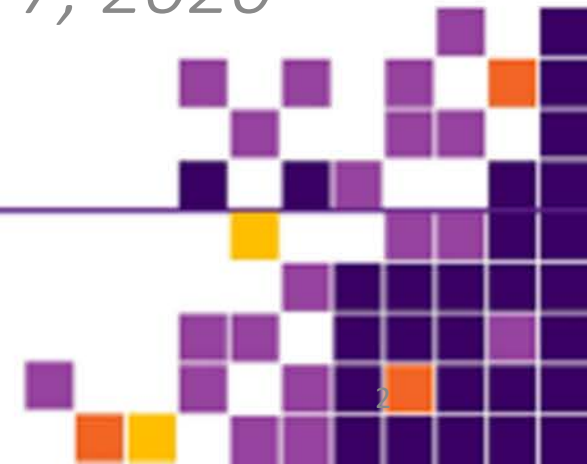


Let's talk
about **bullying!**

HWDSB Safe Schools: Bullying Prevention & Intervention Review Panel Draft Recommendations

*Presented to the Hamilton Community on December 7, 2020
for feedback on the draft recommendations*



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge our presence on ancestral Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Confederacy land as determined by the Dish with One Spoon treaty.

The intent of this agreement is for all nations sharing this territory to do so responsibly, respectfully and sustainably in perpetuity.

We respect the longstanding relationships with the local Indigenous communities, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Six Nations of the Grand River.



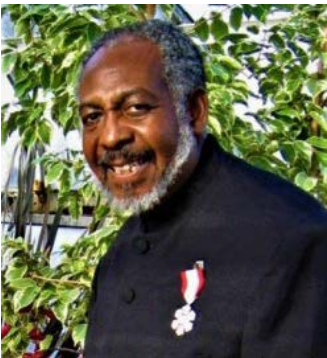
Review Panel



Dr. Jean Clinton, a Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences in the division of Child Psychiatry at McMaster, is renowned nationally and internationally as an advocate for children's issues.



Brenda Flaherty, former Executive Vice President and COO at Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS), and currently Assistant Professor at McMaster University's School of Nursing, serving as Past Chair of YMCA Canada and has extensive board experience for a variety of health, community development and well-being organizations.



Dr. Gary Warner, a former professor and administrator at McMaster University, is an award winning, dedicated and respected member of the Hamilton community with more than 45 years of experience with issues related to international development, peace, poverty, human rights, antiracism, immigration and social justice.

Kojo Institute



Kike Ojo-Thompson and **Evelyn Myrie** join us from **KOJO Institute**, a leading consultancy that partners with organizations to unlock their potential by navigating the challenges connected to equity, bias, diversity, inclusion anti-oppression and anti-racism.

External Advisors

Throughout the process, the review panel has consulted with several independent advisors and experts, including in particular:

- **Barry Finlay**, former Director of Special Education for the Province of Ontario
- **Dr. Debra J. Pepler**, a distinguished Research Professor of Psychology at York University
- **Dr. Kathy Short**, a Clinical Child Psychologist and Executive Director for School Mental Health Ontario
- **Dr. Tracy Vaillancourt**, a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in School-Based Mental Health and Violence Prevention at the University of Ottawa

Response to a Tragic Loss

The tragic and senseless death of Devan Bracci-Selvey has propelled a deeper look into the broader concern of bullying in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB).

The *Safe Schools: Bullying Prevention and Intervention Review Panel* is one way of several ways that HWDSB will recommit its efforts on bullying prevention and intervention practices within its Positive Culture and Well-Being priority.

Review Panel Purpose

Why: To build a positive culture to improve student experience and ensure all students and staff feel safe, supported and accepted. Students are unable to learn without feeling safe and accepted. Schools help students develop the skills they need to build and maintain positive, healthy relationships.

How: Conduct an independent review, which includes community consultations with diverse groups, to receive input on the effectiveness of HWDSB's Bullying Prevention and Intervention policies and practices as well as the broader view related to values, culture and environment.

Presentation Overview

- Review panel process
- Understanding the problem
- Guiding principles
- Organizing framework
- Consultation highlights & draft recommendations
- Next steps
- Discussion

Review Panel Process

- **Public Consultation Sessions**
 - 5 General Sessions (geographic communities)
 - 14 Group Specific Sessions
- **Panel Only Sessions**
 - 7 sessions with school-related groups
- **On-Line Surveys**
 - Student (Nov 2 - 11)
 - Parent/Guardian/Community (Nov 9 – 13)
- Extensive consultation with external advisors
- **Seeking feedback on draft recommendations**
 - Community sessions (Dec 8 to 10)
 - Secondary Student Senate (Dec 9)
 - Thoughtexchange (week of Dec 7)
- **Final Report to Board of Trustees on January 25, 2021**

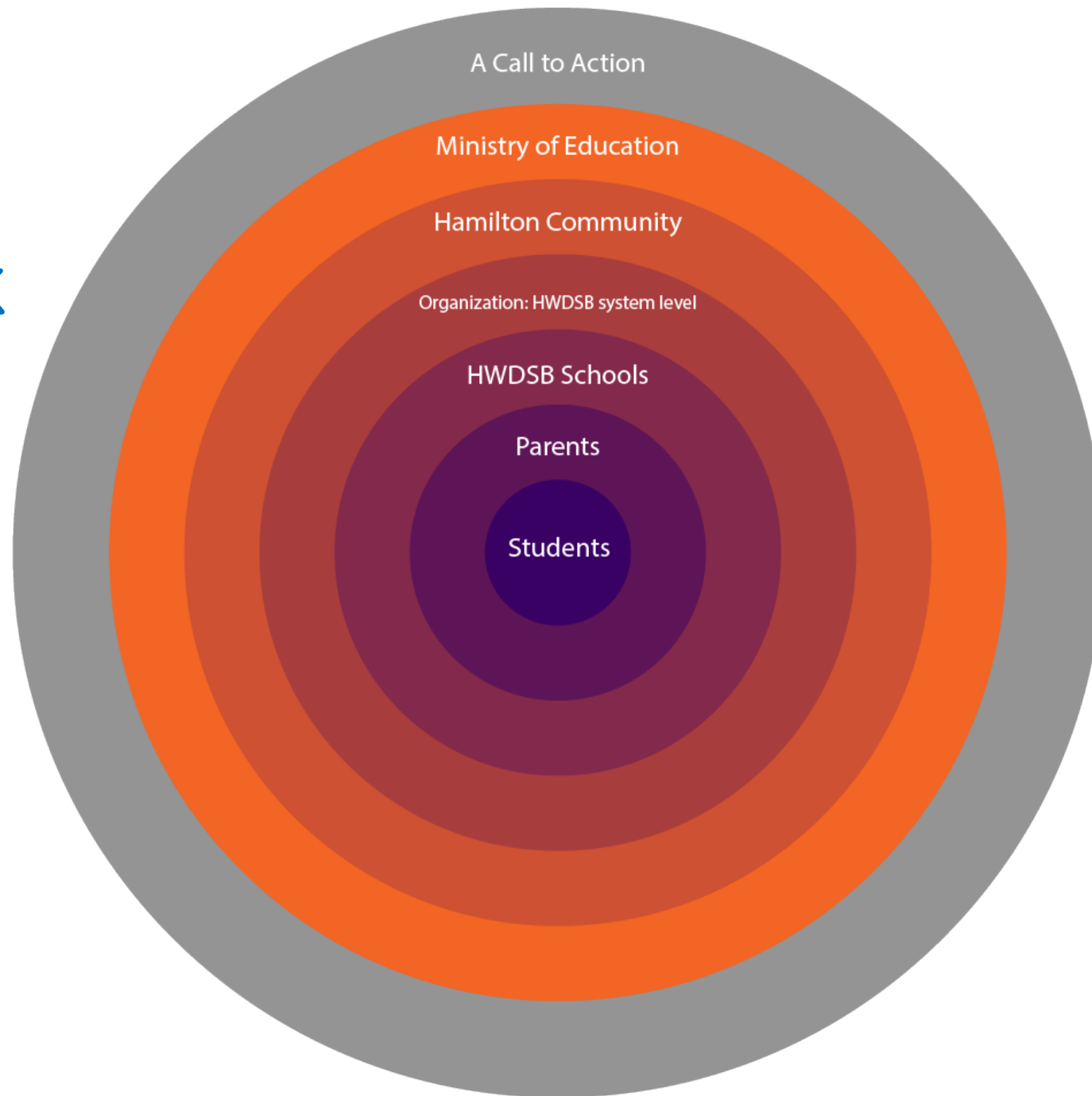
Understanding the Problem: What we heard

- 60% of HWDSB students were bullied at any rate & 20% bullied frequently (pre-COVID)
- 71% of surveyed staff witnessed frequent student bullying in the last school year (pre-COVID)
- Students who identify as gender nonconforming & LGBTQ+ were particularly vulnerable
- Inconsistent processes & poor communication with respect to bullying intervention & response
- Instances of a “*culture of fear*” that normalizes bullying

Guiding Principles

- Healthy relationships, healthy development
- Equity & excellence
- Values driven culture
- Engagement & collaboration
- Data-driven, evidence-informed
- Systems focus
- Consistency, transparency & on-going communication
- Sustained implementation & continuous quality improvement

Organizing Framework



Draft Recommendations

- The following slides provide a high-level overview of the review panel's draft recommendations.
- The draft recommendations identify & describe 10 areas where HWDSB needs to focus & act in order to address bullying & ensure positive school climate.
- Each of the draft recommendations is presented alongside a few consultation highlights as well as examples of recommended action steps.
- There is more detail behind each presented recommendation; these details will be offered in the final report.
- The review panel is sharing the recommendations in draft form with community members to ensure they have not missed any important areas of focus or action. Community feedback will help to inform and guide the refinement of the draft recommendations prior to the final report being provided to the Director of Education.

Overview of Draft Recommendations

1. Elevate student voice, agency, leadership & ownership
2. Review special education plan & reflect upon impact of self-contained programs on student belonging & inclusion
3. Improve communication with & meaningfully engage parents
4. Equip schools & staff with tools & resources for effective response; utilize PREVNet tool kit
5. Review existing bullying policies & procedures through lens of equity, anti-racism & anti-oppression
6. Address inconsistent adherence to existing bullying prevention & intervention policies, procedures & guidelines

Overview of Draft Recommendations (cont'd)

7. Establish clear vision for bullying prevention & intervention as well as positive school climate work, develop core organizational values & incorporate safe schools outcome targets
 8. Review leadership development strategy; incorporate competencies that enable a whole child, student-centred environment
 9. Strengthen & build upon community partnerships; leverage community resources & expertise
 10. Seek commitment from Ministry of Education to provide school boards with supporting conditions that prioritize Safe & Accepting Schools
- Call to Action – thriving, civic citizens through a whole child approach to education

What we heard

- Areas of low supervision are problematic
- Bullied students most often ignored it, walked away, or told a friend or parent/guardian
- Telling someone about bullying didn't necessarily make things better
- Feelings of isolation among students with specialized needs

Recommendation #1: Elevate student voice; create conditions for student agency, leadership & ownership

Action steps

- Regular, consistent & representative collection of student voice
- Incorporate student voice & bullying metrics in performance monitoring framework
- Involve students in co-creation, implementation & evaluation of activities & initiatives
- Student participation in school improvement teams

Recommendation #2: Review special education plan & reflect upon impact of self-contained programs on student belonging & inclusion

Action steps

- Review current research and best practices
- Review student achievement data
- Continue to review & refine special education plan to support research on inclusion

What we heard

- Inconsistent application of existing bullying policies & procedures particularly '*lack of action*' and '*poor follow through*'
- Lack of role clarity, transparency & accountability
- Poor communication; failure to share outcomes
- Lack of information about resources to support students & parents (i.e., mental health supports)

Recommendation #3: Improve communication with & meaningfully engage parents

Action steps

- Improve communication with parents
- Involve parents in co-creation, implementation & evaluation of solutions
- Utilize existing structures (i.e., school councils, Parent Involvement Committee) & provide a focus on school climate
- Align / embed work with Equity Action Plan

What we heard & learned

- Bullying is a significant problem in HWDSB schools that affects multiple demographic groups & identities in different ways
- Areas of low/no supervision are problematic
- Need clearer policies & guidelines
- Need practical training & knowledge
- Barriers: curriculum expectations, leadership skill set, competing priorities & inability to effectively utilize community-based expertise & resources
- Mixed uptake of evidence-based tools & resources

Recommendation #4: Equip schools for effective response

Action steps

- Board-wide framework & dedicated lead
- Adopt whole school approach; utilize PREVNet toolkit*
- Ongoing professional learning; set targets & evaluate
- Seek opportunities to embed social & emotional learning in classrooms
- Prioritize Positive Culture & Well-being in School Improvement Plans
- Explore alternative sources of additional adult supervision

Recommendation #5: Review existing bullying prevention & intervention policies & procedures

Action steps

- Establish review committee (wide representation)
- Employ lens of equity, anti-racism & anti-oppression
- Address all areas of concern especially reporting & responding policies & procedures
- Create formalized process for periodic review
- Align / embed work with Equity Action Plan

Recommendation #6: Address inconsistent adherence to existing policies, procedures & guidelines

Action steps

- Establish review committee
- Provide clarity on “mitigating” circumstances & privacy obligations
- Establish sense of personal accountability for all
- Senior leadership & union reps develop consistent messaging regarding staff roles & responsibilities
- Create formalized process for periodic review

Organization: HWDSB system-level

What we heard

- Missing clear & prominently stated vision for positive school climate work
- Core organizational values lacking
- Traditional management approaches
- Wide variation in practice & accountability
- Pockets of excellence & expertise to build upon

Organization: HWDSB system-level

Recommendation #7: Clear vision, values & targets

Action steps

- Develop vision statement to guide bullying prevention & intervention as well as positive school climate work
- Establish core organizational values
- Incorporate safe schools outcome target(s) in Board Annual Plan & performance monitoring framework
- Adopt continuous quality improvement approach & processes throughout
- Include students in these processes

Organization: HWDSB system-level

Recommendation #8: Review leadership strategy

Action steps

- Identify & build upon current leadership best practice (i.e., professional learning communities)
- Incorporate leadership competencies that enable whole child, student-centred environment
- Reinforce vision, values & culture shift
- Set targets, monitor, evaluate & refine
- Recognize & celebrate great work

Hamilton Community

What we heard

- Education ecosystem extends beyond schools
- Community partners have valuable expertise & assets in areas of shared interest
- Consider a broader range of partnering opportunities
- Effective community relationships & partnership take time & resources as well as clear expectations

Hamilton Community

Recommendation #9: Build on new & existing community partnerships; leverage community resources & expertise

Action steps

- Utilize existing structures & provide school climate focus
- Create Steering Committee (system-level) to address barriers
- Strengthen & leverage community partnerships at school-level to enhance prevention & intervention initiatives
- Engage in opportunities to co-create & collaboratively implement system & school-level solutions

Ministry of Education

What we heard

- Effective positive school climate work requires dedicated time & resources
- Ontario Curriculum expectations can hamper educator ability to engage in positive school climate work & embed social & emotional learning in classroom
- Ministry of Education has a role to play in addressing direct supervision issue

Ministry of Education

Recommendation #10: Seek commitment from Ministry of Education to provide school boards with supporting conditions that prioritize Safe & Accepting schools

Action steps

- Centralized, sustained funding & deliverables including dedicated safe schools lead
- Centralized, sustained bullying expertise & supports (i.e., guidance documents, standardized tools, etc.)
- Update learning curriculum to support whole child approach to learning
- Review supervision maximums for teachers

Call to Action

- Canadian children are facing significant challenges
- New moral imperative for education wherein learners are supported in becoming good at learning & good at life
- Whole child approach to education
- Prioritize child & youth overall well-being
- Everyone has a role to play locally & beyond

Effective bullying prevention & intervention requires action at all levels

Students:

Elevate voice, agency, leadership & ownership.

Parents:

Improve communication & meaningfully engage.

Schools & Staff:

Equip with tools & resources for effective bullying prevention & intervention.

HWDSB:

Create conditions for positive school climate.

Hamilton Community:

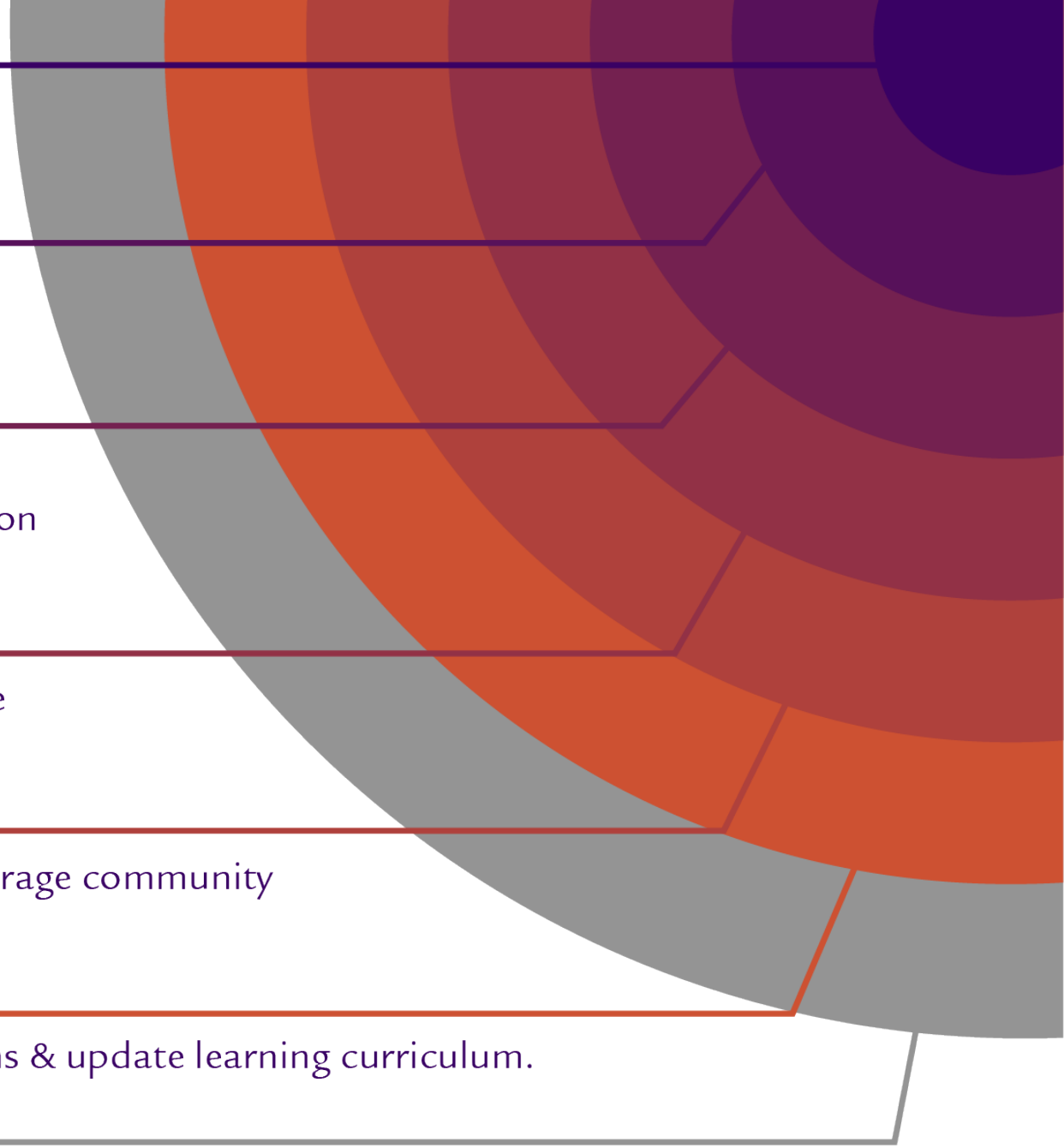
Strengthen partnerships; leverage community resources & expertise.

Ministry of Education:

Provide supporting conditions & update learning curriculum.

A Call to Action:

Prioritize child & youth well-being; adopt whole child approach to education.



Foundation-Setting for Sustained Change

- Long-term plan & sustained commitment
- Co-creation of solutions with all partners
- Communication (on-going, accessible, open)
- Aligned structures & clear accountabilities
- Align &/or embed with Equity Action Plan as appropriate
- Targets & outcome measures established at out-set
- Culture of continuous quality improvement

Next Steps

- Receive feedback on draft recommendations via community sessions, Thoughtexchange, Student Senate, etc.
- Incorporate feedback into recommendations
- Final report presented to Board of Trustees on Jan 25, 2021

Discussion Questions

- Which recommendation(s) strikes you as most significant or promising?
- What is missing? What did you expect or hope to see that is not reflected in the draft recommendations?
- What are your hopes and expectations for the review panel's final report?

Feedback

Thoughtexchange: We are using Thoughtexchange to gather your feedback on the recommendations. Thoughtexchange is an online engagement tool that can crowdsource a community's answers in real time. This will allow you to communicate your thoughts to the Review Panel and weigh in on other people's thoughts at the same time so that the Review Panel knows what feedback ideas are most important to you.

<https://my.thoughtexchange.com/793141770> | Open until December 17, 4pm

Email the panel at safeschoolsreview@outlook.com

Thank you

Email: safeschoolsreview@outlook.com

Thoughtexchange: <https://my.thoughtexchange.com/793141770>