Safe Schools

Annual Committee Report

Committee Members:
Ivana Calabria (Chair, St. Oscar Romero), JoAnne Maher (OTR), Maria Andriano (Executive, St. Patrick)

Structure:
The committee is composed of three teachers listed above with guidance from Gillian Vivona, the TSU President.

Terms of Reference:
   a. To evaluate the effectiveness of Toronto Catholic District School Board's Violence-Prevention Policy.
   b. To assess existing programs/committees in schools and share effective programs with members
   c. To research existing programs in other boards and affiliates
   d. To investigate worker rights and employer responsibilities with regard to workplace safety.
   e. To educate members on issues around violence (i.e. harassment, racism, gender,discrimination, etc.)
   f. To make recommendations on items that would make schools safer
   g. To support members with concerns about violence in the schools.

Summary of Activities:

The committee met on six occasions during the 2019-2020 school year. The committee helped support the Joint Safe Schools Committee by providing research and findings related to student and staff safety and wellbeing. We reviewed and analyzed the Safe and Accepting School Plans as well as the Site Risk Assessments for all TCDSB high schools over the last five years. We concluded the year by providing the Board with a detailed analysis of all secondary school findings.

The intent of the committee was to:
1) Ensure that the teams and plans meet the standards set out by the Ministry.
2) Highlight any gaps and provide feedback on how student and staff wellbeing can be optimized.
3) Review documents related to the TCDSB Safe Schools Policy including all relevant Ministry PPMs.

After reviewing The TCDSB Safe and Accepting School Teams Procedural Guidelines (2013) the committee analyzed The Safe and Accepting School Plans and Site Risk Assessments using the following criteria:

i) **Personnel -** The Safe and Accepting Schools Team (SAST) consists of the following as outlined in the Safe and Accepting School Teams Procedural Guidelines (2013).
a. It is also recommended that the team contain no more than ten members to be effective and efficient.
b. At a minimum, all SAST must consist of the following personnel:
Principal or vice-principal, 1 student (although 2 are recommended), 1 parent – may be a CSAC member, but this is not mandatory, 1 teacher selected by staff, 1 non-teaching staff – options include a secretary, caretaker, CYW, EA or others, 1 community partner – options include a police officer, priest, bus driver or others.
c. The SAST will be established by the end of September and members are expected to attend all meetings.
d. Having two students to provide comfort and will allow for continuity should one member graduate.
e. If additional staff members are included, the Principal may appoint these members.
f. All participants are accepted at the discretion of the Principal.
g. The names of SAST members will be included in the annual Safe Schools Plan.

ii) **Goals -** The SAST determine goals that fit under each of the following categories:

1. **Bullying Awareness, Intervention and Prevention Plan:** Providing students with an opportunity to learn and develop in a safe and respectful school. Providing students with an opportunity to learn and develop in a safe and respectful environment supports academic achievement for all students. Research and experience show that bullying is a serious issue that has far-reaching consequences for students, their families and peers and the entire school community. Schools that have bullying intervention and prevention strategies foster a positive learning and teaching environment that supports academic achievement for all students and that helps students reach their full potential. PPM 144

2. **Progressive Discipline Plan:** Progressive discipline is a whole-school approach that utilizes a continuum of interventions, supports, and consequences to address inappropriate student behaviour and to build upon strategies that promote positive student behaviours. When inappropriate behaviour occurs, disciplinary measures should be applied within a framework that shifts the focus from one that is solely punitive to one that is both corrective and supportive. Schools should utilize a range of interventions, supports and consequences that include learning opportunities focused on reinforcing positive behaviour and helping students make good choices. PPM 145

3. **Positive School Climate:** A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable and accepted. The Safe School Action Team and student leadership groups can play key roles in supporting learning and practices that educate students and staff members about safety concerns.

4. **Emergency Response Plan:** The TCDSB has a responsibility to ensure the safety of students and staff. Central policies and procedures, developed in collaboration with the Toronto Police Service, provide support to school administrators in the management of crisis situations. Each school is to develop procedures, including a process by which staff members are informed in the event of a threat to school safety.

iii) **Site Risk Assessments:** Site Risk Assessment for TCDSB sites over the last five years were analyzed using the following
1. Does a Site Risk Assessment Exist for 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018?
2. Is there information in the Site Risk Assessment that could have informed the Safe and Accepting School Plans?
3. If yes to the above, was the incident and/or recommendation followed up with? If so how?

Our analysis outlined the following findings:

1. Each TCDSB secondary site had completed a SAST plan from 2014 through to 2018.
2. Personnel - Most secondary sites did not have the minimum number of personnel required.
3. Bullying Awareness within schools: Most: increasing bullying awareness. Many: repeated the same exact goal year after year, involved or related to increasing bullying awareness, created a safe and accepting environment, repeated year after year, responded to student behaviour in a timely manner. Some: goals focused on lowering the percentage of bullying related incidents, listed goals but were really under section 306, goals extend off school property but related to student safety, goals related to increasing student awareness through presentations/assemblies, goals related to increasing the number of students who report bullying incidents to an adult, included increasing staff awareness of how to report incidents using the progressive discipline platform.

4. <u>Positive School Climate</u>: Aimed to create a safe, inclusive and accepting environment. Some goals focused on Mental Health and support for students. *Emergency Response Plan*: Lockdowns are the only emergency response listed in any of the SAST Plans. Minimum of 4 lockdown drills are required in the school year. No school appears to have reviewed or practiced the offsite evacuation plan.
5. <u>Site Risk Assessments</u>: Highlight areas of concern that directly relate to student/staff well-being and sense of safety. Assessments for the most part were only completed in 2014 with very little follow up in later years. Poor lighting in parking lots/hallways, unlocked doors, vegetation, lack of signage, PA systems, were all listed as factors which could lead to increased workplace violence, unsafe student/staff environments.

Considered Plans/Recommendations for 2020/2021, the Safe School Committee would like to:

1. Develop strategies for increasing the number of people involved in the Safe & Accepting Schools Team.
2. Work with the Joint Safe Schools Committee to create an Evacuation Plan for Board's consideration.
3. Develop a staff survey regarding sense of safety and wellbeing at work.
4. Creating Professional Development opportunities for staff that touch upon safety and wellbeing.

Prepared By: Ivana Calabria