

# Celebrating & Supporting Student Diversity: *Keeping Complex Learners Safe*

## Supporting Students who have difficulty Self Regulating Physically Aggressive Behaviour

1. Establish and maintain a **strong home-school partnership** that includes close consultation with a student's home team if one is involved
2. Develop an understanding of the **before, during** and **after**, with careful consideration of:
  - circumstances that may increase the likelihood of physically aggressive behaviour (**the "before"**)
  - how to effectively respond when physically aggressive behavior is occurring (**the "during"**)
  - what will occur following a physically aggressive incident (**the "after"**)
  - make this plan readily available to all staff working with the student

Comprehensive planning related to these three areas must occur in advance of an incident and involve meaningful consultation with the home to determine what is most likely to diminish the frequency and intensity of the physically aggressive behaviour
3. Identify key individual roles and responsibilities
  - Comprehensive planning in relation to the *before, during* and *after* stages of an event involves clearly identifying key individual roles and responsibilities based on what is understood about the child
  - Essential to student and staff safety is a clear understanding of who should take the lead in attempting to de-escalate a situation and the training they will require in order to do so safely and effectively
  - Other personnel need to have clearly established roles in terms of their support for other students when a situation is escalating
  - Maintaining a strong home-school partnership involves establishing in advance when the home will be contacted, by whom, and with what intention
  - Key personnel need to be identified to take the lead with efforts to restore a student's sense of belonging subsequent to an event
  - A review of key roles and responsibilities should occur as part of a required team de-brief subsequent to a significant event involving physically aggressive behavior
4. Pay close attention to **language** being used
  - Words imply meaning that can negatively impact the home-school partnership; Difficulty self-regulating physically aggressive behavior is related to a child's disability and not a willful act of violence
  - When discussing what should happen after an incident, consideration is given to whether it is in the child's best interest to be **"taken home"**
  - Students with complex needs are **not "sent home"** following an incident as a form of deterrence or punishment
  - Following an incident attention is focused on what actions will help **restore** the child's sense of belonging and diminish future frequency and intensity of the behaviour
5. Seek to understand how the behaviour may represent a form of **communication**
  - Supporting a child's ability to effectively communicate with others may significantly diminish frequency and intensity of physically aggressive behaviour
6. Carefully consider how a child's **mental health** may be a factor
  - Consult with mental health experts to determine whether an underlying condition may be contributing to the child's difficulty self-regulating
7. Pay close attention to the child's **program**
  - Carefully consider how the physically aggressive behaviour may be related to over or under stimulation
  - Provide **"soft spaces"** within the classroom and/or school to support the child's sensory needs
8. **Measure** incremental progress
  - Improving a child's ability to self-regulate physically aggressive behaviour is an appropriate goal for an IEP in which progress is incrementally measured by decreases in frequency and / or intensity
9. **Communicate** effectively
  - Conversations with parents and team members should reflect a purposeful evaluation of student's progress toward self-regulating physically aggressive behaviour and collaborative efforts to support that outcome
  - Reporting to the home that an incident has occurred should be approached from the standpoint of inviting parent input to inform an appropriate course of action that is aimed at supporting the student
10. Prioritize Student and Staff **Safety**
  - Comprehensive planning, staff training and a strong home-school partnership that involves meaningful consultation with home team will help minimize risk of injury to students and staff