



Minister's office (CM-2)
PO Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

March 3, 2023

Kate White, MLA
Yukon Legislative Assembly
PO Box 2703
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 0N6

Dear MLA White:

Re: Protection for Students

Thank you for your letter dated February 7, 2023. The health, safety and well-being of students in our care is our first priority. The Safe and Caring Schools Policy outlines our expectations that all members of our school community must treat each other with dignity and respect at all times. In addition, the policy is clear that physical or sexualized harassment or assault is also unacceptable.


Yukon Department of Education takes allegations or reports of harm to students very seriously. In situations where school staff are made aware of allegations of student-to-student harm, we have a variety of tools at our disposal. Students are responsible to the Principal of the school for their conduct while at school and while involved in school-related activities. Our response to reported or observed peer-to-peer harm on the part of students includes disciplinary procedures as outlined in the School Code of Conduct where progressive discipline consequences including suspension are established. Families are notified regarding their child's involvement in such incidents and are invited to participate as partners with school Administration as situations of student misbehavior and student harm are addressed. Always schools seek to provide support to those involved.

Finding a restorative path forward focused on new learning and mutual respect is the desired goal. The Department's Post-Incident Communications Guidelines assist Administrators in making school communities aware of concerning situations that have been observed by students not involved or experienced by the school community as a whole. The Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol, designed to assist school-based personnel when considering the level of risk a particular situation may pose, is activated where warranted. This protocol outlines how School Administration and the Department of Education works with other agencies to assess risk of harm and to plan forward for support to students involved.

We recognize that addressing student-to-student violence involves families and community partners, each with specific expertise, roles and mandates. For example, where there is an immediate risk to a student or an indication that criminal behavior may have taken place, school staff are directed to call 911 or the local RCMP detachment as a first step. The Department of Health and Social Services may be involved, through Family and Children's Services, or because of the involvement of health professionals, such as social workers or mental health counsellors. The Department of Justice, through the Sexual Assault Response Team or Project Lynx (Yukon Response to Child Victims and Witnesses), may also be involved.

Your expression of concern is appreciated. We are always working to improve the safety of students in our care. I have passed on your letter to department officials for their consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J McLean". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of the first name being a large, stylized capital 'J'.

Jeanie McLean
Minister of Education