

AVON MAITLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

- We Will: **Create Positive, Inclusive Learning Environments**
- We Will: **Maximize Student Outcomes**
- By Valuing: **Our students, Our Staff, Our Families, Our Communities**
- Using Principles of: **Character, Equity, Sustainability**

DIRECTOR'S INFORMATION REPORT

TO: C/W, Open Session

C/W, Closed Session

Board

TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2016

AGENDA ITEM 6.3 b)

SUBJECT: 2016 School Climate Survey Results

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The “Keeping Our Kids Safe at School” or Bill 157 amendments to the Safe Schools section of the *Education Act* came into effect on February 1, 2010.
- 1.2 Policy/Program Memorandum 145 was revised based on the legislative amendments to include the requirement that all schools must complete an anonymous student survey related to school climate at least every two years.
- 1.3 This board surveyed all grade 6-12 students in February 2006, 2010 and March 2012 as part of its bullying prevention initiatives.
- 1.4 In 2014 and again this year, the board surveyed all grade 4-12 students, staff and parents using anonymous climate surveys. These surveys, conducted on a regular basis, can help schools to: assess perceptions of safety, make informed planning decisions about programs, help prevent bullying and promote safe and inclusive learning environments, determine the effectiveness of programs on an ongoing basis and build and sustain a positive school climate.
- 1.5 The Ontario Ministry of Education provides four surveys for board use, which were conducted in February 2016. The surveys were administered as follows:
 - 1.5.1 A Survey for Students in Grades 4 to 6 About Equity and Inclusive Education, Bullying/Harassment, completed by 2618 of our junior students;
 - 1.5.2 A Survey for Students in Grades 7 to 12 About Equity and Inclusive Education, Bullying/Harassment, completed by 4701 of our intermediate/senior students;
 - 1.5.3 A Survey for School Staff About Equity and Inclusive Education, Bullying/Harassment, completed by 581 staff members down from 806 in 2014; and
 - 1.5.4 A Survey for Parents About Equity and Inclusive Education, Bullying/Harassment, completed by 581 parents, up from 381 in 2014.
- 1.6 The results of the survey have been shared with school principals to inform the work of Safe School Teams for the current and next year. These teams include students, parents, community members and school staff.

2.0 Highlights of 2016 Student Results

- 2.1 Over 75% of students report that school is a friendly and welcoming place. Reported reasons for feeling unwelcome relate to a student's grades or marks, appearance, gender and/or their family's level of income. Students also list these same reasons as barriers to learning and reasons they feel school rules are not applied fairly. In addition to the selections offered in the survey, students noted athletic ability and mental health as reasons for being excluded or as barriers to learning.
- 2.2 There is a significant difference between junior students and intermediate/senior students in terms of enjoyment at school. About 70% of junior students enjoy being at school however at the intermediate/senior level only 60% enjoy being at school.
- 2.3 There are no students who feel unwelcome at school due to a disability that they may have.
- 2.4 There has been an increase of 5% in how often students have reported learning about the experiences and achievements of people with disabilities, reported by both junior and intermediate/senior level students.
- 2.5 Over 80% of students indicated that there were opportunities to learn about Canada's Aboriginal peoples at school.
- 2.6 About 40% of our students report having learned about the experiences and/or achievements of people who identify as transgender, up 10% from 2014.
- 2.7 Over 65% of students are unsure as to whether their school has an anti-discrimination policy. Additionally, approximately 20% of students are unaware of how to report incidents of discrimination or bullying in their school.
- 2.8 The results, related to the location and timing of bullying, were similar to previous surveys. In short, the less supervised areas (playgrounds, hallways and on the school bus) or times (during lunch and recess breaks and on the way to and from school) tend to be the locations where bullying and harassment is more prevalent.
- 2.9 Social and Verbal bullying are the most common types reported by students. These are also the most difficult for staff to monitor. Electronic bullying is occurring with more frequency with intermediate/senior students. This is consistent with the types of incidents that students report participating in.
- 2.10 Junior students indicate that they are more likely to tell the teacher or help another student while bullying is happening. Intermediate/senior students indicate they are more likely to help the person being bullied or tell another student when they see bullying occurring.
- 2.11 Junior students are more likely to tell their parents when they are bullied than intermediate/senior students. Intermediate/senior students are more likely to ignore that bullying occurred.
- 2.12 The reasons students identified for not reporting bullying appear to be consistent for both surveys. Fear that the bullying will get worse, being afraid and/or being unsure of what to do or who to talk to.

- 2.13 There is a significant difference in student belief that adults try to stop bullying; 74% of junior students and 49% of intermediate/senior students feel that teachers try to stop bullying; and 81% of junior students and 58% of intermediate/senior students feel that the principal or vice-principal tries to stop bullying.
- 2.14 Students feel that their school could help prevent bullying and harassment by providing more information about bullying/harassment, providing a method for reporting bullying, inviting guest speakers to speak about the topic, and providing training for staff on how to prevent and address bullying. Research would suggest that guest speakers do not have the desired impact on changing behaviours in the long term.

3.0 Highlights of 2016 Staff Survey

- 3.1 Of the staff who completed the survey, 43% believe that students do not take part in school activities, teams or clubs due to their family's level of income.
- 3.2 Staff reported that there are very few opportunities for students to learn about the achievements and/or experiences of: gay or lesbian people, diverse religious and faith communities and people who identify as transgender.
- 3.3 Staff reported that the biggest barrier to learning at school is the family's level of income. The level of income is also reported as the biggest barrier to the school rules being applied fairly. In addition, staff have noted mental health and not enough support as other reasons for barriers to learning.
- 3.4 Staff reported that the most common type of bullying is verbal, followed by social bullying, consistent with student responses.
- 3.5 The initiatives that are already in place in schools, according to the survey, are: classroom discussions around bullying, the development and posting of class rules, and school rules and policies related to bullying.
- 3.6 Staff feel that they need more training on how to prevent bullying. A number of staff are also unaware of whether the school has a bullying prevention committee. This may be a reflection of the fact that schools have a safe school committee to address issues of bullying prevention and the two are not perceived as the same.
- 3.7 As a result of prevention programs, almost 70% of staff feel that the atmosphere at school is generally more positive and peaceful.

4.0 Highlights of 2016 Parent Survey

- 4.1 Of the parents surveyed, over 50% believe that their child feels unwelcome at school due to their appearance and 45% feel that grades and marks is also a factor.
- 4.2 The most common responses to feeling unwelcome or barriers to learning is due to the grades and/or marks and/or appearance of students. Parents also noted in the comment section that they feel class size is a factor.
- 4.4 Parents feel that the school could do more to prevent bullying by providing more information to students and teachers about bullying, as well as implementing a method for reporting bullying/harassment.
- 4.5 Generally the parent survey results align closely with the student results.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 We do not have the ability to compare our survey results with the province as other boards do not necessarily use the survey in the same method that we do, nor do we share our results with the province or other boards. The best way for us to compare our results is year to year within our own board.
- 5.2 Schools have received their individual results and shared them with staff. Results will also be shared with their school council.
- 5.3 Schools will be developing plans based on their school results to address areas of need in the coming year. Time will be spent working on better understanding of the perceptions between staff and students.
- 5.4 Schools have implemented a number of strategies in order to improve school culture and climate and address student safety. Schools also use the board's identified character attributes as a framework for guiding student behaviour.
- 5.5 Each safe schools team has established a goal to address some aspect of the school climate survey results. Schools will be reporting to their school superintendent on the progress with these initiatives.
- 5.6 Schools have developed a bullying prevention plan which will include mechanisms for raising awareness regarding the negative effects of bullying, procedures for dealing with bullying when it is reported and supports for victims of bullying, the students who bully and the bystanders who witness bullying.
- 5.7 Positive, inclusive learning environments has been identified as one of the two key priorities in the Strategic Plan and will continue to be a focus in our schools.
- 5.8 Another survey will be conducted in the winter of 2018. The structure and content of the survey will need to be reviewed prior to the implementation of the next survey.

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Ted Doherty
Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board