

September 2012

Dear Peel District School Board Families:

I am writing to share with you some important information regarding children who may be in need of protection. The *Child and Family Services Act* states that every person who has reason to believe that a child is or may be abused or neglected must report his or her suspicions immediately to the Children's Aid Society—this is a legal obligation.

This law means that:

- **School staff do not have a choice if they suspect that a student is or may be in need of protection. Staff must report their suspicions directly and immediately to the Children's Aid Society.**
- When staff report concerns to Children's Aid, they must also share with them any information about the concern which might otherwise be confidential.
- It is not the school's responsibility to investigate suspicions, evaluate the situation or assign blame.
- Staff can be fined \$1,000 for failing to report that a student is or may be in need of protection. Staff may also be subject to employment consequences and a provincial offence charge under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

Our staff has a special awareness of the signs of child abuse and neglect, and as such, has a legal responsibility to report any suspicions to Children's Aid. It is not necessary for staff to be sure that a student is or may be in need of protection. All that is needed is "reasonable grounds to suspect" abuse or neglect. "Reasonable grounds" is defined as being what the average person would expect given his or her training, background and experience.

The Peel District School Board is fully committed to meeting the legal requirements of the *Child and Family Services Act*. Staff has the full support of the board in meeting this obligation. As a board, we must continue to protect the welfare of each student.

Sincerely,

Tony Pontes  
Director of Education

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