



REPORT TO

REGULAR BOARD

## SAFE SCHOOLS REPORT 2015-16

Trust in the Lord and do good;  
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

Psalm 37:3

Created, Draft	First Tabling	Review
September 7, 2016	September 22, 2016	<a href="#">Click here to enter a date.</a>
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<b>INFORMATION REPORT</b>		

### 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 rooted in the love of Christ. We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge and to lead lives of faith, hope and charity*



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## **A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Safe and healthy learning environments supported by positive school climates continues to be a key goal for the Toronto Catholic District School Board. Student Achievement and Well Being efforts are supported by school communities when they invest in activities that foster learning environments that are inclusive and accepting. In our annual Safe School Report we continue to examine metrics which promote continued growth in safe, caring and accepting school practices.

For 2015-16 we can conclude that the purposeful use of progressive discipline within our schools has contributed greatly to the overall positive metrics with respect to suspensions and expulsions over the last 5 years. Although there have been some increases in suspensions at the elementary level particularly with females, the long-term system-wide metrics indicate a downward trend in suspensions and instructional days lost to suspensions. Our secondary schools have shown the most growth in positive metrics with continued declines in suspensions and expulsions. In addition perceptual data from Safe School Climate surveys administered to elementary and secondary students indicate that an overwhelming number of students (95% in elementary and 91% in secondary) still believe their schools are safe places to interact and learn.

The Safe Schools department continues to increase the quantity and scope of its professional learning modules offered to members of the TCDSB community to educate staff and students, and provide them with knowledge and skills to create more positive, accepting and safe school environments. Informed by the local Safe and Accepting Schools Teams, all schools will review their local 2015-2016 Safe Schools metrics and make adjustments as needed to their Safe Schools Plan. The components of the plan will include action items for: Bullying Awareness, Prevention and Intervention; Progressive Discipline; and Positive School Climate.

## **B. PURPOSE**

1. The Safe Schools Report for 2015-2016 will include 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 2015-2016 Report also includes an embedded gender analysis.
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) Actionable Items 2015-2016 to consider
3. The evidence will highlight those areas of strength and success, as well as areas for growth, resulting in prioritized actions for the 2016-2017 school year.

## **C. BACKGROUND**

The Safe Schools Report to the Trustees 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. Secondary Safe School Survey and Elementary Safe & Caring Catholic School Climate Survey;
- 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.

Below are data related to Safe Schools:

### **SECTION 1: Suspension and Expulsion Data (Appendix A)**

An analysis of the five year history of Suspension and Expulsion data at TCDSB (2011-2016) indicate a downward trend in the following areas: number of Suspension Notices issued; number of students being suspended; number of students receiving multiple suspensions; and the number of days lost to Suspension. This past year however saw an increase in Elementary School suspensions followed by a continued decline in Secondary Schools suspensions. Detailed data appear below:

## **ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS [Comparison with 2014-2015 data]**

At the Elementary level, the data indicate that more students received suspension as a progressive discipline consequence (36). A closer look at the data reveal that the Junior Division saw more suspensions than either the primary or intermediate divisions. Some comparisons with the previous year (2014-2015) indicate:

- Decrease in the number of Suspension Notices issued to males (27) and increase to females (63)
  - Decrease in the number of Instructional Days lost to Suspension for males (2)
  - Increase in the number of Instructional Days lost to Suspension for females (96)
  - Increase in the number of *males* with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) who were suspended (5)
  - Increase in the number of *females* with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) who were suspended (12)
- Decrease in the number of *males* suspended 2 or more times (19)
- Increase in the number of *females* suspended 2 or more times (29)

*This data would indicate that males' recidivism has declined and female recidivism has increased*

- Increase in the number of *males* Suspended Pending Possible Expulsion under Section 310 of the Education Act (3)
- Decrease in the number of *females* Suspended Pending Possible Expulsion under Section 310 of the Education Act (1)
- Decrease in Board Expulsions (3) for *males* and *no change* for *females* in Board Expulsions
- No change in School Expulsions for *males* and *females* in School Expulsions

*Overall there has been no significant change in the more serious infractions of Expulsions. From the total number of Suspension Pending Possible Expulsion processes initiated (29), very few resulted in expulsions (2). This would suggest principals are using all available sources of information and considering mitigating and other factors during their investigations.*

## **SECONDARY SCHOOLS [Comparison with 2015-2016 data]**

At the Secondary level, the data indicate that fewer students are receiving suspension as a progressive discipline consequence. The data also indicates a

significant reduction (-1016) of notices of suspensions issued over the past five years.

Some comparisons with the previous year (2014-2015) indicate:

- Decrease in the number of Suspension Notices issued *for all students* (421)
- Decrease in the number of Suspension Notices issued *for males* (275)
- Decrease in the number of Suspension Notices issued *for females* (146)
- Decrease in the number of *males* suspended under Section 306 of the Education Act. (96).
- Decrease in the number of *females* suspended under Section 306 of the Education Act. (77)
- Decrease in the number of Instructional Days Lost to Suspension *for males* (584).
- Decrease in the number of Instructional Days Lost to Suspension *for females* (270)
- Decrease in the number of *males* suspended 2 or more times (179)
- Decrease in the number of *females* suspended 2 or more times (69)

*This data would indicate that overall recidivism for both males and females is in decline suggesting that intervention strategies including suspension appear to correct student inappropriate behaviour.*

- Decrease in the number of *males* with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) who were suspended (21).
- Decrease in the number of *females* with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) who were suspended (36).

*Overall, the data indicates that there has been a decreasing trend for suspensions issued to students with an IEP which suggests that Mitigating and Other Factors are being considered when issuing Progressive Discipline.*

- Increase in the number of *males* Suspended Pending Possible Expulsion under Section 310 of the Education Act (4)
- Increase in the number of *females* Suspended Pending Possible Expulsion under Section 310 of the Education Act (19)
- Decrease for *males* in Board Expulsions (8)

- Increase for *females* in Board Expulsions (3)
- Decrease in School Expulsions for males (8)
- Increase in School Expulsions for *females* (8)

*Overall there continues to be significant positive changes in regards Suspensions at the secondary level relative to previous years, indicating that positive student behaviour has created safer school environments. This is consistent with our decreasing 5 year trend data. The reduction in both Suspension Notices and Instructional Days lost to Suspension indicate that students are spending more time in school, hence improving opportunities for student achievement and well-being. Although the data indicates that there has been an increase in the number of expulsions issued to females, it is fair to note that a particular incident has skewed this number and is not consistent with previous years.*

## **SECTION 2: Student Perceptual Data**

During the 2015-2016 school year, elementary students in Grades 6 and 8 participated in the *Safe and Caring Catholic School Climate* survey, and secondary students in Grades 9-12 participated in the *Secondary Safe Schools* survey. Data gathered from these surveys are reported for individual schools and as a 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.

## **COMPARATIVE REVIEW (TREND OVER TIME)**

### **Elementary Schools**

In February/March 2016, 10,294 students in Grades 6 and 8 in all TCDSB elementary schools participated in the Safe and Caring Catholic (SCCSC) Survey. Overall, elementary students' perceptions of school safety are very positive and remain so over the past 3 years, with over 94% of students indicating they feel *very safe* or *safe* in school.

### **Some highlights on safety (See Appendix B1):**

As in previous years, a large majority of students (over 80%) report they have *never witnessed* or *experienced* in school drug use, gang activity, weapons, relationship violence and harassment based on sexual orientation.

Also, consistent over the past three years,

- More than 90% of students feel *very safe* or *safe* in school, in the classroom, while eating lunch at school, in the hallways, and during indoor recess.
- 65% report they have *never* been bullied at school.
- Almost 60% of students indicate that bullying is a *small problem* or *not a problem* in their school.

Improvements are evident in the percentage of students *witnessing/experiencing* verbal abuse and in the reporting of bullying *experienced* and *witnessed* to staff.

#### Areas for further dialogue:

- 60% report they have *witnessed* another student being bullied at school, this is a 6% increase from 2014-2015.
- Over 60% of students indicate they have *witnessed* or *experienced* physical violence and verbal abuse at least 1 time. While student reports on verbal abuse have improved, verbal abuse and physical violence continue to be an area of focus.
- *Verbal* and *social* forms of bullying continue to require dialogue.

#### **Secondary Schools**

In November 2015, 4,899 students in Grades 9 through 12 from all TCDSB secondary schools participated in the Safe Schools Survey. Overall, secondary students' perceptions of school safety are positive and have remained so over the past 3 years, with about 92% of students reporting feeling *very safe* or *safe* in school.

#### Some highlights on safety (See Appendix B2):

Within the 3 year timeframe, improved perceptions of safety are evident in several of the *unsafe actions* probed (e.g., physical violence, drug use, inter-racial conflict, verbal abuse, alcohol use and theft), frequency of students *experiencing* bullying, and reporting of bullying *experienced* and *witnessed* to staff.

There has been improvement also in the percentage of students' reporting that bullying is a *small problem* or *not a problem* in their school (now at 69%; a 5% increase from the previous year).

Also, consistent over the past 3 years:

- More than 80% of students feel *very safe* or *safe* at school (including the classroom, cafeteria, hallways, sports/after school events, stairs, travelling to



and from school and at dismissal time).

Areas for further dialogue include:

- Consistent with past years, the ratings of safety in the parking lot are high with almost 80% of students feeling *very safe* or *safe*.
- While student reports on verbal abuse have improved, verbal abuse continues to be an area of focus and further dialogue, with only 33% of students reporting that they *never witnessed* or *experienced* it.
- The percentage of students *witnessing* or *experiencing* physical violence at school has decreased however, this area requires continued focus as almost half of the students report having *witnessed/experienced* physical violence at least once.
- Almost half the students have *witnessed* another student being bullied (now at 48%).
- *Verbal* and *social* forms of bullying continue to require dialogue.

**GENDER BREAKDOWN**

For the most part, findings comparing male and female students have remained the same as in previous years.

**Elementary Schools** (See Appendix B3)

- Little or no differences between male and female students with regards to their feeling safe in and/or around school.
- More male than female students reported *witnessing/experiencing* physical violence; more male than female students indicated being physically bullied at school.
- While most students regardless of gender report *never* being bullied or of *witnessing* bullying, female reports of bullying *experienced* and *witnessed* are higher than that of males.
  - *Verbal* and *social* bullying continue to be areas of foci for both genders however, females reported *experiencing* and *witnessing* social and cyber bullying more so than males, whereas males had higher reports of *experiencing* and *witnessing* physical bullying.
- More female students have told another person about being bullied; more male students have reported the bullying they *experienced* to a staff member.
- More male students indicated that they think bullying is *a small problem* or *not a problem* in their school.



### **Secondary Schools** (See Appendix B4)

- Generally, most male and female students (i.e., at least 74%) report feeling *safe* or *very safe* in the various locations within their respective schools.
  - Female reports of safety in the washroom are notably higher than that of males.
  - Male reports of safety in the parking lot, as well as, travelling to and from school are higher than females.
- More male than female students reported *witnessing/experiencing* physical violence, weapons, theft and gang activity.
- While most students regardless of gender report *never* being bullied, female reports of bullying are higher than that of males.
  - *Verbal* and *social* bullying are areas of continued focus for both genders however, females reported *experiencing* and *witnessing* social and cyber bullying more so than males, whereas males had higher reports of *experiencing* and *witnessing* physical bullying.
- More female students indicated they reported the bullying they *experienced* to a staff member.
- More female students reported that they *witnessed* another student being bullied and reported it to someone.
- More male students indicated that they think bullying is *a small problem* or *not a problem* in their school.

### **SECTION 3: Safe Schools Alternative Programs**

The TCDSB operates programs through the Safe Schools Department. The Monsignor Fraser College 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 secondary 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 2015-2016, 3 students accessed the elementary program and 43 students were served in the secondary program. 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 provides 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.

In 2015-16, 85% of eligible suspended students were served by TIPSS teachers at sessions in Toronto Public Library sites. In situations where adult students/parents have chose not to attend TIPSS, the school provided the student /family or in some cases detention centre with work packages. In all cases students were afforded the opportunity to continue with their learning while on long-term suspension.

## **SECTION 4: Professional Learning for TCDSB Stakeholders**

In 2015-2016, the Safe Schools Department offered professional learning on diverse safe schools topics to students, parents, TCDSB staff members and community partners.

### **Students:**

Consistent with the research that recognizes students play a critical role in creating positive and safe school environments, key learning opportunities were offered to both elementary and secondary students. Since October 2014, the Safe Schools Department has supported the establishment and growth of the Safe Schools Student Ambassador Program. This initiative provides secondary students with learning opportunities to build capacity in the area of Safe Schools, supports Safe Schools Student Ambassador local initiatives and outreach activities in TCDSB elementary schools. Safe School Ambassadors have also delivered workshops at national conferences including the November 2015 PREVNet Conference.

In November 2015, a Bullying Awareness and Prevention Symposium was held at St. Basil-The-Great Catholic School. The central theme of the symposium was “Using Social Media to Promote Positive School Climate”. The event culminated with the showcase of Safe Schools Student Ambassador Video Projects which highlighted different aspects of our central theme. All were exemplary productions involving real local issues while highlighting the creative talents of our student ambassadors.

**Parents:**

As a child’s primary educator, parents play an integral role in supporting the safe and accepting climate at the school. Parents are included as active members of local Safe and Accepting School Teams, attending local school events including those organized during Ontario’s Bullying Prevention Week in November.

At the local level, parent groups often invite the Safe Schools Department to present at Information Evenings, CSPP and OAPCE meetings.

**TCDSB Staff Members:**

Throughout the last school year, a significant number of TCDSB staff members participated in one or more of the various Safe Schools professional learning modules, in-services, refresher courses, principal/vice principal presentations, school presentations, sessions or workshops (see Section E. Metrics). All of these sessions are offered by members of the TCDSB Safe Schools Department with special guests from partner stakeholder groups (e.g. Toronto Police Service). Feedback received from staff participants help to shape and inform the professional learning modules for the next school year.

Participation of TCDSB staff members at safe schools conferences and workshops offered by external organizations and agencies are often subsidized by the Safe Schools Department.

## E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2014-2015 Metrics	Evidence/Deliverables (2015-16 Metrics)
<p>1. Continue to diversify and expand Safe Schools professional learning including on-line learning and access to resources through digital media.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 new module topics (22 topics total ) delivered in 2015-2016 Professional Learning Modules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 850 participants (social workers, CYW, educational assistants, teachers, psychologists, administrators, support staff, office staff, custodians)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Interdisciplinary professional learning opportunities with various TCDSB stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New Teacher Induction Program – 190 new teachers</li> <li>○ Joint TSU/Safe Schools Training – 79 TSU Members</li> <li>○ Administrative Professional Development – 300 principals/vice principals/superintendents</li> <li>○ Newly Appointed Principal and Vice Principal In-services – 20 (Succession Series) and 35 (Head Start)</li> <li>○ Secondary Guidance Counsellor Workshop (Peer &amp; Self Exploitation) – 27 participants</li> <li>○ Police/School Orientation – 142 principals/vice principals; 13 senior staff; 50 police officers</li> <li>○ Bullying Awareness and Prevention Month Launch (St. Basil-The-Great) – 174 students, staff, parents from various TCDSB school communities</li> <li>○ School Staff &amp; CSPC Presentations – 70 participants</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Toronto Occasional Teacher Local (TOTL) – 50 participants</li> <li>○ Resolution Conference and Mediation Circles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 73 participants (social workers, CYW, educational assistants, teachers, students, officers)</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Threat Assessment Training and Related Workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 163 participants (social workers, CYW, educational assistants, teachers, psychologists, administrators, support staff, office staff, officers)</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Risk Assessment Training – 260 Social Workers and Psychology Staff</li> <li>○ Psychology Presentation (Threat Assessment/Risk Assessment/Suicide Intervention) – 60 participants</li> <li>○ Training to Toronto Police Service – 90 police officers</li> <li>○ York University Teacher Candidate In-services/OISE – 70 teacher candidates</li> <li>○ SEAC Presentations – 50 members</li> <li>○ OAPCE Presentation – 15 members</li> <li>○ Camp Olympia Workshop – 40 elementary students</li> <li>○ Developed a series of training videos related to various Safe Schools topics available on the Safe Schools Portal Page (e.g. Guide to the 310 Process, RCMC, Effective Safe Schools Transitions, Effective Safe and Accepting School Teams, Threats to School Safety Response Procedures)</li> </ul>
2. Continue to focus on Safe Schools metrics that promote safe and accepting practices such as anonymous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A tender for anonymous reporting was awarded and the Safe Schools Department is working with the vendor for a projected start date for secondary schools in the fall 2016.</li> </ul>

reporting in schools.	
<p>3. a) Disaggregate safe schools metrics to identify student subgroups.</p> <p>b) Data patterns will be reviewed and where necessary action plans will be developed.</p>	<p>A) Identified that the increase in elementary suspensions stemmed from Primary Division. The Safe Schools Department:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Raised Awareness: Discussed data pattern with Education Council and subsequently with all K-12 principals and central staff responsible for the Early Learning Program</li> <li>○ Directed schools to disaggregate local data to identify local patterns and appropriate interventions</li> <li>○ Discussed data pattern with members of the Joint TECT/Safe Schools Committee</li> <li>○ Concluded that many suspensions were attributed to programming issues and JK/K students' unfamiliarity with peer socialization</li> <li>○ Alternative strategies to address poor behaviour in primary grades were encouraged</li> </ul> <p>B) Committee was established to review schools with a higher number of racialized students and effective practices leading to student achievement and well-being. Committee's work is ongoing.</p>
c) Continue and expand the Safe Schools Student Ambassador Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Safe Schools Student Ambassador Symposiums: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015 – 149 participants</li> <li>○ February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016 – 166 participants</li> <li>○ May 10<sup>th</sup> 2016 – 148 participants</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Safe Schools Student Ambassador Team delivered a workshop at the 2015 PREVNet National Conference on November 13, 2015.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Safe Schools Student Ambassador Team engaged in outreach with local elementary schools. This initiative culminated in the “Turn It Off Tuesday” campaign where participating elementary students pledged to turn off electronic devices on December 15<sup>th</sup> and engage in non-electronic activities including reading, outdoor play, etc.</li> <li>○ Bullying Awareness and Prevention Launch held on November 6, 2015</li> </ul>
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## **F. ACTIONABLE ITEMS FOR 2016-2017**

1. Continue to diversify and expand Safe Schools professional learning.
2. Continue and expand the Safe Schools Student Ambassador Program.
3. Examine data, and where appropriate develop strategies, to address the increase in elementary suspensions issued to female students.
4. Monitor the implementation of the 33 recommendations resulting from the Safe Schools Inquiry Report.
5. Prepare a Report on the interim status of the 33 Recommendations of the Safe Schools Inquiry.

## **G. CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

This report is for the consideration of the Board.