **Large scale, quantitative data** identifies demographics, trends, patterns, and general implications, and can be useful in prevention planning at the school and/or school division level.

Qualitative individual and/or small group information can be particularly useful to inform planning for effective intervention and response at the individual level.

Questions can be used to review and interpret data to identify needs and establish priorities. This deeper understanding will lead to developing meaningful outcomes for planning in Step 3. The supporting data can also be used as a baseline to monitor progress.

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Step 2

Needs Assessment

“An effective exploring and discovering phase provides a shared focus for engagement and a systematic, balanced exploration of the data. In a well-structured experience, a group can mine the data more deeply and broadly than anyone working alone. This deep look helps group members see the data through others’ eyes, especially those who have different perspectives, experiences, or specialized knowledge. This process often surfaces surprising observations or observations expressed in surprising ways.” (Lipton and Wellman 30)



Lipton, Laura, and Bruce Wellman. *Got Data? Now What? Creating and Leading Cultures of Inquiry*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, 2012.

Holcomb, Edie L. *Data-Based Decision Making: Essentials for Principals*. 3rd ed. Bloomington, IN: Solutions Tree Press, 2012.

To conduct a needs assessment that addresses a whole-school approach, consider the following process:

2.1 Apply whole-school perspectives to focus a needs assessment.

Identify and categorize highlights of evidence from a variety of sources and whole-school perspectives to identify strengths and needs:

- **Comprehensive school health:** school safety, healthy relationships, school-based mental health, diversity, digital citizenship and cyber-safety, school-based suicide prevention and intervention
 - What factors are contributing to the health and well-being of students and the school climate?
 - What evidence in the school context identifies priorities to engage in a planning process for school safety?
- **Three-tiered planning:** primary, secondary, and tertiary
 - What practices, curriculum, programming, services, policy, and/or initiatives are in place, and what needs are identified?
- **Social-ecological systems:** student, parents, classroom, school, and community
 - Where are the risks and protective factors that contribute to and support school safety?
- **Strength-based practices:** Integration of SEL outcomes, planning with positive behaviour supports, and responding with restorative practices
 - How will identified needs be addressed?

2.2 Determine what evidence (data) already exists and what additional data is needed.

- What kinds of data will provide information?
- What ethical, confidentiality, and consent issues need attention?

Examples of Quantitative Data

- Tell Them From Me survey
- Early Development Instrument (EDI)
- School Climate Surveys
- Manitoba Youth Health Survey
- School data to determine prevalence of concerns (e.g., attendance, office referrals, disciplinary action reports, guidance referrals/contacts, suspensions/expulsions, guidance survey, parent contacts, team meetings, follow-up assessments, graduation rates, community services referrals)

Manitoba Data Sources:



Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning. *Manitoba Provincial Report: Tell Them From Me: Bullying and School Safety, 2013/2014*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2014. Available online at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/links.html



Partners in Planning for Healthy Living. *Manitoba Youth Health Survey Report, 2012–2013*. Winnipeg, MB: Partners in Planning for Healthy Living, 2014. Available online at <http://partners.healthincommon.ca/tools-and-resources/youth-health-survey/>.

Healthy Child Manitoba. *Early Development Instrument (EDI)*. www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/edi/

Examples of Qualitative and Descriptive Data

- observations of students
- student conferencing, goal setting, monitoring
- incident reports, student interviews, follow-up, monitoring
- identification of vulnerable/at-risk students (e.g., [re]entry meetings, transition planning, student services team meetings, grade/subject area meetings)
- interviews/focus groups to hear about particular issues, experiences, solutions (e.g., student focus group, breakfast meetings, graduate exit interviews)

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Step 2

Needs Assessment

“Groups need to stay open to multiple interpretations of why the data look as they do before developing any plans of action. Most data sets do not tell the whole story. For any explanation of causal factors to be credible, the analysis must be thoughtful and based on multiple, rich sources of information.”
(Lipton and Wellman 33)

2.3 Explore and interpret evidence to identify needs and establish priorities.

Examples of questions to generate multiple interpretations include the following:



Compile list of current strengths, needs, and priorities with corresponding evidence.

List highlights of evidence in plan template (Appendix D).

- What is the perception of students’ sense of safety? (e.g., prevalence/types/location, support, and perceived impact of and response to bullying/concerning behaviours)
- What strengths, patterns, trends, and anomalies do we see?
- What might be the reasons these patterns, trends, and anomalies exist?
- What directions for growth are indicated?
- What questions or perspectives does this evidence raise to explore further?
- What more do we need or how do we clarify data? (e.g., interviews, focus group, observation, further assessment)
- What student demographics or factors within the whole-school perspectives need specific consideration? (e.g., grade level, gender, cultural background, parent resources, SEL at primary tier)

2.4 Identify one to three priorities.

The following points can be used as a guide to determining priorities:



Record priorities in the plan template (Appendix D).

See sample plan (Appendix E).

- During exploration and interpretation from the whole-school perspectives, categorize reoccurring, prevalent, time-consuming issues.
- Identify problem areas or themes to define priority areas.
- Based on an interpretation of evidence, determine factors contributing to the identified priority area and possible solutions.
- Predict initial expected outcomes for improvement (what outcomes would have the greatest impact in the priority area[s] identified).

- Propose evidence-based implementation strategies to meet outcomes (developed further in Step 3: Evidence-Based Plan).
- Record one to three priorities to guide the plan, such as the following:
 - Connection and Community: Broaden sense of belonging and connection for all students and particularly students identified at secondary and tertiary levels.
 - Comprehensive School Health: Provide staff development on early identification of needs, facilitate collaborative planning addressing tiered programming, and identify resources to support parents.
 - Social and emotional learning for all students: Integrate SEL outcomes and continue to focus on positive behaviour supports.

Using the perspectives of the whole-school approach, with supporting evidence, the needs assessment conducted in Step 2 creates an understanding of needs and identifies existing strengths, along with areas for growth and development. Change is made when school principals, with the support of the coordinating committee, select school practices, processes, programming, curriculum, policies, and/or procedures to address identified priorities in school planning. Involving members of the school community empowers and energizes the development and implementation of a meaningful, evidence-based plan (Steps 3 and 4).



STEP 3: EVIDENCE-BASED PLAN

Develop plan to address identified priorities

The coordinating committee, with the principal, develops a school plan based on the identified needs and priorities established through a needs assessment. A school plan will focus on school processes that have an impact on student safety and on effective responses to incidents (e.g., practices, services, programming, classroom instruction, curriculum implementation, staff development, policies, and procedures).

A comprehensive plan is developed around selected priority areas and includes a plan statement, expected outcomes, indicators of success, strategies for implementation, strategies for data collection to track effectiveness, and timelines. The plan and communication of the plan guides strategic, systematic, and collaborative efforts in implementation.

“You will need to examine your data first to see what would be attainable and a goal worthy of commitment within a given time frame. We encourage schools to set goals that are at least 2 to 3 years out to give themselves the kind of longer-term strategic focus that would result in significant improvement.”
(O’Neill and Conzemius 19)

Consider the following points to guide planning:

3.1 Develop plan.



Record the plan statement in the plan template (Appendix D).

- Clarify identified priorities to frame plan.
- Determine contributing factors.
- Select evidence-based practices and processes.
- Create or update a summary plan statement to focus and communicate the plan.

3.2 Develop outcomes.

Develop one to three manageable, meaningful, clear statements of expected outcomes (SMART ones: specific, measureable, achievable, relevant, time-related).



Indicate expected outcomes in the plan template (Appendix D) with corresponding

- indicators of success
 - implementation strategies
 - data collection plan
 - timelines
- Frame the outcomes around student learning, well-being, and safety.
 - Predict indicators of success.
 - Determine implementation strategies and steps outlining what and how outcomes will be achieved.
 - Indicate the form(s) of evidence/data that will be collected to monitor progress toward achieving the expected outcomes, impact, or change over time (e.g., measures of implementation and measures of change for students and educators).
 - Include timelines for short- and/or long-term outcomes.

3.3 Specify roles and responsibilities.



See a sample school plan (Appendix E).

Who will

- lead and report on each expected outcome?
- collect, monitor, and report on the data?

3.4 Coordinate planning efforts.

- Include safe and caring school outcomes in the school plan (e.g., student services plan and/or divisional strategic plan).
- Facilitate collaboration.
- Communicate status of plan.

The coordination committee, with the school principal, and in communication with the school community, have committed to a whole-school plan for a safe and caring school. A plan statement communicates action and frames the outcomes developed around identified priority areas. With a clear, sustainable plan and using evidence-based practices and strategies, the next step is planning for **Implementation**.

STEP 4: IMPLEMENTATION

Build capacity and engage school community through collaborative action

To implement a plan for school safety and effective response, strategies and processes will reflect an understanding of the complexities of bullying behaviours. An application of the whole-school approach will build capacity and sustainability.

The plan implemented will be unique and will depend on the needs and identified priorities of the school division/school context, culture, and community (e.g., training for staff in awareness and skills, integrating SEL outcomes, positive behaviour supports, and/or restorative practices).

In the implementation process, consider the following points:

4.1 Support collaborative, strategic whole-school implementation.

- Create a calendar of implementation (e.g., strategy session, committee meetings, engaging partners, staff professional development, tiered initiatives, time frames, and monitoring).
- Determine how evidence (data) will be gathered to monitor implementation.
- Review indicators of successful implementation.
- Coordinate identified professional development to build capacity and empower school staff.
- Review and revise membership of the coordination committee for effective implementation.
- Use outcomes and supportive evidence to identify expertise required (internal and external).
- Communicate the plan and progress to the school community.
- Recognize and celebrate progress.

4.2 Chart timelines.

- Clarify methods of reporting on outcomes (e.g., strategies, indicators of success, and data collection).
- Determine how often and when the coordination committee will meet.
- Respond to individual and group needs.
- Adjust outcomes and timelines.

In **Step 5**, the coordination committee will monitor the flow of implementation. Throughout the implementation process, communication on the status of the plan is key and is facilitated within the coordination committee and with members of the school community.

STEP 5: MONITOR, REFLECT, AND EVALUATE

Review plan, reflect on evidence, and identify next steps

The coordination committee monitors and reviews the implementation strategies and indicators of success toward the expected outcomes identified in the school plan. Based on the timeline established, the committee will reflect upon the evidence for each outcome, evaluate to identify next steps or if changes are required, and accommodate newly identified findings and/or needs. Each plan will be unique to the school's context.

5.1 Monitor and review plan.

- Provide regular, scheduled opportunities for staff to reflect on the implementation process.
- Monitor expected outcomes.
- Attend to timelines (revise or adjust if needed).
- Identify any barriers to implementation.
- Invite feedback from committee members and school staff (their roles, the support received, suggestions for improvement).
- Revisit plan statement (yearly).
- Celebrate and communicate accomplishments (acknowledge shared action).

5.2 Reflect on evidence.

- Select and compile data to compare to baseline data from needs assessment.
- Determine additional data needed for ongoing planning.
- Interpret data to gauge expected change.
- Review outcomes where change is not evident (e.g., implementation strategies, support and resources, evidence-based strategies, and educator expertise).
- Make recommendations.
- Report to school community (students, staff, parents/caregivers, community) on progress, findings, and next steps through methods such as the following:
 - student groups
 - staff meeting updates
 - parent council meeting
 - school newsletter, website

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Step 5

Monitor, Reflect, and Evaluate

5.3 Evaluate plan and identify next steps.

- Compile a list of initiatives and programming for continued support, and identify new needs/priorities.
- Build upon or redirect planning in identified priority areas based on analyzed data.
- Identify next steps to sustain momentum and continue building capacity (extend, revise, or create new plan).
- Confirm roles and responsibilities of coordinating committee members and school staff.
- Note lessons learned.
- Celebrate and communicate accomplishments.

All members of the school community need to feel a sense of belonging and safety. Working together and building upon existing resources and strengths, schools implement plans to address identified priorities and respond effectively to behaviours that have an impact on student safety and well-being. With leadership, intentional planning, and shared responsibility, schools provide safe learning environments.