



KINDNESS IS THE KEY TO HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS AT SCHOOL

CONTEXT

The Anti-Bullying and Violence Awareness Week at School was created in 2012 as part of the Government Strategy Against Bullying and Violence in the Schools. It takes place each year at the beginning of October and coincides with the International Day of Non-Violence, decreed by the United Nations for October 2.

In 2015, the Week's activities used an approach founded on positive communication, caring relationships and acceptance of difference. In 2016, the approach was one that encouraged students to become involved, develop positive communication skills and help to create a safe, positive and caring school climate.

The theme selected for the 2017 edition is *Kindness is the key to harmonious interpersonal relationships in school*. The Week will have its official launch on October 2, 2017.

Link with the Policy on Educational Success: Mission: To socialize, to prepare students to live together in harmony: “In a pluralistic society such as ours, schools must act as agents of social cohesion by fostering a feeling of belonging to the community and teaching students how to live together. This means that they must transmit the heritage of shared knowledge, promote the fundamental values of democracy and prepare young people to become responsible citizens. They must likewise prevent exclusion, which jeopardizes the future of too many young people.” (25)

Link with the Policy on Educational Success: Challenge 5, An inclusive, healthy, safe, stimulating and creative environment, Orientation 5.1, “Offer a welcoming, safe and caring living environment that fosters discussion, communication and enriching personal and social relationships.” (p. 57)¹

1. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, *Policy on Educational Success* (Québec, 2017) 25 and 57.
http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/politiques_orientations/politique_reussite_educative_10juillet_A_1.pdf

UNDERSTANDING THE THEME

WHAT DOES KINDNESS MEAN?

- It is a desire to strive for the good and happiness of others.
- It means viewing others in a caring, understanding and non-judgmental manner, wanting them to feel well and being vigilant on their behalf. (Catherine Gueguen, [Translation])
- It is being generous toward others, attentive to their needs, wanting what is good for them and clearly and consistently demonstrating that we feel this way. (Claire Beaumont, [Translation])

In the context of this year's theme, kindness refers to **small, everyday actions that are imbued with good will and kindness and are a part of taking care of ourselves, others and our environment.**

Words associated with kindness: friendliness, respect, empathy, openness, patience, attending to, supporting, welcoming, helping, accompanying, soothing, preventing, etc.

Kindness is a crucial component of healthy relationships in school. The *Chaire de recherche sur la sécurité et la violence en milieu éducatif* recommends working to promote a safe, positive and caring school environment with a view to preventing violence and bullying. Other researchers have demonstrated a strong correlation between a positive environment and quality of learning, academic success and the level of victimization at school (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale - Direction générale de l'enseignement scolaire/Observatoire International de la Violence à l'École, *Le "climat scolaire": définition, effets et conditions d'amélioration*, E. Debarbieux et al., (Paris, 2012) <http://www.cafepedagogique.net/lexpresso/Documents/docsjoints/climat-scolaire2012.pdf>).

THE WEEK'S OBJECTIVES

- To promote caring behaviour and harmonious interpersonal relationships.
- To enable adults and students to express themselves in a constructive and kind manner, and to act as models of harmonious interpersonal relationships in school.

Anti-Bullying and Violence Awareness Week at School is an opportunity to explore the theme *Kindness is the key to harmonious interpersonal relationships at school* and to act in such a way that educational activities throughout the year stem directly from it. If they are to have positive effects, these activities must, among other things, meet following criteria of effectiveness:

- have one or more clear, precise aims relating to a pre-defined problem in the school
- be planned and coordinated
- suggest intervention based on proven, documented practices
- be educational in nature and suited to the development stage of the children or adolescents concerned
- be designed to build skills and introduce protective elements into a safe and caring environment
- encourage involvement by as many people as possible at different levels (including school staff members and students)
- take place within a context and be connected to other actions (past, simultaneous or future) at the school
- leave visual evidence that can be reinvested or used to remind students of the concepts addressed during the year

- encourage students to become actively involved in their learning, motivate them and reinforce their sense of well-being
- promote a sense of belonging and commitment on the part of both students and adults
- do not have detrimental impacts that are contrary to the desired positive impacts

These activities must be part of a comprehensive, systemic process designed to help schools reflect on and take action against violence, promote healthy and caring relationships, and build a safe and positive climate. This process, proposed by the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, will allow the school team to think collectively about its values and its commitment to and promotion of interventions to foster harmonious interpersonal relationships in school.

POSSIBLE WAYS THE RSO CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT

- Explore the theme of kindness and harmonious relationships in school during meetings with:
 - local support officers
 - regional administration roundtables (directors general, directors of educational services, etc.)
 - school principal roundtables
 - resource groups
 - regional support personnel and specialists
 - various resource people at the school boards
- Assist the local support officers and the school boards in their mobilization and roll-out strategies.
- Make connections between the theme and various projects throughout the year.
- Promote the ministerial tools.
- Encourage the sharing of achievements among the school boards (review of local initiatives).
- Join forces with a researcher in their region.
- Use regional levers (regional days, forums, symposia, biannual newsletters, etc.) to explore the theme.

POSSIBLE WAYS OF SUPPORTING THE SCHOOL BOARDS

- Make kindness in interpersonal relationships an important value for the school board, staff and students.
- Make connections between the theme and the school board's commitment-to-success plan, and between the theme and the school's educational project.
- In conjunction with the local support officer, present the theme, the effectiveness criteria and possible activities to the school board.
- Discuss the climate within the schoolboard and in the schools, as well as its effects.
- Define various actions that could have a positive influence on the quality of interpersonal relationships.