



REPORT TO

**STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND
WELL BEING, CATHOLIC
EDUCATION AND HUMAN
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

SAFE SCHOOLS REPORT 2019-2020

*Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety.
Leviticus 25:19*

Created, Draft	First Tabling	Review
July 20, 2020	September 3, 2020	Click here to enter a date.

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INFORMATION REPORT

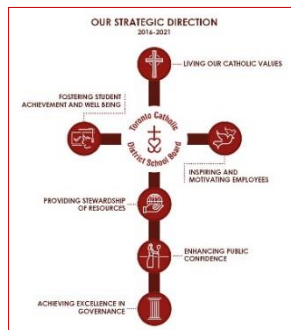
Vision:

At Toronto Catholic we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.

Mission:

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.

We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.



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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Safe and caring learning environments supported by positive Catholic school climates continues to be a key goal for the Toronto Catholic District School Board. In our annual Safe Schools Report, we examine metrics which promote continued growth in safe, caring and accepting school practices.

While this has been an exceptional year given school closures due to COVID-19, both qualitative and quantitative perceptual data for 2019-2020 confirm a continued positive trend toward safe and welcoming school climates in the TCDSB. These data indicate that, prior to distance learning, an overwhelming number of students (93% in secondary) believe their schools are safe places to interact and learn. During the COVID-19 school closures, both elementary and secondary students (97%) indicate that they feel very safe or safe online while working on distance learning activities.

The behavioural data is presented for each year and, where possible, are summarized using three-year rolling averages (or moving averages). Three-year rolling averages are calculated by creating a series of averages over three years. This statistic uses averages to describe trends over time.

An analysis of the rolling average over the last five years shows an overall downward trend in various areas. Elementary school data indicates improvement in many areas including a decrease in the number of suspensions issued, a decrease in the number of students suspended, a decrease in the number of suspensions pending possible expulsion issued and a decrease in the number of expulsions issued (both school and board expulsions). Although positive results can be identified in the secondary panel, there was an increase in total number of school expulsions issued to male students; however, this increase can be attributed to a few serious incidents, with each involving multiple students. The Safe Schools Department has identified a number of action items for 2020-21 to address the data collected for secondary schools.

Informed by the local Safe and Accepting Schools Teams, all schools will review both their local 2019-2020 Safe Schools metrics, as well as the perceptual data learned from the annual *Safe Schools Survey* (secondary) and this year's *Student Voice: Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic* survey (elementary and secondary). Based on this information, each school will make adjustments, as needed, to their 2020-2021 Safe Schools Plan. The components of the plan will

include action items for: Bullying Awareness, Prevention and Intervention, Progressive Discipline, and Positive School Climate.

The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 110 hours.

B. PURPOSE

1. The Safe Schools Report for 2019-2020 includes quantitative and qualitative data related to Safe Schools metrics, procedures, programs and other activities designed to create safe, accepting learning environments, and strengthen public confidence in the TCDSB. In an effort to gain further insights into the data, the 2019-2020 Report also includes embedded gender and identity-based analyses.
2. The following areas will be addressed in this report, along with actions undertaken to address evidence-informed needs:
 - 1) Suspension and Expulsion Data
 - 2) Safe Schools Climate Surveys
 - 3) Alternative Safe Schools Programs for Students
 - 4) Professional Learning to Build Capacity within the System
 - 5) Student Voice on how to increase the level of safety in schools
 - 6) Proposed Actionable Items for 2020-2021
3. The evidence will highlight those areas of strength and success, as well as areas for growth, resulting in prioritized actions for the 2020-2021 school year.

C. BACKGROUND

1. The Annual Safe Schools Report to board has evolved from focusing on suspension and expulsion data ten years ago, to a comprehensive review and analysis of established metrics and subsequent action plans for the new school year.

D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

Sources of Evidence for this report include, but are not limited to:

1. Suspension and Expulsion data;
2. Safe Schools Climate Surveys;
3. Safe Schools alternative programs to support student achievement and well-being;
4. Participation rates of TCDSB staff in professional learning opportunities, workshops and in-services;
5. Student Voice: Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic survey (elementary and secondary)

SECTION 1: Suspension and Expulsion Data (Appendix A)

As indicated in Appendix A, an analysis of the rolling average over the last five years shows an overall downward trend in various areas including: number of students suspended, notices of suspension issued, number of instructional days lost, number of students with an IEP suspended, number of suspensions pending expulsion issued and board expulsions. Students and parents working through a suspension and/or suspension pending possible expulsion are often supported with this process by various outside groups including TAIBU, Justice for Children and Youth, and Catholic Children's Aid Society.

During school closures due to COVID-19, nine (9) suspensions and zero (0) suspensions pending possible expulsions were issued. The 9 suspensions were the result of infractions related to inappropriate use of technology.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS [Comparison with 2018-2019 data]

At the Elementary level, the data indicate that *less students received suspension as a progressive discipline consequence (-624)*.

Some comparisons with the previous year (2018-2019) indicate:

- decrease in the number of Suspension Notices issued to males (-478) and decrease to females (-146)
- decrease in the number of Instructional Days lost to Suspension for males (-825)
- decrease in the number of Instructional Days lost to Suspension for females (-206)
- decrease in the number of males with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) who were suspended (-117)

- decrease in the number of females with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) who were suspended (-23)
- decrease in the number of males suspended 2 or more times (-236)
- decrease the number of females suspended 2 or more times (-52)

The above data would indicate that recidivism at the elementary level has shown a decrease in comparison to 2018-2019.

Further comparisons with the previous year (2018-2019) indicate:

- the number of males Suspended Pending Possible Expulsion under Section 310 of the Education Act has decreased (-13)
- decrease in the number of females Suspended Pending Possible Expulsion under Section 310 of the Education Act (-1)
- decrease in School Expulsions (-1) for males and no School Expulsions for females
- decrease in Board Expulsions for males (-4) and females (-1)
- Total number of TCDSB students with an IEP is 16,925. Total TCDSB elementary students with an IEP is 10,650. Total TCDSB elementary students with an IEP who were board expelled is 0, and school expelled is 1.

Consistent with 2018–2019 data, there has been ***no significant change in the more serious infractions of expulsion (-14)***. From the total number of Suspension Pending Possible Expulsion processes initiated (20), very few resulted in expulsions (1). This would suggest principals are using all available sources of information and considering Mitigating and Other factors during their investigations. Although the Fresh Start process is not disciplinary in nature, 15 students were transitioned at the elementary level for concerns related to safety. This is an increase of 3 students.

The Ministry of Education is eliminating discretionary suspensions (subsection 306(1) of the Education Act) for students in Kindergarten to Grade 3, starting in the 2020-21 school year. Alternative measures to discretionary suspensions must be used to address student behaviour in this student group. In 2019-2020, the total number of suspensions issued to K-3 students in the TCDSB was 218. An action item has been developed for 2020-2021 to respond to this data.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS [Comparison with 2018-2019 data]

The data indicate ***a constant downward trend***. This past year saw a decrease (-244) in the number of suspension notices board wide.

Some comparisons with the previous year (2018-2019) indicate:

- decrease in the number of Suspension Notices issued for males (-216)
- decrease in the number of Suspension Notices issued for females (-28)
- decrease in the number of Instructional Days Lost to Suspension for males (-619)
- decrease in the number of Instructional Days Lost to Suspension for females (-22)
- decrease in the number of males suspended 2 or more times (-111)
- decrease in the number of females suspended 2 or more times (-15)

The above data would indicate ***that overall recidivism for both males and females has decreased this year.*** This suggests that mitigating factors and intervention strategies appear to correct inappropriate student behaviour.

Further comparisons with the previous year (2018-2019) indicate:

- decrease in the number of males with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) who were suspended (-34)
- increase in the number of females with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) who were suspended (+17)
- increase in the number of males Suspended Pending Possible Expulsion under Section 310 of the Education Act (+2)
- decrease in the number of females Suspended Pending Possible Expulsion under Section 310 of the Education Act (-6)
- increase in School Expulsions for males (+14)
- decrease in School Expulsions for females (-4)
- increase for males in Board Expulsions (+3)
- increase for females in Board Expulsions (+3)
- Total number of TCDSB students with an IEP is 16,925. Total TCDSB secondary students with an IEP is 6,275. Total TCDSB secondary students with an IEP who were board expelled is 7 (+6), and school expelled is 17 (+1).

As indicated in Appendix A, the rolling average over the last 5 years indicates ***an ongoing downward trend in suspensions issued.*** This positive Safe Schools trend is further supported by the decrease in serious student incidents resulting in suspension pending possible expulsion (-4). This year's data indicates an increase in suspensions issued to females with an IEP, school expulsions for males and board expulsions for both males and females; these increases will be addressed in the 2020-21 priorities for the Safe Schools Department. In addition, there have

been a few serious incidents this year, with each involving multiple students, which lead to school expulsion. Although the Fresh Start process is not disciplinary in nature, 36 students were transitioned in secondary for concerns related to safety. This is a decrease of 21 students from the previous year.

SECTION 2: Student Perceptual Data

During the 2019-2020 school year, secondary students in Grades 9-12 participated in the annual *Safe Schools Survey* held in the Fall. Secondary students were given opportunity to complete this survey during designated class time.

Elementary students in Grades 6 and 8, however, did not participate in the annual *Safe and Caring Catholic School Climate Survey* administered each Spring, as schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Spring, a *Student Voice: Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic Survey* was completed by elementary students in Grades 6 and 8, as well as secondary students in Grades 10 and 12. Students were given ample opportunity to complete this surveys online, with multiple reminders to complete them through regular communication with staff, students and parents. The focus of the survey was to learn about students' learning and well-being while doing their school work at home (distance learning) during this time, and included a few questions regarding online safety while participating in distance learning activities.

Data gathered from all these surveys are reported for individual schools and for the Board. At the Board level, general trends can be identified and serve as a focus for collective inquiry and action. At the school level, the data will be reviewed by the Safe and Accepting Schools Team to gain greater insights into students' perceptions of school safety and school climate, to advise the principal about enhanced safety procedures and programs, and to review and update the local Safe Schools Plan.

OVERALL BOARD LEVEL RESULTS

(i) Safe Schools Survey (Secondary)

In November 2019, 5,464 students in Grades 9 through 12 from all TCDSB secondary schools participated in the *Safe Schools Survey*. Overall, secondary students' perceptions of school safety were positive and have remained so over the past 3 years, with about 93% of students reporting feeling *very safe* or *safe* in school.

Some highlights on safety (See Appendix B1):

When comparing secondary data for the three-year period, from 2017-2018 to 2019-2020, results are consistently positive (with little to no change evident) in all areas of feeling safe in and around school.

Over the past three years, secondary students' feelings of safety were very positive:

- over 90% of secondary students felt *safe* or *very safe* in the classroom, at sports/after school events, in school, at dismissal time, on the stairs/in stairwells, in the cafeteria/lunch time and in the hallways;
- over 80% felt *safe* or *very safe* travelling to and from school, in the washrooms, and in the parking lot.

Positive results can also be seen in secondary students' reports about bullying:

- 87% of secondary students indicated that they have *never* been bullied;
- 74% of secondary students indicated that bullying is *a small problem* or *not a problem* in their school; an increase of 6% since 2017-18.

Areas for continued dialogue:

- Of the secondary students who *experienced* bullying at school (13%), more than half (53%) told another person about being bullied (a 4% improvement from 2018-19).
- Of the secondary students who *witnessed* bullying at school (31%), 43% indicated they told someone about the bullying they witnessed. This is an increase of 24% from the previous year.
- For those who had been bullied (13%) or had witnessed bullying (31%), the most common forms of bullying were verbal or social.

(ii) Student Voice: Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic Survey

Elementary and Secondary Schools

In May/June 2020, 7,531 students in Grades 6 and 8 in all TCDSB elementary schools participated in the *Student Voice: Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic Survey*. In the same period of time, 4,839 students in Grades 10 and 12 in all TCDSB secondary schools also participated.

Overall, elementary and secondary students' perceptions of online safety are very positive, with the large majority (97%) of students indicating they feel *very safe* or *safe* while working on distance learning activities.

Some further highlights on safety (See Appendix B3):

- 89% of elementary students and 90% of secondary students indicated that bullying during distance learning has not been a problem
- 2% of students in both panels reported they were bullied

Area for continued dialogue:

- The reporting of bullying remains an area for growth.

PERCEPTIONS BY GENDER

(i) Gender Breakdown: Safe Schools Survey (Secondary)

Findings comparing male and female students are consistent with those of previous years (See Appendix B2). While generally there are little or no differences in feelings of safety, gender differences are evident in the forms of bullying that males and females experienced or witnessed: more males indicated experiencing or witnessing physical bullying; more females experienced or witnessed social or cyber bullying.

(ii) Gender Breakdown: Student Voice: Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic Survey

There are little or no differences between genders in their feelings of online safety while working on distance learning activities, as well as, indicating they have been bullied, in both the elementary and secondary panel.

While few have reported bullying to be a problem during distance learning, more females than males indicate bullying to be a problem.

PERCEPTIONS BY RACIAL IDENTIFICATION

In the Fall of 2019, 5464 secondary students completed the *Safe School Survey*; in the Spring of 2020, 7531 elementary students and 4839 secondary students completed the *Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic Survey*. Both surveys included questions pertaining to safety, and on both surveys, students were asked to indicate with which racial group(s) they identified; Ministry of Education recommended racial categories were used. A preliminary analysis was conducted to examine the perceptions of safety among students identifying in the various racial categories. (See Appendix C.)

Results were generally positive for all groups; however, the pattern of perceptions in the areas of safety and bullying is slightly less favourable for some groups (e.g., secondary students who identify as Indigenous and Middle Eastern on the *Safe Schools Survey*).

The results of this preliminary analysis based on the voice of students will be reviewed and will inform dialogue between the departments of Safe Schools, Equity, Diversity, Indigenous Education and Community Relations, and Educational Research. Action items will be developed to address future data collection and the implementation of plans for continuous improvement in the areas of safety and well-being for all students.

SECTION 3: Student Voice: How to Increase the Level of Safety in Schools

On both the annual *Safe and Caring Catholic School Climate* (SCCSC) survey and the *Secondary Safe Schools Survey*, students are asked: *How do you think we can make our schools safer?* This year, the *Safe and Caring Catholic School Climate* survey was not administered; these data are not available for elementary schools. Below is a summary of responses from secondary schools.

Student Voice: Secondary Schools

On the *Secondary Safe Schools Survey*, students were asked: *How do you think we can make our schools safer?* Responses of students were collated and results

summarized. Many secondary students indicated the schools are already safe. Top responses by students on how to increase school safety were:

- the promotion of anti-bullying initiatives
- increased police, School Engagement Team (SET) officers, or security guard presence
- more supervision outside the classroom (monitors or teachers in the hall)
- adding more security cameras
- staff being more approachable to create trusting and caring relationships
- renovations to maintain a clean, safe and healthy school environment
- no vaping
- being kind and creating a caring school community
- stricter rules and enforcement of rules
- listening to students' concerns

SECTION 4: Safe Schools Alternative Programs

The TCDSB operates programs through the Safe Schools Department. These alternative programs at St Martin and Our Lady of Lourdes support students who have received a board expulsion as a result of a safe school incident.

1. The Expulsion Program

The Expulsion Program is a short term support program for students who have been expelled from all schools of the TCDSB. The program serves elementary students grade 6-8, and secondary school students, grades 9-12. Program staff work in a multidisciplinary team to address student strengths, needs and triggers, with an aim to provide individualized academic programming and individual support at school. Once students have transitioned from their home school, the goal for all students is to successfully complete the demission requirements and return to a different TCDSB school. While in the program, some students are able to meet graduation requirements and proceed to post-secondary education, while others look to access community programs or the world of work upon program completion.

In 2019-2020, there were 2 students in the elementary program.

In the secondary program 26 students (20 Board Expulsion and 6 Voluntary Intervention Program) were served at different points during the school year. Program staff work diligently to develop community partnerships across the GTA so that students and their families can access local community support and resources.

2. TIPSS (Transitional Intervention Program for Suspended Students)

The long-term suspension program offers programming to students serving a suspension of 6-20 days in length. For students receiving a suspension between 6-10 days, academic programming is provided. For students serving a suspension of 11-20 days, social work assistance is provided in addition to the academic programming. Parents are not obligated to accept TIPPS support although participation is strongly encouraged.

In 2019-2020, 70.4% of eligible suspended students were served by TIPSS teachers at sessions in Toronto Public Library sites. In situations where adult students/parents have chosen not to attend TIPSS, the school provided the student/family with work packages. In all cases, students were afforded the opportunity to continue with their learning while on long-term suspension.

SECTION 5: Professional Learning for TCDSB Stakeholders

In 2019-2020, the Safe Schools Department offered a diverse menu of professional learning on safe schools topics to students, parents, TCDSB staff members and community partners.

2019-2020 Activities are listed in Action Items found in section E.

In addition, the Safe Schools Department worked collaboratively with various TCDSB departments, including Mental Health and Curriculum Leadership and Innovation and ICT, to develop various resources to support students, parents, and staff with distance learning. These resources include:

- Classroom Management Strategies for Online Learning: Tools for Classroom Teachers and Support Staff
- Tips for Parents: Supporting Student Safety in a Virtual Environment (Appendix D)

- Tips for Students: Supporting Student Safety in a Virtual Environment (Appendix E)
- Progressive Discipline Interventions and Alternatives to Suspension during Distance Learning (for Principals/Vice Principals)

E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2019-2020 Metrics	Evidence/Deliverables (2019-20 Metrics)
1. Expand the <i>Safe Schools Professional Learning Modules Series</i> to include new modules: • “Supporting Elementary Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder using Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Strategies and Techniques” • “Self-Compassion and Kindness”	<i>Due to labour disruption and COVID-19, the number of modules offered was significantly reduced.</i> • 19 different topics delivered in 2019-2020 Professional Learning Modules Series: ○ 163 participants (social workers, CYW, educational assistants, teachers, psychologists, administrators, support staff) <i>Due to labour disruption and COVID-19, the number of Interdisciplinary professional learning opportunities offered for various TCDSB stakeholders was significantly reduced.</i> • Interdisciplinary professional learning opportunities with various TCDSB stakeholders: ○ Administrative Professional Development – 628 principals/vice principals/superintendents ○ Safe Schools Student Ambassador Symposiums including Bullying Awareness and Prevention Month Launch – 340 elementary/secondary students, staff, trustees, community partners ○ Resolution Conference and Mediation Circles: 36 participants (social workers, CYW, educational assistants, teachers, police officers) ○ Threat Assessment Training and Related Workshops: 23 participants (social workers, CYW, educational assistants, teachers, psychologists, administrators, support staff, police officers)

	○ Training to Toronto Police Service – 35 police officers ○ SEAC Presentation – 20 members ○ Osgoode School Conference – 145 participants ○ School Presentations – 75 staff, students and parents ○ I-Lite Presentation – 57 elementary students
2. Safe Schools/St. Martin School staff will continue to produce training videos on various topics related to Safe Schools and Promoting Positive Catholic School Climate. School communities will be able to access these videos to share with staff, students and parents.	During the 2019-2020 school year, the Safe Schools Department developed 3 professional learning videos on the following topics: ● Bullying Awareness, Prevention and Intervention, Part 1 ● Bullying Awareness, Prevention and Intervention, Part 2 Scenario ● Overview of Threat Assessment These videos are available on the Safe Schools Portal Page.
3. As a result of the increase in the number of suspensions issued to elementary students during 2018-2019 school year, the Safe Schools Department will attend K-8 principal meetings to encourage principals to share effective strategies that promote students engaging in positive and pro-social behaviours. In addition, the Safe Schools Department will review	On November 12th and November 14th, the Safe Schools Department presented at K-12 Principal meetings.

with principals resources and materials to support a positive school climate.	
4. As a result of the increase in the number of suspensions and expulsions issued to students with IEPs during the 2018-19 school year, the Safe Schools Department will attend K-12 principal meetings to review the province of Ontario's resource <i>Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs through Progressive Discipline, Kindergarten to Grade 12</i>.	On October 8th and October 10th, the Safe Schools Department presented at K-12 Principal meetings. On October 30th, the Safe Schools Department presented to Elementary Vice-Principals. On January 30th, the Safe Schools Department presented to Secondary School Vice-Principals.
5. Based on student feedback from the 2018-2019 <i>Safe and Caring Catholic School Climate</i> survey and secondary <i>Safe Schools Survey</i>, the Safe Schools Department will focus on the themes of Kindness and Bullying Prevention during the elementary and secondary	During the 2019-2020 school year, the Safe Schools Department hosted 2 Student Ambassador Symposiums attended by students, staff mentors, parents, senior staff, trustees and community partners including TPS. Themes addressed in the course of the symposiums included: bullying prevention, healthy relationships, kindness, resiliency and the importance of empathy and inclusion. The role of the Safe Schools Student Ambassador Team is to collaborate with school stakeholders to develop and implement initiatives that promote a safe, caring and accepting Catholic school climate.

Student Ambassador Symposiums.	Secondary – October 22, 2019 Elementary – November 19, 2019 Due to COVID-19, the April 21, 2019 Safe Schools Ambassador Symposium (Secondary) was cancelled.
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F. ACTIONABLE ITEMS FOR 2020-2021

1. Expand the *Safe Schools Professional Learning Modules Series* to include new modules: “Introduction to Autism and Applied Behaviour Analysis Strategies in Secondary Schools”, “Informal Restorative Processes” and “What You Need to Know about Cannabis and Vaping for Students from Grades 6 – 12”.
2. Safe Schools/St. Martin School staff will continue to produce training videos on various topics related to Safe Schools and Promoting Positive Catholic School Climate. School communities will be able to access these videos to share with staff, students and parents.
3. The Safe Schools Department will provide further training on the topic of Mitigating and Other Factors with principals to ensure that these factors continue to be considered in determining decisions and plans that support student achievement and well-being. The Safe Schools Department will also collaborate with the Equity Action Team to review with principals the application of Mitigating and Other Factors through an approach that considers varying sociological factors, including factors that may impact students from various racial groups.
4. The Safe Schools Department will meet with secondary school principals to facilitate the sharing of effective strategies that promote students engaging in positive and pro-social behaviours, and to further support nurturing a positive rapport between staff and students within an overall positive school climate.
5. The Safe Schools Department will review data included in this report with the Equity, Diversity, Indigenous Education and Community Relations Department, and with the Research Department, to explore appropriate

recommendations; specifically, perceptual data related to bullying in various racial groups will be a focus of discussion and action.

6. The Safe Schools Department will meet with elementary principals to address the Ministry of Education's recent mandate to eliminate suspensions issued to K-3 students and to explore alternative measures to address student behaviour in this student group.
7. Based on the feedback from the 2019-2020 *Safe Schools Survey*, the Safe Schools Department will continue to support Safe Schools Student Ambassador Teams and offer symposiums during the 2020-2021 school year. The theme of kindness and compassion will continue to be an area of focus.

G. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This report is for the consideration of the Board.