

SHAPING A CULTURE OF RESPECT IN OUR SCHOOLS: PROMOTING SAFE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



Safe Schools Action Team
Report on Gender based
Violence, Homophobia,
Sexual Harassment,
and Inappropriate Sexual
Behaviour in Schools



December 11, 2008



December 11, 2008

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street, 22nd Floor
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister,

On February 21, 2008, we accepted your invitation to once again work together to look at how we can better promote healthy relationships and safe environments in our schools.

Our mandate included a review of the issues of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour by students towards other students and a review of the Local Police/School Board Protocols, including but not limited to reporting requirements. We also looked at barriers to student reporting of these types of inappropriate behaviours in schools, and at reporting requirements for school staff.

The Safe Schools Action Team is pleased to submit its report, *Shaping a Culture of Respect in Our Schools: Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships*.

This report focuses on recommendations to prevent and address gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour by students towards other students and to remove barriers to reporting such incidents in order to help students succeed and re-engage in school.

We are aware that over the last four years the Government of Ontario has worked closely with education and community partners to rebuild our publicly funded education system. We are pleased that the Safe Schools Action Team has been a part of these efforts.

During this mandate, in our consultations throughout Ontario, we heard many perspectives and stories about all the initiatives that are happening in schools to help students, school staff, parents, and the school community confront issues of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. We have also heard about many barriers and challenges faced by students, by schools, and by community agencies, including experiences shared by and about students who feel that school is not a place where they feel welcome.

We believe that every adult in the school has a role to play in addressing issues of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. Behaviour that is not addressed becomes accepted behaviour.

We wish to recognize the outstanding contributions made by all of the participants in the consultation process, contributions that were invaluable in the development of our report and recommendations. We greatly appreciate the candid conversations and feedback from all participants, but in particular from those students who have experienced the impact of these issues in school settings and who shared their experiences with us. One police officer shared some very profound words with us that resonate through our thoughts and have guided our actions: *“We need to create a generation of people who don’t have to recover from their childhood.”*

We are confident that these recommendations will contribute towards ensuring a positive and safe learning and teaching environment, where all students feel welcome and supported.

Respectfully,

Safe Schools Action Team



Liz Sandals (Chair), MPP



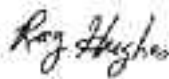
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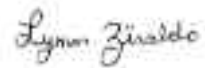
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This publication is available on the Ministry of Education's website at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>.

Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant : *Façonner une culture de respect dans nos écoles : Promouvoir des relations saines et sûres.*

INTRODUCTION

“In a safe, supportive environment you can be who you want to be without being afraid. You feel welcome so you want to be there and do more.”

– *Student*

PREAMBLE: THE OVERARCHING PROVINCIAL GOALS OF EDUCATION

Three overarching provincial goals guide the policies and actions of the Ministry of Education: (1) to help students attain high levels of achievement; (2) to narrow gaps in achievement; and (3) to maintain and strengthen Ontarians’ confidence in our system of publicly funded education.

Among the many factors that influence the quality of student learning and achievement, a safe and supportive environment for learning and working is one of the most important.

SAFE SCHOOLS: A PREREQUISITE FOR LEARNING

There is a direct link between success in school and the school environment in which student learning takes place. Students are more able and more motivated to do well and achieve their full potential in schools that have a positive school climate and in which they feel safe and supported. A school climate may be defined as the sum total of all the personal relationships within a school. When these relationships are founded in mutual acceptance and inclusion, and are modelled by all, a culture of respect becomes the norm.¹

The Ontario government recognizes the importance of school safety for successful learning and the healthy development of youth. The government’s Safe Schools Strategy aims to build and sustain a safe learning and working environment for students and staff and to keep students in school by providing them with the appropriate supports they may need.

Over the last four years the government of Ontario has worked closely with school boards² and community partners to rebuild our publicly funded education system. Much work has been done to help give students the opportunity to keep learning, and provide them with the additional supports they need to succeed

1. Safe Schools Action Team, *Safe Schools Policy and Practice: An Agenda for Action* (Toronto: Ministry of Education, Ontario, June 2006), p. 6.

2. In this report, *school board(s)* and *board(s)* refer to district school boards and school authorities.

and re-engage in school. The Safe Schools Action Team, first established by the Minister of Education in 2004, has provided advice on ways to ensure that schools play a key role in shaping the welcoming culture that is the basis for a positive school climate and that enables all members of the school community to feel safe, comfortable, and accepted.

THE SAFE SCHOOLS ACTION TEAM

The Safe Schools Action Team was formed in December 2004 under the leadership of Liz Sandals, Member of Provincial Parliament for Guelph. At that time, Ms. Sandals was Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. At present, she is the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education.

The Safe Schools Action Team's first mandate was to advise on the development of a comprehensive, coordinated approach to bullying prevention in Ontario schools. The resulting report, *Shaping Safer Schools: A Bullying Prevention Action Plan*, was based on province-wide stakeholder consultations and provided recommendations to the government that were used to guide school bullying prevention measures. The government supplied initial funding of more than \$28 million to support these measures.

The Ministry of Education developed and launched Sample School Climate Surveys to collect student, parent,³ and school staff perspectives on school safety. A Registry of Bullying Prevention Programs was also created, providing one-stop access to a wide range of products that may be purchased by schools.⁴ In addition, two million copies of a pamphlet on bullying prevention, in both English and French, were sent home to the parents of every elementary and secondary school student in Ontario. These pamphlets have now been translated into twenty-two languages.⁵ The ministry also entered into a partnership with Kids Help Phone to provide counselling services for students on bullying and other issues. To date, at least 40,000 students have been helped as a result of this partnership. Investments were made by the ministry to train approximately 7,450 principals and vice-principals and up to 25,000 teachers on bullying prevention. The ministry provided funding to school boards for the purchase of bullying prevention programs and resources for their schools. Funding was provided for security access devices for elementary schools as part of the Safe Welcome Program, to help staff better monitor school visitors and limit points of access into schools. As well, the ministry funded model projects to promote positive behaviour. These model projects provided information to the ministry

3. In this report, *parents* refers to parent(s) and guardian(s). Parental involvement applies, except in cases where the student is eighteen years of age or over or is sixteen or seventeen years of age and has “withdrawn from parental control”.

4. Posted on the Ministry of Education public website:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/bullyprevention.html>

5. Posted on the Ministry of Education public website:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/bullying.html>

and school boards that was helpful in establishing programs for expelled students and students on long-term suspension.

In November 2005, the Safe Schools Action Team was once again engaged by the government to review the safe schools provisions of the *Education Act*, as well as its regulations, and related policies and practices. The team conducted broad public consultations across the province, with parents, students, educators, and other community groups and members. The team's report, *Safe Schools Policy and Practice: An Agenda for Action*, summarized the results of the review, and made a number of recommendations to the government. On the basis of these recommendations, the government passed Bill 212, making changes to the *Education Act* to support a progressive discipline approach and to enable schools to choose the appropriate course of action for addressing inappropriate behaviour and to more effectively combine discipline with opportunities for students to continue their education.

The government supported these initiatives with further dedicated funding totalling \$43.7 million in 2007-08, which included \$23 million for programs for expelled students or those serving long-term suspensions and \$10.5 million for hiring paraprofessionals (e.g., youth workers) in schools. New annual funding of \$10 million will be provided in the 2008-09 Grants for Student Needs (GSN) to support selected Urban and Priority High Schools – schools that struggle with safety issues and challenges that arise from their neighbourhood and community settings, including poverty, criminal/gang activity, and lack of community resources. This funding signals the government's ongoing commitment to promoting and maintaining safe and welcoming schools. The ministry provided policy direction to school boards in the form of four new Policy/Program Memoranda (PPMs) (listed below):

- PPM 141, "School Board Programs for Students on Long-Term Suspension"
- PPM 142, "School Board Programs for Expelled Students"
- PPM 144, "Bullying Prevention and Intervention"
- PPM 145, "Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour"

The ministry also made revisions to the existing PPM 128, "Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct (revised)". We would like to draw attention to these revisions, which included a statement that all members of the school community must not engage in hate propaganda or other forms of behaviour motivated by hate or bias.⁶

6. See Appendix B: Glossary.

According to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics report *Hate Crime in Canada (2006)* and the 2007 Toronto Police Service Annual Hate/Bias Crime Statistical Report:

- **sexual orientation was one of the top three motivations for hate crimes;**
- **56.3% of all hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation were violent;**
- **the second most likely place for hate crimes to be committed was in educational facilities; and**
- **hate crimes predominantly affected youth: approximately one-half of all victims and three-quarters of those accused were between the ages of twelve and twenty-four.**

The Safe Schools Action Team was re-engaged in February 2008 by the Minister of Education in order to review the issues of student-to-student gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour, including any barriers to reporting that may exist in Ontario's publicly funded schools, and to provide recommendations for addressing such behaviour and supporting students. The team's new mandate builds on the recommendations from previous mandates, as well as on the effective work the government has done on an ongoing basis to promote healthy relationships and safe environments in our schools.

KEY TERMS

Gender-based violence: Any form of behaviour – including psychological, physical, and sexual behaviour – that is based on an individual's gender and is intended to control, humiliate, or harm the individual. This form of violence is generally directed at women and girls and is based on an attitude or prejudice, which can be conscious or unconscious and which exists on the individual and institutional level, that aims to subordinate an individual or group on the basis of sex and/or gender identity.⁷

Homophobia: A disparaging or hostile attitude or negative bias, which may be overt or unspoken and which exists on the individual and systemic level, towards people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (LGBT).⁸

Sexual harassment: Unwelcome sexual attention directed at an individual by someone whose conduct or comments are, or should reasonably be known to be, offensive, inappropriate, intimidating, hostile, and unwelcome. Sexual harassment often occurs in an environment in which sexist or homophobic jokes and materials have been allowed.⁹

Inappropriate sexual behaviour: Sexual behaviour on the part of a young person that places the person or another individual "at risk" physically, psychologically, or socially and/or that is inappropriate relative to the person's age or stage of development (examples include: unprotected sexual activity that might result in sexually transmitted disease; the viewing of pornography at a young age; or the posting of sexual information on the Internet).

7. Adapted from Peter Jaffe and Ray Hughes, "Preventing Violence against Girls", *Education Forum* 34 (3) (Fall 2008) (Toronto: OSSTF/FEESO). Available online at: <http://www.osstf.on.ca/Default.aspx?DN=7971,7590,493,355,365,Documents>
8. In this document, references to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) persons should be understood to include persons who identify themselves as queer, transsexual, two-spirited, intersexed, or questioning.
9. Toronto District School Board, "Building Healthy Relationships: Interventions for Gender-based Violence," March 2008.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE REPORT

It is very disheartening when we hear stories of even one student being bullied or harassed in a school. Research shows that gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour are serious issues with far-reaching consequences to individuals, their families, peers, and the community at large. It is our collective responsibility to put safeguards in place to ensure that our schools are safe places to learn and work. More needs to be done to ensure that every student has the opportunity to be successful in school and in life.

This report focuses on making recommendations to the Minister of Education on ways of preventing and addressing gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour by students towards other students. It makes a number of recommendations on ways to make it easier for students to report incidents, to help schools support and respond to students who are victims of these types of behaviour, and to assist school staff in supporting these students. Several recommendations have also been made as a result of a review of all Local Police/School Board Protocols to ensure that they align with the Provincial Model.

In carrying out its most recent mandate, the Safe Schools Action Team drew on the results of research by such bodies as the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). As well, it conducted province-wide consultations with education stakeholders, including school boards, school principals, teachers, other school staff, students, parents, and representatives of a wide range of community groups: police, Public Health personnel, Aboriginal groups, diverse cultural groups, special needs advocacy groups, crisis centres, sexual assault centres, and agencies that support LGBT youth and youth with disabilities.

DESCRIPTION AND SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Issues of homophobia and sexual harassment need to be seen in the context of bullying/harassment. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, one-third of students experience bullying at school, and almost one-third report having bullied someone else.¹⁰ Current research further highlights that bullying has serious consequences that affect individuals, families, peer groups, and the community. It can damage many types of interactions, including those within the school, with a negative impact on school safety, school climate, and student learning. Bullying/harassment can be severe, persistent, and pervasive to such a degree that it limits students' ability to participate in or benefit from an education program and creates an educational environment that is hostile or threatening for students.¹¹

10. Edward M. Adlaf, Angela Paglia-Boak, Joseph H. Beitchman, and David Wolfe, *The Mental Health and Well-Being of Ontario Students, 1991-2005*. Ontario Drug Use Survey. CAMH Research Document Series, No. 18 (Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2005), p. 89.

11. David A. Wolfe and Debbie Chiodo, "Sexual Harassment and Related Behaviours Reported Among Youth From Grade 9 to Grade 11", CAMH Centre for Prevention Science (Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, February 5, 2008), p. 1. Hereafter cited as Wolfe and Chiodo, CAMH, 2008.

A recent report from CAMH states that “the rates of sexual harassment [in schools] are significant”, with 36% of boys and 46% of girls in Grade 9 reporting that “Someone made [unwanted] sexual comments, jokes, gestures or looks at me.” By Grade 11 this rate had declined significantly for boys, but remained consistent at 46% for girls. [CAMH, 2008]

Sexual harassment is a type of bullying/harassment that takes the form of unwanted or unwelcome sexual attention, both physical and verbal. A recent report from CAMH states that “the rates of sexual harassment [in schools] are significant”, with 36% of boys and 46% of girls in Grade 9 reporting that “Someone made [unwanted] sexual comments, jokes, gestures or looks at me.” By Grade 11 this rate had declined significantly for boys, but remained consistent at 46% for girls.¹²

The report also found that one in four boys and almost one in three girls in Grade 9 stated that “Someone brushed up against me in a sexual way” or “Someone touched, grabbed, or pinched me in a sexual way.” These figures declined only slightly by Grade 11.¹³

The consequences “among those who report higher rates of sexual harassment victimization” can include psychological problems such as “depression, loss of appetite, nightmares or disturbed sleep, low self-esteem, and feelings of being sad, afraid, scared, or embarrassed”.¹⁴ In terms of student learning, victims of harassment “also reported loss of interest in school activities”, as well as increased absenteeism, decreased quality of school work, poor grades, and increases in skipping or dropping classes, tardiness, and truancy.¹⁵

Research shows that boys more often than girls both receive and make homophobic comments (e.g., “gay”, “fag”, “dyke”, “queer”, “lezzie”, or similar terms): in the CAMH survey 34% of Grade 9 boys and 30% of Grade 11 boys reported being victims of such insults, while 38% of Grade 9 boys and 33% of Grade 11 boys reported being perpetrators. In Grade 9, 22% of girls reported being victims and 26% perpetrators; while in Grade 11, 12% of girls reported being victims and 16% perpetrators.¹⁶

Research also shows that sexual harassment and gender-based violence disproportionately affect female students: 27% of Grade 11 female students in the CAMH survey admitted being pressured to do something sexual against their will, while 15% of these respondents reported having oral sex just to avoid having intercourse.¹⁷ Among female students, those from marginalized groups are particularly vulnerable, including those for whom race, class, sexual minority status, or disability are factors. For example, girls and young women living with disabilities experience violence at a rate that is four times the national average.¹⁸ Again research shows that for students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (LGBT), the effects of homophobia and violence can be intolerable, leading some students to leave school or contemplate/attempt suicide: “Sexual minority youth are more likely to experience physical or verbal

12. Wolfe and Chiodo, CAMH, 2008, p. 3.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., pp. 4, 7.

17. Ibid., p. 8.

18. S. Razack, “From Consent to Responsibility, From Pity to Respect: Subtexts in Cases of Sexual Violence Involving Girls and Women with Developmental Disabilities,” *Law and Social Inquiry*, 19 (4) (Fall 1994): 891-922, p. 900.

harassment than heterosexual youths, and often report limited access to supportive family and friend relationships.”¹⁹

The influence of the media – particularly the electronic media – on young people is highly relevant to issues of sexual harassment. Findings from the Kaiser Family Foundation indicate that young people are exposed to television, DVDs, CDs, video games, and the Internet for an average of 6.5 hours per day (45.5 hours a week). A survey published in March 2005 indicated that 53% of young people had no family rules limiting their hours of access or the content they viewed or listened to; 68% had access to a computer, video games, and/or TV in their own bedroom.²⁰

“Young children who see media violence have a greater chance of exhibiting violent and aggressive behaviour later in life than children who have not seen violent media ... Violent video games can cause people to have more aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviours and decrease empathetic, helpful behaviours with peers.”²¹

It is widely acknowledged that content showing violence, including gender-based violence, is a staple of much media programming. Such content frequently models negative relationships and perpetuates stereotypes. Research indicates that prolonged exposure to such material can encourage imitation, stimulate violent or aggressive behaviour, cause emotional desensitization towards victims, and reduce the inclination to intervene to help victims or seek help on their behalf.²²

With this information as a starting point, the Safe Schools Action Team began its consultations to acquire a much more in-depth and specific picture of how gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour are experienced and/or perpetrated by students in Ontario schools. Along with its findings about the nature of the problem, the team also sought and received a wide range of informed perspectives and ideas about actions that might be taken to deter perpetrators, protect and help victims and potential victims, and support all these students.

The Safe Schools Action Team wishes to recognize the outstanding contributions made by all of the participants in the consultation process, including those contributions made through written submission, which were invaluable in the development of this report and the recommendations that follow. We greatly appreciate the candid conversations and input from all participants, but in particular from those students who have experienced the impact of these issues in school settings and who shared their experiences with us.

19. T. Williams, J. Connolly, D. Pepler, and W. Craig, “Peer Victimization, Social Support, and Psychosocial Adjustment of Sexual Minority Adolescents,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 34 (5) (2005): 471-482, p. 471.

20. Report from the Kaiser Family Foundation, March 2005, *Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Yr-olds*. Available at <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/index.cfm>

21. From The National Institute on Media and the Family. Available at http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts_vlent.shtml

22. Aletha C. Huston et al., *Big World, Small Screen: The Role of Television in American Society* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Throughout its current consultations, the Safe Schools Action Team has been guided by the vision of a publicly funded education system where all students and members of the school community are welcomed and respected, and where every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning. The team's review has been shaped by the belief that every student deserves to *be* safe – and *feel* safe – at school, on the school grounds, on school buses, and at school events and activities. This belief informs the guiding principles on which the recommendations in this report are grounded. These principles reflect the shared consensus of government, educators, and community members across Ontario. The principles – six in number – are as follows:

- **Safety is a precondition for learning.**
- **Every student is entitled to learn to the best of his or her ability.**
- **Every student is entitled to a safe and caring learning environment.**
- **Every student is entitled to learn in an environment free from harassment and violence.**
- **A quality education is about more than academic achievement – it is about the development of the whole person.**
- **The commitment to safe schools is a shared responsibility of government, school board trustees and administrators, principals, teachers, support staff, students, parents, police, and other community partners.**

This report focuses on ways in which all partners in the education system can work together to ensure the best possible learning environment for each and every student in Ontario.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERVIEW


Throughout the provincial consultations, we heard from various stakeholders who shared their perspectives on preventing and responding to incidents of student-to-student gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. We listened carefully, especially to students, who told us that remaining silent and inactive on these issues is not the answer. Silence and inaction can be understood by students as condoning behaviour that is hurtful, sending the wrong message to other students. The Safe Schools Action Team believes that every adult in the school who works with students, including administrators, teachers, educational assistants, and professional support staff, is responsible for addressing these issues and making a difference. Behaviour that is not addressed becomes accepted behaviour.

“When teachers don’t call us on comments like ‘fag’, ‘dyke’, or ‘bitch’, it tells us it’s okay to use that language.”

– *Student*

We know that schools do not exist in a vacuum. Educators, students, parents, principals, trustees, and community agencies all agree that issues of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour extend beyond the school itself. They are complex, challenging societal issues that must be addressed through the cooperative efforts of the school, parents, community partners, and government.

Our consultations and discussions confirmed that a comprehensive approach must be put in place if we are to continue to build and sustain a school climate that deters gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour and allows students to feel safe and comfortable discussing and disclosing incidents. This approach must ensure that administrators and teachers feel equipped to respond to incidents, that boards and community partners are able to work together to share expertise and resources, that students are given opportunities to take leadership roles, and that parents are engaged and have a role in supporting students and school initiatives.



In order to create the conditions all students need to thrive, we are recommending a wide range of strategies, focused on the following key areas:

- i. Curriculum**
- ii. Effective Partnerships With Community Agencies and Organizations**
- iii. Prevention, Awareness Raising, and Intervention**
- iv. Response and Supports**
- v. Reporting**
- vi. Local Police/School Board Protocols**
- vii. Student Leadership**
- viii. Parent/Family Engagement**
- ix. Training**
- x. Evaluation and Accountability**

There has been significant progress in the government's implementation of its Safe Schools Strategy. Our collective commitment to providing a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment for our students must continue to guide us in our day-to-day activities. As teachers, parents, students, school staff, and community partners – we all have a significant role to play.

i. CURRICULUM

KEY FINDINGS

In our consultations, participants overwhelmingly confirmed that the most effective way to enable all students to learn about healthy and respectful relationships is through the school curriculum. The *Baseline 2007* report from the Canadian Federation for Sexual Health agrees: “Schools represent the only formal institutions to have meaningful contact with nearly every young person in Canada and are therefore in a unique position to equip youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to exercise healthy sexuality throughout their lives.”²³

“A series of surveys of Canadian parents have consistently found that over 85% of parents agreed with the statement ‘sexual health education should be provided in the schools’.”²⁴

During our consultations there was concern expressed about the health instruction currently being provided in many schools. Participants repeatedly told us that this part of the curriculum is not being implemented consistently across the province. In fact, many students told us they had very little time to discuss issues related to sexual health and healthy relationships, and in some cases students stated that they had not been exposed to any sexual health curriculum at all.

In particular, participants told us that the curriculum does not fully address issues of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. They pointed out that these topics are not directly addressed in the Health and Physical Education (H & PE) curriculum and generally are not effectively integrated and reinforced in subjects across the curriculum. In many cases these topics are just “add ons” to an already full course schedule. We heard that this is because insufficient time is allocated to sexual health topics, and because teachers tend to avoid, or are uncomfortable discussing, a number of key issues.

Participants felt that education about topics such as healthy relationships and sexuality, gender stereotyping, and homophobia are introduced too late in the curriculum. This is a concern, as we heard that students are engaged in sexual activity at younger ages.

“In a survey of over 7,000 grade 7-12 students, one in every four (26%) students in grades 9-12 had had sexual intercourse in the last 12 months. Close to two-thirds (62%) of sexually-active students were 15 years of age or younger when they first had sex and one in four (25%) sexually-active students who reported they had sexual intercourse in the last 12 months had sex when they really did not want to.”²⁵

23. Canadian Federation for Sexual Health (CFSH), *Sexual Health in Canada, Baseline 2007*, p. 10.

24. From “Sexual Health Education in the Schools: Questions and Answers”. Prepared by Alexander McKay, Ph.D, Research Coordinator, the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN), 2005.

25. From “Student Health 2005: Gauging the Health of Peel’s Youth”. A Peel Health Status Report Survey designed by the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, p. 132.

“Ideas must permeate across all curriculum.”

– Educator

“Through our focus groups we learned that many girls experience violence that they think is normal. They didn’t realize the depth of the problem.”

– Student

The Safe Schools Action Team looked at Public Health data, including incidents of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), which vary widely from region to region. However, Public Health officials commented that cases of STIs are often discovered as a secondary outcome when young people contact Public Health for contraceptives.

This is a concern, given statistics that of the Grades 9-12 students surveyed, “grade 9 students were least likely to have ever had sexual intercourse (14%) but more likely to have not used any birth control or protection during sex (32%)”. In Canada in 2000, 38% of the 32, 842 reported cases of chlamydia were among young women between the ages of fifteen and nineteen.²⁶

Advocates for children with special education needs reported that often these children find developing healthy relationships challenging. However, we heard that often these students are exempted from the health curriculum that would assist them in developing and building healthy relationships.

Participants expressed particular concern that, through the media, children experience significant exposure to stereotypes and to examples and images of violent or disrespectful behaviour. In fact, some of the most popular video games contain graphic violence in which violence (particularly against women) is normalized.²⁷ Students are not given sufficient opportunity within a school setting to have open discussions and to think critically about what they are witnessing.

In a “Media Violence” survey of more than 5,000 twelve-year-olds in 93 countries including Canada, UNESCO found evidence that media images reinforce the experiences of children in their real-life environments. Almost half (44%) of all girls and boys reported a strong overlap between what they perceive as reality and what they see on the screen.²⁸

We were also told that teachers do not always have the appropriate training and resources that they need to be successful in educating students about healthy relationships and sexuality. We must enable schools and educators to provide and deliver curriculum that effectively addresses issues of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

26. Ibid.

27. The Coalition on Media Violence, Presentation to the Roots of Youth Violence Secretariat, Toronto, February 15, 2008.

28. Jo Groebel, *UNESCO Global Study on Media Violence* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1998). Available online at <http://www.hinifoto.de/gaming/unesco.html>

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

General

- The Ministry of Education must:
 - ensure that references to gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour are included in prompts and examples in the revised Health and Physical Education curriculum and in as many other curriculum areas as possible;
 - continue to ensure that revisions to curriculum include a commitment to equity, inclusion, and respect for all students;
 - ensure that curriculum documents take an integrated and cross-curricular approach to educating students about healthy and respectful relationships, as well as gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour;
 - ensure that students with special education needs are educated about healthy and respectful relationships, as well as gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour, in a manner that is consistent with each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and/or Safety Plan, including any accommodations and modifications required;
 - ensure the development and availability of resources and lesson plans, in English and French, for classroom teachers that will take a cross-curricular approach to healthy relationships, gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour;
 - add a section entitled "Healthy Relationships" in curriculum documents, as appropriate, to support this cross-curricular approach;
 - add "building healthy peer-to-peer relationships" to the Learning Skills section on the elementary and secondary report cards; and
 - develop a credit-based course at the senior level that would focus on character development, healthy relationship skills, citizenship, and community.
- School boards must ensure that schools are delivering the entire curriculum as written, including those components addressing gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, inappropriate sexual behaviour, and healthy relationships.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

Health

- The Ministry of Education must:
 - consider changing the current report card requirement for Health and Physical Education from one mark (for health and physical education) to two marks (one for health and one for physical education) as part of any review of the Assessment and Evaluation (A & E) process;
 - require teachers to allocate a minimum of 30% of instructional time for health education to address the Healthy Living curriculum expectations as part of an integrated approach to delivering the Health and Physical Education curriculum;
 - ensure that the topics of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour are introduced in an age-appropriate way, beginning in Grade 6, and are developed and studied in greater depth in Grades 7, 8, and 9. In particular:
 - revise the Health and Physical Education (H & PE) curriculum so that:
 - by Grade 6 all students will learn about gender stereotypes and homophobia;
 - by Grade 7 all students will learn about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and preventive measures, and about various forms of contraception including condoms;
 - by Grade 8 all students will explicitly learn about sexual identity, dating violence, and contraceptives; and
 - by Grade 9 all students will learn specifically about gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour in more depth.
 - ensure the development of resources and lesson plans, in English and French, for Health and Physical Education teachers that can support them in delivering this revised curriculum.
- School boards must:
 - ensure the implementation of the H & PE curriculum so that students in the publicly funded system are exposed to healthy relationships/sexuality topics;

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

- make student learning from the “healthy living component” of the H & PE curriculum available through partial or alternative options when Health and Physical Education is substituted;
 - ensure that when students, including those with special education needs, are exempted from the H & PE credit, their program of study still includes instruction about healthy relationships and sexuality; and
 - support teachers in the implementation of healthy relationships/sexuality topics as well as gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.
- The Ministry of Education should work with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to ensure the greatest possible alignment of Public Health Units’ resource documents with provincial education curricular expectations.

Media Awareness

- The Ministry of Education must:
 - include references to issues of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour in the elementary Language and secondary English curricula – including the Media Literacy and Media Studies strands, respectively – and also in the elementary and secondary *Français* curricula, particularly in the course *Français des médias*;
 - ensure that students, including students with special education needs, learn about Internet safety and are taught the long-term implications of sharing personal details, especially those that are sexually explicit;
 - ensure that, by Grade 10, students will learn to critically interpret representations in the media of relationships that perpetuate violence, particularly in the Media Literacy and Media Studies strands of the elementary Language and secondary English curricula, and also in the elementary and secondary *Français* curricula; and
 - ensure the development and availability of cross-curricular lesson plans, in English and French, to equip students with the critical literacy skills necessary for the consumption of media. These lesson plans must include specific examples of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

ii. EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

KEY FINDINGS

“The most effective programs have an effective bridge to the greater community. The entire community needs to be involved.”

– *Educator*

During our consultations, many educators and community agencies/organizations shared their positive experiences of working in partnership on a variety of issues. In some cases, boards described strong proactive working relationships with agencies/organizations that have professional expertise²⁹ in responding to issues of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. During our consultations, we heard from many schools, boards, and community agencies that are part of the Ministry of Education’s Student Support Leadership (SSL) initiative. Through SSL the ministry provides school boards with \$3 million annually over three years to establish or enhance local partnerships across the province in order to better meet the needs of students through collaborative planning, coordination, and referrals.

During our consultations, we heard that these types of initiatives are a good start in helping to ensure that partnerships exist between schools and community agencies/organizations. However, a number of participants indicated that school boards/schools still lack strong links to community agencies/organizations with expertise in the area of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. Participants stressed that because the needs of students and parents – and the issues – vary from school to school, schools do not always have the expertise to provide support to students and their families.

We were told of many excellent resources that exist across the province, in schools and in local communities. Local Public Health Units, for example, can play a vital role in offering support to students on healthy relationships and sexuality and also to teachers on how to implement the healthy living component of the Health and Physical Education curriculum. However, we heard from Public Health Units that they have difficulty accessing some publicly funded schools to deliver their public health curriculum relating to healthy relationships and sexuality, including information on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and contraception. Some other community agencies also reported resistance from school administrators to the agencies’ attempts to set up in-school programs for students.

The Safe Schools Action Team often heard contradictory information from school boards and community agencies about what supports were in place for those students who were victims of gender-based violence or homophobia.

29. “Professional expertise” should be understood to mean access to professionals with training that qualifies them specifically to counsel and/or support students about incidents/issues of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Another gap highlighted during our consultations was that schools and teachers do not always have access to information about which agencies/organizations have the relevant expertise in these areas. Subsequently, this lack of information would have an impact on teachers' ability to support students, including students with special education needs, parents, and other family members.

In dealing with these complex – and often delicate – issues, we heard that, as an effective practice, school boards and schools should, wherever possible, seek out community partners that reflect and have the ability to support the linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity, as well as the disabilities, of students and parents served by the board/school.

“Where support does not exist within the board, there are professionals within the community to support schools and students with issues like sexual assault.”

– *Community Agency*

Community agencies/organizations with professional expertise in addressing gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour are a key resource for schools and school boards seeking to develop and maintain programs to deal with these issues. Schools and teachers should make use of this expertise in order to support students and their families.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

- Schools and agencies/organizations with knowledge and professional expertise in addressing gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour must work together to:
 - support students who experience or perpetrate sexual harassment/violence;
 - support lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students;
 - provide access to appropriate supports for parents (e.g., take into account linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and disability considerations); and
 - expand opportunities to support teachers in addressing these issues.
- All publicly funded schools must provide access to Public Health Units to deliver their mandated public health curriculum.
- Every school board/school authority must have a contact list of community agencies/organizations that have professional expertise and knowledge in the areas of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. This contact list should include providers of supports that may be required for students with special education needs; for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered youth; or for those youth in remote areas where resources are limited.

iii. PREVENTION, AWARENESS RAISING, AND INTERVENTION

KEY FINDINGS

“Change has occurred when people are brought together to share stories and build empathy.”

– *Ontario Human Rights Commission*

Throughout the consultations, we heard that promoting a positive school climate free from gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour is the responsibility of every person within a school.

During our consultations we heard that a comprehensive whole-school and community-wide approach to prevention, awareness raising, and intervention with regard to gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour is most effective in leading to positive systemic change that will benefit all students and the broader community.

We heard that schools often do not know the extent to which incidents of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour are occurring in schools. When schools do regularly scheduled surveys, it allows the principal and school staff to determine what programming is needed and to assess the effectiveness of existing programming.

Concerns were raised that activities such as wearing coloured jelly bracelets – where sexual favours are exchanged and/or expected and where the colours of the bracelets worn are associated with explicit sexual acts – are occurring in some schools. Participants stressed the need for dialogue and awareness raising with students about healthy and respectful relationships to prevent and counteract these kinds of peer-to-peer dynamics.

Participants told us about many excellent prevention programs, initiatives, and awareness-raising campaigns designed to promote healthy and equal relationships that are occurring in schools. Examples include but are not limited to the following:

- **EqualityRules.ca – A fully bilingual and accessible website that teaches children about respecting themselves and others, and how to speak up when they or their friends are being treated unfairly. Through interactive scenarios, videos, quizzes, and links, children and teens can learn about healthy, equal relationships for teens and the truth about difficult or abusive relationships.³⁰**
- **White Ribbon Campaign – Promoting Healthy Equal Relationships – A website that outlines fully interactive exercises designed to help teach and promote healthy, equal relationships.³¹**
- **OK2BME is a project operated by K-W Counselling Services in partnership with Family and Children’s Services of the Waterloo Region. OK2BME is a set of free, confidential services for kids and teens who are wondering about their sexuality or gender identity. They may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or gender-variant, or they may just have questions. Resources for teachers and schools, for students, and for parents are available online.³²**

We also heard that in some cases, students question whether schools are taking these issues seriously when they see that disrespectful comments go unaddressed by school staff or by their own peers. On the extreme end, we heard that in some schools terms such as “bitch”, “fag”, and “dyke” are so common in everyday life that students feel there is little point in reporting such issues and may withdraw from school.

“If you don’t feel like you fit in, it is easy to withdraw.”
 – *Student*

We heard from participants that school staff do not intervene consistently to deter inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour by students towards other students. It was evident that in many circumstances students did not feel supported or that they had access to an adult with whom they could discuss these issues. Participants reinforced that while some incidents require more in-depth responses, prevention and awareness raising can occur in day-to-day interactions, during classroom discussions, in the lunchroom, at recess, or at school events. In schools where respectful interactions are encouraged and modelled, prevention is occurring at all times.

30. Posted on the Ministry of Education public website: Available at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/bullying.html>

31. Available at www.whiteribbon.ca

32. Available at <http://www.ok2bme.ca/about>

We heard repeatedly that in order to support students, staff must always intervene when they encounter gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, or inappropriate sexual behaviour. The following resource is included as an appendix to this document to support school staff in doing so.

■ **“How to Handle Harassment in the Hallways in Three Minutes,” developed by the Toronto District School Board, Equity Department (see Appendix C)**

Some students shared with us a reluctance to report these types of incidents not only to school staff but also to parents. From our observations, not all schools have mechanisms in place to assess how school safety is perceived by students, school staff, and parents. In addition, for those schools that do have these types of diagnostic tools, they may not include questions about gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

During our consultations we heard that schools/boards and community agencies/organizations possessing expertise in these areas do not always have the opportunity to work together to develop a coordinated approach to preventing and responding to these issues.

“There is a high rate of suicide amongst LGBT populations. Prevention is key.”
– Police Officer

Participants also indicated that it was not always apparent that provincial ministries work together to align policies and services related to the prevention/intervention of these issues.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

- To promote a positive school climate, all school staff who work with students, including administrators, teachers, educational assistants, and professional support staff, must intervene to address inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour such as sexual, sexist, or homophobic comments, slurs, and jokes.
- The Ministry of Education must make available resources to school boards on effective intervention strategies for school staff.
- School Boards must address gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour in their safe schools policies and protocols.
- In order to promote a positive school climate, where students are not subjected to gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, or inappropriate sexual behaviour, schools must:
 - provide prevention and awareness-raising strategies for students and staff in the areas of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, inappropriate sexual behaviour, critical media literacy, and safe Internet use;
 - work with agencies possessing professional expertise in these areas to develop a coordinated approach to prevent and respond to these types of issues;
 - give students and staff authentic and relevant opportunities to learn about diverse histories and perspectives (e.g., include material by or about gay/lesbian authors; highlight women's contributions to science and technology);
 - ensure that, in any prevention and intervention planning, accommodations and modifications are consistent with IEPs for students with special education needs;
 - ensure that their character education and equity policies address gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour;
 - undertake awareness-raising strategies aimed at all members of the school community to increase knowledge and understanding about these topics as well as about healthy relationships and the influence of popular culture. When applied consistently, these strategies will support teachers in supporting students;
 - help teachers provide support to student-led initiatives such as Gay/Straight Alliances and other activities that promote healthy relationships; and
 - engage school councils and student councils in supporting student activities such as Gay/Straight Alliances and any other activities that promote and encourage the understanding and development of healthy relationships.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

Data Collection

- School boards must ensure that schools are conducting anonymous school climate surveys of students on a regularly scheduled basis and that the results are built into their School Improvement Plans.
- Schools must conduct an anonymous school climate survey of their students, on a regularly scheduled basis, to assess perceptions of safety and to inform prevention and intervention planning. These surveys must include bullying/harassment questions on homophobia and sexual harassment. Schools should also conduct climate surveys of school staff and parents.
- Schools must share survey results with the Safe Schools Teams and build strategies into their School Improvement Plans to improve school climate, in particular with regard to issues identified through their climate surveys.
- The Ministry of Education should:
 - expand the existing School Climate Surveys to include issues of homophobia and sexual harassment; and
 - provide the capacity to roll up survey results electronically for the expanded School Climate Surveys. This will facilitate the administration of the surveys in schools.
- Provincial ministries need to work together to align policies and services on prevention/intervention in the areas of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

iv. RESPONSE AND SUPPORTS

KEY FINDINGS

“There needs to be a school response to incidents even if there are no criminal justice implications.”

– *Police*

During our consultations we heard that many students are reluctant to discuss matters such as relationships and sexuality or to disclose or report incidents of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, or inappropriate sexual behaviour. We heard this from students as well as school staff, educators, and community agencies. Although the reasons for this are complex and varied, a number of common concerns were identified as barriers, including fear of retribution by peers; fear of families knowing details; fear of loss of anonymity; fear of feeling isolated; fear that there will be no response or action taken; and fear of losing control of “their story”.

Students also told us that in many instances they and their peers are not always comfortable discussing issues of relationships and sexuality with teachers. However, they don’t know whom to go to or where to get information.

We heard that LGBT students who have experienced homophobia are at risk of leaving school early, have left school, or have even left their community because of a school climate in which they feel victimized, isolated, and lacking the support or resources to deal with these very difficult issues.

We heard from one parent whose daughter was moved to a behavioural class rather than referred to a counsellor who could assist her in dealing with issues of harassment. The parent felt her daughter’s negative experiences were the root cause of her behaviour.

We heard that when students do discuss, disclose, or report information, school staff do not always feel comfortable or have the skills or knowledge to deal with these issues. Participants, including students, stressed that it is critical for school staff to respond to *all* reports and allegations of incidents – and to incidents they themselves witness – in a timely, sensitive, and supportive manner.

We also heard that not all incidents require a formal response such as police involvement (discussed in the next section); however, not all school staff were aware of how such incidents could be resolved through an informal and supportive resolution process or through a referral to a professional with expertise in these areas.

“Students need to know that the lines of communication are open and that they can speak to school administrators and parents about their problems. And we need to be open and honest with kids and arm them with the necessary tools to make healthy decisions.”³³

We heard that schools are not always able to help parents support their children when they are exposed to gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, or inappropriate sexual behaviour. Roles and responsibilities of school staff in responding to and supporting students are not well defined, and school staff do not always have opportunities to acquire the necessary skills or the information they need to respond appropriately to students when these issues arise.

Participants identified a number of suggestions and practices that would help create a school climate in which students feel comfortable, safe, and supported in discussing, disclosing, or reporting incidents. These included the presence of a caring adult, sensitive and supportive responses to disclosures, opportunities to discuss these issues on an ongoing basis in a safe setting, and access to resources and information, including referrals to professionals who have expertise in these areas. It is important that students with special education needs be referred to agencies with relevant expertise in their specific disability.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

- Schools must provide contact information about professional supports (e.g., Public Health Units, child and youth workers, Help Phone lines) and make it readily available to students who wish to discuss issues of healthy relationships, gender identity, and sexuality.
- School staff must take all allegations of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour seriously. School staff must act in a timely, sensitive, and supportive manner when responding to all these types of incidents, including assisting students to contact qualified professionals, where appropriate.

33. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, “Sexual Harassment and School Safety: How Safe Do Students Feel?”, news release, February 5, 2008. Available online at www.camh.net/News_events/News_releases_and_media_advisories_and_backgrounders/how_safe_do_students_feel.html

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

- To support students who disclose/report incidents of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, or inappropriate sexual behaviour, school staff must:
 - respond and take action to stop any further school-based incidents; and
 - offer students access to professionals with expertise in these areas.
- School boards must:
 - provide staff with the necessary skills to respond to and support students who disclose or report incidents of gender-based violence, sexual assault, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour;
 - include strategies to re-engage students who are at risk of leaving or who have left school because of sexual harassment or homophobia. These strategies should link up with appropriate student success strategies that boards, schools, and their community partners have in place to engage all students in learning and achieving their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD); and
 - outline for parents what the schools are expected to do to support their children on issues involving gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. Boards must also outline to parents their pathways for recourse if parents are not satisfied with the supports that their children receive.
- The Ministry of Education must develop a provincial manual to support school staff in responding to student-on-student incidents of sexual assault. The manual needs to address how staff should:
 - respond and take action to stop any further school-based incidents;
 - make referrals;
 - follow up;
 - support the victim and the aggressor in school on an ongoing basis; and
 - deal with students who must be separated after an alleged incident has occurred.
- School boards must monitor schools to ensure that they are following the processes specified in the provincial manual.

v. REPORTING

KEY FINDINGS

“We need to ask the students how we can support them in reporting sexual assault. Often the consequences of reporting are perceived as being worse than the crime itself.”

– *Community Agency Representative*

In Ontario, the *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) is the legislation that is focused on promoting the best interests, protection, and well-being of children.

Under section 72 of the CFSA there is a universal duty to report to a Children’s Aid Society (CAS) any reasonable suspicion that a child is or may be in need of protection from the person having charge of the child, whether because of harm or neglect inflicted by that person. This obligation applies to everyone. However, persons who perform professional or official duties with respect to children have a particular duty to report and may be found guilty of an offence if they do not do so. A person who has a duty to report must report directly to a CAS and not rely on anyone else to report on his or her behalf.

Section 72 of the CFSA provides a list of indications that a child may be in need of protection. For example, if a teacher has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may have been physically harmed by a caregiver, then the teacher must report the suspicion to a CAS. Other examples that must be reported to a CAS include a pattern of neglect, sexual molestation, failure to provide medical treatment, and emotional harm.

There are also behaviours that a child may display to another child that may indicate a need for protection. For example, if a child demonstrates self-destructive or aggressive behaviour, it may be an indication that the child has suffered emotional harm. Another example is if the child is under the age of twelve and has killed or seriously injured another person or caused serious property damage or has repeatedly injured someone. In each of these situations, there may be reasonable grounds to suspect that the child may be in need of protection.

The Ministry of Education notified school boards of these obligations through Policy/Program Memorandum No. 9, “Reporting of Children in Need of Protection” (issued August 10, 2001). This memorandum requires that school boards ensure that all staff members are aware of, and understand, the relevant sections of the CFSA.

A CAS which receives a referral under section 72 that a child is or may be in need of protection is required, by statute (CFSA) and by regulation (O. Reg 206/00) and by Policy Directive (CW 002-07), to respond to the referral and make a decision as to what, if any, intervention/investigation is necessary in the circumstances. A CAS's determination that a child is in need of protection requires that

- a. harm or risk of harm be verified through an investigation by a CAS;
- b. the harm must be caused by or result from something done or not done by the child's caregiver.

The CFSA mandates, in section 15(3), that Children's Aid Societies have the exclusive jurisdiction to investigate allegations or evidence that children who are under the age of sixteen years or in the care of a CAS or under its supervision may be in need of protection.

The *Education Act* does not have any specific requirement that teachers report to someone on violent incidents between students.

Currently there are clear legal requirements and policy directives from the Ministry of Education on what actions principals must take once they become aware of any incident:

- that must be considered for suspension,³⁴ or
- that they are required to report to the police, including those for which expulsion must be considered.³⁵

Under the recent changes to the safe schools provisions of the *Education Act* there are clear requirements as to what actions a principal must take with regard to the suspension and/or expulsion of any student who has engaged in activities as spelled out in legislation. Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 120, "School Board Policies on Violence Prevention in Schools and the Violence-Free Schools Policy", requires principals to report to the police any violent incidents, including sexual assault, by students twelve years of age and older. For students under the age of twelve, who cannot be charged under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA), PPM 120 stipulates that, at a minimum, the need to report sexual assault should be discussed with the police. PPM 120 also states that where young children are behaving in a violent manner, a Children's Aid Society may be the most appropriate recourse.

34. Section 306(1) of the *Education Act* states that a principal shall consider suspension if they believe that a student has engaged in any of the activities listed, including uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm on another person, bullying, committing vandalism, and possessing alcohol or illegal drugs.

35. Section 310 (1) of the *Education Act* states that a principal shall suspend a student if they believe that the student has engaged in any of the activities listed, including sexual assault, trafficking in weapons or illegal drugs, possessing a weapon including possessing a firearm, and committing physical assault on another person that causes bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner.

The Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol directs boards on how to develop policies on working with the police (including in the context of a violent incident). The Provincial Model also requires that local protocols provide information and outline procedures related to the reporting of incidents to the police. We describe this model more fully in section vi, “Local Police/School Board Protocols”.

PPM 120 states that “school boards should consider whether employees, other than principals, should be authorized to call the police, and if this occurs, the principal must be notified that a report has been made”. However, a review of school board procedures shows that generally boards do not have policies in place to require other school staff to report these types of student-to-student incidents to the principal.

During our review, it was evident that the roles and responsibilities of the principal in responding to student-to-student incidents are well established in both legislation and policy. However, after a careful review of the existing legislative and policy framework, it was also evident that a gap exists regarding the roles and responsibilities of other school staff on reporting incidents to principals. This is a serious gap, especially in the case of a student-to-student sexual assault. Incidents of student-to-student sexual assault cannot be tolerated in Ontario schools.

“Females under the age of 16 have the highest rates of sexual violence by a dating partner/close friend.”³⁶

Some parents also raised concerns about whether there are any consequences if an administrator or teacher fails to report or intervene. The Professional Misconduct regulation (O.Reg 437/97) under the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* sets out what activities are defined as professional misconduct for teachers and other board staff who hold teaching certificates (e.g., principals and superintendents). Included in the list are:

- failing to comply with the *Education Act* or the regulations made under that Act, if the member is subject to that Act; and
- failing to comply with the member’s duties under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

36. R. Kong, H. Johnson, S. Beattie, and A. Cardillo. “Sexual Offences in Canada”, *Juristat* 23 (6) (Ottawa: Minister of Industry, 2003), p. 8.

We heard from students, educators, parents, and administrators that all school staff have a critical role to play in building and sustaining a positive school climate. This is everyone's responsibility. Principals must be supported in their duty to maintain a safe learning and teaching environment for all students and staff. There must be clarity about the role of other school staff in reporting incidents that may have an impact on school climate.

Another important issue that emerged during the consultations was a lack of communication between the school and the parents of the victim once incidents have occurred. We feel that the safe schools provisions of the *Education Act* thoroughly outline the responsibility of principals and boards in communicating with the parents of students for whom suspension or expulsion is being considered. However, the same clarity does not exist with regard to provisions for contacting the parents of victims. We heard that where parents of victims had learned of an incident involving their child, the information often did not come from a principal or teacher.

During our review we heard that there is an absence of information sharing with parents of victims regarding disciplinary measures that have been put in place for the alleged aggressor/perpetrator. Parents also reported a lack of information about how their child is being supported by the school or what they can do if they are not satisfied with the support and help their child is receiving.

We also heard that in some cases, following an incident or to comply with a court order, the victim and the alleged aggressor/perpetrator must be separated. Too often it is the victim rather than the aggressor/perpetrator who is moved from one school to another, and the appropriate supports for the student who changes schools are often not in place.

During the consultations, we heard concerns about how school staff react when they become aware of dating violence that occurs off school premises. In these cases, students at the secondary level need to have the assurance that others will not be made aware of the incident if they do not wish them to be informed.

Many personal stories were shared with the Safe Schools Action Team (SSAT) as we travelled around Ontario. Some parents were concerned that they were not being informed of incidents involving their children; others, who were informed, were unhappy with the responses of school staff to the events. There was a clear desire to close a gap in reporting incidents to the principal; but also a clear demand for staff to intervene and provide adequate responses to incidents. There was one story of an elementary student whose parents noticed changes in her behaviour and an uncharacteristic refusal to go to school, indicative of a problem at the school. Upon further investigation, the parents learned that their daughter was being sexually assaulted by several classmates on a regular basis and that the teacher who knew about the assaults had not reported it to the principal. To the SSAT, this demonstrated a functional need not only to close any gaps in reporting but also to provide an adequate response and supports for vulnerable students.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

General

- School staff must continue to respond to a child who is or may be in need of protection as required by the *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA).
- Principals must report serious incidents that occur in school or at school-related activities to police as outlined in Policy/Program Memorandum 120 and in the Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol (see Appendix D). The details of reporting serious incidents involving children under twelve are found in Policy/Program Memorandum 120.
- All school staff must report to the principal:
 - any incident that should be considered for suspension; and
 - any incident that the principal is required to report to the police, including those for which expulsion must be considered.
- Schools must inform the parents of victims as well as the parents of the aggressors/perpetrators about serious student-on-student incidents involving their child or children. This is particularly important for the parents of students with special education needs.
- Schools must provide parents of victims with information regarding discipline/management of the aggressors/perpetrators, when asked, and with information about the steps being taken to protect the victim from future victimization.
- If a school must separate students after an alleged incident, it is preferable that the alleged aggressor/perpetrator rather than the alleged victim be moved. Supports must be provided to the student who is required to change schools.
- The Ministry of Education should request that the Ontario College of Teachers amend the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession to include fostering and maintaining a safe and caring school environment.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

Sexual Assault

- School staff must report to the principal any allegations/suspicions of sexual assault of a student by another student *on school premises or during school activities*, and the principal must report this incident to the police.
- In cases where students disclose/report allegations or suspicions of student-to-student sexual assaults *off school premises* to school staff, staff must:
 - for secondary students, ask them whether or not to contact their parents or police, and offer them information about professional supports such as sexual assault services; and
 - for elementary students, call the parents and offer to put the parents in touch with police and professional supports for the student.

vi. LOCAL POLICE/SCHOOL BOARD PROTOCOLS

KEY FINDINGS

As part of our mandate, the Safe Schools Action Team was also asked to review Local Police/School Board Protocols for consistency with the Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol, and to make recommendations based on our findings.

Since 2000, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services have given policy direction to school boards and police services to develop Local Police/School Board Protocols to provide a clear understanding of the respective roles, procedures, and decision-making authority of both police and school personnel.

The Provincial Model has sections that address key areas such as school reporting of incidents to police and police interviews of students at school. The section on police interviews of students outlines procedures and considerations with regard to notification of parents of students under the age of eighteen. The protocol requires police to advise a student under the age of eighteen that he/she may request his/her parent/guardian to be in attendance during the police interview. It also requires the school and police officials to determine, if required, who will contact the parent/legal guardian before the police interview (e.g., the principal or the investigating officer).

Each school board and school authority in Ontario is expected to have a protocol with each local police service in its area of jurisdiction.

In a complaint filed on July 7, 2005, against the Ministry of Education, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) maintained that the application of the former “Safe Schools” provisions of the *Education Act* and related discipline policies had a disproportionate impact on racialized students and students with disabilities. In April 2007 the Ministry of Education reached a settlement with the OHRC. One element of the settlement was that Local Police/School Board Protocols should be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with the Provincial Model.

Our review indicates that all of the Local Police/School Board Protocols are consistent with the Provincial Model in the areas of concern to the OHRC.

However, during the consultation, we received a number of reports of incidents in which principals failed to call police as required in the Provincial Model. We also heard from the OHRC, student advocates, and the media that the rules set out in the Provincial Model with regard to police interviews of students are sometimes not followed. For example, current requirements about contacting parents when students are to be interviewed at school were not always met. As our review of local protocols indicated that they all align with the Provincial Model, these findings suggest that the issue appears to be one of implementation rather than the quality of the written protocols.

“Everyone should come together to discuss critical pieces of the protocols – new administrators would benefit.”

– Committee of Youth Officers of Ontario

During our consultations we also heard that training on the local protocols varies from place to place. In some jurisdictions training is provided twice each year, while in others training is not provided. As we travelled around the province, we found some jurisdictions where the police and/or the schools were not aware of the existence of the protocols.

In some cases, we heard that problems arise when the police are involved in investigating a criminal offence and the principal is required by the *Education Act* to investigate the same incident for the purposes of school discipline. There appear to be different understandings among boards and police forces regarding these parallel but separate investigations. Some police services have asked the principal to suspend his/her investigation while a criminal investigation is in progress. This is of particular concern when the principal's investigation may lead to a possible expulsion, since a decision regarding expulsion must be made within twenty school days from the date when the student was suspended.

We heard that many principals require a better understanding of how to investigate incidents and when to report.

We also heard that sometimes schools are denied access to information regarding the investigation of incidents involving students on school premises. We were told that the Provincial Model requirements on the sharing of information are not clear as to when and under what authority schools and police can share information.

Participants further indicated that the requirements in the Provincial Model relating to students with special education needs were not clear and that there were no specific guidelines on how to provide support for these students during emergency drills, particularly lockdowns.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

- To improve collaboration between local police services and schools:
 - school boards must train school administrators annually on their Local Police/School Board Protocols;
 - police services must train police officers annually on their Local Police/School Board Protocols; and
 - where possible this training should occur jointly.
- The Ministries of Education and Community Safety and Correctional Services should conduct a review of the Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol to:
 - clarify how principals are to deal with suspension/expulsion investigations, as required under the *Education Act*, while there is a police investigation taking place for the same incident, addressing how both can be carried on concurrently;
 - clarify what constitutes student property – and also school/board property – and what constitutes reasonable grounds for police or principals to search either;
 - clarify when and under what authority police, courts, and principals can share information, and encourage them to do so;
 - communicate the current requirements regarding when principals are required to involve police;
 - specify the current requirements regarding the contacting of parents when students are to be interviewed at school by the police;
 - provide more direction regarding police investigations involving students with special education needs; and
 - specify annual training requirements for school administrators and police officers.
- All schools, boards, and police services must monitor their staff for compliance with Local Police/School Board Protocols.

vii. STUDENT LEADERSHIP

KEY FINDINGS

“Students can create strategies that are more realistic and not out of reach for their peers.”

– *Community Agency*

Students themselves play a key role in working for positive change on issues that affect their schools. Students want to be empowered to play a role in creating a positive school climate. The engagement of students *as* leaders is critical to the success of efforts to create a positive and inclusive school environment that is free of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Students shared with us the observation that while prevention programming – especially in the areas of gender-based violence and sexual harassment – is often primarily aimed at girls/young women, it is essential for both male and female students to be involved. Prevention programming must be inclusive and directed towards all students, and opportunities for student leadership in the area of prevention planning must be extended to all students.

Students also highlighted that having opportunities to speak to these issues in open and safe spaces among/between peers, teachers, and youth workers or other professionals is essential to prevention and to the promotion of a positive school climate. They want the discussions to begin, and they want to be a part of them.

We know through our consultations that student leadership in schools occurs in a variety of ways: through student councils, student-led/staff-supported committees or clubs, youth representation on school/board committees, and participation in student forums on important topics of interest to youth. We also heard that many students are actively involved in finding solutions to the issues of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour in their schools.

Students highlighted peer-to-peer programs as an effective way to help them become change agents in their schools. Participants identified a variety of examples of student-led initiatives supported by adults or school staff, including the following:

- **The Respect in Schools Everywhere (RISE) model helps young people make use of their strengths through meaningful activities in their schools and communities. The model is based on the principle of youth engagement and the belief that young people are a resource for their community, have a stake in its well-being, and can be part of the solution to social problems that affect them.**
- **Empowered Student Partnerships is a student-driven high school safety program facilitated by staff advisers and Toronto Police Services officers. In this program, students are empowered to identify, plan, organize, and execute year-long safety initiatives in their local schools and communities.**
- **Gay/Straight Alliances are student-run and teacher-supported school-based groups that work to create safe, caring, and inclusive spaces for gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans-identified, and two-spirited students and their allies in schools.**

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

- All publicly funded schools must:
 - support students if they want to engage in school-led clubs, including Gay/Straight Alliances or other activities that promote healthy relationships;
 - engage school councils and student councils to support these student-led activities; and
 - give students opportunities to take a leadership role in prevention and intervention strategies.

viii. PARENT/FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

KEY FINDINGS

“Children flourish when they know that the important adults in their lives care about them, express interest in what they do and appreciate and accept them for who they are.”³⁷

We know that the active engagement of parents/families and the broader school community contributes significantly to improved learning outcomes for students and to the creation of a positive school climate. Research shows that there is a positive link between parent involvement/engagement and various indicators of student achievement, including higher academic achievement, better student attendance, and improved student motivation. Throughout our consultations, participants noted a gap in parental involvement and support for school-based prevention initiatives to address gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Participants also recognized that there are many obstacles – including cultural/religious diversity, language barriers, accessibility barriers, and variations in family structures – that may make it difficult for schools and parents to engage together on these complex and challenging issues. We were told that schools struggle with how to involve parents in general, and that these obstacles or barriers add to the challenge of involving parents and other community members. If schools do not make efforts to engage and reach out to parents, parents often find it difficult to get involved and do not always feel welcome in their children’s school.

“Family structures vary. Sometimes aunts, uncles, or grandparents are the care providers ... we must engage the care provider.”

– *Community Agency*

Participants emphasized that parents themselves need to be consulted about how schools can increase parental involvement. Schools need to respect parents’ insights about their children and welcome them as advocates on their children’s behalf. The information gathered through the use of a school climate parent survey can be invaluable in school improvement planning for creating and maintaining a positive school climate.

37. Tatyana Barankin and Nazilla Khanlou, *Growing Up Resilient: Ways to Build Resilience in Children and Youth* (Toronto: CAMH, 2007), p. 31.

We heard that parents, particularly parents of students with special education needs, require support to enable them to recognize and respond to warning signs of victimization and processes for reporting such incidents to school staff. One parent of a student with special education needs talked about how important it is, particularly in the case of students with communications exceptionalities, for the school and parents to work together (1) to identify a trusted adult in the school to whom the student can go, if necessary, and (2) to ensure that the student understands who that person is and how to reach him or her.

Boards and schools need to be aware of parents' diverse cultural, religious, linguistic, and accessibility needs in order to provide suitable resources and help families connect with appropriate community outreach programs.

Suggestions for supporting and engaging parents included:

- organizing parent information nights and “lunch and learn” informational sessions;
- organizing parent/child breakfasts;
- delivering programs/resources in parents' first language;
- setting up conferences and workshops for parents;
- sharing information on board/school websites;
- sending home “fact sheets” with the school newsletter;
- utilizing a variety of communication tools to engage parents, such as DVDs and audio tapes;
- recruiting local businesses to help publicize and support awareness initiatives;
- engaging parent groups such as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG); and
- establishing or enhancing partnerships with Native Friendship Centres or other community-based agencies that have trusting relationships with parents/families.

Participants also underlined the importance of including Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs), Parent Involvement Committees, and School Councils as an integral part of school prevention and intervention strategies.

The broader community also has an important role to play in supporting schools' and parents' efforts. Participants pointed out that sometimes schools abandoned the idea of parent as well as broader community involvement because they did not always get the level of response they had hoped for.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

- The Ministry of Education must make it a priority to seek out, develop, and share effective practices on how to engage all parents and the community in promoting and supporting healthy relationships, particularly parents from diverse communities and parents of students at risk.
- School boards must ensure that parents, Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs), Parent Involvement Committees (PICs), and school councils are an integral part of school prevention and intervention strategies.
- Schools must make opportunities available to all parents to be engaged in the development of strategies to prevent and address gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour and to assist in overcoming barriers to reporting.

ix. TRAINING

KEY FINDINGS

“We must have a level of comfort with the topics ourselves in order to implement programs [that address gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour].”

– *Educator*

We have already noted in the section on curriculum that some school staff are uncomfortable with discussing issues of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. Participants identified a lack of training and access to appropriate resources for school staff to support them in educating students about healthy relationships.

Our consultations also emphasized that teachers and school staff did not feel equipped to address these issues, whether in the formal curriculum or in other areas of school life. For example, we were told that school staff sometimes lack knowledge about the appropriate terminology to use, as well as how to phrase questions sensitively and respectfully when issues such as homophobia and sexual harassment arise. Our consultations highlighted for us the gap in training for school staff both in the area of prevention and, more significantly, in intervention strategies and techniques for responding effectively (1) to incidents witnessed by school staff, (2) to student-to-student incidents disclosed/reported by students, and (3) to incidents that involve students and adults. The training gap is particularly evident with regard to the complex issues often faced by students with special education needs.

During our consultations we heard that school staff are not always aware of resources, programs, and initiatives that exist in the community that would help them better support students. In this regard, participants emphasized the importance of working with a range of community partners to raise awareness and provide training with regard to healthy relationships and sexuality, gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. Participants also noted a willingness on the part of new teachers to address some of these issues – although it was felt that new teachers were not sufficiently trained to do so. It was also clear from our consultations that school administrators and experienced educators are not well equipped to provide leadership in addressing these very complex issues.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

- School boards must provide teachers, other school staff, school administrators, and trustees with sensitivity training in the areas of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.
- School boards must provide principals, teachers, and other school staff with training on effective intervention practices to deal with gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour on a routine basis.
- School boards should work with their local Children's Aid Societies to develop and implement annual training for school administrators, teachers, and school staff on their duty to report under the *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA).
- School boards must provide specific in-service training in the Healthy Living component (healthy relationships/sexuality topic) to teachers delivering the Health and Physical Education curriculum. School boards should collaborate with Public Health Units (PHUs) to provide this training.
- The Ministry of Education should request that the Ontario Association of Deans of Education (OADE) include safe schools training in their pre-service programs, including training in the prevention and management of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.
- The Ministry of Education should request that the Ontario College of Teachers, the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), Supervisory Officers' Associations, and Principals' Associations include safe schools training (as it would pertain to the role of the school administrators) as part of the Principals' Qualifications Program (PQP) and the Supervisory Officers' Qualifications Program (SOQP).
- The Ministry of Education should request the Ontario College of Teachers to develop an additional teachers' qualification course in safe schools, with the content to include the prevention and management of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

- The Ministry of Education should request the Ontario College of Teachers to include the prevention and management of gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour involving students with special education needs in the additional teachers' qualification courses in Special Education.
- The Ministry of Education must develop support materials for boards to assist principals with the process for investigating incidents, including investigations involving students with special education needs.

x. EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

KEY FINDINGS

In its previous two mandates, the Safe Schools Action Team made a number of recommendations to the government with regard to policies and programs that could be put in place to ensure that students continue to have opportunities to keep learning within a safe and positive environment for learning and teaching. Over the last few years the government has put in place a number of safe schools policies and programs to help achieve these goals. It is imperative that the ministry now look at determining whether these policies, programs, and procedures have had the desired impact on making our schools safe for our students. Accountability allows for a process of continuous improvement.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: KEY AREAS FOR PRIORITY ACTION

- The Ministry of Education should evaluate the effectiveness of its safe schools policies.
- School boards must ensure that schools are addressing gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour in their school improvement plans.
- Schools must evaluate the effectiveness of their safe schools policies and programs through the regular use of school climate surveys.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE SAFE SCHOOLS ACTION TEAM

Ms. Liz Sandals, MPP Guelph, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education –

MPP Sandals was elected to represent the riding of Guelph–Wellington in October 2003 and re-elected to represent the redistributed riding of Guelph in October of 2007. Prior to her appointment as Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education, she served as Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Government Services and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. MPP Sandals has taught computer science at the University of Guelph and was elected to her local public school board in 1988. She served as vice-chair and chair of the board and was president of the Ontario Public School Board Association from 1998 to 2002. MPP Sandals holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of Guelph and a Master of Mathematics from the University of Waterloo.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast, MPP Kitchener–Conestoga, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister Responsible for Women’s Issues –

MPP Pendergast was first elected to represent the riding of Kitchener–Conestoga in October 2007. She was appointed Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister Responsible for Women’s Issues and is a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and of the Cabinet Committee for Emergency Management. Prior to this, MPP Pendergast was the Vice-Principal of four high schools in the Waterloo Region and also served as an Education Consultant for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. MPP Pendergast received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and History at St. Jerome’s College at the University of Waterloo, continuing her studies at the University of Toronto and at Oxford University in England, receiving a Master of Arts in English Literature, a Bachelor of Education in English and Science, and a Master of Education in Computer Applications.

Mr. Stu Auty – Mr. Auty is President of the Canadian Safe School Network and the former chair of the Ontario Safe School Task Force. Mr. Auty leads a national multi-faceted not-for-profit organization with a mandate to reduce violence in schools and communities in Canada. Over the years, Mr. Auty has acted as an adviser on safe school issues to municipalities, school boards, and provincial and federal governments. He was the founding administrator of the Vanier School for Young Offenders.



Dr. Inez Elliston, Ph.D., O.Ont. – Dr. Elliston has been engaged for over three decades as an educator and community volunteer. She is a former Education Officer within the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training and has worked at all levels of the public education systems in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Jamaica. In recognition of her contribution, Dr. Elliston has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the Arbor Award for Volunteerism from the University of Toronto (2003), the Harry Jerome Award for Excellence in Community Service (2003), and the Order of Ontario (2004). She is currently a Patron of P.A.C.E. (Project for the Advancement of Childhood Education) Canada.

Mr. Ray Hughes, M.Ed. – Mr. Hughes has thirty years of experience in education as a teacher, Department Head, Consultant, and University Lecturer. He is currently the National Education Coordinator of the Fourth R Project with the CAMH Centre for Prevention Science and a faculty member at the University of Western Ontario’s Faculty of Education. Previously, Mr. Hughes was the Learning Coordinator for Safe Schools with the Thames Valley District School Board where he coordinated the implementation of violence prevention programs for 190 schools and 80,000 students. He has developed and implemented school-based programs related to substance abuse, domestic violence, gender equity, dating violence, human sexuality, interpersonal violence, conflict resolution, and anti-bullying.

Dr. Debra J. Pepler, Ph.D., C.Psych. – Dr. Pepler is a Distinguished Research Professor of Psychology at York University and a Senior Associate Scientist at the Hospital for Sick Children. Her major focus is on aggression and victimization among children and adolescents, particularly in the school context. Her research identifies bullying as a relationship problem that transforms to other problems of power and aggression over the lifespan. Together with Dr. Wendy Craig, Dr. Pepler is leading a national network, PREVNet (Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network), a Networks of Centres of Excellence – New Initiative. With national non-government organizations and Canadian research partners, PREVNet’s mission is to promote safe and healthy relationships for all Canadian children and youth (www.prevnet.ca).

Ms. Lynn Ziraldo – Ms. Ziraldo has been involved with the Learning Disabilities Association of York Region for over twenty-seven years and currently serves as its Executive Director. She has represented learning disabilities and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder on numerous committees/task forces and work groups on education, health, social, and legal issues throughout York Region, Ontario, and the United States. She is currently an adviser to the Minister’s Advisory Council for Special Education and vice-chair of York Region SEAC. Her involvement in the LD Association has led her to be an effective advocate for her sons, who have LD and ADD, as well as for other people with disabilities.

APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

For the purposes of this document only, the words used in this report have the following meanings attributed to them.

Bullying

Typically a form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.

(Policy/Program Memorandum 144)

Gender

Those characteristics of women and men that are socially constructed. *Sex* refers to those characteristics of males and females that are biologically determined.

Gender-based violence

Any form of behaviour – including psychological, physical, and sexual behaviour – that is based on an individual's gender and is intended to control, humiliate, or harm the individual. This form of violence is generally directed at women and girls and is based on an attitude or prejudice, which can be conscious or unconscious and which exists on the individual and institutional level, that aims to subordinate an individual or group on the basis of sex and/or gender identity.

(Adapted from Peter Jaffe and Ray Hughes, "Preventing Violence against Girls", *Education Forum* 34 [3] [Fall 2008] [Toronto: OSSTF/FEESO])

Hate propaganda

Ideas, beliefs, and ideologies transmitted in written, oral, or electronic form for the purpose of creating, promoting, perpetuating, or exacerbating antagonistic, hateful, and belligerent attitudes or actions against a particular group or groups of people.

(Adapted from "Addressing Hate Crimes in Ontario: Final Report of the Hate Crimes Community Working Group")

Homophobia

A disparaging or hostile attitude or negative bias, which may be overt or unspoken and which exists on the individual and systemic level, towards people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (LGBT). In this document, references to LGBT persons should be understood to include individuals who identify themselves as queer, transsexual, two-spirited, intersexed, or questioning.

Inappropriate sexual behaviour

Sexual behaviour on the part of a young person that places the person or another individual “at risk” physically, psychologically, or socially and/or that is inappropriate relative to the person’s age or stage of development (examples include: unprotected sexual activity that might result in sexually transmitted disease; the viewing of pornography at a young age; and the posting of sexual information on the Internet).

Sexual harassment

Unwelcome sexual attention directed at an individual by someone whose conduct or comments are, or should reasonably be known to be, offensive, inappropriate, intimidating, hostile, and unwelcome. Sexual harassment often occurs in an environment in which sexist or homophobic jokes and materials have been allowed

(Adapted from Toronto District School Board, “Building Healthy Relationships: Interventions for Gender-based Violence”, March 2008)

Student with special education needs

Also known as an “exceptional pupil”, the term used in the *Education Act* and defined there, in Subsection 1(1), as “a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program by a committee, established under subparagraph iii of paragraph 5 of subsection 11 (1), of the board, (a) of which the pupil is a resident pupil, (b) that admits or enrolls the pupil other than pursuant to an agreement with another board for the provision of education, or (c) to which the cost of education in respect of the pupil is payable by the Minister.”

(From “Safe Schools Policy and Practice: An Agenda for Action”, 2006)

APPENDIX C

HOW TO HANDLE HARASSMENT IN THE HALLWAYS IN THREE MINUTES

(From the Toronto District School Board)

1. STOP the harassment.

- Interrupt the comment/halt the physical harassment.
- DO NOT pull students aside for confidentiality unless absolutely necessary.
- Make sure all the students in the area hear your comments.
- *It is important that all students, whether onlookers, potential targets, or potential harassers, get the message that students are safe and protected in this school.*

2. IDENTIFY the harassment.

- Label the form of harassment: “You just made a harassing comment/put-down based upon race (religion, ethnicity, abilities, gender, age, sexual orientation, economic status, size, etc.).”
- Do not imply that the victim is a member of that identifiable group.
- A major goal is to take the “spotlight” off the target and turn the focus to the behaviour. Students should realize what was said, regardless of what was meant (e.g., kidding).

3. BROADEN the response.

- Do not personalize your response at this stage: “At this school we do not harass people.” “Our community does not appreciate hateful/thoughtless behaviour.”
- Re-identify the offensive behaviour: “This name calling can also be hurtful to others who overhear it.”
- “We don’t do put-downs at this school” specifically includes those listening, as well as the school community in general. Even if they were “only kidding”, harassers must realize the possible ramifications of their actions.

4. ASK for change in future behaviour.

- Personalize the response: “Chris, please pause and think before you act.”
- Check in with the victim at this time: “If this continues, please tell me, and I will take further action. We want everyone to be safe at this school.”
- Now turn the “spotlight” on the harasser specifically, asking for accountability. Again, be sure not to treat the target like a helpless victim. Rather, plainly give him/her this responsibility on behalf of others.



APPENDIX D

PROVINCIAL MODEL FOR A LOCAL POLICE/SCHOOL BOARD PROTOCOL

(excerpt)

7. Occurrences Requiring Police Involvement or Response

List the types of incidents requiring police involvement or response. The types of incidents listed must include, at a minimum:

- physical assault causing bodily harm requiring medical attention;
- sexual assault;
- robbery;
- criminal harassment;
- weapons offences; and
- drug offences (e.g., trafficking).

8. Other Occurrences Requiring Police Involvement or Response

List the types of incidents, beyond those listed in section 7 above, that would result in police involvement or response, such as:

- hate- and/or bias-motivated incidents;
- gang-related incidents;
- extortion;
- threats of serious physical injury;
- incidents of vandalism; and
- trespassing incidents (new provisions under the Access to School Premises Regulation (O. Reg. 474/00), and the *Trespass to Property Act*).

It is expected that all other school-related occurrences will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.



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