Student Engagement and Management Policy – Y Community School

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students are supported to engage in education at Y Community School in a safe and supportive manner and that any issues arising with their engagement, behaviour or enrolment are managed in a fair equitable and transparent manner.

2. Scope:

This policy applies to all Staff, Volunteers and Board Members of Y Whittlesea and, students who access or the Y Vocational School.

Please note: This policy does not apply to other programs operated by Y Whittlesea.

3. Definitions:

- **'The Y', 'Y' or 'Y Whittlesea':** refer to YMCA Whittlesea Inc and YMCA Whittlesea Youth and Community Services LTD
- **School**: Refers to the Y Community School noting that the legal entity through which the school is registered is YMCA Whittlesea Community Services.
- **Staff:** Any person performing duties on behalf of the Y Community School be they an employee, volunteer, trainee or contractor.
- **Engagement:** The participation of a student in activities designed to lead to learning and in the social interactions of the school.
- **Dysregulation:** An inability to control or regulate one's emotional responses, which can lead to significant mood swings, significant changes in mood, or emotional lability. It can involve many emotions, including sadness, anger, irritability, and frustration. Dysregulation often occurs in response to a trigger and leads to behavioural responses which can be either overt, active and disruptive to self and others or withdrawn, dissociative and leading to states of 'shut down'.
- **Suspension:** The withdrawal of a student and prohibition from attending school for a defined and limited period of time.
- **Expulsion:** The withdrawal of a student, prohibition from attending school on a permanent basis and termination of enrolment as a result of this.
- **Principal:** The person with executive authority for the Y Community School. Unless otherwise reflected in the Y Whittlesea organisational chart the Executive Manager Schools will hold this position and fulfil all roles described as Principal in the relevant State and Federal legislation and regulations.

4. Principles

Student engagement and management at the school will always be carried out in way that recognises the individual needs and differences of our students.

Behaviour management will operate within the frameworks of trauma informed practice, School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) and restorative practice.

It is assumed that all behaviour serves a function for the person performing it. Positive, prosocial and productive behaviours should be encouraged and the factors contributing to any unhelpful, counterproductive or problematic behaviours should be understood and strategies put in place to reduce these.

In line with the frameworks above the approach to engagement and management of students is based in early intervention, graduated consequences, and maximum support to enable students to succeed.

5. Policy:

The Y Community School is established to respond to the needs of young people who are disengaged or at significant risk of disengaging from mainstream education.

We enact our belief in the power of inspired young people by providing a safe, supportive environment for young people to engage with education, attain skills and qualifications and begin not just to survive, but to thrive, become inspired, and an inspiration to others.

Our approach to student engagement and management is to focus on student's strengths and interests, adjust the curriculum and supports available to cater for their individual needs and emphasis positive expectations and approaches.

Any form of corporal punishment is specifically prohibited at the school, or any event associated with the school.

5.1   Individual learning plans:

Each student will have an individual learning plan (ILP) which will be developed by their teachers and other support staff working together with the student. The ILP will form the basis of a student's program at the school and will incorporate their interests, levels of ability, challenges, and any special circumstances impacting that student. The ILP will cover the academic, personal and interpersonal aspects of a student's learning and development. Where a student requires individual adjustments to successfully engage in learning these will be recorded in their ILP.

The ILP will be developed during the student's intake and settling in process and will be reviewed at least every semester thereafter. The ILP is a living document and as such will be reviewed whenever there are significant changes in a student's circumstances, needs or presentation.

The first ILP is to be at completed draft stage no later than 6 weeks[1] after a student's first attendance and this draft will be shared with the parent(s) and any other relevant adults.

5.2   Supporting students to self-regulate:

Teachers and all school staff will use the language of self-regulation on a regular basis with their classes and students and use both formal and informal opportunities to teach and support self-regulation. At the beginning of each day class groups will 'check in' to identify how they are feeling and whether any additional supports are needed for any individual student.

Each student's ILP will include a section identifying their challenges and triggers with self-regulation. This section will identify the things which cause a student to feel dysregulated either through acting out or withdrawing, how the school can support them to avoid these triggers, what types of behaviours they might exhibit and what strategies the student and school can use to manage any event when the student is dysregulated. When developing this section of the learning plan staff will use the regulate – relate – reason approach for the neurosequential model as shown below.
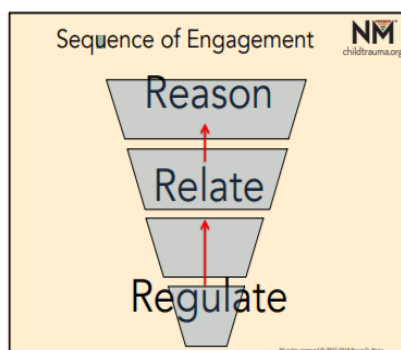
Ongoing challenges with a student's ability to self-regulate will lead to use of a case conference approach where the school staff can be engaged in collective problem solving to facilitate solutions for the student involved and assist their colleagues in supporting the student.

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[1] Note the 6 week timeframe allows for a settling in and getting to know you period so that the student can gain trust and the staff can build sufficient knowledge of the student to develop a meaningful ILP.

5.3   Supporting student engagement:

As identified in section 5.2, the first requirement for engagement in learning is that students are regulated and able to manage themselves to be able to engage and learn. The use of individual planning and focus on regulation and relationships are the key vehicles to support engagement. Through relationships with trusted adults and the opportunity to co-construct their learning aligned to their interests and needs with those adults, students' opportunities to engage are maximised and supported.

Disengagement is itself a behaviour of concern whether that manifests as passive disengagement or active behaviours that disrupt others or signal disengagement. Where student engagement is identified as a concern, they will be supported by focussing on a problem-solving approach with the recognition that some behaviours stem from dysregulation resulting from stress or past trauma, while others serve specific functions for students including avoidance, attention seeking, emotional expression and may be learned behaviours which have become habitual responses.

A functional behaviour approach will be applied to all behaviours impacting a student's engagement in learning.

5.3.1   Responding to persistent disengagement:

Where a student is regularly disengaged from learning as evidenced by low participation and productivity in their work, persistent disruptive or counterproductive behaviours or declining attendance, the following approaches will be taken:

- The class teacher will revisit the student's individual learning plan and work with the student and others including parents, support workers and other school staff, to identify alternative approaches, possible modifications, or additional supports to help the student engage. The approach will be focused on the student's interests and needs.
- Any specific barriers identified through the review of the student's learning plan will be addressed where possible through interventions, referral, and additional supports.
- Where the two approaches above do not result in significant improvement a case conference meeting will be held involving key staff to brainstorm and problem solve the barriers facing the student and assist the classroom teacher in reengaging the student.

Parents and other support workers external to the school will be engaged wherever this is considered by the school to be of possible assistance in supporting a student to better engage.

5.4   Managing behaviour:

The management of behaviour at the school is focussed on the goal that all students are actively engaged in learning. This includes managing problematic behaviours and also the focus on students' behaviours that support learning, social interaction, and the operation of a positive school environment.

Corporal punishment will under no circumstances be used to manage student behaviour and any staff member who engages in corporal punishment will be subject to disciplinary procedures.

The school will support this goal by actively training staff through internal processes as well as external supports in the processes outlined below. The processes for students to be supported to regulate and relate, and the primary prevention strategies present across the school will be monitored and regularly discussed at staff meetings, forums and staff performance and development processes.

### 5.4.1 School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS)

The school's behaviour management approach will operate within the School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) framework. The framework is based on the following:

- Students are actively taught the behavioural expectations of the school and how these apply to them.
- Expected behaviours are regularly recognised, rewarded, and reinforced. Positive recognition and reinforcement of expected behaviours occur significantly more often than corrections or sanctions for unhelpful behaviours.
- Behaviours that inhibit or disrupt learning are to be identified and acted on as early as possible and before they have the opportunity to escalate.
- Redirection and reteaching of behaviours is preferable to sanctions.
- When behavioural sanctions are required, these should be at the lowest level required to manage the behaviour and are to follow a pattern graduated consequences which seek to address the function and impact of the behaviour being addressed.

In line with the SWPBS framework, behaviour supports will function in a tiered approach as shown in the diagram below (Continuum of School Wide Instructional and Positive Behaviour Support). Primary prevention through the

provision of consistent schoolwide behavioural supports in all classes and settings underpins the framework and will support all students to understand expectations, experience a positive learning environment and engage in learning. Where students demonstrate behaviours that indicate low engagement and that inhibit the learning of that student and / or others, targeted interventions at either the secondary or tertiary prevention levels will be used to support those students.

The resourcing and support for the secondary and tertiary prevention tiers is provided for in the staffing profile and resourcing is at a level that reflects the nature of the school as a special assistance school and the proportion of students likely to require additional support.

(Source: https://ttac.gmu.edu/archive/telegram/article-3)
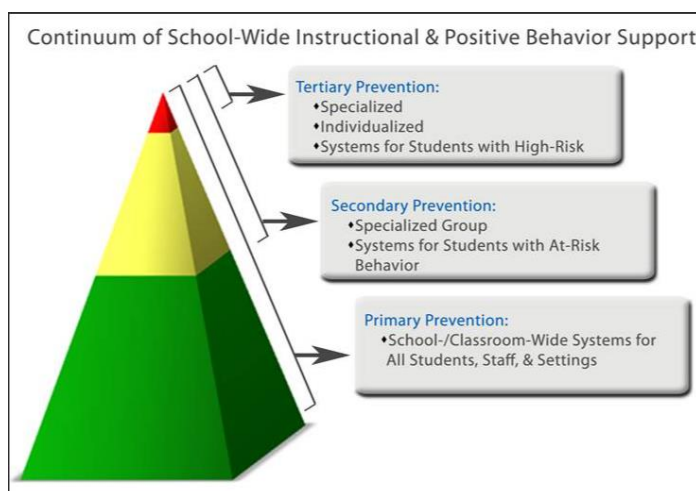
Physical discipline of any kind is unacceptable.

Any instances of physical discipline will lead to disciplinary actions in relation to the staff concerned and may also lead to consideration of Reportable Conduct Notifications and referral to police.

5.4.2. Restorative practices

The behaviour management and engagement approach includes a focus on restorative practices. The nature and extent of any restorative response will vary according to the degree of harm or damage and could range from informal approaches focussing on understanding the impacts of behaviour and identifying what is required to redress these impacts to formal restorative conversations facilitated by school leaders or external facilitators.

The key principles underpinning the restorative approach are:
- Identifying and understanding impacts on the school community and relationships between school community members.
- Focussing on relationships and what is required to repair and strengthen them.
- Ensuring the complexity of any situation is considered and explored and simplistic responses are avoided.
- Identifying causes of conflict.
- Ensuring all voices can be, and are, heard and considered.

Through the focus on restorative practice approach the strong relational requirement of students can be met and strengthened contributing to a positive learning environment across the school.

5.5   Approaches to specific instances of problematic behaviour.

Some behaviours require specific and structured responses to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other students, staff or of the student engaging in the behaviour.

5.5.1   Aggression, threatening, behaviour and violence:

Any acts of aggression, threats, intimidation, or violence are unacceptable and will be responded to as soon as they occur. The emphasis in responding to these incidents is to secure the safety of all students and staff immediately. It is important to recognise that safety includes physical, emotional, and psychological safety.

Once safety and a calm and orderly environment have been restored, a thorough investigation of the circumstances will be undertaken. Students who are deemed to pose a risk to the safety of others may be

required to remain away from school while the investigation is undertaken and until a safety plan for all involved can be developed.

It is recognised that in some instances there is not a clear distinction between victims and perpetrators while in other instances one party is clearly responsible. Where responsibility is shared the approach will be equitable and fair in dealing with any conditions imposed to assure safety. The restorative practice approach will be used to ensure the underlying causes of conflict are identified and the restoration of relationships is paramount.

Where an investigation shows that a student has been responsible for threatening the safety of other students or staff one or more of the following actions will be undertaken depending on the scale and impact of the issue:

- The student's individual learning plan will be revisited, and any changes required to the section regarding self-regulation will be made.
- A restorative conversation mediated by an appropriate staff member will be held between the parties involved. This could range from a less formal restorative conversation between 2 students with a staff member facilitating to a formal restorative conference facilitated by a senior staff member or external party as appropriate.
- A safety plan will be developed. This may require students to maintain distance from each other or to remain in separate areas of the school. All people involved in a safety plan will be provided a copy and have their role clearly explained to them.

The emphasis in dealing with any incidents of this type will be to ensure that students and staff can coexist safely within the school and a productive learning environment exists.

Where a student refuses to comply with conditions required to ensure the safety their enrolment may be reviewed.

The above approach includes circumstances where violence or threatening behaviour has occurred outside school and has led students or staff to feel unsafe at school.

5.5.2   Use of substances:

Substance use and abuse is a common problem among young people who are disengaged from education. This includes the use and abuse of illegal substances, misuse of prescribed or over the counter medications, use of inhalants and similar materials, alcohol, and use of tobacco products.

Substance use will be responded to with a health and harm minimisation focus and an emphasis on ensuring the safety of those misusing substances and preventing others within the school from being impacted. Drug education will be a regular part of the school's curriculum and students will be provided with avenues for support through the school's wellbeing team and youth workers as well as via external referrals.

Where a student indicates that they use substances outside school they will be offered support and referrals and a clear undertaking will be sought that they do not bring substances to school or attend school while under the influence.

Where a student is believed to be showing behavioural impacts as a result of substance use:
- They will be removed from contact with other students, parents will be contacted, and arrangements made for them to go home under the care of a responsible person. Students will not be sent from the school unattended as this may pose a risk to their safety.
- It will be clearly explained to the student and their parents that this is being done for the safety of the student and others. It is not to be used as a punishment or sanction.
- The student will be advised they can return to school on the following day as long as they are not under the influence of substances.
- Referrals and supports will be made to assist the student to manage their substance use and return to school.
- Where a student denies substance use and no other explanation for their behaviour is evident the Campus Principal or Wellbeing Leader will have discretion to determine that the above points apply.

Where a student brings an illegal substance to school this will be confiscated, and the police contacted with the substance handed over to police. The student will be isolated from other students and an investigation undertaken by senior staff.

Use of tobacco and related products (vapes etc) is not acceptable at the school and students who use these substances at school will have a management and support plan developed to enable them to attend school without the need to use tobacco products at school.

5.6   Student suspension:

Parents and students should be clear as to the difference between a suspension where the school requires the student to stay home and an agreement between the parent, student, and the school that it is in the student's best interests to have a break of a day or so.

Student suspension can have a serious negative impact on a student's engagement and is a sanction which will only be used where there is no other reasonable option, and where this is required to ensure the safety of the students and / or staff at the school. Suspension is to be used not as a sanction but as a mechanism to ensure safety of staff and / or students.

A student may only be suspended on the authority of the Principal or Campus Principal.

Where a student is suspended this will be for the minimum time required to ensure the safety of other students and staff. Students may initially be sent home to ensure safety and the details of a suspension confirmed as soon as practicable when the school leadership has had the opportunity to investigate further. In this instance any time already spent away from school will be included in the suspension.

Parents and the student being suspended will be informed of the reasons for the suspension, the duration of the suspension and process for that student to return to school. This will be communicated in writing and the suspension will be recorded as such in the school's student management system.

Where a student is suspended, the school will take every opportunity to support the student to continue progress towards learning at home while they are suspended.

5.7   Student expulsion:

Expulsion from school has a serious detrimental effect on a young person's wellbeing and should be avoided wherever possible.

A student will only be expelled when they have breached the school's code of conduct in a serious manner and to a degree and in such a way that they cannot return to school without jeopardising the safety and wellbeing of other students and / or staff. This must be a threat to safety which is long term and has not been resolved by the mechanisms specified above.

Expulsion can only be carried out by the principal.

Where the principal is considering an expulsion, they must ensure the following:
- That the student and family are advised in writing that expulsion is being considered and the reasons why it is being considered.
- That the student and family have the opportunity to meet and discuss the circumstances leading to this consideration, any mitigating circumstances and to discuss alternatives to expulsion. The student and family may choose to have a relevant support person with them provided they communicate this in advance.
- The principal will ensure any relevant support staff are present and available to support this discussion.
- After this meeting the principal will consider all relevant information and make a decision as to whether the expulsion will proceed, or an alternative can be found.
- The principal will provide the family with a record of the meeting and their decision no later than 5 working days after the meeting is held.

Where an expulsion proceeds the principal will:
- Ensure this is recorded as such in the school's enrolment register and the student management system.
- Ensure appropriate support and referral is provided to the young person to support their transition to other educational or employment options.
- Advise the family of their avenues of appeal.

Where an expulsion does not proceed the principal will ensure a plan to return the student to school safely or where an alternative transition plan has been agreed, ensure support to the student is continued through their transition.

5.7.1   Appealing an expulsion:

Where an expulsion has occurred, the parent may appeal the expulsion by:

- Notifying the Executive Manager Schools in writing that they wish to appeal the decision to expel their child and the reasons why they believe this decision is unreasonable. Parents will be provided with the

relevant contact details for this when notified of an expulsion. The appeal must be received no more than two weeks after receipt of the decision to expel.

- The Executive Manager Schools will refer this matter to the CEO Y Whittlesea who will convene a meeting with the parents, student and Executive Manager Schools at which the parents and student will be able to present their case as to why the expulsion should not proceed. The parents and student may have a support person at this meeting should they choose. This must be arranged prior to the meeting.
- The CEO will consider the evidence presented and make a decision as to the appeal and advise the family in no more than 5 business days as to their decision. This notification shall be in writing and state the reasons for their decision.

Where the expulsion is upheld, the parents will be provided with the contact details for the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). They will be advised that if they believe that the school has acted unfairly and or has failed to follow their policies and procedures, they should contact the VRQA to discuss their concerns.

6. Related policies:

- YCS Enrolment Policy

7. Related procedures and supporting documents:

- Y Community School Enrolment Agreement
- Code of Conduct (Y Whittlesea Staff)
- YCS Code of Conduct (Students, staff and parents)

8. Legislative and Industry Requirements:

Link to Legislative Compliance Register

9. Consequences of breaching this policy:

All elements of this policy must be adhered to, and any breach will be dealt with in accordance with the YMCA Whittlesea Disciplinary and Termination Policy.

10. Variations:

Y Whittlesea reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.

11. Policy owner:

The Executive Manager Schools is responsible for keeping this policy current - including making amendments as required, and regular reviews as scheduled.

12. Document Control:

Review of this policy will be undertaken every two years, or prior as required by law, in consultation with appropriate Y People.

Policy available on Y-MAC>Communication>Manuals and Files>Policies and Procedures

This document is due for review on 1/05/2026.

Version:	Description of Amendment	Amended by	Approver and date	Release Date
1.1	Specific Prohibition of Corporal Punishment	Paul van Breugel	Executive Manager Y Schools 16/11/20123	1/12/2023
1.0	Policy created	Paul van Breugel	Executive Management Team 19/6/2023	1/11/2023