



Committee of the Whole PUBLIC
Report No: 24-037

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Safe Schools Action Plan

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PURPOSE:

1. The purpose of the report is to present the Safe Schools Action Plan outlining the learning and work occurring in the District related to the advancement of increased safety for students in schools.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. The Safe Schools Action Plan is in direct support of the values stated within the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, including inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility, as well as advancing the OCDSB's strategic plan commitments to Learning, Well-Being and Social Responsibility. The plan focuses on enhanced safety to support the cultural, emotional and physical well-being of all students and staff; improved educator-student relationships built on empathy, understanding and respect for differences; strategies to foster positive student behaviour; creating anti-hate and anti-oppression strategies in service of improved safety; and, mental health for all students.

CONTEXT:

3. The staff in Safe and Caring Schools works closely with the Equity and Inclusion Department, Learning Support Services and the Mental Health Lead, the Indigenous team, the Human Rights and Equity Advisor, Research Evaluation and Analytics Division (READ), students, parents/caregivers, community partners and others to create and maintain learning environments so all students feel a sense of safety and belonging.

The report highlights the initiatives that the District is engaged in that will build on the creation of safe spaces in our schools through staff capacity building, student agency and collaboration between the District, parents/caregivers and community partners.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

4. Learning Conditions

Safe and Caring Schools, Learning Support Services and the Mental Health Lead have created 'Conditions for Learning' kits for educators to promote the implementation of The Third Path, and its eight optimal learning conditions, as a foundational approach in all OCDSB schools. These kits are an extension of previous learning around The Third Path. This has been implemented through professional activity days, staff meetings and new educator training. The kits can be used as a collaborative endeavour or can be self-directed. This relationship-based approach to student well-being and achievement puts relationships first, and emphasizes that it is through strong adult/child connections that students learn and grow. The eight conditions are: safety, belonging, identity, regulation, engagement, positivity, meaning and mastery.

5. Restorative Practices

Restorative practices proactively build a positive school community through the development of strong interpersonal relationships and community building. These practices have deep roots within Indigenous communities and are key to building supportive learning environments for everyone. Restorative practices centres the importance of repairing relationships when harm has occurred and moves us away from a punitive approach to school discipline. It is a relational and restorative approach to solving conflicts and for taking responsibility and repairing relationships when harm has been done.

Mental health staff, principals, vice-principals, select staff from priority schools and some education assistants have been trained in Restorative Practice so far this year. Looking ahead, we will provide training to staff at the remaining schools. On-going learning and reflection will be embedded into the District training plan.

6. Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

PPM 144 outlines the expectations that all school boards create a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP). The revised BPIP specifically looks to ensure that all schools develop bullying prevention and intervention plans and incorporate current thinking related to anti-racism, anti-oppression and anti-colonialism. This is strongly reflected in the District's BPIP through the guiding principles, and the integration of these focused goals into school well-being plans.

The BPIP provides schools with detailed and specific direction on the expectations required for their plan. These expectations include the elements that each school must use to develop their plan, including: area of focus, data

collection, identifications of disproportionalities evident within the data, key actions, indicators of success, resources required, as well as monitoring and review.

The BPIP integrates the Student Mental Health and [Well-Being Plan](#) with the BPIP as we recognize as a District that creating safe and welcoming environments for students is key to bullying prevention and intervention. Schools will use a variety of qualitative and quantitative data to monitor and inform their goals.

7. Supporting Racialized and Marginalized Students

Our student suspension data shows that there is a higher number of racialized and marginalized students suspended. Many marginalized students do not feel a sense of belonging in schools because they do not see themselves represented in the school staff, the curriculum and the learning activities. To reduce the disproportionalities, the District is engaging in strategies such as eliciting student voice, creating identity affirming spaces in schools for students, connecting students with culturally responsive staff supports, engaging community partners, ensuring that families have access to the school resources and staff through such measures as Family and Community Engagement (FACE) and the Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) with the goal of building and maintaining positive relationships.

8. Safe and Caring School Leads

Over the last 18 months, approximately twenty-four principals and vice-principals across the District were selected as Safe and Caring School Leads to support schools through the use of proactive strategies that assist staff and students in implementing structures and techniques to best meet the needs of all students. Each lead assists 6 - 8 other OCDSB schools with questions that arise related to safe school matters. Leads support schools as a thinking partner in how to better support a student, strategies to assist school staff in engaging students, and as a sounding board to work through complex student matters. On average, each Lead interacted with their assigned schools five times from September to December. The goal of this initiative is to build greater capacity in the ability for school administrators to work through safe school matters. Safe and Caring Leads receive additional training and support during the school year to carry out their duties.

9. Professional Learning and Training

Principals and vice-principals receive training throughout the year at System Leaders' Meetings on such topics as the Anti-hate Protocol, anti-sex trafficking training, progressive discipline, bullying prevention and intervention strategies, equity centred trauma informed practices, student mental health and well-being,

student suspensions, student exclusions, the Police-Board Protocol, vaping, and search and seizure.

The Equity and Inclusion department created the Anti-hate Toolkit for school administrators and staff to respond to bias, hate and discrimination in schools. Included in the toolkit are learning modules designed to support students who have caused harm in gaining a deeper understanding of the impact of their actions, develop empathy for those affected and learn strategies to prevent similar harm in the future.

The Equity and Inclusion department has developed the anti-racism and anti-oppression starter tool kit for educators. The starter kit has been created to support educators in embedding equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-oppression in their instructional practices.

The District has also made a significant commitment to Behavioural Management Systems (BMS) training. BMS training emphasizes the prevention of disruptive behaviour primarily through non-physical interventions and the use of calming and de-escalation techniques, and also practices physical containment strategies in the rare circumstances they are required. This school year, the District has trained 1,014 employees, with the goal of having 2,000 employees trained by June 2024. The training has included teachers, educational assistants, early childhood educators, principals, vice-principals and central staff. Currently, 3,490 individual employees have an active BMS certification.

Mental health professionals and some principals have participated in Traumatic Events Systems training (TES). The TES model explores how we can address the systemic aftermath of a traumatic event on individuals and communities. This training provides a systems perspective and focuses on the assessments and interventions necessary to lessen systems anxiety and prevent further trauma from occurring.

Training in Violent Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) is an essential component of keeping our schools safe. Through training staff in a trauma informed threat assessment framework, mental health professionals and administrators are better able to monitor, assess, intervene and prevent violence in schools and communities. In collaboration with Learning Support Services (LSS), approximately 150 staff members have been trained in the past two years. In an effort to create a sustainable plan moving forward, three mental health professionals have been trained this year as trainers to deliver VTRA Level 1 to administrators across the system.

10. Using Data to Make Informed Decisions

The District administers school climate surveys for staff and parents/caregivers every other year, with students completing a survey on alternating years. Schools use this information to assist in creating and monitoring their student well-being goals and bullying prevention and intervention plan.

Schools also engage in regular learning related to their student suspension data. They use this information to assist them in better understanding patterns of suspension, strategies to reduce student suspensions, the identity of students being suspended and how to eliminate disparities between groups, and the effectiveness of prevention and intervention strategies.

Schools may also engage in focus groups and more informal feedback sessions throughout the year to elicit student voice on a variety of topics that impact the school climate.

The data noted in this section, along with other sources of evidence (e.g., Anonymous Reporting Tool, student attendance, etc.) is used to make informed and timely decisions to support all students, with a particular focus on marginalized and racialized students.

11. Safe Schools Anonymous Reporting Tool

The OCDSB Safe Schools Anonymous Reporting Tool provides students in Grades 4 - 12 with an opportunity to report concerns in an anonymous and private manner. If the school is identified, school administrators receive this information once reported and use it to become aware of issues in school or to further assist them in increasing the safety and well-being for students. This tool adds to other ways that students can communicate concerns, such as sharing with a trusted adult, an educator or a member of the school administrative team.

From September 2023 to February 1, 2024, there were approximately 175 incidents reported.

- 21% connected to hate and discrimination
- 19% related to bullying
- 19% for other (e.g., students upset with staff member, lack of communication, students upset that other students are not following directions, etc)
- 12% for harassment
- 6% related to abuse
- 5% connected to drugs or alcohol
- 5% for fighting
- 5% smoking or vaping
- 5% for threats
- 2% weapons related

Students feeling more comfortable in sharing information with schools or the District will assist staff in creating and maintaining safe and supportive spaces for all students.

12. Anti-Sex Trafficking

In meeting the requirements of PPM 166, the Ministry of Education's anti-sex trafficking policy framework, LSS and Safe Schools have partnered in leading the work in anti-sex trafficking within the District. An anti-sex trafficking protocol was developed which outlines the reporting and response procedures for both staff and administrators. All board staff were trained to better understand the risk factors and signs that a student is being lured, groomed and trafficked as well as the pathways to resources and services for these children and youth. Professional support staff received increased training in order to be better prepared to guide administrators in suspicions or disclosures of sex trafficking.

The District has expanded partnerships with community members recognizing the importance of centering those with lived experience. Partnerships have been built with YouTurn Youth Support Services, VoiceFound, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, and Ottawa Police Services. YouTurn staff have provided support through individual counselling, consultation and classroom presentations. This year, staff from VoiceFound has provided education sessions to grade 9 students in over 15 schools on the topic of human trafficking. Recognizing that this work is a collaborative effort, information was launched for parents and caregivers on the OCDSB's website. An evening panel session for parents/caregivers on Combating Human Trafficking took place in February 2024.

13. Focus on Youth

In partnership with the Province of Ontario and community agencies, OCDSB offers a summer employment program for secondary school students ages 16 or older who are in-risk of not graduating high school. Through Focus on Youth, the District creates summer employment opportunities for students working in support of children's camps and custodial positions. The program is also connected to co-operative education. Students can gain work experience, be paid and also earn co-operative education credits. Students involved in the program gain valuable skills such as collaboration, time management, initiative, leadership development and technical skills.

Approximately 140 students a year take part in this program. The learning is invaluable for students and employees in Facilities who mentor and support students in their summer working experience.

14. Tobacco Use and Vaping

As part of the Health curriculum, students learn about substance use and addictions. The District is working with Ottawa Public Health, Rideauwood Addictions and Family Services and other third party agencies to educate students on the risks of using tobacco and vaping products. Schools continue to work with the above community supports, parents/caregivers and students to eliminate the use of these products in schools.

15. Screen Time

Staff in LSS, Mental Health and Safe and Caring Schools are working collaboratively to assist students in recognizing the dangers of excessive screen time and technology use. Some of this work has been done through the District's Speaker Series for parents/caregivers and students as well as Rideauwood Addictions.

16. Police Involvement in Schools

School principals and vice-principals are to contact police for mandatory reasons. If a student is under the age of 12, calls to police are discretionary. Additionally, if a school would like to contact police for any reason that is not mandatory, they must obtain their superintendent's approval. Ottawa Police Service (OPS) may also contact schools and/or parents/caregivers may call OPS who may reach out to schools as a follow up.

The police involvement in schools data for the 2022- 2023 school year is provided below. There were 368 contacts, with 320 initiated by OCDSB schools and 48 by OPS. The accuracy of the data is based on schools completing the Police Involvement in Schools form for each occurrence. Schools are reminded to do this on a regular basis; however, there may be occasions when the form is not completed due to school staff engaged in multiple tasks and competing priorities.

CATEGORIES	2022-2023
Sexual Assault*	49 contacts
Weapons*	50 contacts
Threats*	49 contacts
Physical Assaults with injuries*	42 contacts
Missing students (elopement, unaccounted for etc.)	23 contacts
Hate motivated incidents*	14 contacts

Pornography, sharing of pictures*	10 contacts
Mental Health (suicide ideation, harm to self)	8 contacts
Trespassing (interior, on property)	8 contacts
Suspicious (person, item, vehicle etc)	8 contacts
Medical	2 contacts
Theft	5 Contacts
Drugs*	6 contacts
Other (e.g., Parent Dysregulation, Dangerous Driving, Children's Aid)	46 Contacts
Police initiated	48 contacts

*Represents a mandatory call to police, as per OCDSB and the Provincial Model for a Police-Board Protocol

17. Next Steps

Safe and Caring Schools will continue to work closely with central departments, in particular the Equity and Inclusion Team, the Indigenous Education Team and the Mental Health Lead, as well as schools, students, parents/caregivers, and community partners to create and/or maintain the learning conditions for all students to thrive. All of the work outlined in sections 4 - 16 in this plan will continue to be part of the next steps, as sustainable change occurs over time. A particular focus will be on increased student engagement and voice to enhance student sense of belonging, reduction of student suspensions and the elimination of the disparity between marginalized and racialized students and all other groups. Schools will continue to monitor the strategies in their School Improvement Plan Student Achievement Wellbeing (SIPSAW) and Student Mental Health and Well-being plans, while District staff will monitor the goals in the Board Improvement and Equity Plan to ensure the work and learning is having the desired impact.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

18. As noted in Student Suspension and Expulsion Report, the District receives approximately \$85,000 in PPF funding to support some of the work outlined in this action plan. The Safe and Caring Schools budget is also used to support many initiatives in the plan, such as professional learning, training and release time for staff to participate in the learning. The Board dedicated significant funding for this school year to increase the number of staff trained in BMS.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

19. The information in the report provides an overview of the work that Safe and Caring Schools, in partnership with other departments, has been engaged in over the past year. School Climate Survey results have assisted the District in monitoring the initiatives outlined in the Safe Schools Action Plan. Schools will continue to use the results of the School Climate Surveys to monitor their goals in their Student Mental Health and Well-being plan.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

The following questions are provided for discussion purposes:

- What are the strengths of the Safe Schools Action Plan?
- What other actions/next steps should be considered?

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