

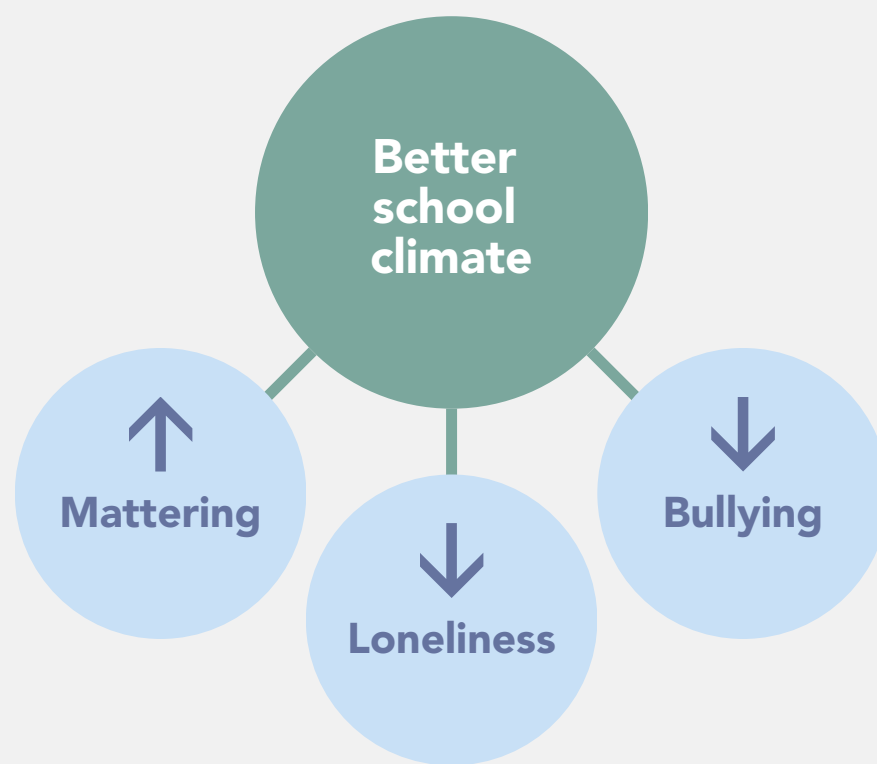


BULLYING & MENTAL HEALTH

Ontario students spend 940+ hours in school every year. During adolescence, a key developmental phase, school plays a crucial role in supporting student mental health. When students have a strong, respectful relationship with both their teachers and their peers, they are less likely to experience common youth mental health struggles like anxiety, depression, stress, and low self-esteem.

In the Ontario Health and Peer Relations Study, we found that students experience less bullying and fewer mental health struggles when their schools have higher collective ratings of safety and support.

Figure 1: Effects of school climate on bullying and mental health



Source: HPRS (2026)

“Bullying is a relationship problem that needs relationship solutions. Healthy relationships at home, school, and in the community help buffer the inevitable stresses that students encounter when they are bullied. When caring and kind relationships are promoted at school, students feel safe, valued, nurtured, and supported in learning.”

Debra Pepler, Ph.D., Professor at York University, Officer of the Order of Canada, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada

How You Can Support

Tips adapted from PREVNet Canada

- ☑ Encourage your students to speak with you if they’re having problems with their peers. It’s not snitching or tattling to tell a teacher when somebody is bullied.
- ☑ Consider providing an alternative reporting method, like a message box for students who aren’t comfortable talking about their experiences.
- ☑ Encourage your students to get involved in school activities to help them build confidence and strong connections with their peers.