

Bill 157: Reporting and responding to serious incidents in schools

Date : August 1, 2009

On June 1, 2009, the Ontario government passed Bill 157, the *Education Amendment Act (Keeping Our Kids Safe at School) 2009* which amends Part XIII (Behaviour, Discipline and Safety) of the *Education Act*. The Bill 157 provisions are scheduled to come into force on February 1, 2010. The Legislature's stated objective is to address reporting gaps between teachers, principals and parents about serious student incidents that could lead to suspension or expulsion.

The Bill 157 amendments will make it mandatory for school staff to report violent incidents to the school principal. School principals will be required to notify the parents of students who are victims of serious incidents. The new provisions are the first of their kind in Canada and follow in the wake of a study from the Safe Schools Task Force which investigated gender-based violence, homophobia, and sexual harassment in Ontario schools.

REPORTING TO THE PRINCIPAL

Under Bill 157, employees of school boards will be required to report to the principal, as soon as is reasonably possible, after becoming aware that a student may have engaged in any of the activities listed in subsections 306(1) or 310(1) of Part XIII of the *Education Act*. These activities, listed below, are those that result in a possible suspension or a possible expulsion, respectively.

Subsection 306(1) of the *Education Act* Activities leading to possible suspension

1. Uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm on another person.
2. Possessing alcohol or illegal drugs.
3. Being under the influence of alcohol.
4. Swearing at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority.
5. Committing an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property at the pupil's school or to property located on the premises of the pupil's school.
6. Bullying.

7. Any other activity that is an activity for which a principal may suspend a pupil under a policy of the board.