



S A C E

South African Council for Educators

Towards Excellence in Education



Teachers' Safety and Security in South African Schools: A Handbook

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Foreword



At the heart of any education system lies the quality of educators who are pivotal to teaching and learning in our schools. Indisputably, educators' conducive working conditions equal learners' quality learning conditions. Equally, as reflected in the South African Council for Educators' (SACE) professional teaching standards, educators are national assets whose professional work builds classroom communities and contributes to nurturing school communities as a whole. Thus, SACE has a responsibility to protect educators and the teaching profession alike, as well as maintaining the profession's image, integrity and status, particularly when it is attacked.

SACE joins the National Development Plan, various laws, policies and frameworks, and institutions in advocating for the respect of constitutional rights and human dignity, along with safety and security, as preconditions for quality teaching and learning environment in schools.

More so, Council has the responsibility to respond to the erosion of the fundamental values that unite school communities and act as a moral compass that provides direction and guidance in our schools, communities and homes. Notwithstanding the importance of the entire school community, the erosion of the values and violation of the human rights culture in schools has resulted in educators, amongst others, being at the receiving end of various forms of violence in schools. The nation should recognise that educators' rights are human rights and human rights stand against violence. Educators, like all others in the school community, are entitled to dignity, respect and protection within the whole school safety and security context.

As a source of reference and guidance, the **Teachers' Safety and Security in South African Schools: A Handbook** aims to provide educators with access to their rights and responsibilities regarding violence in schools. It also provides further guidance on how educators should protect themselves in violent situations they may confront in the school environment. Likewise, the handbook assists educators to know what action to take to decrease the risk of violence against every member of the school community. In this way, the handbook provides educators with an opportunity to create a safe school environment and perform their daily roles and responsibilities without fear and intimidation from others within the school community.

This user-friendly and resourceful handbook is divided into five steps underpinned by a whole school approach, and includes scenarios that might be applicable to an everyday situation in a school environment. The five steps include understanding violence; understanding roles and responsibilities; understanding the risks of violence in your school; taking action in potentially violent situations; and evaluating, reflecting and improving processes and actions.

Moreover, as part of its legislative advisory role, Council will present a policy brief on the safety and security of educators in schools for consideration. Council will also engage in the process of capacitating educators to mediate the handbook through numerous modes across all provinces. Council is looking forward to your fruitful engagements with the handbook, together with some reflections and feedback to enhance it continuously.

Ella Mokgalane

Chief Executive Officer

Acronyms

DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	District Based Support Team
EAP	Employee Assistance Programmes
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
FBO	Faith-based Organisation
GBV	Gender-based Violence
HOD	Head of Department
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
NGO	Non-government Organisation
NSSF	National School Safety Framework
NSVS	National School Violence Study
OHSA	Occupational Health and Safety Act
PBST	Provincial-based Support Team
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SADTU	South African Democratic Educators' Union
SAPS	South African Police Services
SASA	South African Schools Act
SBST	School Based Support Team
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SSC	School Safety Committee
WHO	World Health Organization

Definitions

Code of Conduct:

This document spells out the rules regarding learner behaviour at school and describes the disciplinary system to be implemented by the school concerning transgressions by learners. All learners are bound by the Code of Conduct of their school.

District-based Support Teams:

Groups of departmental professionals whose responsibility it is to promote inclusive education through training, curriculum delivery, distribution of resources, identifying, assessing and addressing barriers to learning, leadership and general management.

Educator:

Any person, who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services including professional therapy and education psychological services. Examples: educator, principal, SMT member, office-based educator.

Expulsion:

Permanent prohibition of a learner from attending the school concerned if found guilty of serious misconduct. This can only be sanctioned by the Head of the respective Provincial Education Department.

In Loco Parentis:

Latin term for "in the position of parents". Educators are expected to act in the place of parents who have entrusted to them the custody and control of their children, with the expectation of providing the same level of care.

Learner:

Any person enrolled in an education institution as defined in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

Parent:

- The biological or adoptive parent or legal guardian of a learner
- The person legally entitled to custody of a learner
- The person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations towards the learner's education at the school

School:

An education institution which enrolls learners in one or more grades from grade R to grade 12.

School-based Support Teams:

Teams established by schools whose primary function is to put in place co-ordinated school, learner and educator support services.

School Governing Body:

A statutory body that governs the school and ensures it runs smoothly. Through the South African Schools Act it gives the school principal and elected members the right to make policies around a range of issues that are in the best interests of the values and beliefs of the school.

School Management Team:

The team managing the school that comprises the principal, deputy principal and heads of department whose roles are to support and assist the principal in the management of the schools.

School Safety Committee:

A subcommittee of the School Governing Body that ensures the health and safety of the learners and staff of the school.

Serious Misconduct:

A set of behavioural norms, usually referred to in a school's Code of Conduct, which, if transgressed, a learner may be charged with and/or found guilty of.

Suspension:

The precautionary measure of temporary prohibition of a learner from attending school, due to misconduct or suspected misconduct.

Teacher:

A school-based educator whose core responsibility is that of classroom teaching at a school.

Whole School Approach:

An approach that is guided by the values, preferences and involvement of the whole school community, including teachers, non-teaching staff, learners, parents, departmental structures and community organisations.

Introduction

Purpose of this handbook

This handbook aims to provide a way forward for educators by serving as a user-friendly reference and giving every educator access to information on his/her rights and responsibilities regarding violence in schools; how to protect him/herself in violent situations in the school environment; and most importantly, what action to take to decrease the risk of violence against every member of the school community, both near, or in, schools and classrooms.

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) ⁽¹⁾, any person, who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services is an educator. A teacher, on the other hand, is defined as a school-based educator whose core responsibility is that of classroom teaching at a school. In this handbook we have chosen to use “educator” throughout as it is the more inclusive term.

As much as children should be provided with a safe learning environment, educators also need to be provided with a safe work environment, so that they can carry out their duties with confidence. ⁽¹⁾

It is SACE’s hope that this handbook will help educators create a safe school environment and deliver lessons without fear and intimidation for or from their learners. In this way, hopefully, the passion for the education profession and educator morale will be regained, and, as importantly, educators will be able to empower their learners to develop healthy psychological and social attitudes and behaviours which will, as a result, benefit the whole of South Africa.

How should this handbook be used?

This handbook is divided into five steps. Each gives you, the educator, a framework which can be used and applied in your daily practices.

We have included a number of symbols or icons throughout the handbook.



We have included a number of **scenarios**. They provide real examples given to SACE by South African school educators. We hope that you will be able to relate to some of them, that they will make you think and reflect, and apply alternatives to your own situation and environment.



The **reflection** exercises provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your own circumstances and make changes and adaptations. These reflection exercises are for you alone and we are not asking you to share them with anyone else (of course you can if you wish). However, we are asking you to be as honest as possible – we are all human, we all make mistakes, and we all have the capacity to change and learn.



The **knowledge** boxes contain additional interesting facts and information that may help contextualise or give background to the content being discussed.



You will see the icon **suggestion box** throughout the handbook. These provide a range of practical examples, ideas and processes which you may want to implement in your classroom and school.



We have also included extracts from a range of South African **newspaper articles**. We have displayed these to look like real articles.

We have chosen to use a whole school approach as a framework to identify what is in place to address violence, to identify the gaps, to develop a plan to fill the gaps and thereafter, to reflect on what progress has been made.

The framework underpinning this handbook provides a practical approach to reducing the risk of violence in schools, and focusses on five distinct steps. Within each step we firstly identify and recognise the problem and then suggest actions that could be taken. ⁽²⁾



A whole school approach means making it the responsibility of the entire school community to work collaboratively to ensure a culture that improves the schooling experience of learners, and the wellbeing of all roleplayers. A whole school approach recognises that a supportive, safe and inclusive school culture needs commitment from all stakeholders and roleplayers in the school community including school staff, parents, learners, community- and faith-based organisations and community members.

A whole school approach also means that an inclusive culture is reflected in the school's policies, practices and procedures and entrenched through the collaborative action of all.

Five-step Whole School Approach to Reducing the Risk of Violence in Schools



Before we begin, it is essential to understand what violence is and the various forms that violence can take, specifically within the school environment.

This is addressed in **Step 1**.

1

Understanding violence

- ▶ What is violence?
 - ▶ What are the various forms of violence?
-

Step 2 identifies and explains the roles and responsibilities of those who are responsible for playing a part in reducing the risk of violence in schools i.e. the roleplayers. The roleplayers include school staff and management, parents, learners, community- and faith-based organisations and community members.

In this step we discuss the meaning of the whole school approach where roleplayers work together towards a shared vision. The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasises the importance of reducing violence in schools in order to improve educational outcomes and targets. ^(2.P3)

2

Understanding roles and responsibilities

- ▶ Who are the roleplayers?
 - ▶ What are their roles and responsibilities?
 - ▶ What policies should be put in place?
-

Step 3 provides guidance on understanding the risks in your own school. It provides a practical method for identifying “hotspots” and high-risk areas.

3

Understanding the risk of violence in your school

- ▶ What can the various roleplayers do?
 - ▶ Understanding your school environment
-

Step 4 addresses the practical side of how to take action. It outlines processes that can be followed, both in a school situation and in the classroom.

4

Taking preventative action in potentially violent situations

- ▶ Understand the situation
 - ▶ Deal with the situation
 - ▶ Diffuse the situation
 - ▶ Reflect on the situation
-

Step 5 identifies the need to evaluate and reflect on processes and actions in order to improve and reduce risk. It also reflects on the relevance and effectiveness of policies, as well as adaptive behaviour and attitudes amongst the roleplayers.

5

Evaluating, reflecting and improving processes and actions

- ▶ Reflection and evaluation
 - ▶ Act now
-

Steps 1, 2 and 3 lay the foundation for understanding the problem of violence in schools and evaluating the extent and risk of violence in schools. Step 4 provides practical recommendations for possible solutions, and outlines suggested actions. Step 5 encourages reflection and feeds back into Step 3, thus encouraging the school's roleplayers to reflect on their current situation and adapt to changes. This cycle ensures that all roleplayers work towards a shared vision, constantly and consistently improving on strategies, processes and policies.

During the course of this handbook we are going to ask you to consider your experiences, your beliefs, your values and your actions. We can learn to take difficult and harrowing experiences and use them to become stronger. We can think about how we dealt with a situation and possibly find an alternative. We can ask for input, assistance and support from management and colleagues. We urge you to engage with an open mind and a positive outlook.

Overview

There have been some disturbing incidents of school violence and bullying. Motshekga said that it has been troubling to see an increase in contact violence among learners.

Fourways Review, 1 October 2020^[3]

The statistics reaffirmed the fact that there is a major correlation between inequality and violence in schools and addressing the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment within communities would go a long way in reducing incidents of violence, particularly at schools.

Naidoo, E, Sunday Independent, 15 September 2019^[4]

The scale of the problem in South Africa

The school environment is supposed to be a safe space for everyone within the school system - learners, educators, management and support staff. In fact, our Bill of Rights protects the rights of learners to learn and educators to teach in an environment that is safe and free from all forms of violence.

Unfortunately, however, the school environment is not always like this. While one of the most important roles of the educator is to provide a safe place, conducive to learning, educators themselves are facing dangerous and uncomfortable situations both inside and outside the classroom and school.

NAPTOSA argues that violence in schools is a reflection of South African society, generally. When pupils see adults manhandling one another in high places of society such as Legislatures and Parliament they start to think that violence is an acceptable norm to resolve differences.

NAPTOSA has been inundated with disturbing testimonials concerning

the levels of violence against teachers in schools, said Mr Ntantala, President of NAPTOSA... Violence in schools has resulted in some teachers leaving the profession. People in positions of authority in communities should intervene in order to safeguard the integrity of the teaching profession.

Media Release: NAPTOSA condemns violence against teachers in schools, 17 September 2018^[52]

Research conducted by the Youth Research Unit (YRU) of the Bureau of Market Research (BMR) of people interviewed, 11% of pupils considered suicide after experiencing school violence, and almost half (47%) of the teachers who participated in the YRU@BMR study considered resigning from their positions.

TimesLIVE, 26 August 2020^[5]

In the same way as children should be provided with a safe learning environment, so educators also need to be provided with a safe work environment, so that they can carry out their duties with confidence.

Violence in our schools is an ongoing problem and impacts on our learners. We know that violence leads to poor academic performance, high absentee rates as well as an increase in dropouts, and can even lead to an increase in child suicide.

Violence in schools has a similar impact on educators. Just as with learners, violence directed against educators can include threats, harassment, victimization, bullying and sexual harassment. The study by the Youth Research Unit (YRU) of the Bureau of Market Research (BMR)⁽⁹⁾ reported that almost half of educators in Gauteng had considered resigning. Many educators fear for their safety, and suffer from depression, burnout or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

It is crucial to address violence against educators, because educators - like every other roleplayer in the school community - have clear and defined rights. Another equally important reason is that if you are a victimized educator,

you cannot carry out your work to the best of your ability. International research has shown that educators who experience violence or harassment are absent from school more often, and are less prepared than educators who are not victims of violence. These educators may try to be transferred to another school, seek early retirement or even leave the teaching profession. It is difficult to stay motivated and enthusiastic when relationships between you, the educator, and your learners, or their parents, are strained or have broken down.



SA Democratic Educators' Union (SADTU) on Sunday expressed serious concern over provincial statistics which reveal over 60 attacks on educators in the province

during the first quarter... and includes threats, insults, sexual abuse, criminal assault, and robbery.

Cape Argus, 17 September 2018⁽⁷⁾

No school is an island

As much as children should be provided with a safe learning environment, educators also need to be provided with a safe work environment, so that they can carry out their duties with confidence. ⁽¹⁾

Schools are an integral part of the community, and an integral part of society. In fact, schools are also part of the wider community, and often a mirror image of the community they service. In other words, in a violent community it would not be unusual to see violent behaviour in its schools. Sadly, in many of our communities, violence is so common that is accepted as a normal way of life. Like a virus, it can overflow into schools and turn what should be a safe space into a violent space.

The DBE has provided a framework for a whole school approach – a strategy advocated for in the 2008 National School Violence Study (NSVS), following the recognition that a school comprises several interdependent components, including learners, educators, principals, parents, school bodies and teams. ⁽⁹⁾ As a school we are part and parcel of our communities. Schools cannot work effectively in isolation – they need to reach out to their community structures for help, support and networking.

Neither are you, the educator, an island. In order to deal effectively with violence all roleplayers – comprising learners, administrators, management and educators, as well as parents and community members – must see themselves as an integral part of the safety of all.

As an educator you are aware that there are external factors (for example, gangsterism) and internal factors (for example, school leadership and management) that affect the safety of educators in a school environment. These factors have significant implications for the ways in which schools are organized and managed, and the ways in which learners do or do not see themselves as part of a genuine school community. In order to be in a position where you, the educator, are able to respond with the best course of action if/when you encounter a threatening or provocative situation, you need to be fully aware of both your rights and your responsibilities.



The essence of the African philosophy of ubuntu is the belief that human beings cannot exist in isolation – we depend upon each other. Archbishop Desmond Tutu explained the concept as “A person is a person through other persons.” And stated that “ubuntu ... speaks of the very essence of being human... It is to say, ‘My humanity is inextricably bound up in yours.’ We belong in a bundle of life”.

(9, P34 – 35)



The 2012 National School Violence Study highlighted the extent to which family and community factors intersect with the levels of violence occurring at schools. The results showed that by the time young people enter secondary school many of them have already been exposed to violence, either as victims or witnesses, in their homes or communities.

- More than a tenth of the participants (in the research) had seen people in their family intentionally hurting one another
- One in ten learners had themselves been assaulted at home
- Half of the sample had witnessed a physical fight in their community ^(10, Pxxi)

How big is the problem internationally?

Violence in schools is a problem throughout the world. According to UNESCO ⁽¹¹⁾, an estimate by an international NGO, Plan International, suggests that 246 million children and adolescents experience violence in and around school every year.

Globally, slightly more than one in three students between 13 and 15 years of age has said they experience bullying, and about one in three has been involved in physical fights.

“... in different contexts around the world and regardless of significant differences in education systems, violence has a negative impact on the well-being of the educators affected as well as on the quality of their teaching.” ⁽¹²⁾

According to UNICEF’s #ENDviolence Youth Manifesto 2019, ⁽¹³⁾ of pupils worldwide aged 13–15:

- Half (about 150 million) report having experienced peer violence in and around school
- More than 1/3 have experienced bullying
- Around one in three has been involved in physical fights

Harassment of, and violence against educators is also not limited to South Africa. Educators across the world face issues of safety in their schools. The form that violence takes may be different in different countries, but importantly, the impact that it has on educators is very similar.





USA

According to a U.S. Department of Education survey conducted in 2015–16:

- 10% of public school teachers reported being threatened with injury by a student during the previous year
- 6% of teachers reported having been physically attacked

According to a 2017 survey of 3,403 teachers:

- One in five teachers were the victims of physical attacks; threats of physical violence; or verbal aggression/intimidation
- These teachers did not report that violence to school administrators



ARGENTINA

There was increasing violence against teachers until the country passed a law classifying any attack on a teacher as aggravated assault. Students and parents found guilty of violence against teachers will now be subject to 25% longer jail sentences or 25% larger fines than if a similar offense had been committed against anybody else.



NIGERIA

Since 2009 the education system in North East Nigeria has been devastated by militant Islamic insurgency.

A research study conducted by the Education Data, Research and Evaluation in Nigeria (EDOREN) showed how the insurgency affected teachers:

- All but 15 of the 104 teachers interviewed had witnessed violence. Many had lost close relatives and friends
- Schools have become much more difficult to manage. Teachers reported issues of insubordination, while unruly behaviour among pupils has increased



SOUTH AFRICA

According to a survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council, 20% of South Africa's teachers believe that schools are violent places and suspect their students and colleagues are armed.



AUSTRALIA

Around 84% of Australian principals and deputy principals had been subjected to "offensive behaviour" by parents or students, according to 2019's Australian Principal Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing Survey.



GERMANY

A 2018 study published by the Federation for Education and Training, one of Germany's largest teachers' unions, found that teachers at half of schools had been verbally threatened or insulted and that teachers at around one-in-five schools had been the victims of cyberbullying.



UNITED KINGDOM

Research undertaken by United Kingdom teachers' union NASUWT, found that:

- one in four teachers say they experience physical violence from their pupils at least once a week. Many reported being shoved while a "significant percentage" said they had been hit, punched or kicked
- Almost nine in 10 teachers reported being verbally or physically abused by pupils in the past year
- 86% said they had been sworn at
- 46% said they had been verbally threatened



ISRAEL

A 2017 nationwide survey revealed that 73% of teachers had experienced some form of victimization from students.

Understanding Violence

What is violence?

Another violent incident has occurred at an educational facility in Gauteng. The Sizwe Secondary School, based in Germiston, was the scene of abject horror on Wednesday, after a Grade 9 learner was fatally wounded by a fellow pupil at the school. We

understand that a Grade 11 student is the main suspect, and the shocking altercation took place a small distance away from the school after classes had finished for the day.

Head, T, The South African, 19 March 2020^[14]

Last Wednesday, a 17-year-old pupil from Roodepark High School was admitted to hospital after an alleged bullying incident at the school. The pupil was allegedly slam-dunked onto the concrete by a fellow pupil during an altercation and subsequently admitted to hospital. The mother of the boy who was allegedly bullied by a 15-year-old pupil says her child was sensitive to light and sound since the incident occurred.

Luvhengo, P, TimesLIVE, 7 February 2020.^[15]

Often when people think of violence in schools, they think only about the sort of violence described in the newspaper examples above. These incidents appear in the media precisely because they are so shocking. However, there are ongoing acts of violence in schools that may not be as dramatic. Use the checklist below to reflect on your own understanding of what constitutes school violence. You should be able to deduce the answers to these questions from the information that follows.



Indicate, in your opinion, whether these statements are true or false.

TRUE FALSE

The definition of school violence is acts of violence that only take place on school premises

☐
☐

Sending a naked photo of a classmate to a learner WhatsApp group does not fit the definition of violence

☐
☐

If someone threatens you but does not actually hurt you, this cannot be defined as violence

☐
☐

A 19-year-old grade 11 student refuses to answer his teacher. He stares at her constantly but will not say a word. It makes her feel uncomfortable, but this is bad behaviour rather than violence

☐
☐

To call behaviour "school violence", it needs, by definition, to be a criminal act

☐
☐

A teacher proposing love to an 18-year-old matric student cannot be defined as violence

☐
☐

A teacher making a disobedient learner kneel in the corner for the entire lesson cannot be defined as violence

☐
☐

A group of grade 11 boys make kissing sounds when they see a grade 9 boy, who they think is homosexual. The teacher says this is stupid behaviour but it is not violence

☐
☐



Think about the checklist on the previous page and reflect on your experiences in and out of school. How would you define violence? Does it have multiple meanings for you?

There are other forms of violence perpetrated against learners and educators that do not make the papers, for example: psychological bullying, demeaning and humiliating others, sexual suggestions and/or verbal threats. In fact, threats of violence are the most common violent incident experienced by high school learners. And although threatening violence may not cause physical harm, it causes serious long-term psychological damage that can lead to poor academic performance, absenteeism, or long-term depression. This long-term psychological damage applies as much to educators as it does to learners. These latter forms of violence are also highly likely to be repeated.

In South Africa, school-based violence takes on many dimensions. Being involved in school violence can mean being a perpetrator or a victim, but it can also mean being a witness to the violence, which in itself can be psychologically damaging. School violence encompasses:

- Learner on learner violence
- Educator on learner violence
- Learner on educator violence
- Educator on educator violence
- External people on educator and learner violence



Which of the above have you experienced? Can you think of the first time you witnessed or were involved in a violent incident? What happened? How did it make you feel?

As you have probably experienced, school violence does not only take place in the confines of the school grounds. It may take place:

- On the way to or from school
- Outside the school gate
- At external school events

It is crucial to work towards preventing school violence in all its forms. There is international research that shows that “when schools are transformed into places of safety and learning, and into environments where young people feel protected, appreciated and nurtured, the results have consequences far beyond the immediate school environment”. (10, P5)



The World Health Organization 2002 report on violence and health defines violence as: “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, (against oneself), another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.” (16: P4)

According to a South African educators union, 50 educators are attacked or threatened by learners in South Africa's schools a month. The union said from May 2018 to date, already over 600 cases of violence in schools have been reported at its offices.

The South African Democratic Educators Union's (SADTU) Nomsa Cembi said, “Monthly we talk of 72,000 incidents (of school-based violence) conservatively. Attacks are not only physical but verbally, cyberbullying, etc.” The numbers Cembi refers to are all incidents of violence, not just learner-on-educator violence.

Simelane, B, Daily Maverick, 14 June 2019 (19)



Violence is when we use, or threaten to use, power or physical force to harm or hurt. We could be intending to hurt one person, a group of people, or even ourselves. Violence is intentional: that means that it is done on purpose. Violence also does psychological harm. It can cause fear, especially the fear that the violence will be repeated. It humiliates people and damages their confidence and self-worth.

(17, P12)

A safe school is a haven for learners, and for all members of the school body. But it takes commitment and engagement from all stakeholders - learners, management, educators, the community - to create and maintain such an environment.



Are there particular places within or outside the school grounds where you feel nervous? Where? Why? Have you done anything about it? Can you think of practical things that could be done about it?

What are the forms of violence?

As we have already established, violence can take place in many forms. Many actions and behaviours can lead to violence.

According to the NSSF, ⁽¹⁸⁾ violence includes:

- ▶ **Assault and fighting**
- ▶ **Bullying**
- ▶ **Cyberbullying**
- ▶ **Corporal punishment**
- ▶ **Xenophobia**
- ▶ **Homophobia**
- ▶ **Sexual and gender-based violence**
- ▶ **Gang-related violence**

A lot of these forms of violence depend on the culture of the school and what is and is not tolerated.

According to South African research ⁽²⁰⁾, high rates of violence in surrounding areas and easy access to weapons are some of the main reasons for assault and fighting or the threat of assault in schools.

Physical violence can be any form of physical aggression with intention to hurt, and it includes corporal punishment and physical bullying by adults and other children. ^(11, P14)

Corporal punishment of any kind is also assault and is illegal.

▶ **Bullying** is unwanted, aggressive behaviour and happens when someone hurts or frightens another person by using:

- Physical strength
- Emotional force and influence over others
- Their position of power (e.g. a prefect, educator or a team captain) but can also be their strength or their ability to influence others

Bullies will usually do this repeatedly and it usually happens over a long time, which is why it is different from other aggressive behaviour and often more difficult to deal with.



Research undertaken while developing the National School Safety Framework (NSSF) ⁽²⁾ found the following:

- The classroom is the site where most forms of violence take place
- Corporal punishment, though banned, continues to be experienced by one half of secondary school learners
- Bullying is experienced by more than one in 10 learners
- Most violence, of any form, is perpetrated by learners from the school, rather than by others from outside the school environment
- Sexual violence, in particular, remains common and is experienced at the hands of both fellow learners and educators
- Learners receive very mixed messages when it comes to acceptance of, and approaches to violence, particularly messages provided by educators and principals ⁽¹⁸⁾



Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose. ^(11, P15)

Many bullies may bully emotionally, verbally or physically or a combination of all three.

The victim is either physically weaker than the bully or has less influence with other people. Bullies try to make a person feel small, ugly, powerless or stupid and force a particular action. For example, they may make their victims give them something, do something for them or agree with them. They may isolate the victim and force or influence others to do the same.

These days school violence can also take place online, through messenger groups like WhatsApp, Tumblr or TikTok.

► **Cyberbullying** and online violence includes:

- Sending rude, offensive or insulting messages
- Posting cruel and hurtful rumours
- Sending or posting personal or embarrassing secrets online
- Posting online threats
- Hacking messaging accounts and sending fake messages
- Distributing naked or sexually explicit images without permission



It is important to address even a single episode of aggressive behaviour among students when there is a clear imbalance of power, before the behaviour becomes repetitive. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

► **Corporal punishment** is still used by many educators in many schools. This is illegal and is not an appropriate and effective way to discipline. It is a form of bullying and an unethical, violent practise.

Corporal punishment is any punishment where physical force is used with the intention to cause pain or discomfort, however light. Examples include:

- Hitting, with a hand or an object (for example, a ruler, whip, stick, or belt)
- Kicking, grabbing or throwing
- Scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears
- Forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions
- Throwing objects at a learner (for example, a duster)
- Burning (for example, with hot water or cigarettes)
- Denying a child the right to use the toilet, to drink, to shelter or eat their lunch ^(22, P17)



Some signs of a bullying culture to look out for at your school

- ☐ School community gathers to watch fights and bullying
- ☐ Bullying usually continues until an educator stops it
- ☐ Some children are bullied repeatedly
- ☐ When one person starts bullying, others join in
- ☐ People who bully are popular or hold leadership positions
- ☐ Some educators are bullies
- ☐ Boys bully girls sexually with things they say, movements or touching. This could happen at school or on the way to school
- ☐ There are places in the school grounds where learners are scared to go
- ☐ People or groups are treated badly because they are seen as different. Some may insult them and make them feel ashamed, and others may avoid or ignore them



How to begin to address bullying

- ✓ Support learners to feel strong and proud of who they are without needing to feel superior to anyone else. This means using accurate and respectful language to describe others
- ✓ Enable learners to interact empathetically with one another, and to find comfort and joy in diversity
- ✓ Foster learners' ability to identify bias, recognize injustice and be empathetic to the hurt discrimination causes
- ✓ Give learners the skills and ability to stand up for themselves and others when confronted with bias and prejudice ⁽²¹⁾

Even though it is illegal, many educators continue to use corporal punishment because they do not know enough about alternative ways of non-violent discipline. Educators need to be given alternative ways to discipline learners who are disrupting the learning process. This is a challenge for school communities, and the DBE.

Many research studies, both in South Africa and overseas, have shown that corporal punishment does not help with long-term disciplinary issues. In fact, conversely, corporal punishment has been linked to disruptive behaviour and aggression in learners, as well as growing depression and declining academic performance.



Do you or does any educator in your school still use corporal punishment in any form? (this can include, for example, throwing something at a learner, making a learner do push ups, making a learner spend the day walking barefoot). Have you lost your temper with a learner in the last year or so? What happened? How was the issue resolved? If it had to happen again would you be able to deal with it differently? How?



Disciplining learners can take the form of a negotiation, where educators negotiate with their learners around setting limits, consequences for their actions and rewards for positive behaviour. This empowers children and gives them a sense of responsibility. Consequences for "breaking the rules" should be clearly discussed with learners. All rules and limits must be in their best interests and never involve pain or harm. For example, you could give your learner a non-abusive task to perform, related to what they did wrong. If they have to fix or clean something they dirtied or damaged, they will be less likely to repeat that behaviour in future. ^(23,P5-8)

► **Xenophobia** or ethnophobia is a fear of something that is foreign. Xenophobic attitudes can lead to rejecting, excluding, bullying or attacking people who don't come from the same society or country. Xenophobia is rife in South Africa, and this has impacted on South African schools where children from other countries or who speak different languages are discriminated against. It is up to you, the educator, to challenge stereotypes and to encourage learners to celebrate diversity rather than fear it.

As educators, your primary commitment is to teach everyone in your class, no matter who they are. It is your responsibility to ensure that your own beliefs, attitudes or behaviours are not responsible for any prejudice-based bullying. This includes bullying because of sexual preferences, gender, race, religion or nationality.



Diversity is everything that makes people different from each other. This includes race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, ability, age, religious belief, or political conviction.



"Teaching about sexuality is different from teaching homosexuality."

"Why can't they behave normally on the outside?"

I accept it but parents are more problematic.
The SGB [School governing body] is run by the parents."

"With me I will be praying for that person, reading the Bible for them, hoping they see the reality that it is really, really, really ungodly."

"What your sexuality is all about has got nothing to do with me, I don't need to know it, I don't need to see it ..."

In South Africa, educators are often seen to be contributing to ► **homophobia**. Many educators ignore homosexual harassment, name-calling or bullying. Gender roles and gender stereotypes are established for young people from a very young age. For many young people, "gay" means "a man who is not a proper man and doesn't do the things which real men do" and "lesbian" means "a woman who is not a proper woman and doesn't do the things which real women do". Gender roles are crucially important while growing up and, for some young people – particularly for young men – acting in a homophobic manner is a way in which they are able to reinforce their own masculinity and heterosexuality to those around them.

Many educators are reported as having negative attitudes towards homosexual or transsexual learners. But it is your job, as a concerned educator, to work against discrimination within the school community.

In these comments we see fear, judgement, dislike and exclusion – the characteristics that open the way to bullying. These comments come directly from adults in our society, from parents, educators, community and religious leaders. They reflect views that result not only in bullying and intimidation, but serious violence against learners who do not fit neatly into a particular category.



According to Burton, P and Leoschut, L: "The relationship between violent victimisation and later aggressive behaviour is well-documented. Those who are victimised at a young age are at greater risk of themselves engaging in violent and anti-social behaviour as they get older. Similarly, those who are bullied at school are at greater risk of themselves engaging in bullying behaviour. In a society that is already often perceived both domestically and internationally as being one of the most violent in the world, this in itself justifies concerted action to break the cycle of violence that young people are exposed to – starting with the school environment." (10, P4)

► **Sexual violence and gender-based violence** happen mainly because women and girls are not treated as equal to men and boys in our society. Gender-based violence is all those kinds of violence that result from gender inequality and keep gender inequality going. These can range from disrespect and discrimination to sexual harassment, sexual abuse and rape. Mostly, it is men and boys who use violence, and most victims are women or girls. ^(23, P16)

Sexual harassment is a form of bullying. Behaviour that involves unwanted sexual comments, suggestions, advances, insults or threats to another person is called sexual harassment or sexual bullying. In schools where there is lots of general bullying amongst learners and where educators bully learners, sexual harassment is also common. When learners and educators accept this as normal, it can easily develop into more serious forms of gender-based violence, like sexual abuse or rape.

All educators are bound to follow SACE's Code of Professional Ethics. Any form of sexual misconduct is a breach of this Code, including a consensual sexual relationship with a learner; sexual abuse; sexual harassment; or any improper physical contact. It is the job of SACE to ensure any educator guilty of any of the above is not employed by any other school. ⁽²⁴⁾

► **Gang-related violence** stems from a formalized group or an informal social group and often involves alcohol, drugs, and weapons. People who involve themselves in one form of violence usually engage in other forms. ^(25, P19)



Sexual harassment includes unwanted sexual jokes, sexually insulting pictures, calling out sexual comments or insults, following people with unwanted sexual invitations, spreading sexual rumours and uninvited touching, like purposely brushing up against someone.



Look back at the true/false reflection exercise on page 16. All the answers are false. Did you mark some of the answers as "true"? Have any of your responses changed? Have you had new thoughts or ideas on what constitutes violence in school?

Look at Annexure A to evaluate and rate your level of confidence in preventing violent and bullying behaviour. If your evaluation shows that you need more information and training on how to deal with violence and bullying at school, then be pro-active about getting the assistance you need. There are many schools that do not have policies in place, or do not communicate their policies regarding violence and bullying. You are not alone.

Understanding Roles and Responsibilities



Now that you have a better understanding of violence, Step 2 deals with the roleplayers as part of a whole school approach to reducing the risk of violence. We look at what their roles and responsibilities are, and we look at what policies should be in place at school level.



Do you feel that all roleplayers play an equal role in addressing the problem of school-based violence at your school? Where is the weak link in the chain? Are there ways to address those weak links?

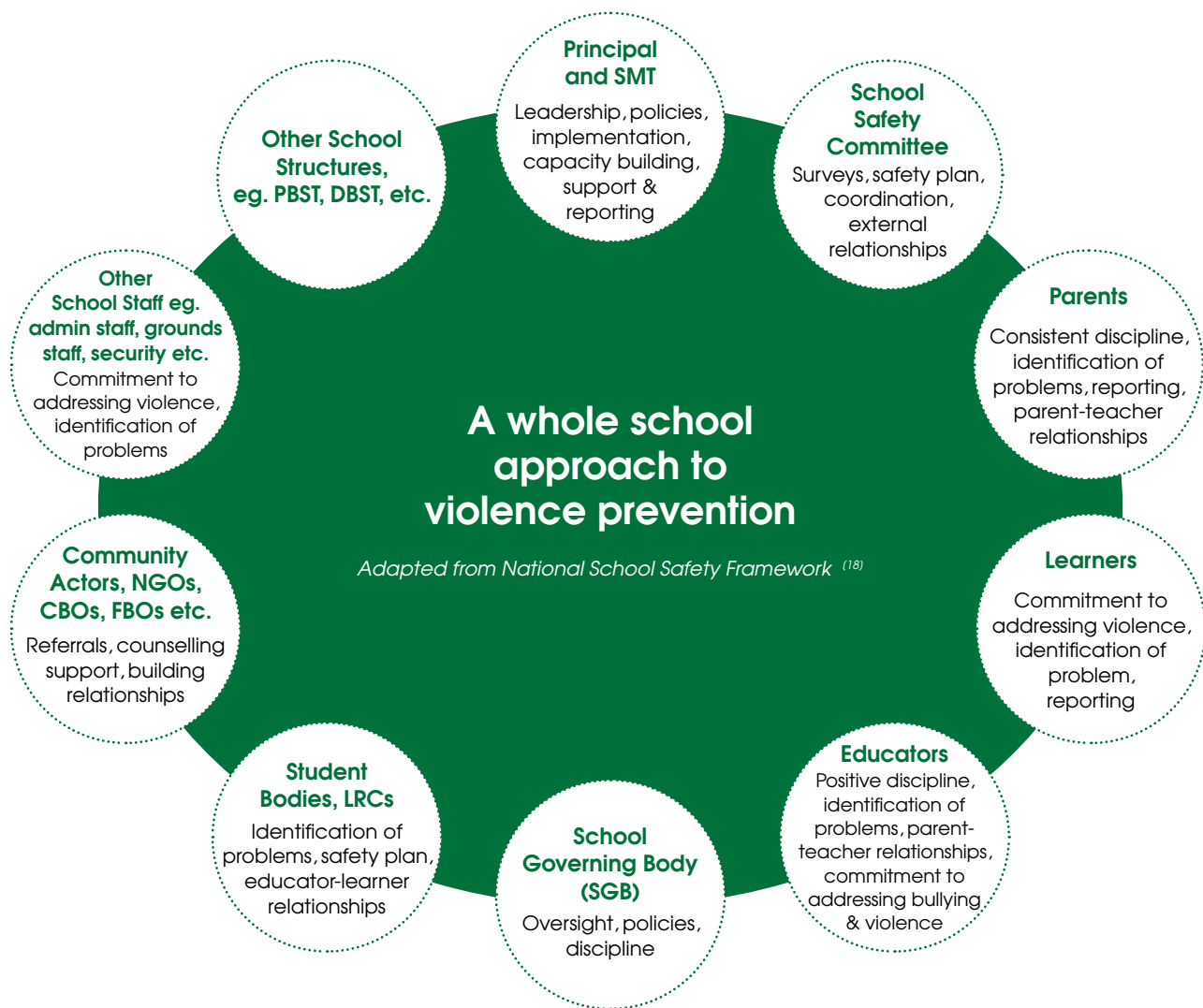
There is plenty of evidence to indicate that adopting a whole school approach is the most effective way to reduce violence and the risk of violence.⁽¹⁸⁾ A whole school approach means creating:

- A supportive, safe and inclusive school culture
- School-based programmes that focus on emotional learning, diversity and acceptance
- Policies that emphasize and monitor learners' progress and focus on removing inequalities
- Partnerships with roleplayers within the greater community in order to grow the capacity of the school to help learners and their families outside of the classroom⁽²⁶⁾

The National School Safety Framework (NSSF) is an all-inclusive strategy that describes the different roleplayers and how they interact and work together using a whole school approach to prevent violence. The framework emphasizes the importance of the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder within the broader system.⁽¹⁸⁾

Who are the roleplayers and what are their responsibilities?

You, as an educator, probably have some experience of roleplayers not being effectively involved in helping or supporting the school in reducing violence. This is often because they don't understand what their roles and responsibilities are or they have not been given the chance to contribute. The figure below has been adapted from the NSSF^(18,P16) and outlines all of the relevant roleplayers that should be involved, and outlines their key roles.



It is often left to the principal and School Management Team (SMT) to ensure safety in schools. While it is an essential function of any SMT, its members cannot do this alone. There are many roleplayers who can contribute to the safety and well-being of staff and learners at the school. The larger school community, the parents, the school district office, the School Governing Body (SGB), the entire staff and the learners all have valuable and essential roles to play.

One of the most important committees in a school is the School Safety Committee. The School Safety Committee could consist of SGB members as well as representatives of religious and/or sport bodies, educators, learners (where appropriate), management, local business, SAPS, local government, parents, and community organisations. The school should also appoint a Safety Officer from amongst its educators.



The regulations for safety measures at public schools as contained in Government Notice 22754 (No. 1040), the South African Schools Act (SASA) and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), prescribes there should be one safety representative at every school. The school-based Safety Officer will fulfil this mandate. ⁽¹⁸⁾

The table below summarises the **minimum** requirements of the leadership and management structures in reducing the risk of violence in the school. The roles of other roleplayers - namely, learners, parents and other community organisations - are discussed in the next section: "Does everyone know and understand their roles?"

EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS AND DISTRICTS

Support to school communities in their efforts to reclaim and regain control of their situation. Their main roles are:

- Trauma debriefing and counselling
- Introduction of intervention programmes to identify root causes, and preventative measures to contain any situation
- Extension or addition of any necessary security mechanisms
- Enlisting the assistance of law enforcement agencies ⁽²⁷⁾

SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

Oversight of school systems, processes and management. Its members are involved in the governance and not the management of the school. Their main roles are:

- Develop effective policies (see the list in the section below)
- Develop effective processes
- Constant review and revision of policies
- Ensure that the necessary funding is available for risk reduction measures
- Involve the public and form partnerships
- Communicate and seek input from other roleplayers
- Support the principal and SMT in the discipline processes
- Promote a positive and safe environment for all learners and staff
- Establish reporting mechanisms that are easily accessible to all learners and staff
- Carry out annual risk analysis of school
- Establish subcommittees e.g. School Safety Committee



- Governance is about planning a framework and ensuring it is put in place
- Management is about organising and doing the work, supporting and implementing the goal and values of the SGB

It is not the role of the SGB to make managerial decisions or get involved in day-to-day implementation of strategy.

SCHOOL SAFETY COMMITTEE

This is a subcommittee of the SGB and combines representation from all roleplayers. It can comprise educators, learners, public and community organisations, senior management, or any other relevant players. Members should be trained appropriately to carry out their roles, e.g. First Aid. They are the "eyes and ears" on the ground and should play an active role in all risks and preventions in the following ways:

- Conduct a safety audit
- Establish a School Safety Plan (management plan) that links to all other policies
- Plan programmes linked to safety
- Have regular meetings and evaluations, including revision of safety plans
- Compile monthly safety reports
- Provide feedback to the SGB, SMT and staff
- Promote a climate of safety and security within the school
- Report and investigate all incidents and accidents and take all reasonable steps to rectify identified hazards
- Give advice with regards to selection and implementation of safety strategies
- Conduct an audit of service providers

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP (PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM)

The principal and SMT are responsible for the management of the school. This includes implementing systems, guiding, inspiring and mentoring staff. These responsibilities include:

- Effective implementation of policies and processes
- Effective communication of policies, processes and actions to staff, learners, parents and broader community
- Develop, support, and reflect on school-level safety plans, policies and guidelines
- Address general safety matters, crisis management, Codes of Conduct for learners, and other relevant policies or guidelines
- Empower and develop staff, learners, parents and the broader community through awareness training
- Develop safety plans and effectively and appropriately manage these
- Promote a positive and safe environment for all learners and staff
- Implement reporting mechanisms that are easily accessible to all learners and staff
- Ensure that appropriate responses and actions are followed through
- Carry out effective disciplinary actions
- Develop a school improvement plan that includes and addresses issues of concern around violence and safety of staff and learners (with input from the SGB)
- Instill classroom discipline and systems and processes
- Ensure a collaborative and supportive working approach from all staff members
- Exhibit appropriate leadership for learners and school personnel
- Ensure proper supervision of learners and staff
- Report all criminal acts as provided for by the law
- Ensure that school personnel are trained in a variety of strategies for dealing with learners' specific needs
- Monitor and evaluate the School Safety Plan, as well as projects and/or programmes implemented to prevent crime and violence
- Cooperate with local law enforcement and human services agencies to promote safe, caring and child-friendly schools

EDUCATORS AND SUPPORT STAFF

All school staff members have the responsibility to assist in maintaining safe, secure and child friendly schools. These responsibilities include the following:

- Assist in the development and implementation of the School Safety Plan according to delegated roles and responsibilities
- Carry out all job-related responsibilities that impact learner safety
- Serve as positive role models
- Demonstrate integrity and respect through attitudes and personal conduct
- Provide supervision for all learners under their care
- Report all misdemeanours
- Maintain a classroom environment that is safe, secure, and orderly
- Empower learners with necessary skills to meet expected standards of behaviour
- Monitor and evaluate the safety procedures as outlined in the School Safety Plan
- Participate in school safety training
- Implement strategies to address the diverse needs of all learners in relation to school safety
- Provide and enforce appropriate disciplinary consequences for disruptive learners (Code of Conduct)
- Cooperate with social services agencies and law enforcement (SAPS) or private security agencies to promote safe, caring and child-friendly schools that will meet the needs of all learners ^{(27), (28) and (18)}

See Annexure B at the back of the handbook. This provides a checklist for you to reflect on who does what in your school.

On reflection, you may find that no one has taken responsibility for the roles above. All of these actions are essential in reducing violence in schools. You will notice that the responsibility of all of these key actions is spread across a variety of roleplayers. An example of this is effective leadership. While it is the responsibility of the principal to ensure the SMT is effective, it is also the responsibility of the SGB to ensure that the appropriate people are appointed and efficient in their role as manager. Many of these actions are overseen by the principal and/or SGB but might be more effective if they got input and assistance from other roleplayers. Promoting a positive and safe environment for all learners and staff would also be more effective and easier if the parents and community were brought on board.

It is essential that everyone plays their part in contributing to a safer school.



Have a look at the scenario below and reflect on how things could have been different if the roleplayers had carried out their tasks effectively.

A parent has taken a grievance to the SGB. He is very angry because an incident happened in March and it is now October. The parent says James, a learner in his son Bongani's class, threw Bongani's cell phone into the toilet. Although the principal suspended James for a month, the parent wants James expelled. The parent says that James is a disgusting homosexual and should not be allowed in the school with normal children. James says that Bongani and his friends have been bullying him ever since they saw him holding hands with another boy in town.

On that day in March, Bongani and his gang surrounded him in the toilet and threatened to do terrible things so he grabbed the phone, threw it in the toilet and ran away. Their class teacher said he had heard them calling James a "normal boys' teasing".

Once the suspension was over the class teacher asked the boys to leave James alone but he can see that the bullying is continuing. The principal says that if James got himself a girlfriend the bullying might stop. The SGB looked to the principal for a recommendation. The principal says there is no excuse for breaking property but an expulsion is too tough. James is given a demerit instead.

What could have been done differently?

The **SGB** could have stated that the school has policies in place concerning violence, and policies concerning discrimination and prejudice, and referred to those policies. Action should have been taken on the basis of those policies.

The **SMT** could have asked the principal or the School Safety Committee to investigate the incident more thoroughly and look at the school's internal policy on bullying, violence and discrimination. This should have led to more appropriate action against Bongani and his gang, rather than James. The SMT should have informed the SGB of the incident.

The **class teacher** should not have ignored the initial signs of bullying. He should have nipped those in the bud as soon as he became aware of what was going on. He could have referred to his classroom Code of Conduct, and had private discussions with both boys. The educator should also have had a discussion with the entire class about diversity, respect and human rights. The situation should have been referred to the SMT and the School Safety Committee.

The **parent community** need more awareness training on the problem of bullying, violence and discrimination in schools. This particular parent should have been called in to the principal's office and had the situation laid out for him the moment the incident in the toilets occurred. The principal should have referred the parent to the school's multiple codes of conduct and policies on bullying, violence and discrimination.

Both **learners**, Bongani and James, should have had the chance to meet with the **school counsellor**, or a **senior educator**, to talk through the situation and understand what occurred, why and what alternative responses could be to episodes of bullying.

Rights and responsibilities of educators

As an educator, you are responsible for ensuring that your own classroom is safe and secure and conducive to learning. Your approach to discipline and your attitude towards your learners should be something you constantly reflected upon. You should be familiar with policies and processes and be able to identify problems early. It is also essential that you build good relationships with the parents of your learners and understand your learners' individual circumstances.

While you, as an educator, are supposed to provide learners with knowledge and a safe environment for social and psychological development, research has shown that many educators feel that their rights have been violated at times in both the classroom and on the school property.

It is essential that all educators are respected, and their rights are protected, but the success of this depends on the contribution of a number of roleplayers. Use these two checklists below to assess whether you know what your rights and responsibilities are.



What do you do in your classroom to reduce the risk of violence? How well do you know your learners' personal circumstances? Can you think of examples of your learners showing that they felt comfortable by speaking to you when they have a problem?



Responsibilities of Educators

Look at the table below and reflect on how well you carry out your responsibilities as an educator.

	YES	NO
Fairly, reasonably and consistently implement school discipline policies	☐	☐
Build self-esteem of learners through encouragement and positive reinforcement	☐	☐
Build positive relationships with students	☐	☐
Encourage tolerance, and understanding of diversity	☐	☐
Know and understand the content you teach	☐	☐
Know your students	☐	☐
Plan and assess for effective learning	☐	☐
Create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments	☐	☐
Implement the anti-bullying and harassment policy	☐	☐
Access specialist welfare and referral services when required	☐	☐
Use a range of teaching strategies and resources to engage students in effective learning	☐	☐



	YES	NO
Regular monitoring of student progress, attendance, participation and welfare	☐	☐
Treat all members of the school community with respect, fairness and dignity	☐	☐
Keep parents and guardians informed on student progress and learning	☐	☐

(29)

As well as upholding and protecting the rights of learners, educators are also obliged by law to report any abuse of a learner. It is a criminal offense not to report such abuse because, as an educator, you have a “duty of care” or in Latin, *in loco parentis*. This is a legal duty which gives the school and the teacher the responsibility and the right to protect and maintain order, in place of the parents. This means that the children under your care must be protected from any form of violence.

Rights of educators

Many educators’ rights rely on the parents and community and the values instilled in the learners. Although there are a number of preventative mechanisms that can be put in place at school to minimise the violation of educators rights, many rely on values and morals that are set in the family, home and community environment. Often the lack of respect stems from individual, social and cultural prejudices. Although there are many ways in which to challenge social and cultural norms and promote equal relationships, this is only effective if the parents and community are supportive.



How can educators’ rights be enforced or implemented?

- ✓ Each school could nominate an independent person and/or a separate unit to intervene and link up with the DBE to mediate educator concerns.
- ✓ SMTs could be requested to arrange support resources for educators. For example, provide access to professionals like social workers and psychologists to deal with educators’ psycho-social problems. The same rights apply to learners.



Section 110 (1) of the Children’s Act states that any educator who on reasonable grounds concludes that a child has been abused in a manner causing physical injury, sexually abused or deliberately neglected, must report that conclusion in the prescribed form to a designated child protection organisation, the provincial department of social development or a police official. ⁽³⁰⁾



Educators are among those professional groups that are at high risk of becoming victims of violence. The school should provide support to educators who become victims of violence at the workplace. Educators often hesitate to report violence they experience to the school administration, as they fear that disclosing violence could have negative effects on their career or they feel shame about not being able to control a violent situation. Schools should consider establishing easily-accessible support mechanisms for educators.” ⁽²⁾



Reflect on the rights of educators and indicate who you feel is responsible for ensuring that these rights are respected.

	Educators and staff	SMT	SGB	Parents and community	Learners
Right to be respected in class	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right to teach in a conducive situation and safe environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right not to be discriminated against based on race, gender, nationality, or other differences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right to dignity and humanity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right to be treated reasonably and fairly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right to be heard and be taken seriously	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right to be empowered/educated and made aware of rights	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right to know the recourse when rights are violated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right not to be victimized	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right not to be verbally or physically abused	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right to have intervals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right to defend themselves	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right to be paid on time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right to teach what they know, and what they trained for	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Right to develop/study further	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Educators have the right to work in an environment in which they feel valued and respected, where they may actively support learners' development and learning and where they are free from fear, threat and harm. This is entrenched in the South African Bill of Rights and in the South African Constitution where it states that everyone has the right "to be free from all forms of violence and not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane, or degrading way".⁽³¹⁾

Like anybody else, educators have a right to dignity and the right to life. Section 23 of the South African Constitution provides that, “Everyone has the right to fair labour practices”. Labour rights (according to the Labour Relations Act (LRA) ⁽³²⁾ and the Employment of Educators Act (EEA)) ⁽³³⁾ include protection against unfair dismissals, teachers’ rights to form and join a trade union, to participate in the activities and programmes of a trade union; and to strike.

Educators must be vigilant about their rights and schools should develop protocols for educators’ safety.



Tips for educators on how to behave legally and keep safe:

- ✗ Never touch your learners - especially not when angry
- ✗ Never transport learners in your car
- ✗ Never be alone with one learner in the room
- ✗ Never be an internet/social media friend with learners
- ✗ Never ask a learner out for a social occasion
- ✗ Never use extreme physical activity as a form of punishment
- ✗ Never use corporal punishment ⁽³⁴⁾



Read the scenario and reflect on which rights of the educator were violated. Is this something similar to what might happen at your school?

Ms Vela is a young educator with only one year’s experience in the classroom. Andani is in Ms Vela’s grade 11 class and keeps commenting on Ms Vela’s clothes and hair. She makes rude jokes and the other learners laugh. Ms Vela has tried to ignore these comments, but they upset her. She hasn’t tried to talk to Andani but she has spoken to the principal who said she must instil discipline in her class. She tells a senior teacher who says that Ms Vela must dress more modestly. The situation in class gets worse. Some of the boys start to make remarks about her appearance, and about her body.

Ms Vela sees an SGB member on the school grounds and explains what has been happening. The SGB member tells her to ask for a disciplinary enquiry. Ms Vela does not know how to do that, and the principal will not help. She cannot cope and starts to take days off, saying that she feels sick. At the end of the year, the SGB looks at her poor attendance record and questions her commitment. The principal says that he does not think she is suited to teaching.

- The **educator’s rights** have been disregarded (her right to be respected in class; not to be victimized; to teach in a conducive situation and safe environment; not to be discriminated against; to be made aware of her rights; and the right to know what action she can take now that her rights have been violated)
- **Ms Vela** should have been made aware of her rights by the principal. She should have been advised to put the issue of violence and victimization in writing, and to request a formal meeting with the principal
- The **principal** has an obligation to ensure the educator’s rights are upheld
- The issue should be referred to and acted upon by the **SMT and referred to the School Safety Committee**
- **Andani** should have been interviewed by a school counsellor or senior educator. She may be unhappy or have problems at home and it is important to find out why she is behaving in this way
- The **Code of Conduct** should have been enforced. Charges of bullying and sexual harassment need to be taken very seriously
- The **SMT** should have looked into the best way to discipline the perpetrators and the best way to prevent a recurrence. The SMT needed to reflect on what policies and rules are in place to prevent this or to deal with situations like this, and revise them if they are found to be lacking
- The situation and/or need for changes to policies/codes/rules needs to be presented to the **SGB**

What policies should be in place?

It is essential to have policies in place in schools and this is the key function of the SGB. While the principal supports and provides assistance to the governing body, the responsibility does not fall on him/her alone to develop, review and adapt policy. It should be a collaborative effort and all the necessary roleplayers should be brought in for advice and expertise. Once policies are drawn up and signed off by the SGB, it is the responsibility of the SMT to effectively implement and communicate the policies. The policies should be effectively communicated to all staff, parents and learners. It is the responsibility of all staff members to adhere to the policies and processes and implement them effectively.

The SMT, together with the SGB, should monitor the effectiveness and appropriateness of the policies. While it is the responsibility of the SMT and the SGB to put most of the structures, policies and procedures in place for the school, it is also essential that the educators do not neglect the important role that they have to play. ⁽³⁵⁾

School policies include codes of conduct for both learner and staff; discipline policy; and a safety policy. Each educator is responsible for discipline in their own classroom within the framework of the school's policies, rules and regulations. Educators should develop their own acceptable behaviour model for their classroom.

Below is a summary of the policies that every school should have in place.

Discipline Policy

The school discipline policy outlines the levels of misconduct, the appropriate disciplinary procedures, and possible consequences. It mentions the disciplinary committee, how it is constituted and when it is applied.

School Safety Policy

The school safety policy outlines safety related issues, risk management strategies and risk assessment processes. It also highlights procedures and guidelines to ensure safe working practices and environments. The policy sometimes includes the safety framework of the school. This policy needs to be reviewed and revised more often than most other policies.

Code of Conduct for Learners

The Code of Conduct spells out the rules regarding learner behaviour at the school and describes the disciplinary system that is implemented when the rules are transgressed. The Code of Conduct should be customised to the needs of the school. The Code of Conduct should not contravene any national or school policies. It should specifically include rules that promote safety (e.g. no smoking, weapon free zone etc.). Many schools split the Code of Conduct into one for learners and one for staff.

Code of Conduct for Staff

The Code of Conduct for staff spells out the rules and regulations regarding staff duties, behaviour and roles and responsibilities at the school. It also describes the disciplinary system that is implemented when any of these are transgressed. These should be attached to each staff member's contract and signed by the staff member.

All policies should be consistent with the aim of the school, written clearly and in a way that is easy to understand. They all need to be formally adopted by the school and signed off by the Chair of the SGB. All policies should be clearly communicated, understood and implemented by all of the roleplayers. A complete summary of all the policies and legislative frameworks for reducing violence in schools can be found in Annexure C.



POLICY DEVELOPMENT: Who is responsible for what?

- ☐ Developing policy – **SGB, principal and SMT**
- ☐ Communicating policy – **SMT**
- ☐ Implementing policy – **SMT and staff**
- ☐ Interpreting and using policy in classroom – **educators**
- ☐ Monitoring policy – **SMT**
- ☐ Reviewing policy – **SGB**



The school safety policy should include the following or should be linked to appropriate policies: HIV/AIDS; nutrition; First Aid; disciplinary procedures; latecoming; absenteeism and truancy; weapons and drugs; bullying; abuse and sexual abuse; physical, emotional and mental violence; confidentiality. ⁽³⁶⁾

Understanding the Risk of Violence in your School



In Step 1 you got a better understanding of what violence is and in Step 2 a clearer understanding of the role and responsibilities of the roleplayers. In order to reduce the risk of violence, it is essential that you get a clear idea and understanding of what the potential risk is at your school. In this section, Step 3, we look at two key elements. The first is identifying what each roleplayer can do to reduce the risk of violence and the second is establishing where the greatest risk in the school environment lies.

What can roleplayers do to reduce risk?

Get everyone on board

Accountability includes commitment, participation, transparency and responsibility. In order to achieve this it is essential to get all roleplayers on board. This could include district office, parents, community leaders and religious leaders, SMT and SGB members and all staff. All need to be actively involved and accountable. It is also essential to establish *who* is accountable for *what* and to *whom*.

Roleplayers know and understand their roles

Principal

The principal should firstly ensure that he/she is leading effectively and guiding everyone towards a shared vision. The principal is fundamental in establishing and implementing this shared vision. He/she should contribute to the development of policies as part of the SGB and ensure that they are implemented. It is essential that all staff members are constantly updated, informed and communicated with in an effective manner. Capacity building and staff development should be a priority and staff empowered with the knowledge and confidence to deal with discipline issues that may arise in the school or classroom. Effective leadership contributes to a positive staff attitude and effective teamwork and cooperation.



Eight steps to get everyone on board and accountable

1. Establish a shared vision
2. Discuss and communicate the vision with all roleplayers
3. Ensure that everyone agrees with and takes ownership of the vision
4. Collaborate on a plan
5. Put policies and processes in place to achieve the vision and plan
6. Ensure that each individual/group understands and accepts their role in the process
7. Ensure effective teamwork and co-operation
8. Ensure regular communication

School Management Team

The SMT should be a constant support to the principal and the staff. It should assist in implementing the policies and processes already in place. It is essential that reporting mechanisms are put in place that are easily available and constantly reflected on. It should also assist educators to establish positive and effective discipline in their classrooms and manage the overall discipline system in the school. The SMT should encourage and enable educators to attend training in order to work on positive discipline and classroom management. ^(2, P10)

Educators

Positive discipline is a key factor in any classroom. All educators should have training in positive discipline and classroom management as part of continuing professional development. Positive discipline involves setting clear expectations of behaviour in the classroom and praising and encouraging students who meet those expectations. Misbehaviour is dealt with using non-violent strategies that allow children to understand and learn from their mistakes. It focusses on problem-solving rather than rewards and punishment. ⁽³⁷⁾ Here are some suggestions for educators:

- Identify problems early on and use effective approaches to diffuse any issues. Do regular audits of your classroom to assess where potential violence may take place
- Attempt to constantly improve your classroom management style – what could you change or adapt to encourage positive behaviour in your classroom?
- Embark on continuous professional development to ensure that you are constantly developing new ideas and exposing yourself to the latest trends and success stories
- Incorporate human rights values and beliefs into curriculum-based activities and use these as talking points for reducing violence amongst learners
- Develop good parent-educator relationships and keep informed of what is happening in the learners' personal lives and in their homes. This knowledge and understanding will assist in identification of problems early on
- Make a visible effort to address bullying and violence in the school generally as well as in your classroom ^{(38), (2) and (18)}



Is your school's leadership effective? Does the leadership give direction? Do they guide and inspire? Do they contribute to a positive environment?

If your answer is not "yes" to all questions, then think about reasons why your school's leadership is not effective. What can you and your colleagues do to improve the situation? A discussion and a proactive strategy might help address this challenge.



Six steps: do your own risk assessment in your classroom

1. Identify the hotspots in your classroom
2. Identify any patterns of occurrence e.g. times, situations, certain classes, certain learners
3. Decide who might be affected and how
4. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions that could be taken in your classroom
5. Put rules, processes and precautions in place
6. Record and review your findings, and update if necessary



Well-managed classrooms are also likely to increase educator safety through minimizing the opportunities for educators to be victimized. Read the scenarios below and compare how the two educators handled the same situation very differently.

EDUCATOR A

The maths teacher is explaining a difficult concept but Lubabalo and Fezekile are talking openly and loudly. It is clear they are not discussing the subject. The teacher makes eye contact and they stop. A few minutes later they begin again. She again asks them to stop but this continues. Eventually the teacher stops the lesson and says, "I'm sick of your disruptions. You are going to amount to nothing in your lives. You are a pair of donkeys. Get out!" The class bursts out laughing. The boys walk out, and Fezekile throws a rude finger sign at the teacher and bangs the door on his way out. The class takes another five minutes to settle down and the lesson continues.

EDUCATOR B

The maths teacher is explaining a difficult concept but Lubabalo and Fezekile are talking openly and loudly. It is clear they are not discussing the subject. The educator makes eye contact and they stop. A few minutes later they begin again. She asks them to stop but this continues. She walks over to the boys and stands next to them as she continues explaining the concept. She does not look at them or address them. When she is finished explaining she sets the class some exercises and calls the boys to her, one at a time. She quietly draws their attention to the classroom Code of Conduct and explains the consequences they will face if this happens again. She requests meetings with each boy after school where she gently ask them if they are OK, if they have a personal problem, and why they behaved the way they did.

Compare the two scenarios of how the two educators handled a minor situation in the classroom and think about the questions below:

EDUCATORS

A

B

Which educator is more likely to experience a repeat of this situation?

☐☐

Which educator seemed to be more in control of the situation?

☐☐

Would the disciplinary style of educator B work for you and why do you say so?

☐☐

When last did you do a professional development training course? Have you thought of doing courses on any of the following?

- Strategies to manage challenging behaviour
- Setting classroom rules and behavioural expectations
- Building positive relationships between educators and children
- Rewarding appropriate behaviour
- Developing children's social, emotional and academic skills

It is essential that educators adopt a positive attitude. They should not let their own prejudices interfere with the way in which they build trust and cooperation in the classroom.

Training about discipline could also include awareness of how traumatic experiences and neglectful or abusive home lives can affect children's behaviour and learning. Trauma-informed approaches recognize this link and the important role that educators have in building safe, trusting relationships with children outside of the home. These approaches support troubled children in dealing with broader social issues rather than penalize them for bad behaviour, and could help to improve their mental health and longer-term behaviour. ⁽³⁷⁾

Other School Staff

There are many non-educator staff members who also play a vital role in the shared vision of the school. Where possible they should be consulted, as they may experience things from a different point of view. If they feel included, they are more likely to demonstrate a commitment to addressing violence in the school. They also play an essential role in identifying problems that may result in unwanted violence.^{(38), (2) and (18)}

School Governing Body

The SGB plays an oversight role in forming a shared vision for the school and deciding on and setting policy. It may be required to get involved in serious discipline issues or cases of gross misconduct. The SGB should review its policies every three years and ensure that the relevant circumstances of the school and its environment are always considered. Its main role is governance and not management, and they should be supportive of the principal. The SGB also plays a vital role (together with the principal) in establishing community initiatives to reduce the risk of violence and to build relationships with parents and other community organisations.⁽³⁰⁾

Community

As we have already mentioned, the school is not an island and is part of a wider community. It is essential to get NGOs, CBOs and other community support systems involved in reducing the risk of violence. Community organisations are especially useful for referrals and counselling support, where the school may not have the human resources and structures needed to fulfil these roles. Building relationships with community organisations is vital.⁽¹⁸⁾

Parents

Parents should be encouraged to provide consistent positive discipline in the home environment. The school should encourage parents to establish values and morals that encourage positive actions, respect and positive attitudes. Parents should remain in constant communication with the school and educators, and report any incidents or behaviours that may lead to or result in violence. Parents should identify problems and seek support if they feel that they are not able to handle them on their own. It is essential that parents support the school and share the same vision for violence prevention. This involves proactive input and support from the SGB, the SMT, and their members.

Learners

It is essential that the school's vision, policies and plans are communicated effectively to the learners and that they commit to addressing issues of violence in the school. They need to be able to report any incidents in a confidential manner and feel secure that these will be followed up on. Learners should know and understand their rights, but equally respect the rights of educators.

They should be provided with opportunities to develop values and morals and respect the discipline processes of the school. In high schools, where learners form part of the SGB, their opinions and inputs should be valued. It is often an advantage to involve learners in committees such as the School Safety Committee.⁽¹⁸⁾



Core Community Actions

- Take part in multi-sectoral coordinating bodies such as community violence prevention committees
- Involve community members in school-based coordinating committees and in developing school policies and codes of conduct
- Outsource serious incidents, drug-related issues and trauma and psychological counselling to specialist organisations
- Involve SAPS and community security organisations in policy decisions and implementation^(2, P11)



Ideas to involve parents

- Keep parents involved and informed about violence prevention activities and school policies on violent behaviour
- Invite parents to sit on prevention coordinating committees, e.g. School Safety Committee
- Encourage parents to attend training programmes, e.g. recognising violence, drug prevention and abuse
- Encourage parents to take an interest in their child's work, behaviour and discipline at home and school
- Assist parents in building relationships with the school and educators, and to communicate openly
- Assist parents to become familiar with, and supportive of the implementation of school rules, Code of Conduct and disciplinary processes
- Encourage parents to report any potential or actual incidents of violence
- Encourage parents to offer services, e.g. security^{(2) and (18)}

Additional School Structures and Committees

There are many structures which a school can put in place to support the reduction of violence. A School Safety Committee is an excellent mechanism to carry out surveys, and identify hotspots and risk factors. Using input from many different people and structures, combined with findings from its own research, the committee can put a safety plan in place and then ensure that this is implemented effectively. This takes some of the pressure off the principal and SMT. The committee can also assist in building external relationships with, for example, security companies, SAPS etc. ⁽²⁾



Have you thought of including discussions in your classroom about what violence is and the prevention of all forms of violence, including harassment and bullying? This will give learners an opportunity to learn and exchange views, opinions and fears. You may also learn a lot from the discussions!

Understand your school environment



The spotlight has turned to bullying at schools where Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga revealed there were 1 345 violent hotspots in the country. “School violence most often occurs on school premises, but it also takes place on the way to and from school.

Bullying is also increasingly taking place online and with the use of mobile devices,” the minister said during a safety and security in schools briefing in Parliament on Tuesday. Granville Whittle, deputy director-general of the department, said ...learner safety

needed to be considered when planning school infrastructure like fences, metal detectors, burglar proofing, alarms, and bullet proofing.

IOL News, 15 September 2019 ⁽⁴⁾

An essential part of reducing risk is to analyze your own school situation. It is important that you constantly look at your school's weaknesses and identify the hotspots in your school environment. Have a look at annexure D at the end of this handbook, and reflect on how much each factor within the list contributes to the issues of discipline and violence in your school. It is also essential to keep records of violent situations and map where they happened and when they happened. This may give you some idea of trends and why these are happening.



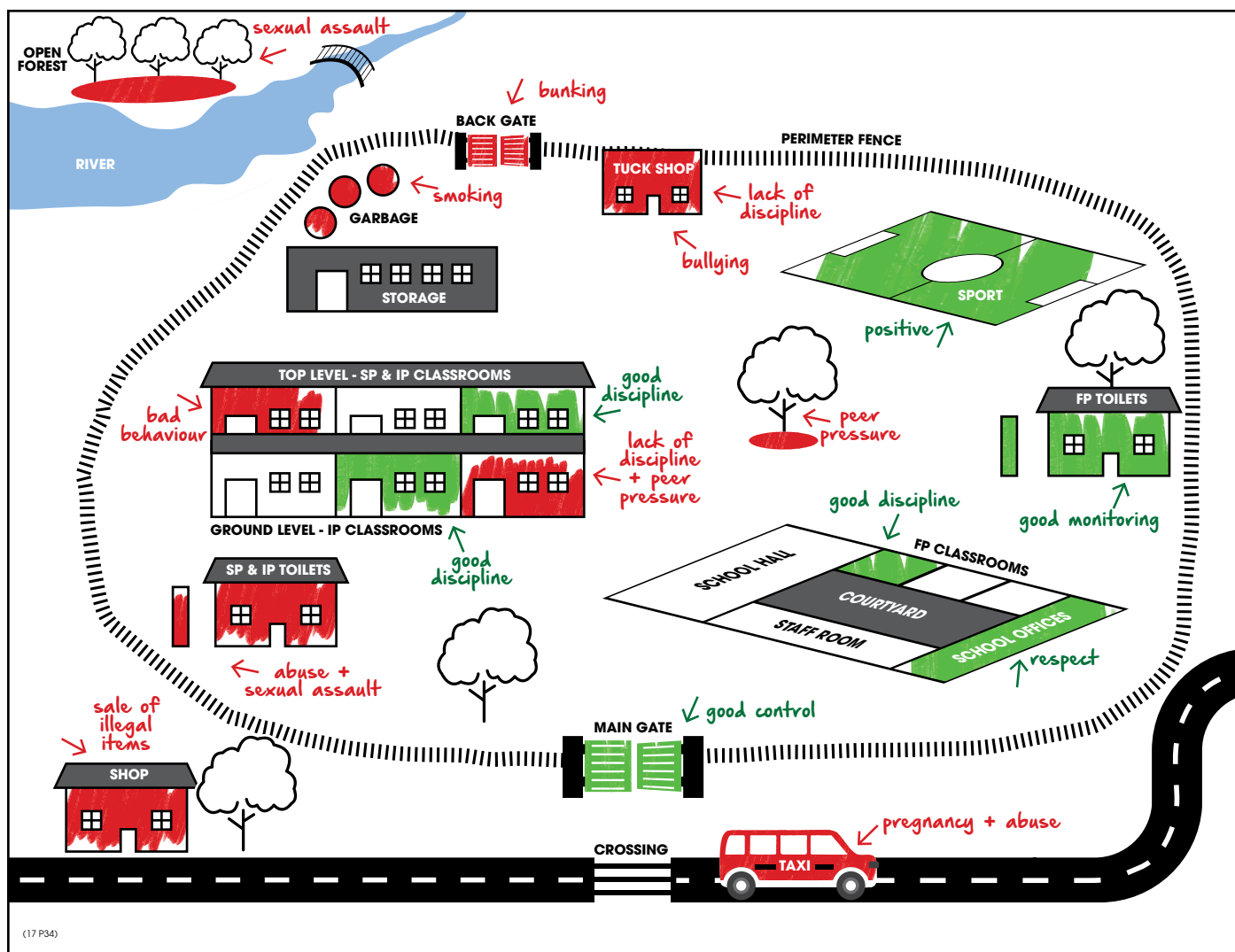
Findings indicated that school toilets are sites of increased risk for sexual violence, accounting for the location of more than 12.5% of sexual assaults in schools. Female learners, in particular, reported cases where male learners had sexually violated them, in the school toilets. ⁽³⁸⁾

Map your school

Of course the geography and layout of each school is different. Some schools have many buildings, spread far apart. Other schools may have secured the safety of their toilets. In order to take action against school violence it is important to understand your school's “hotspots”. Keep in mind, when we speak of sites of school violence, we are talking about all forms of violence, including bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, threats of violence and physical violence.

A useful exercise is to map your environment. As we have said before, a whole school approach has a better chance of success, so involve other educators, and of course, learners. Also, map hotspots outside the actual school grounds, for example, the route many learners may take to school, or where strangers loiter outside the school gates.

An example of a school mapping exercise:



The illustration is an example of a school mapping exercise. The questions below provide a guideline for what needs to be asked in order to identify hotspots.

This mapping exercise can also be done by groups of learners. This may provide insight for problem areas you may not be aware of and assist in getting the learners involved and gathering important information.

Now it is your turn to draw your own hotspot map.

1. Which area do you feel the learners feel least safe?
2. Which areas do you feel are the safest?
3. Where do most of the violent incidents occur?
4. Which areas would you address first?
5. What could you do to make this area safer?



Educators reported feeling most unsafe in the following areas:

- Classrooms (29.9%)
- Toilets (20.8%)
- Other open areas (15.6%)
- Outside of the school gate (10.4%)
- Near the learners' toilets (7.8%)
- Playgrounds (6.5%)
- Walking between classrooms (3.9%)⁽¹⁰⁾

When you draw your hotspot map, make sure you include all the areas surrounding your school. Include classrooms, learner and educator toilets, car park, play area, the library, the tuck shop, the fencing, the perimeter area and the areas outside the gate.

Another suggestion is to take a team comprising educators, learners and management on a walkabout. Keep a critical eye on the buildings, the school grounds, the vegetation, the security, the exterior of the school and together make a note of risky features. Each school will have its own unique list. ^(39, P280–292.)

According to research the majority of violence at schools in South Africa takes place in the classroom. This occurs when educators are unable to control their classroom, or when the classroom is left unsupervised.⁽¹⁰⁾ This is followed by sports grounds and playing areas. The area most feared by learners is the school toilets. Added to this, many learners face general violence on their way to and from school, especially if they are obliged to walk. Learners also face the risk of sexual violence.



How to draw your own map

1. Draw a detailed map of your school
2. Have learners and educators give feedback on the map and add places or areas that they identify
3. Now make multiple copies of the map
4. Give the copies of the maps to groups of learners, educators and other school staff
5. Ask them to mark all of the places that they feel unsafe in **red**
6. Ask them to mark all of the places that they feel safe in **green**
7. Collect the maps and collate all of the information on one map. Indicate the number of times the particular place was identified by different people
8. Discuss the places where different types of violence happen. Identify the form of violence, for example: corporal punishment, bullying, sexual harassment, verbal threats. Identify the times of the day the violence is most likely to occur

Your map should not be the only reference; there are many other ways to gather information. Have discussions with the learners and educators about the types of violence that happen in the hotspots and when they generally occur. It might be useful to draw up a table to write down your findings. We have included an example of a table below. Mark the area on your map and then use this to complete the table. Try to get as much detail as possible.

WHERE?	WHAT FORM OF VIOLENCE?	WHAT TIMES?	AGAINST WHOM?	BY WHOM?
Classroom	Smacking with ruler	All morning	Paseka, Xolani, Peter and Frank	Mrs Chen
Girls toilet	Sexual threats	All day	All female learners	A group of Matric boys
Outside the school on the street	Wolf whistling, ugly comments	On the way home	The young female educators	Groups of schoolboys in uniform

Every educator should do their own mapping exercise and audit of their classroom. Part of the audit is to reflect on what may be contributing to violence in the classroom. Your own behaviour and relationship with the learners in your class, should also be considered.



Read the scenario and reflect on the questions that follow in relation to your school:

Learners enter the school gate in the morning without drugs. During and after break, they are found using drugs which they bought from vendors standing outside the school's fences. When these learners return to class after break, educators can see something is wrong because their eyes are red and their behaviour is abnormal.

- This is a situation where the school could call on the **community** for help. Is there a **local counsellor, a chief, or a priest** who has the respect of the community? Could he be asked to help put something in place to prevent the vendor coming near the school? Could community members patrol the fences during break?
- Could the **Representative Council of Learners (RCL)** be brought in to monitor the buying and use of drugs?
- Do any **policies or Code of Conduct** need to change or be adapted? Are there **disciplinary procedures** in place that address drug possession or use in the school?
- In this situation, what are the roles of the **SMT** and the **School Safety Committee**?
- Do the **educators** have class rules that clearly deal with learners under the influence of drugs or alcohol?
- Does the school have a relationship with the **SAPS**? Could the SAPS be asked to make presentations or to warn learners caught using drugs or alcohol?
- Are there other **NGOs** or **CBOs** that can assist in educating and advising?

The school is supposed to be a safe environment, where learners are nurtured, where they can learn and flourish and ultimately become active citizens. This is the fundamental role of educators, but while trying to create a conducive learning environment, educators often find themselves in uncomfortable or dangerous situations, both inside and outside the classroom. ⁽²⁾

Now that you have drawn your own map and collated the information, ask yourself the following questions.

- As an educator in your school, where do you feel at the most risk of violence? (whether it be physical, psychological, threats or harassment)
- Where in the school do your learners feel unsafe?
- Have you taken any action regarding the answers above? If so, what? If not, why?

There are many other forms of information that you could draw on. Surveys and records are an essential part of putting a plan in action to reduce the risk of violence in your school. Once you have all of this information, it is advisable to collate it. In this way, you have a summary from which you can develop plans, processes and adjust policies.



In your school and your classroom, which of these factors contribute to crime and violence?

- ☐ Individual factors (e.g. low self-esteem, impulsiveness, stress, lack of skills)
- ☐ Relationship factors (parenting, family violence, poverty, home circumstances)
- ☐ School-related factors (age in grade, absenteeism, school size)
- ☐ Friendship factors (social isolation, participation in group activities, influences)
- ☐ Social factors (exposure to media and inappropriate actions, unemployment levels, access to illegal substances)

Think about which factors are most serious and significant. Why is this? What can you do about it?



Audit of Violent Actions

Use information from your school mapping exercise and other records to compile this

	YES	NO	Time of Day (during breaks, before school, after school, during class)	Area of School (refer to hotspots on map)
Verbal aggression from educators towards learners (including sexual harassment)	☐	☐		
Verbal aggression from learners towards learners (including sexual harassment)	☐	☐		
Verbal aggression from learners towards educators (including sexual harassment)	☐	☐		
Physical abuse by educators on learners	☐	☐		
Physical abuse by learners on learners	☐	☐		
Physical abuse by learners on educators	☐	☐		
Bullying and intimidation from educators towards learners	☐	☐		
Bullying and intimidation from learners towards learners	☐	☐		
Bullying and intimidation from learners towards educators	☐	☐		

Taking Preventative Action in Potentially Violent Situations



In Step 1 and 2, you got a clearer understanding of what violence is and who has what roles and responsibilities. Step 3 took you through the process of what the various roleplayers should or could be doing and how to evaluate the risk in your own school. This section, Step 4, deals with what to do when you are faced with a potentially violent situation and how to deal with it. It includes four key stages.

- ▶ **UNDERSTAND** the situation
- ▶ **DIFFUSE** the situation
- ▶ **DEAL** with the situation
- ▶ **REFLECT** on the situation

Using a whole school approach, you have now identified problem areas. The next step is to draw up a plan to tackle hotspots and ask yourself the following: What needs changing? How can it be done? Who is responsible?

When a situation arises, it is essential to act immediately and in the most appropriate way. Sometimes it is not immediately clear as to what has transpired, who is involved and what the potential dangers are. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Follow this four-step process to assist you when a potentially violent situation occurs. This process can be used for minor classroom infringements as well as more violent school situations.



Read the scenario and reflect on the questions that follow:

Learners start fighting at the back of the classroom. One learner picks up a pair of scissors and stabs his classmate. The educator runs to the principal's office and asks him to call the police.

- Could this have been you? Would you have picked up tension or problems between the learners before the situation reached this point?
- Is it likely that one/both of the learners had been showing signs of escalating violence?
- Would you know if the learners have a history of conflict?
- Is there a Code of Conduct for your classroom? How would your Code of Conduct have addressed this situation?
- Would you have left the classroom to go to the principal's office or stayed and sent a learner to call the principal? Why?
- Would it have been helpful for the educator to make the rest of the learners quietly leave the classroom and go to the break area?
- Does your classroom policy address the use of cell phones during lessons? Having fights like this appearing later on social media can only escalate the problem

► UNDERSTAND the situation

Before you act in a situation, it is important to know what you are dealing with. Each situation is unique and there are different circumstances that lead to it as well as different personalities and attitudes involved. Sometimes it is wise to take a breath and spend a minute trying to understand the situation. Start by asking yourself: **What is actually happening?** Observe the environment and people involved to make sense of what is actually happening. You may not have time at this point to ask witnesses or bystanders, but be aware of who they are so that you can call on them for information later. It is then important to identify the people involved. This may determine how you deal with the situation. Ask yourself: **Who is involved?** Understanding who is involved may provide some clarity on how bad the situation is or could become. For example, is one of those involved known to have a temper? Is one of them a bully? Is one of them quiet and often victimized? Have those involved had issues in the past?



Education MEC blames overaged learners for violence in schools.

The North West MEC for education, Mmaphefo Matsemela, said overage learners perpetuate bullying and gangsterism in schools.

Macupe, B, News24, 19 Aug 2019, [40]

► DIFFUSE the situation

Now that you have a better idea of what you are dealing with, your immediate response should be to prevent the situation from getting worse. ⁽²⁾

Could this situation escalate?

Is there anyone in immediate danger?

Who should be removed from the situation?

Who should be contained?

Is there anything I can do to immediately stop the situation?

You also need to protect the people involved or who could potentially become involved or hurt. There may also be something you could do quickly and effectively to terminate the situation or prevent it from escalating.

KNOWLEDGE



Knowing the learners in your classroom – their personalities, their home lives, their challenges – always helps when assessing a potentially violent situation. It is important to build relationships with your learners. ⁽²⁾

SCENARIO



Read and reflect on the scenario below:

A learner throws an exercise book at his educator, Mr Mogorosi, when his back is turned. The other pupils begin to laugh and so Mr Mogorosi walks out of the class. He believes this is better than losing his temper with the learners.

In order to diffuse the situation, it is sometimes better to walk away. This prevents the situation from escalating. Often learners are looking for a reaction. This doesn't, however, mean that the learner shouldn't be admonished and disciplined after the incident. The situation still needs to be dealt with as the educator must remain in control. Perhaps an idea might be to call the learner back after class, go through the Code of Conduct, and then impose the appropriate disciplinary sanction. Perhaps speaking to the class about the disruption that was caused and the effect it will have on teaching time might be an idea. A discussion about respect and self-control might also be a good idea. What would you do?

► DEAL with the situation

Once you have done everything you can to diffuse the situation, you will be able to deal with what has transpired. You will need to take certain actions. It is important to first assess: **Can you deal with this on your own?** If you cannot, make sure you call the appropriate person to assist. **Is anyone hurt?** Your first priority is to call for medical assistance should that be needed. Is there a school safety officer or a School Security Committee member you can call for?

Your school will hopefully have policies, processes and guidelines to deal with potentially violent and violent situations. You should be familiar with these and be able to follow these processes. Ascertain: **Which policy or process should I follow in this case?** An important part of dealing with any situation is gathering evidence. This may be from people who witnessed it or from your own observations. These all need to be documented directly after the incident. **What evidence is there?** and **What was witnessed?**

You need to determine whether this is a disciplinary issue or a support issue. Often people don't need to be disciplined but rather supported. It is essential to ask yourself: Who **needs disciplining and who needs support?** In some case you may find that there is a need for both. If there is a discipline issue, then ask yourself: **How serious is the offence?** And: **What process needs to be followed?**

Once you have completed the discipline process or handed it over to the person who should best deal with it, ask yourself: **Have I recorded the event and passed on the information to the necessary roleplayers?** Use the guidelines provided to ensure that you are informed of the different discipline levels. ⁽¹⁸⁾



Discipline versus support

When to support? When to reprimand?

- If a person CAN'T DO something, they need support and encouragement (this is a skills problem)
- If a person WON'T DO something, they need discipline (this is an attitude problem) ⁽⁴¹⁾



Sometimes punishments may be seen to be implemented hastily and without thinking. Positive discipline, on the other hand, takes some forethought, consideration and reflection. Education takes time. ⁽²⁵⁾



Read and reflect on this scenario:

Senkosi was a hard worker and always performed well at school. However lately he had become very quiet and withdrawn. His marks had dropped and he was frequently absent. When he failed his exams his mother went to the school to ask his class teacher why Senkosi had suddenly failed. "He doesn't work hard enough," the class teacher said. "You don't teach him properly," the parent said. The principal got involved and stopped the argument, but Senkosi's mother remained unhappy and her questions unanswered.

It sounds as if there is something wrong in Senkosi's life. Early on, when he suddenly became withdrawn, his class teacher should have been observing him and thinking: Does he have friends? Is he being bullied? Is something terrible happening at home? If he is unhappy might he eventually act out and become violent? His educator should have made an effort to meet with him, show sympathy and concern and try to get to the root of the problem. If he didn't want to speak to her she could have suggested he speak to a school counsellor and she could have offered to set up a meeting with a counsellor or social worker. If this did not work, the next step might have been to ask Senkosi's mother to come to the school to discuss the problems facing her son.

The scenario above went too far. It is the educator's responsibility to ensure his/her learners have the right mind-set to enable them to learn, and to counsel and comfort them when necessary. The goal is always to prevent a situation from getting out of hand and turning ugly.



What type of disciplinarian are you?

Punisher?

- Uses direct or indirect violence
- The punishments tend to be physical or psychological in nature

Withdrawer?

- Non-violent
- Tends to withdraw privileges or participation or curtails movement of child
- Involves coercion
- Little or no emphasis on the learner learning from the experience, except to avoid the penalty in future

Constructor?

- Emphasizes explanation, reasoning and problem-solving
- Emphasizes learning and comprehension
- Positive discipline is carried out from the perspective of teaching, not punishing, the child

Disciplinary problems mean when learners act out in a variety of ways which impacts on those around them and their ability to learn. Disrespect, defiance, bullying, and aggression are the most common disciplinary problems. A dysfunctional home life can impact learner behaviour. ⁽³⁷⁾ Managing disciplinary issues may be one of the most challenging aspects of teaching. Mistakes made when it comes to discipline include befriending your learners and then coming down too harshly when they overstep the murky boundaries.

As a progressive educator it would be beneficial to use an appropriate restorative discipline method rather than a punitive measure (punishment).

“Discipline” and “punishment” are very different. While discipline means teaching learners the necessary self-control to obey rules and codes of conduct, punishment means making a learner suffer for breaking the rules. Punishment may stop the behaviour in the moment, but it teaches learners nothing about understanding their behaviour and correcting it in future. ⁽⁴²⁾

	Discipline	Punishment
PURPOSE	Presents a choice	Demands compliance
INVOLVES	Making a learner learn from their mistakes	Making a learner pay for his/her mistakes
USE	To teach learners to obey rules or change their behaviour	To fix the behaviour of the learner
CALLS FOR	Learning acceptable behaviour	Fearing a consequence
TEACHING METHOD	Positive	Negative
KEY CONCERN	What does the learner need to do?	What is wrong with the learner?
LONG TERM EFFECT	It causes the learner to incorporate rules and hold themselves responsible for their behaviour	It causes the learner to call for external control, so as to behave in the right manner
SELF ESTEEM	Increased	Lowered
PARENT-LEARNER RELATIONSHIP	Strengthened	Damaged

⁽⁴²⁾

Seek assistance and advice from others to constantly improve on your discipline processes and classroom practices. Many serious incidents can be avoided by addressing the number of smaller events and issues that occur leading up to the larger, disruptive event.

Some of the success factors in handling discipline include:

- Timely intervention
- Follow-up support
- Logical consequence
- Non-punitive atmosphere
- Fairness
- Cooperation
- Firmness

The essence of discipline is finding effective alternatives for punishment to help learners learn self-discipline. Some educationists believe that ineffective punishment may frustrate learners and make them uneducable. It may be more helpful to perceive punishment as a last resort after the more positive measures have failed to get through.

Now that you have been guided through the success factors in the management methods and strategies, you may feel motivated (perhaps together with some colleagues) to develop alternative perspectives and strategies to deal with some common problem behaviour in schools.

When a discipline measure is adopted, it should not merely be as a form of punishment but as an educative process. It should have the following characteristics:

- Focuses on rules and not the power of the educator
- Proves to learners that they are being cared for
- Is fair, reasonable and flexible, taking every situation into account, rather than being erratic or irrational
- Is accompanied by desirable alternatives
- Is followed with guidance activities



It is important to record misconduct, threats, injury and actual incidents

Level 5	Criminal misconduct	Very serious violations of the school Code of Conduct, school rules or civil law. These incidents may need to be reported to the police, social welfare and the district support teams. For example, possession of, or trading illegal drugs, intentionally using a dangerous weapon, sexual harassment, abuse, assault and robbery. Frequent repetition of Level 4 infringements.
Level 4	Very serious violations of school Code of Conduct or rules	For example, threatening with a dangerous object, and intentionally causing physical injury. Frequent repetition of Level 2 and 3 infringements.
Level 3	Serious violations of school Code of Conduct or rules	For example, minor injury to another person, possession or use of alcohol, severely disruptive behaviour, possession of a dangerous weapon, theft or vandalism. Frequent repetition of Level 2 infringements.
Level 2	Minor violations of school Code of Conduct or rules	For example, possession or use of cigarettes or tobacco, truancy of several classes, cheating during examinations, or verbally threatening the safety of another person. Frequent repetition of Level 1 infringements.
Level 1	Minor violations of general classroom discipline	For example, failing to attend class on time, leaving class without permission, cheating in class test, failing to complete homework, or dishonesty with minor consequences.

(43 P 53)



Who can suspend a learner?

The SGB may, on reasonable grounds and as a precautionary measure, suspend a learner who is suspected of serious misconduct from attending school, but may only enforce such suspension after the learner has been granted a reasonable opportunity to make representations to it in relation to such suspension. ⁽¹⁾

Who can expel a learner?

According to the South African School's Act (No 84 of 1996), a learner at a public school may only be expelled by the Head of the Provincial Education Department; and if found guilty of serious misconduct after disciplinary proceedings contemplated in section 8 were conducted. A learner or the parent of a learner who has been expelled from a public school may appeal against the decision of the Head of Department to the Member of the Provincial Executive Council within 14 days of receiving the notice of expulsion. ⁽¹⁾

REFLECT on the situation

Once you have dealt with an issue, it is always important to reflect on it and find ways that you could have handled things differently. ⁽⁴⁴⁾ Ask yourself: **What could I have done better?** It is always difficult to reflect because these situations are often emotional and all you want to do is put them behind you. Analyze how you reacted and what you did in order to learn from the incident. It can also be helpful to analyze the incident with a supportive colleague who may be less emotional.



How often do you stop and think about how you could have handled something better? Take a few minutes to think back about a discipline issue you faced that you could have handled more effectively.



Think about this scenario:

Bontle did not do her homework for the third day in a row, and refused to answer the educator when she was asked for a reason why. Her educator punished her by detaining her at school for two hours. During that time she had to clean the school toilets. She went back home, and told her father who was furious. Her father confronted the educator the next morning in the classroom and they started shouting and pushing each other. There was a huge commotion at the school.

Let us look at the flashpoints. These are moments when, had there been a different response, things might have gone very differently.

- Bontle refused to answer the educator. If she had answered, the situation would not have arisen
- The educator could have spoken to Bontle later in the lesson, gently and in private. Possibly there is an underlying problem
- The educator has a right to discipline, but the discipline should ideally be positive. Making a student clean toilets is demeaning (learners also have rights) and does not help with her learning. More reasonable discipline might have been for Bontle to tackle that homework
- The educator could have required Bontle to read the school's Code of Conduct and have a discussion about why rules are important
- If Bontle still refused to respond or respect the educator's instructions, the educator could have arranged a meeting with her parent, or looked for advice and information from Bontle's other educators
- When Bontle's father arrived, the educator could have insisted that they speak in the staff room or another private place.
- If the father entered the school already aggressive, the educator could have asked a learner to summon the principal

Educators have the responsibility not to use physical violence.

Also reflect on what you did well. **Did I manage to reduce the risk?** Sometimes these are development opportunities for you and other roleplayers that can provide guidance on what structures and support may be lacking. **Did I have the necessary knowledge and skills to deal with the situation?** There are many online and other training courses available to assist educators in dealing with conflict and managing classroom situations. **Were the necessary policies and processes in place for preventing the situation and dealing with it effectively?** Although policies are often in place in a school, they are not always clearly communicated, and some educators are not aware of the processes which they should follow. Where policies are not adequate or effective, they should be reviewed and updated.



Do you have someone that you trust to go to speak about your emotions? Who would you approach if you were traumatised after an incident?

Some incidents can be very traumatising for all those involved including bystanders and witnesses. **What is the impact on the people involved and have they been sufficiently supported? Have they been debriefed?** The importance of emotional and psychological support should not be underestimated and there are many ways that this can be provided. This may be a good opportunity to bring in community organisations, especially if trauma counselling is needed.

Don't be afraid to ask for support and assistance.



Read the scenario and reflect:

A learner is caught smoking dagga on school premises. The school principal calls the parent. The principal also reports the learner to the circuit office. They advise the principal to allow the learner to attend school after a week's suspension. After this incident, the smoking of dagga on school property increases and a learner is caught selling dagga behind the staff toilets.

This was not the most effective way to deal with this situation.

- Either the school policies need updating or are not being followed
- The SMT was not involved in the decision making, nor was the SGB

The greater issue of how the drugs got into the school, and how widespread the problem is, was not addressed.



Read the scenario and reflect:

Richard's family comes from Malawi. He does very well in class. There is a group of boys in the class who bully him. They say things like, "You are here just to hide! Your parents didn't contribute to the building of this school. Go home where you belong." Richard ignores the boys and so does his educator.

Learners are often bullied because they are different – different religion, sexual orientation, or nationality. Think of a time when you came across this in your teaching career. What happened? How did you respond? What would you do in future?

"Positive school cultures provide a safe, supportive, encouraging, inviting, and challenging environment for students and staff, which in turn allows students' academic achievement to evolve." ⁽⁴⁷⁾



Emotional health is very important as it builds resilience to stress and allows you to develop deeper relationships. It also builds self-esteem and provides you with energy and clearer thoughts

How to improve your emotional health

- ✓ Confide in a trusted friend
- ✓ Spend time with close friends and family
- ✓ Learn to react to stressful situations
- ✓ Focus on one thing at a time
- ✓ Exercise
- ✓ Get enough sleep



Be positive!

An educator's attitude has a direct effect on the attitude, performance and behaviour of the learners that they interact with. According to Bonni Gourneau ⁽⁸⁶⁾ the five attitudes that an educator should have include:

- ✓ A genuine caring and kind attitude
- ✓ A willingness to share the responsibility involved in a classroom
- ✓ A sincere sensitivity to the students' diversity
- ✓ A motivation to provide meaningful learning experiences for all students
- ✓ An enthusiasm for stimulating the students' creativity ⁽⁴⁶⁾



What culture exists in your school? Do the management team and educators act professionally and respectfully towards each other and the learners? Do you feel there is any way you can contribute to creating a positive culture?

“Having the respect and personal relationships with their students’ families, school leaders are uniquely positioned to guide them on how to support their children at home during this exceptional challenge.” (48)

Educators’ actions and attitudes play a major role in the environment and culture of the classroom and school. As professionals, we should always reflect and ask ourselves: ***Did my actions or attitude cause or escalate the situation in any way?*** Sometimes we underestimate the impact our emotions, attitude and responses can have on learners, parents and other educators. The culture of the school is determined by the positive relationships built between educators, parents and learners and the interaction and support from and for the SMT. Part of your reflection is to ask: ***Could this happen again and if so, how could I handle it differently?*** When answering this, be honest with yourself, as making mistakes is essential to learning.



Educators need to change their attitude towards learners. They need to realise that teaching children how to behave is part of the job. They need to show children that there are consequences for bad behaviour, and for breaking the rules. Schools need to do away with any practices that foster violence. For example, corporal punishment merely teaches children the values of degradation, force and humiliation. It must be stopped. Intimidation by leaders and educators also needs to be avoided in school situations. (49)



Read the scenario and reflect:

After one week of teaching, Kerina, a newly qualified educator, tells the librarian that she can’t cope with the boys in her class. She asks what she should do. The librarian offers sympathy but says that the lack of respect and good manners have been a problem at the school for a while. The next day, Kerina e-mails the principal and asks for help transferring to another school.

Learners are more likely to bully or turn to violence when discipline is not managed consistently within the school as a whole. Schools that are well-managed and well-organized with clear systems, policies and protocols have fewer victims of violence. Educators can limit violence in their classroom (aimed at themselves or learners) through having and sharing clear classroom and school rules, being role models through their own behaviour, rewarding positive behaviour and/or mentoring learners with behaviour difficulties. Educators need to be aware of their rights and what steps to take to enforce these rights.

Evaluating, Reflecting and Improving Processes and Actions



You have now reached the last section of the handbook. You have a clear understanding of violence and the forms of violence (Step 1), as well as the roleplayers involved and what their roles and responsibilities are (Step 2). You have been through the process of evaluating the risk of potential issues in your school and in your classroom (Step 3) and in Step 4 you went through the four-step process of how to take action when a potentially violent issue arises. This section (Step 5) emphasizes the importance of constant reflection and evaluation of all the previous sections. It also discusses the importance of constantly re-evaluating and improving policies, processes and procedures with regards to reducing the risk of violence in schools.

A school's roleplayers need to constantly evaluate and reflect on how they can change, develop and improve their systems, policies and processes to reduce the risk of violence. Constant self-reflection and review of policies and processes provides insight on behaviours, values, knowledge and growth. ⁽⁵⁰⁾

Sometimes school life gets so busy that we forget to stop and reassess whether the systems and processes that we have in place are effective and appropriate for the changing nature of school and society. Some policies become out of date, especially when it comes to social media. Sometimes new policies have to be rapidly put in place, for example, policies addressing the recent COVID-19 epidemic.

This process of reflection and reassessment should include all of the roleplayers and should be done on a regular basis. It is particularly important after an incident has occurred as this is often where we see the gaps in managing the reduction of risk of violence in our schools. We should however not wait for an incident to occur before evaluating and reflecting. The School Safety Committee should constantly be reflecting on the policies and processes in place and exploring ways to improve on them. The committee should use input from incident reports and how they were dealt with, as well as insights and ideas from all roleplayers. ⁽¹⁸⁾

According to the NSSF ⁽¹⁸⁾ there are particular roles that the school plays in preventing violence. This checklist is an excellent starting point for your evaluation process.



Does your school implement the following?	YES	NO
Are policies and processes effectively implemented (Code of Conduct, discipline, safety, etc)?	☐	☐
Are policies and processes constantly reviewed?	☐	☐
Is there community involvement?	☐	☐
Is the leadership of the school effective?	☐	☐
Do educators prepare for their lessons and continuously undergo training?	☐	☐
Does the school adopt a proactive approach (have plans in place with effective and appropriate management of these)?	☐	☐
Is there a collaborative working approach from all staff members?	☐	☐
Do your district, parents and educators carry out their rightful responsibilities?	☐	☐
Are there easily accessible and child-friendly reporting mechanisms and adequate response systems in place? ⁽¹⁸⁾	☐	☐

Many schools have policies and processes in place. However, they are not always known to everyone and sometimes not applied.

This handbook has taken you through a process that every school and educator should follow to help reduce the risk of violence in schools. Part of the evaluation and reflection process is evaluating each of these steps and assessing:

- **What is lacking?**
- **What should be changed?**
- **What should be improved?**

The decisions that are made here, feed back into the process to improve the overall whole school approach to reducing the risk of violence.



Do you know if all the policies and processes in your school are developed? Communicated? Actioned? What process does your school have in place to ensure that you, the educator, have access to all school policies? Can you think of ways that you could help influence how policies could be better developed? Communicated? Actioned?

The final scenario that follows takes you through many different reflective questions, all drawing from what you have thought about and learned about in this handbook. Hopefully it will be a useful example for guiding you through the process of reflecting on and evaluating a potentially violent future scenario. Once you have finished, read the analysis on the next page and compare it to your outcomes and observations.



Read this, the final scenario, and answer the questions that follow:

Mrs Mogorosi was aware that her grade 9 maths class could be fairly disruptive. The class was particularly weak and needed all the teaching time possible. One morning, she was teaching a new and difficult concept that some of the learners understood better than others. She gave one group work to continue with in order to reinforce the concepts with others. When she turned around, she realised that one of the learners had been videoing her with his phone. The other kids were laughing and when she asked what the learner was doing he said that he wanted to record the lesson to watch later in case he missed some important information.

However Mrs Mogorosi had a short skirt on and realised that the learner was videoing her personally. She was concerned about him putting it on Facebook. The learner argued and said that although he knew there were rules in place, there were no rules to not make video recordings in the classroom. In fact, in the previous lesson, the educator had actually asked them to take out their phones to use the calculators on them.

Mrs Mogorosi was nervous to discipline this learner as in a previous situation where she had tried to discipline the learner, he had become verbally abusive and insulting, and called her "meat on legs", accused her of "asking for it" and said he was going to get the head of his gang to "hunt her down". The learner lives next door to one of the senior management members of the school and Mrs Mogorosi knows that they are family friends so she was not sure who to go to or what to do. Mrs Mogorosi wasn't sure what the process was for reporting these incidents, and was not aware of policies that she could refer to, or if they even existed.

After considering her options, and knowing that she was not putting any of the other learners in danger, she decided to let the incident go. It was however stressful for her as she was not sure what the learner was going to do with the video and she was worried about her reputation.

- 1. Is this a potentially violent situation?**
- 2. What type of violence is referred to?**
- 3. Who are the various roleplayers in this scenario? Have they carried out their roles? If not, what could each of them have done to reduce the risk of the situation?**
- 4. Was there anything that the educator could have done to reduce the risk in her classroom?**
- 5. Was there anything that the school could have done to support her in this situation?**
- 6. Did the educator analyze the situation before reacting as she did?**
- 7. Did she have the necessary knowledge and skills to deal with the situation?**
- 8. Did the educator contribute to the events leading up to the situation in any way?**



Now that you have answered the questions on your own, reflect on some of the ideas below.

1 Understanding Violence	Is this a potentially violent situation?	The educator identified that it could become a potentially violent situation. She drew on her past experiences with the child. She could have also taken into consideration the learner's social environment.
	What type of violence is referred to?	Although this is not physical violence, it is still a form of violence. It could be classified as both bullying and sexual bullying, as it was demeaning and humiliating for the educator. The educator also referred to an earlier incident where the learner called her "meat on legs" and said she was "asking for it". This is classified as sexual harassment. Saying he would "hunt her down" is a violent threat. If the learner posted the video on social media, it would be considered cyberbullying.
2 Understanding Roles and Responsibilities	Who are the various roleplayers in this scenario? Have they carried out their roles? If not, what could each of them have done to reduce the risk of the situation?	It is mentioned that there are rules at the school. The question is, are they known to the learners and are they enforced? The rule about cell phones should appear in the school's Code of Conduct. These should be clearly laid out and signed off by the SGB. Although the school rules and Code of Conduct are essential, educators should also make sure that they establish classroom rules that the learners are familiar with and that the educator consistently enforces. It could be confusing to the learners where mixed messages occur. In this case the educator said no cell phones, but then allowed the learners to use them in a previous lesson. However, no learner needs to read a rule book to know that threatening and sexually harassing a teacher – or anyone for that matter – is unacceptable and requires disciplinary action. It is the responsibility of the principal and SMT to ensure all staff and learners know which committee (e.g. School Safety Committee, SMT) or which person (e.g. principal, school safety officer, HOD) they can approach for support regarding violent threats, sexual harassment or any form of bullying or abuse.
3 Understanding the Risk of Violence in your School	Was there anything that the educator could have done to reduce the risk in her classroom?	Firstly, it is important to note that the educator did not contribute to being sexually abused, bullied, threatened or harassed in any way. In terms of reducing general risk, the educator could have been more consistent with the cell phone rule and reinforced it. Positive reinforcement has proven to be an effective way to reduce violence in schools and classrooms. After the previous incident with this learner, did the educator take time to evaluate risks and decided on precautions to take in the classroom? Did the educator take time to get to know and understand the reasons behind the learner's violent tendencies? Does the educator spend enough time incorporating values and beliefs into their curriculum-based activities? Does the educator manage her classroom appropriately and are there aspects that she could change? The educator needs to build relationships with her learners and develop emotional and social skills. Was the educator aware of potential incidents that could occur and does she have the systems in place to deal with them? Is the educator aware of the policies, and systems in place at a school level to deal with potential situations of violence and who to report incidents to?

	Was there anything that the school could have done to support her in this situation?	The SMT does not seem to have a good system to report and record incidents. This should be put in place. The educator did not report this incident nor did she report the earlier incident where she was verbally abused and sexually harassed as she felt that she would not get the necessary support. This should not be the case. The SGB and SMT need to support the educators in disciplining the learners and possibly put in a better overall discipline system in the school.
4 Taking Preventative Action in Potentially Violent Situations	Did the educator analyze the situation before taking action?	The educator assessed the situation and knew what she was dealing with and chose not to react. She also looked at the impact on the entire class and lesson. She was unclear or unaware of policies and processes and did not know who to report to. The action she took was to ignore the learner. However, harassment and bullying behaviour are likely to continue if no action is taken.
	Did she have the necessary knowledge and skills to deal with the situation?	She chose the option of ignoring the learner. This would indicate that she felt that she did not know of any other options. This educator needs help and training to develop her ability to manage challenging behaviour in her classroom. She possibly also needs emotional and psychological support.
	Could the educator have taken steps to create a classroom situation that could have been easier to control and manage?	It is most important to note that no-one contributes to being sexually abused, bullied, threatened or harassed in any way. It is not their fault. However there are many processes and procedures that the educator could have put in place: • Setting classroom rules and behavioural expectations, including respect for her role as an educator • Ensuring that there are consequences to any incidents that may have led to forms of violent or threatening behaviour • Building positive relationships between herself and learners • Rewarding appropriate behaviour • Developing children's social, emotional and academic skills
	Did the educator deal appropriately with the situation?	The educator did not really deal with the situation at all. She chose to ignore it. This means that the learner got away with his unacceptable behaviour and will more than likely repeat it.
5 Evaluating, Reflecting and Improving Processes and Actions	Did she or the school bodies reflect and record the situation appropriately?	She was concerned about the repercussions but did not necessarily reflect on how she could have handled it better or differently. Even though there was no formal reporting mechanism, she could still have reported the incident, in writing, to the SMT or principal or the School Safety Committee. This also shows how useful it would be to have such a committee. Had the educator known this route was available to her, she could have reported the incident to them and been given the support she needed to take this further or to ensure structures are put in place to help her deal with any similar incidents in future. The school needs to put in place mechanisms that allow victims of violence, like this educator, to feel guaranteed of safety and support when reporting such incidents. The school should constantly evaluate and reflect on how they can change, develop and improve their systems, policies and processes to reduce the risk of violence.

Annexures

Annexure A ⁽⁵¹⁾



On a scale of 1–4, with 1 being “Not at all confident” and 4 being “Highly confident”, rate your level of confidence in your ability to do the following:

Not at all confident

Highly confident

1	←	2	→	3	→	4
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Identifying bullying and/or violent behaviour when I see it

1	←	2	→	3	→	4
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Describing my school’s policy on how to address violent behaviour

1	←	2	→	3	→	4
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Recognizing possible warning signs of students who are being bullied

1	←	2	→	3	→	4
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Knowing how to intervene in bullying behaviour when I see it

1	←	2	→	3	→	4
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Knowing how to de-escalate a situation if necessary

1	←	2	→	3	→	4
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Knowing how to address bullying behaviour that is reported to me

1	←	2	→	3	→	4
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Knowing how to find out what happened so I can make an accurate determination of whether an incident may involve bullying

1	←	2	→	3	→	4
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Knowing how to support the learners involved, including bystanders

1	←	2	→	3	→	4
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Knowing how to follow up and report on bullying behaviour

1	←	2	→	3	→	4
---	---	---	---	---	---	---



Look at the list below and reflect on who does what in your school?	Teachers and staff	SMT	SGB	Parents and community
Empower and develop educators	☐	☐	☐	☐
Involve the public and form partnerships	☐	☐	☐	☐
Promote moral values amongst learners and staff	☐	☐	☐	☐
Develop effective policies	☐	☐	☐	☐
Develop effective processes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective implementation of policies and processes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective communication of policies, processes and actions to staff, learners, parents and broader community	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective awareness training for staff, learners, parents and broader community	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐
Develop plans and effectively and appropriately manage these	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instil classroom discipline and systems and processes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ensure a collaborative and supportive working approach from all staff members	☐	☐	☐	☐
Implementing reporting mechanisms that are easily accessible to all learners and staff	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ensuring that appropriate responses and actions are followed through	☐	☐	☐	☐
Constant review and revision of policies	☐	☐	☐	☐
Carry out effective discipline actions	☐	☐	☐	☐
Promotes a positive and safe environment for all learners and staff	☐	☐	☐	☐
Carries out annual risk analysis of school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Develop a school improvement plan that includes and addresses issues of concern around violence and safety of staff and learners	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ensure that government, parents and teachers take their rightful responsibilities	☐	☐	☐	☐

Annexure C

Summary of policies available for educators to refer to for the prevention of and dealing with violence in schools

International and Regional Policies	• The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1995) • The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (2000) • The African Youth Charter (2009)
National Policies	• The South African Constitution (1996) • The Child Justice Act (No. 75 of 2008) • The Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005) • The Liquor Act (No. 59 of 2003) • The National School Health Policy and Implementation Guidelines (2003) • The National Development Plan (NDP) (2011) • The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Act, no.32 of 2007 as Amended • The Labour Relations Act (Act.66 of 1995)
Educational Policies and Acts	• The South African Schools Act, (No. 84 of 1996) • The National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996) • The Employment of Educators Act (No. 76 of 1998) • The Regulations for Safety Measures at all Public Schools (Government Gazette 22754, 2001) • The Regulations to Prohibit Initiation Practices in Schools (Government Gazette 24165, 2002: 68) • The Norms and Standards for Educators (Government Gazette 20844, 2000: 48) • The Policy Framework for the Management of Drug Abuse by Learners in Schools and in Public Further Education and Training Institutions (Government Gazette 24172, 2002) • The National Guidelines for the Management and Prevention of Drug Use and Abuse in all Public Schools and Further Education and Training Institutions (2002) • The Devices to be Used for Drug Testing and the Procedure to be Followed (2008) • The Implementation Protocol between the Department of Basic Education and the South African Police Services on prevention of crime and violence in all schools (2011) • The SACE Act no. 31 of 2000 • The SACE Code of Professional Ethics (2002) • The DBE National School Safety Framework (2015)
School Policies	• Code of Conduct for Staff • Code of Conduct for Learners • Discipline Policy • Safety Policy • School Safety Framework • School rules and regulations

Annexure D



Reflect on how much each of these factors contribute to the issues of discipline and violence in your school

	No impact	Some impact	Impact	Strong impact
Learners show little respect for educators	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learners have a negative attitude towards learning	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learners do not respect educators' authority	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learners carry weapons to school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learners behaviour is impacted by the media	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learners have poor socio-economic backgrounds	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gang violence impacts the school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drugs and alcohol impact learners' behaviour	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learners do not respect young educators	☐	☐	☐	☐
The school is poorly managed	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gender dynamics impact the classroom	☐	☐	☐	☐
Racial dynamics impact the classroom	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are no serious consequences for actions	☐	☐	☐	☐
Little support for educators from parents and community	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is a lack of parent involvement	☐	☐	☐	☐
Absenteeism of educators	☐	☐	☐	☐
Age disparity between learners in the same grade	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of communication of school rules and consequences	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of discipline policies and procedures	☐	☐	☐	☐

	No impact	Some impact	Impact	Strong impact
Learners come from broken families	☐	☐	☐	☐
Educator/learner ratio is not manageable	☐	☐	☐	☐
Educators do not keep the learners focussed in the classroom	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of structure and support from Department of Education	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of structure and support from the SGB	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of structure and support from the SMT	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of structure and support from parents and community	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of structure and support from colleagues	☐	☐	☐	☐

References / Endnotes

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Need help?

If you are facing incidents of violence or harassment at your school, whether from learners, other educators or management, please contact your educator/teacher union, or the SACE call centre on **012 663 9517** or email **info@sace.org.za**. If you need emotional support at any time, day or night, contact **LifeLine** on **0861 322322**



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