



HARASSMENT POLICY

MLCP recognizes the inherent right of all individuals to be treated with dignity and respect. Consequently, MLCP believes that every employee has the right to freedom from harassment while in the workplace. Reports will be taken seriously and responded to in a timely manner. Reports of harassment should be documented for clarity and confidentiality will be respected by both parties. Together, both parties can discuss the means of moving forward.

MLCP is committed to:

- ❖ Creating a working and teaching environment which fosters mutual respect among staff, parents and students;
- ❖ Supporting, assisting and educating its staff, parents, volunteers and students with respect to harassment;
- ❖ Working with staff to recognize any roadblocks in this process and making sure understanding and support are in place.

Harassment is defined as engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome. Harassment is a term recognized in law as either criminal or civil harassment. In both cases there are four types of harassment: oral, physical, telecommunications, and written.

Criminal harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- ❖ Oral: vague threats or innuendoes or repeated communications that give rise to a genuine concern for personal safety;
- ❖ Physical: leering or besetting stalking;
- ❖ Telecommunications: conveying vague threats or innuendoes or repeated communications that give rise to a genuine concern for safety;
- ❖ Written: vague threats or innuendoes or repeated communication conveyed in writing, on paper or electronic mail, which give rise to a genuine concern for safety.

Civil harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- ❖ Oral: shouting, swearing or the use of personally demeaning, sarcastic expressions;



- ❖ Physical: intentionally using an intimidating presence or entering MLCP property without permission;
- ❖ Telecommunications: numerous and lengthy calls that disrupt an employee's ability to attend to duties;
- ❖ Written: frequent detailed, frivolous or vexatious written complaints that require an employee to spend inordinate time investigating, thus distracting the employee from attending to duties.

Parental /Legal Guardian Harassment may be understood as persistent parental or community criticism of, or interference with, school programs or teacher performance or a course of interaction that is vexatious, unwarranted or unsubstantiated. Parental Harassment does not include the normal interaction of parents with school staff regarding their children.

Defamation of character is commonly defined as making public or available to a third person, words or matter containing an untrue attribution which impugns the character of another. Such communication in writing is called libel. When the communication is conveyed orally, it is called slander.

Workplace is defined as offices, staff rooms, classrooms, cafeterias/lunch rooms, hallways and other MLCP property; events associated with and including co-instructional and extra-curricular activities; situations outside of MLCP-operated premises such as field trips, external work assignments, work-related conferences,, training sessions, travel or social gatherings; in general any place where employees, students and other users perform work or work-related duties or functions.

Goals for Establishing a Harassment-Free Environment

In order to ensure that a safe, secure, and affirming environment exists in our schools, it is understood that the following must exist:

- ❖ Procedures and protocols which clearly establish the roles and responsibilities of staff, parents and students
- ❖ Education of all staff, parents and students of the rights and responsibilities of individuals and of expectations for a safe, secure and affirming environment
- ❖ Assurance that staff and parents are aware of this harassment protocol
- ❖ Consistent and decisive implementation of the Safe Schools Policy



Administrative Implementation Guidelines

Administrators will be responsible for ensuring that all MLCP employees, and those using the services of MLCP are aware of MLCP's commitment to providing a harassment-free environment and the existence of the procedures available under this protocol.

MLCP Administration Employees Shall:

- ❖ Provide the training and resources for all those working for and using the services of MLCP to fulfil their responsibilities under this protocol
- ❖ Work to actively discourage and prevent parent-related harassment of staff
- ❖ Provide appropriate procedural assistance to staff complaining of harassment
- ❖ Investigate every complaint of harassment
- ❖ Acknowledge formally to a person found to have been harassed that harassment has taken place and to provide the student with support and assistance, as appropriate
- ❖ Impose appropriate remedial and preventative measures, consequences and enforcement
- ❖ Maintain records as required by this protocol
- ❖ Review regularly the procedures of this protocol to ensure that they adequately meet the protocol objectives.

Identifying the Signs and Symptoms of Harassment

Actions that constitute harassment:

- ❖ Verbal or physical
- ❖ Repeated or singular
- ❖ Deliberate
- ❖ Unwelcome
- ❖ Harassment is action which humiliates, insults, degrades, frightens.



Harassing actions may include:

- ❖ Unwelcome sexual overtures (verbal, physical, written, electronic, etc.)
- ❖ Graffiti
- ❖ Vague threats or innuendoes
- ❖ Vandalism
- ❖ Put-downs
- ❖ Name calling
- ❖ Verbal or non-verbal taunts
- ❖ Negative personal comments
- ❖ Suggestion of unpleasant smells
- ❖ Laughing at someone's condition
- ❖ Mocking an individual's mannerisms or speech
- ❖ Untoward remarks or jokes about sexual orientation or gender
- ❖ Insults related to someone's race, colour, citizenship, place of origin, ancestry, ethnic background, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, physical or mental disability or age.

Possible outcomes of harassment for victims:

- ❖ The individual may feel agitated, anxious or emotionally drained
- ❖ The individual may become uncomfortable when a particular person comes close
- ❖ Increasingly doubtful of abilities
- ❖ A feeling of being singled out, or picked on
- ❖ Concerned for personal safety
- ❖ That a change of employment may be necessary for mental / physical health
- ❖ That no one will believe the claim of harassment, or general helplessness
- ❖ That maybe they had actually provoked the harassment
- ❖ Ashamed and isolated
- ❖ Overwhelmed

Procedures for Responding to Parental Harassment

The following is the recommended procedure and need not be followed in the order outlined, dependent upon the nature and severity of the complaint (incident).



Speak Up

A staff member who considers that she/he has been subjected to harassment is encouraged to bring the matter to the attention of the parent responsible, making direct and clear objection while referencing the protocol. The staff member should document all parent interactions (dates, times, places, witnesses, details of the incident, including quotes) and retain all written materials (memos, letters, e-mails, faxes). The matter is resolved if the behaviour ceases.

Obtain Assistance

If bringing the matter to the attention of the parent does not produce a satisfactory result, the staff member should seek assistance from the principal/supervisor, documenting contact. A meeting with the principal/supervisor and the staff member should take place to ascertain evidence of behaviour with reference to the harassment protocol and assess whether harassment has occurred.

If the principal/supervisor does not believe that harassment has occurred, he/she will provide support to resolve the staff member's concerns.

If the principal/supervisor believes that harassment may have occurred, then she/he will meet with the parent to outline the staff member's complaint to determine/confirm if the parental behaviour constitutes harassment under the parental harassment protocol. After such meeting, the principal/supervisor will advise the staff member that such meeting has occurred and provide any appropriate information with respect to follow-up by the school.

If harassment is confirmed, the parent will be cautioned regarding his/her conduct. The principal/supervisor will also provide the parent with a copy of the *Communication Guideline for Parents/Guardians* and the *Parental Harassment Policy*.

A follow-up meeting with the principal/supervisor, the staff member and the parent, to focus on restoring the parent/staff member relationship, is advisable. The matter is considered resolved if the behaviour ceases.



Further Investigation

If the matter is unresolved and the behaviour persists, then the principal/supervisor and staff member will meet with the Appropriate Authority. The Appropriate Authority will conduct an investigation, including liaison with the police, to determine the full extent of the situation and decide the next course of action, which may include but is not limited to the following:

- ❖ A cautionary letter from the principal or supervisor
- ❖ A cautionary letter from legal counsel
- ❖ A Trespass to Property Act letter
- ❖ A letter from legal counsel to the parent concerned (involved)

In the event that these steps are unsuccessful, the Appropriate Authority shall consult with the appointed Provincial Minister of Education.

Documentation

All reports and documentation gathered under this protocol will be dealt with in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Communication Guidelines for Parents/Guardians

MLCP is committed to providing the best quality learning opportunities by encouraging and promoting the partnership and cooperation of home and school. To achieve this goal, open and on-going communication is essential. If you have concerns, the following guidelines will support positive and effective communication.

All communication with MLCP employees, staff, volunteers, etc. should be conducted in a respectful manner, free from hostility and/or harassment.

Step One: Contact the Teacher

Write a note or make a phone call to set up an appointment. Spontaneous discussions at the classroom door are discouraged due to the interruption of instruction, the issue of confidentiality, as well as time constraints.

Step Two: Contact the Principal



Write a note or make a phone call to set up an appointment. The principal will ask you to speak with the teacher if you have not already done so. The principal will involve the teacher in discussions and may, at any time in the process, request that parents put their concerns in writing. If the matter remains unresolved at the school level, the principal or parent may contact the Superintendent of Education.

Protection Against Reprisal

Parties involved in an occurrence are prohibited from seeking retaliation. If you experience any retaliatory action or threat of retaliatory action from the responding party, witnesses, management, or other people within or outside the organization, please inform the office immediately.