

# Considerations for program planning

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## Healthy Relationships

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Every student is entitled to learn in a safe, caring environment, free from discrimination, violence, and harassment. Research has shown that students learn and achieve better in such environments. A safe and supportive social environment in a

school is founded on healthy relationships – the relationships between students, between students and adults, and between adults. Healthy relationships are based on respect, caring, empathy, trust, and dignity, and thrive in an environment in which diversity is honoured and accepted. Healthy relationships do not tolerate abusive, controlling, violent, bullying/harassing, or other inappropriate behaviours. To experience themselves as valued and connected members of an inclusive social environment, students need to be involved in healthy relationships with their peers, educators, and other members of the school community.

Several provincial policies, programs, and initiatives, including [Foundations for a Healthy School](#), the [Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy](#), and [Safe Schools](#), are designed to foster caring and safe learning environments in the context of healthy and inclusive schools. These policies and initiatives promote positive learning and teaching environments that support the development of healthy relationships, encourage academic achievement, and help all students reach their full potential.

In its 2008 report, *[Shaping a Culture of Respect in Our Schools: Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships](#)*, the Safe Schools Action Team confirmed “that the most effective way to enable all students to learn about healthy and respectful relationships is through the school curriculum” (p. 11). Educators can promote this learning in a variety of ways. For example, by giving students opportunities to apply critical thinking and problem-solving strategies and to address issues through group discussions, role play, case study analysis, and other means, they can help them develop and practise the skills they need for building healthy relationships. Co-curricular activities such as clubs and intramural and interschool sports provide additional opportunities for the kind of interaction that helps students build healthy relationships. Educators can also have a positive influence on students by modelling the behaviours, values, and skills that are needed to develop and sustain healthy relationships, and by taking advantage of “teachable moments” to address immediate relationship issues that may arise among students.