

### **AGENDA: 5:30-8:30 p.m.**

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Update – Remote Learning
4. Safe Schools Action Plan 2021-2023
5. Student Learning & Achievement: Graduation (no copy)
6. Adjournment



## EXECUTIVE REPORT TO PROGRAM COMMITTEE

**TO:** PROGRAM COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Manny Figueiredo, Director of Education

**DATE:** Tuesday, April 6, 2021

**PREPARED BY:** Peter Sovran, Associate Director, Learning Services  
Bill Torrens, Superintendent of Student Achievement, Program  
Simon Goodacre, Coordinating Principal, Remote Learning

**RE:** 21st Century Learning Update: Remote Learning

### Action

### Monitoring X

#### Background

The following report provides an update on remote learning at the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB). Remote learning demonstrates the importance of building the modern learning environments envisioned in the [HWDSB 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Strategy](#). It requires staff and students to acquire and use digital skills to teach and learn in a virtual learning space using digital tools and platforms. It also requires a different approach to learning resources such as devices, digital texts, and applications (“apps”).

The report is organized into three sections:

- 1) 2020-21 Remote Learning Update
- 2) Learning from Remote Learning in 2020-21
- 3) Planning for 2021-22

#### 2020-21 Remote Learning Update

##### Preparations July-August 2020

The HWDSB developed its remote learning programs in response to the Ministry of Education direction. In July 2020, school boards were instructed to prepare for learning in three scenarios (A-Conventional Learning, B-Adaptive Learning, and C-Remote Learning). The conventional learning scenario featured students learning in-person at their home schools with enhanced public health measures such as physical distancing and masking. The adaptive model also requires enhanced public health measures because students both attend their school in-person and remotely at home. In the remote learning scenario, students learn at home using the board standard digital learning platforms. The conventional and adaptive models require students to attend in-person learning for all or part of the school day. Remote learning, however, requires a separate learning structure. For secondary schools, the existing eLearning structure has been utilized while a new structure was created for elementary schools, the Elementary Remote Learning Program (Elementary Remote Learning).

A series of key decisions made prior to July 2020 supported staff in their preparations for remote learning. One key decision was to continue the HWDSB device deployment model. The on-going commitment to provisioning 1:1 devices to secondary students provided the devices needed to access the adaptive or remote learning environments. The board provisioned device kits in elementary schools provided a significant supply of devices available for student use. Another key decision was to use a hybrid combination of The HUB (D2L Brightspace) and MS Teams as the board’s standard blended and remote learning platforms. These platforms are connected to the board’s student information system (PowerSchool) and each HWDSB teacher with a classroom assignment is provisioned with both a HUB and a MS Teams virtual classroom. This decision enabled staff to focus professional learning and training on these two platforms and use these tools as professional learning platforms. It also meant

that students only needed to be familiar with these two platforms to access learning remotely. A third decision was to support implementation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Strategy. The strategy provides a conceptual framework regarding creating modern learning environments through which to implement both adaptive and remote learning. It identifies the key components of a modern learning environment and the digital skills and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies that staff and students require to be successful in remote learning.

Preparations for Elementary Remote Learning began in early August. Staffing the new program was a priority. To determine staffing needs, a parent survey was created to determine the number of students who would learn remotely rather than in-person. By end of August, approximately 6300 students were slated to attend the Elementary Remote Learning. This shift in student enrolment required a sizeable re-organization of student and teacher assigned classes prior to the start of the school year. An administrative team of three principals were assigned to lead the program with support from four office administrators. Later, additional vice-principals, a coordinating principal, and additional office administrator support was added as student enrolment continued to rise.

Deploying learning resources was another key aspect of preparing for Elementary Remote Learning. Staff procured a number of digital learning resources to support Elementary Remote Learning. Devices (iPads) were deployed to staff and students requiring a device. Links to teaching and learning resources were curated at [Elementary Learning Resources | Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board \(hwdsb.on.ca\)](https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/elementary/learning-resources/); and a team developed the *Program Guide to School Re-Opening* which provided guidance to in-person and remote teaching strategies. Staff also began to acquire digital resources for Language and Mathematics programming.

In secondary schools, Student Services staff supported students in changing timetables to add eLearning courses. By the start of the first semester, more than 100 students had a fully remote timetable of all eLearning courses and approximately 1600 students had at least one eLearning course. These students all had access to a device through the 1:1 device deployment strategy. As well, eLearning teachers were provided a device (laptop) as a teaching tool.

Finally, remote learning educators in both the elementary and secondary school panels were provided professional learning opportunities. Elementary Remote Learning teachers had access to self-directed learning on using The HUB and MS Teams prior to the three days of orientation and support provided in the first week of September by the Program Division. eLearning staff also had access to the on-demand learning prior to their orientation sessions during the first week of school.

#### School Start-Up September 2020

Prior to the first day of class on September 16, Elementary Remote Learning grew to approximately 8600 students due to increased parental interest in having their children learn remotely. An additional 90 staff were hired, trained, and assigned to classrooms to bring the total number of homerooms to over 330. Device deployment to staff and students was on-going throughout September and into the fall. Professional learning was also on-going as new staff was on-boarded and existing staff required support. Staff also continued to acquire and provide learning resources for staff use such as the digital Developmental Reading Assessment tool, SMASH Education resources for French Immersion classes, Levelled Literacy Intervention, and the D2L grade one to eight math program for The HUB.

#### The First Elementary Transition and Re-Organization

The first of three transition opportunities occurred in November 2020. Parent and guardians used the Parent Portal in October to indicate a preference to move their child(ren) to remote from in-person or move back to in-person learning from remote. 1300 students moved during this transition with 800 students moving to remote and 500 students moving to in-person learning. Alongside of this transition was a re-organization of staff and students in both in-person and Elementary Remote Learning. Elementary Remote Learning grew to 360 classrooms as result of the transition. New staff received professional learning prior to starting teaching and had on-going support

thereafter. Staff deployed devices to new students requiring a device (students with a device who left program were required to return that device). Some parents of students who had been in Elementary Remote Learning since September voiced concerns with the disruption of programming due to a change in teacher or the addition of new students in the class.

Parents and guardians were made aware through the transition process that requests would only be fulfilled if there was available space. All requests were met in the November transition. In addition, staff created a process to address requests made outside of this transition period on a case-by-case basis, based on extraordinary circumstances.

#### Board-wide Remote Learning January-February 2021

As directed by the Minister of Education, all HWDSB schools moved to remote learning on January 4, 2021 and remained in that scenario until February 8, 2021. Students requiring significant special education supports/services continued to be provided the opportunity to attend school in-person with enhanced public measures. Elementary Remote Learning continued to operate as usual. Educators assigned to in-person learning transitioned to teaching via The HUB and MS Teams seamlessly as virtual classrooms had been provisioned earlier in the school year. Staff deployed more than 7000 devices to elementary students during the week of January 4, 2021 for remote learning. Where students had challenges in connecting to the classroom, prepared lesson packages were shared via email or available for pick-up at school.

Secondary schools pivoted to full remote learning and returned to 75-minute periods delivered remotely via The HUB and MS Teams. Students requiring significant special education supports/services continued to be provided the opportunity to attend school in-person with enhanced public measures. Students with eLearning courses continued as before January 4. The provisioning of 1:1 devices ensured that students had access to a device to learn remotely.

#### The Second Elementary Transition

A second elementary transition process occurred in February 2021. Over 1200 students transitioned in February with approximately an even number of students moving in either direction. Unlike the November transition, this process did not include a staff/student re-organization of class assignments. Instead, 4 additional teachers were added to Elementary Remote Learning and 7 teachers and 1 designated early childhood educator were added to in-person schools to meet all transition requests. Once again, students moving to in-person learning returned any board devices that were provided to them and students needing a device were provided with one.

#### The Third Elementary Transition

A third and final transition will occur on May 3 and 4. The transition request process in the Parent Portal is now complete. The initial data indicates that there are more than 1200 transition requests, with more than 1000 of those requests being for a return to the home school from Elementary Remote Learning. A follow-up survey has been sent to parents/guardians to better understand the reason(s) for transitioning at this point in the school year. Staff are determining physical space availability in each school as well as staffing needs to meet the current requests. Parents and guardians will be notified of the next steps during the week of April 26.

#### Current Elementary Remote Learning Program

Since the start of the school year, Elementary Remote Learning has operated on a daily schedule with bell times matching those of a physical school. Currently, approximately 9 000 students from kindergarten through grade eight attend Elementary Remote Learning. The program is led by three principals, supported by the equivalent of one vice-principal per grade. A system-assigned principal provides additional operational support. There are approximately 500 classroom staff assigned to the over 360 homeroom classes. The program is dual track with both a French Immersion and English programming stream, as well as two Mandarin language classes.

Educators teach through the board's standard digital learning platform (The HUB and MS Teams). All Ontario Curriculum areas are taught, assessed, and reported on, as in an in-person class. Educators are connected to their

students throughout their daily assigned teaching time. Being “connected” includes providing instruction to the whole class, small groups, or individual students, as well as being available to support students as they work independently or in groups on a task.

Without the ability to provide physical resources to students on a daily basis, learning resources in Elementary Remote Learning have needed to be digital. A wide variety of learning resources, in both French and English, have been provided to support teaching and learning remotely. To support early reading acquisition, digital levelled readers and reading assessment tools has been provided. In mathematics, all staff have access to a grade 1-8 mathematics program from D2L, the provider of the provincial virtual learning environment (The Hub at HWDSB). The Hamilton Public Library has made its resources available through the System Learning Commons. Other partners have provided virtual learning opportunities such as virtual excursions, virtual guest speakers, and virtual guest instructors.

More than 3900 Elementary Remote Learning students have been provided a board issued device (iPad). Approximately half of these devices have been with students since the spring 2020 school closure. Elementary Remote Learning distributed the other half throughout the 2020-2021 school year. More than 100 staff members received devices (iPad) as well. A process was also established for families to access technical support. Over 400 requests for support have been resolved since December 2020.

As shared in the [Student Learning and Achievement Plan 2021-22 and Report](#) (March, 2021), term one report card data indicates that achievement in Reading closely tracks the HWDSB average for students enrolled in Elementary Remote Learning. Mathematics achievement follows a similar pattern. Staff continues to work to learn more about student learning in both remote and in-person environments and it is worth noting that the report card information provides some encouraging evidence that most students continue to make progress.

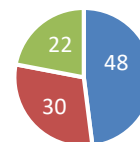
#### Elementary Parent/Guardian survey

Staff surveyed parents and guardians of current Elementary Remote Learning students in March 2021 to gauge interest in a “post-pandemic” remote learning program. More than 2500 parents/guardians replied and the results indicated that 48% of respondents would be interested in continuing to have their child(ren) attend a remote learning program for the following school year (see graph below for more details). Based on the response, staff project a potential enrolment of at least 1200 students in a remote learning program.

HWDSB Research and Analytics Division analysed the open response portion of the survey, where parents were invited to provide additional information, and identified eight themes:

1. Preference for in-school learning when the pandemic ends (348 comments);
2. Preference for remote learning due to child/family needs (228 comments);
3. Preference for in-school learning due to child/family needs (201 comments);
4. Concerns about remote learning quality and inclusivity (102 comments);
5. Preference for a hybrid model (75 comments);
6. Concerns about health and well-being (14 comments);
7. Miscellaneous Comments (10 comments);
8. Busing concerns (4 comments).

**Parent Responses to the question:**  
*"In September, if the Ministry allows us to return to fully in-person learning, would you still consider having your child or children attend the Remote School if that option is available?"*



- Would consider remote
- Would not consider remote
- Unsure

The parent survey indicates that many parents/guardians would choose a remote option in 2021-22 due to health and safety concerns. Other parents/guardians feel that their child(ren) have done well in remote learning and would be glad to continue. However, the majority of parents/guardians would prefer to have their child(ren)

return to learning in person, if possible. The open responses also provide staff with feedback on the effectiveness of the current program, some of which will be acted upon immediately, and some of which could inform program planning for 2021-22. See Appendix A for an analysis of the themes from the survey.

### **Learning from the Experience of Remote Learning August 2020-April 2021**

Throughout the school year, staff continually gathers information from a variety of sources (student learning data, parent voice, staff voice, student voice) and uses that information to make programming and operational adjustments intended to improve the remote learning experience for students and staff.

Staff learning from the current remote learning program can be summarized through the themes of connection and consistency. Connection relates to staff and student well-being, as well as to student learning. Being connected to a teacher and to peers is essential to student well-being in remote learning. Students need to feel safe, included, and welcome in the remote classroom through a connection to both the educators and fellow students in the classroom. Students need opportunities to interact with peers on-line to reduce the isolation of learning at home. These interactions should not be limited to class activities but should include time to interact over chat or video. Building community within the classroom is an important part of a teacher's role. Therefore, educators have been provided professional learning and encouragement to provide small group instruction and to enable students to work in groups to build connection and well-being. This social connection is important in the remote learning classroom where students may not engage in some of the casual social interactions that occur within the in-person school setting.

In addition, it is vital that educators feel connected to their colleagues. Teaching is a social profession that relies heavily on cooperation and collaboration. While many teachers spend most of their teaching time working individually, they are typically a part of at least one formal team, as well as informal networks. Sharing ideas and resources informally with peers happens continuously in a physical school. At the start of the school year, these teams and networks did not exist, and any informal collaboration occurred within an Elementary Remote Learning Team chat of more than 300 educators. Over the course of the fall and early winter, the Elementary Remote Learning principals and vice-principals started to create small learning teams in each grade to foster connection and professional collaboration. This process has proved to be successful with educators collaborating and connecting formally and informally.

Connection, in a practical sense, is essential to effective instruction and student learning in a remote setting. Effective instruction in remote learning parallels effective instruction in the physical classroom. The learning goals of a lesson need to be explained explicitly through direct instruction to introduce new skills and knowledge. Students need time to acquire new knowledge and practice new skills, supported by feedback from peers and their teacher. Learning can be differentiated, and small group instruction provided in a remote setting. Educators also need to be available to support student questions via chat or video. Elementary Remote Learning staff have multiple professional learning opportunities available to them, including drop-in support, self-directed courses, and specific learning sessions on effective teaching and assessment.

The theme of consistency reflects the importance of using standard tools, standard processes, and embedding effective practices across all Elementary Remote Learning classrooms. Using The HUB and MS teams as a standard learning platform has supported the development of remote learning. Students and staff now have two platforms to learn how to use rather than several. Staff has developed an understanding of effective "workflows" for students to access tasks, connect with their teachers, and demonstrate their learning. These workflows will be shared widely in future professional learning sessions. Similarly, effective lesson structures will be standardized and shared with educators to create consistency of experience for students.

### **Planning for 2021-22**

Pending confirmation from the Ministry of Education, it is anticipated that like 2020-21, three programming scenarios will be expected to be offered for the 2021-22 school year: conventional, adaptive, and remote. At secondary, eLearning will continue to be the HWDSB remote learning program. Course selection data for 2021-22

indicates an increasing number of students choosing some or all of their courses as eLearning. At this time, it is projected that more than 3000 students will take one of more than 160 eLearning courses (an increase of more than 60 courses over one year).

Preparations for providing remote learning to elementary school students include seeking parent interest, staffing, resourcing, and developing programming. The experience of 2020-21 indicates that the earlier preparations for elementary remote learning begin, the better prepared staff and students will be for the school year.

#### Proposed 2021-22 Elementary Remote Learning Program

A remote learning program for the 2021-2022 school year would be built on the experiences and learning from 2020-21. The program would be integrated into HWDSB schools in a dual-track model rather than being its own separate model. It would resemble the existing dual-track French Immersion schools model, but with the tracks being remote and in-person rather than French and English. Placement of remote classrooms would be determined by space in schools created by demand for remote learning. The remote learning teachers would be members of the school staff, responsible to the school principal. Student supports, such as English as a second language and learning resource, would be provided by the school, reducing the need for additional principal and vice-principals dedicated to remote learning. This structure would also allow for the return for all students to in-person learning when the pandemic is over.

Remote learning program staff would be provided with a standard device, digital learning resources, and a structured professional learning program designed to implement the effective practices identified this year.

The programming would reflect the importance of connection and consistency. Building community and relationships would be an on-going priority for educators. Educators would remain connected to their class through their daily schedule and provide whole group, small group, and individual instruction. Educators would also be encouraged to innovate and experiment with new instructional strategies and workflows.

The program would be resourced centrally prior to the school year with responsibility moving to the schools at the start of the school year. To ensure equity of access, the remote learning program would blend a “bring your own device” (BYOD) model with a board provisioned model where students requiring a device will receive a board device (iPad). The current supply of devices is sufficient to meet the demand of an elementary remote learning program for 1200 students. Other digital and physical learning resources would be provided centrally with school-based resources available as a supplement. See below for more information on the provisioning of devices in 2021-22.

The proposed elementary remote learning model responds to concerns expressed by parents and guardians such as not having a physical school to contact when an issue arises or the potential loss of connection with peers that attend an in-person. Students would be placed in their home school, or a nearby school, and would have the opportunity to participate in school events like educational excursions if public health measures permit.

For educators, the new model would provide a physical home school, daily access to their colleagues, principal and vice-principal, as well as access to the school’s learning resources. Staff would be a member of the school community. In addition, the proposed model would streamline several logistical and operational items such as access to support from English as a second language or learning resource teachers and access to a student’s Ontario Student Record. It would also enable the distribution of physical resources such as learning materials, which has been challenging within the current model.

Staff would monitor the implementation of remote learning through the dual-track model and provide updates through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning report.

#### Potential Timelines

Timelines	Next Steps
<b>April-May 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Communication and Registration</li> <li>• Program staffing and resourcing</li> </ul>
<b>June 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation of staffing and resourcing</li> <li>• Staff Professional Development</li> <li>• Class building</li> </ul>
<b>July-August 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer Learning Institute for staff to prepare for remote learning</li> <li>• Distribution of any needed student devices</li> </ul>
<b>September 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program is ready to start on regular school calendar</li> <li>• End of September Re-organization/Transitions</li> </ul>
<b>January 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential Mid-year transition (to be determined)</li> </ul>

### Device Deployment

To start 2021-22, the HWDSB will take the approach to deploying student devices outlined in the [February 20th, 2020, 21st Century Learning Update](#). As noted in the report, “Equity is foundational to the HWDSB’s current digital device strategy. The current deployment model of device kits in elementary schools and 1:1 devices in secondary schools places digital devices in the hands of students daily and removes barriers to accessing digital tools...” To that end, devices will be offered to all secondary students (1:1) and elementary schools will have device kits. However, Secondary students will be able to decline or return their 1:1 iPads if they are not needed. The iPad will be the board standard device for 2021-22.

Staff also plans to collect and analyze, as noted in the February 2020 report, “usage data, staff and student voice, and other data sets” as part of the Learning Resources Review. The goal of the review is to recommend a device deployment approach that aligns with the 21st Century Learning Strategy. Considerations within the review will include:

- How might devices be provisioned to make classrooms modern learning environments?
- How might students be provisioned with devices in a modern learning environment?
- What should be the board standard devices for students, based on grade, program, and the need to learn in virtual learning environments?
- How might other student information influence the provisioning of devices?

The next 21st Century Learning Report (June, 2021) will provide an update on board standard devices for students and initial recommendations of the Learning Resources Review.

In 2021-22, the HWDSB will provision devices to teaching staff. A board standard device has been identified, after consultation with educators and system staff, and, using the Federal Safe Return to Class Fund and Expanded Targeted Testing in Schools funding provided in February 2021, devices have been purchased for teaching staff. The board standard device is a Wi-Fi enabled laptop with the processing speed and memory needed to use The HUB and MS Teams effectively, as well as to complete tasks such as attendance, email, and preparing report cards. Educators will continue to have access to iPads for pedagogical tasks better suited to a tablet.



## **Appendix A: Elementary Remote Learning in the Future Analysis of Survey Comments March 2021**



Remote Learning in the Future  
Analysis of Survey Comments  
March 2021

In a March 2021 survey, parents/guardians were asked if they would consider a remote learning option after the Ministry permits all schools to return to in-person learning. Of the 2502 respondents, 982 left a comment from which eight themes emerged. A summary of the themes is as follows.

### **1. Preference for in-school learning when the pandemic ends (348)**

348 responses indicated that parents were keen to send their child(ren) back to school but that this would depend on the following (in no particular order):

- The number of Covid-19 cases in Ontario before September.
- Whether the majority of the population would be vaccinated.
- What happens with the Covid-19 variants and community transmission.
- Whether children would also get the vaccine.
- Whether children would still be required to wear masks.
- Whether schools have improved the school environment (outdoor playing with/without masks, ventilation, windows, class sizes, testing, better washrooms, etc.).
- How their child feels about going back to school.
- Whether busses would be available.
- Whether issues with technology and connectivity can be resolved.
- Chances of further interruptions to in-person learning.
- Work arrangements.

Some parents said they were unsure at this stage whether their child would go back to school and would look at information available closer to school restarting in September. Others said they would have to consult with vulnerable family members first (i.e. the elderly and medically vulnerable).

### **2. Preference for remote learning due to child/family needs (228)**

228 responses indicated that parents prefer remote learning because:

- It is the safest option given the current Covid-19 situation and vulnerable family members.
- It is the safest option given their child's health issues (i.e. being prone to colds, flu, asthma, and chronic illness).
- Their child has been learning and progressing well as shown by improved grades and motivation.
- Their child is learning life skills (i.e. cooking, repairs, maintain residence, sign language, etc.).
- It meets their child's needs (i.e. ADHD, Autism, hearing, verbal, reading and physical difficulties) better than in-person learning.
- It allows children with learning difficulties to transition slowly into in-person learning.
- Online teaching has been engaging, fun, responsive, and appropriately challenging.
- There is no more bullying/exasperation of existing mental health difficulties (i.e. anxiety).

- There are no classroom/peer distractions.
- It has allowed their shy/introverted child to make friends.
- It is the best of homeschooling and in-person learning.
- It has improved the quality of family life (i.e. more time together, more parent involvement, no more schooling/work transport/logistical issues).

### **3. Preference for in-school learning due to child/family needs (201)**

201 responses indicated that parents prefer in-person learning because:

- Their child is missing teachers and peers during remote learning.
- Remote learning has led their child to struggle with being social and wanting to go outside.
- They are concerned about the amount of time their child is spending seated using technology.
- They feel it is important for children to learn how to interact with peers, how to organize and manage themselves, and how to get on with others.
- Being in school is a daily necessary relief for children who have difficult home situations.
- Parent-school communication is better during in-person than remote learning.
- Their child is struggling to focus/engage during remote learning.
- The quality of in-person teaching and learning is better than online teaching and learning.
- Remote learning does not work for their family due to parent work commitments

### **4. Concerns about remote learning quality and inclusivity (102)**

102 comments indicated that some parents perceive remote learning to be problematic because:

- Remote learning is not a tried and tested learning method and therefore shouldn't be a permanent solution.
- There are too many teacher changes which unsettle children.
- Some teachers are not experienced with online teaching and learning tools.
- Teachers are not attending teaching time requirements (i.e. multiple days without a teacher/teachers assigning tasks and logging off).
- The quality of teaching and learning online is hit and miss (i.e. Teachers use YouTube/videos too often, Study hall is not a lesson).
- One lesson in the morning can't be considered remote learning.
- Difficulty in communicating with teachers (i.e. no responses to emails and requests for support).
- Difficulties in accessing work and information on learning platforms because there isn't a standardized location/way in which teachers are uploading documents/instructions.
- Confusion over how their child is performing in relation to national standards.
- Confusion about when report cards will be received.

- Children are not required to have their cameras on and therefore aren't held accountable for being present and engaging.
- Children performed poorly in remote learning and are now on a waiting list to go back to in-person learning.
- There needs to be better task and time management in remote learning.
- Lack of French Immersion online.
- IEPs requirements aren't met and there is no EA/specialized staff support.
- There is no adequate planning or structure for special needs children learning online.
- HWDSB provided technology (i.e. iPad) has poor connectivity and battery life.
- Not all families have the technology needed for remote learning.
- Too many issues with student log-ins and wrongly marking children absent or late.
- Online learning requires so much parent involvement that it is impossible to work from home.
- There are very limited subjects to learn in remote school.
- Some parents hired private tutors to ensure their child is progressing well but were also concerned that other parents may not have resources to do the same.

## **5. Preference for a hybrid model (75)**

There were 75 comments from respondents suggesting a preference for a blended/hybrid learning:

- Students/families should be able to choose what works for them according to their learning styles, needs, work, family situation, etc.
- Online is working but children need opportunities for hands-on learning.
- Possible option: Two days remote learning, three days in school.
- It would be ideal to have remote learning with in-person learning for trips and activities.
- It is a great option for students who struggle with physical or mental health.
- Prepares students for life as an adult where they will be required to do some learning online.

## **6. Concerns about health and well-being (14)**

Some parents had concerns about children's physical and mental health:

- There's too much sitting down and screen time in remote learning, causing decreased physical activity, eye strain, and headaches.
- There's too much social isolation with remote learning which is causing mental health issues.
- Some children are developing fears about being in school and being social after long periods of remote learning.
- There is not enough monitoring and enforcement of Covid-19 protocols in schools.

- The constant scrutiny and enforcements of Covid-19 protocols in schools is causing children anxiety and distress (constantly being reminded to keep their mask on, to stay away from other children, etc.).
- Lack of clarity around what parents need to do if a child is ill but doesn't have Covid-19.
- Concerns about stigma every time a child gets a runny nose.

**7. Other comments (10)**

- Teachers should be aware of children's IEPs.
- Financial support, technology, and supplies to families who can't afford remote learning would be much appreciated.
- Parents are stressed and confused about what to do in September 2021 and what their options are.
- Parents would like data that compares how children are progressing remotely and in-person in relation to provincial standards.
- Parents would like information on what health and safety and structural changes have taken place in schools to ensure children are safe from Covid-19.

**8. Bussing concerns (4)**

- Children are missing morning classes because no busses are available/busses are late.
- Suspension of courtesy bussing has led some children to be forced into remote learning.
- Reinstate the bus service that was cancelled due to Covid-19.



## EXECUTIVE REPORT TO PROGRAM COMMITTEE

**TO:** PROGRAM COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Manny Figueiredo, Director of Education

**DATE:** April 6, 2021

**PREPARED BY:** Sharon Stephanian, Superintendent on Special Assignment

**RE:** Safe Schools Action Plan 2021 – 2023 (part of the Positive Culture & Well-Being Priority)

### Action

### Monitoring X

#### Background:

Following the tragic death of Devan Bracci-Selvey, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) trustees created the *Safe Schools: Bullying Prevention and Intervention Review Panel*. The Panel's purpose was to gather qualitative and quantitative community feedback, summarize research and create recommendations for HWDSB, the Hamilton community and government to address bullying. The Panel's comprehensive report ([\*Building Healthy Relationships and an Inclusive, Caring Learning Environment\*](#)) was shared with Trustees on January 25, 2021.

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is committed to responding to the voices of students, parents/guardians/caregivers, staff and community as shared within that report. This means:

- a relentless focus on building positive and inclusive cultures in all classrooms and schools – a place where everyone belongs, everyone is safe and everyone achieves;
- creating learning environments where student identity and voice are centered – students' lived experiences are honoured and an essential part of learning;
- relationships are positive, supportive, caring and kind;
- creating structures to gather, listen and respond to student voice – student voice must inform school and board plans;
- safety is paramount and incidents of bullying are addressed with active involvement of students and families – this includes the student who experiences bullying, the student who displays bullying behavior and the student who witnesses bullying.

We will do this by:

- being transparent with students, parents/guardians/caregivers, staff and community – Implementation Plans, Outcomes Measures and Timelines related to the *Safe Schools Action Plan*, will be shared and updated regularly;
- creating structures to ensure student, parent/guardian/caregiver, staff and community voice inform school and board plans and that these plans are publicly shared and reported on;
- improved engagement with attention to working with those impacted by decisions;
- building relationships and trust through our actions – listening and responding and
- being accountable at the school and system-level for improvement in student safety and well-being.

The attached *Safe Schools Action Plan* provides an overview of the implementation timelines of the recommendations and actions essential to transform the cultures within our schools. Next steps include the development of:

- *Implementation Plan(s)* for each Recommendation;
- *Communications and Engagement Strategy* – structures which will be established to support involvement of students, parents/guardians/caregivers, staff and community throughout the implementation process;
- *Transparency and Accountability Strategy* – processes and structures to ensure the work is transparent and staff are accountable for progress and outcomes and
- *Monitoring and Measuring Strategy* – clarity of anticipated outcomes and how we will measure improvement in school culture.

An update will be provided to Trustees in September, 2021.



## HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

## SAFE SCHOOLS ACTION PLAN 2021 - 2023

**MISSION**

We empower students to learn and grow to their full potential in a diverse world.

**COMMITMENT**

We are committed to learning, equity, engagement and innovation.

**OVERVIEW**

Following the tragic death of Devan Bracci-Selvey, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) trustees created the *Safe Schools: Bullying Prevention and Intervention Review Panel*. The Panel's purpose was to gather qualitative and quantitative community feedback, summarize research and create recommendations for HWDSB, the Hamilton community and government to address bullying. The Panel's comprehensive report ([\*Building Healthy Relationships and an Inclusive, Caring Learning Environment\*](#)) was shared with Trustees on January 25, 2021.

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is committed to responding to the voices of students, parents/guardians/caregivers, staff and community as shared within that report. This means:

- a relentless focus on building positive and inclusive cultures in all classrooms and schools – a place where everyone belongs, everyone is safe and everyone achieves;
- creating learning environments where student identity and voice are centered – students' lived experiences are honoured and an essential part of learning;
- relationships are positive, supportive, caring and kind;
- creating structures to gather, listen and respond to student voice – student voice must inform school and board plans;
- safety is paramount and incidents of bullying are addressed with active involvement of students and families – this includes the student who experiences bullying, the student who displays bullying behavior and the student who witnesses bullying.

We will do this by:

- being transparent with students, parents/guardians/caregivers, staff and community – Implementation Plans, Outcomes Measures and Timelines related to the *Safe Schools Action Plan*, will be shared and updated regularly;
- creating structures to ensure student, parent/guardian/caregiver, staff and community voice inform school and board plans and that these plans are publicly shared and reported on;
- improved engagement with attention to working with those impacted by decisions;
- building relationships and trust through our actions – listening and responding and
- being accountable at the school and system-level for improvement in student safety and well-being.

The *Recommendations* and *Action Steps* within the Panel's Report align with the *Positive Culture and Well-Being* (We will build student and staff well-being through positive climate strategies and supportive relationships) focus in the Board Annual Plan.

## HWDSB 2021 – 2022 Board Annual Plan

**Goal:** Improve the well-being of all students and staff and close the gap for those historically underserved.

**Target:** At least 80 per cent of students and staff who self-identify as Black, Indigenous, Racialized, Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+, and people requiring special education supports/services self-report feeling safe, supported, accepted and affirmed in their diverse and distinct identities.

### STRATEGIES:

#### *Investing in People:*

1. Provide differentiated professional learning on **culturally relevant and responsive** pedagogy, **Indigenous Cultural Safety** and Learn. Disrupt. Rebuild @HWDSB with a **focus on relationships and conditions** impacting learners who are historically underserved.
2. Provide differentiated professional learning to system leaders on human rights, systems of **oppression, privilege, and anti-racism** and implications within the learning and working environments.

#### *Leveraging Effective Practices:*

1. Implement differentiated strategies to provide targeted and enhanced support to **Black, Indigenous, Racialized and Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ students and students requiring special education supports and/or services**.
2. Implement **Emotion Coaching** (i.e. Validation), to enhance **student-staff relationships** (i.e. caring adult).
3. Implement **Employment Equity Action Plan**.

#### *Refining Measures of Progress:*

1. Develop and implement the tools required to collect student identity-based data as part of the **Student Census**, and updated annually.
2. **Develop and implement a Safe Schools Action Plan to respond to the recommendations from the Safe Schools: Bullying Prevention and Intervention Review Panel.**

The *Building Health Relationships and an Inclusive, Caring Learning Environment Report* identifies 11 broad recommendations based on advice from experts and findings from the community consultation and survey. Each recommendation has a number of recommended action steps which provide the basis for the **Safe Schools Action Plan**.

### Students

Recommendation #1: Increase Student ownership and seek out and listen to student perspectives

### Parents/Guardians/Caregivers

Recommendation #2: Involve parents, guardians and caregivers in bullying prevention and response in meaningful ways.

### Schools

Recommendation #3: Develop multi-tiered supports and programming

Recommendation #4: Support schools so they can establish their own bullying prevention and intervention plans

Recommendation #5: Examine special education practices from a student-centred learning perspective

Recommendation #6: Review policies and procedures from equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression perspectives

Recommendation #7: Ensure policies and procedures are followed consistently



## HWDSB Organization – System Level

Recommendation #8: Set the foundation for a culture of learning

Recommendation #9: Strengthen the leadership skills needed for culture change

### Hamilton Community

Recommendation #10: Work with a wide range of community partners

### Ministry of Education

Recommendation #11: Ask the Ministry of Education for support

## TIMELINES

**Phase 1**    **March, 2021 to August, 2021**

**Phase 2**    **September, 2021 to August, 2022**

**Phase 3**    **September, 2022 to August, 2023**

**Note: Action Steps highlighted in yellow were identified in the Report as Immediate Actions**

<b>STUDENTS – Action Steps</b>
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## ALL PHASES

- 1.1 Involve students in the co-creation, implementation and evaluation of all HWDSB bullying prevention and intervention activities and initiatives at the school-level and system level, including reviewing and updating related policies and procedures. (Phase 1 – Student Voice Structure(s) established)
- 1.11 Students to play a central role in developing and implementing all of the review panel's recommended action steps. (Phase 1 – Student Voice Structure(s) established)

## PHASE ONE AND TWO

- 1.9 When engaging students, consider and include the perspectives and experiences of the student experiencing bullying, the student with bullying behaviours and the student who witnesses. Important given the HWDSB Safe School Survey findings that indicate bullying tends to happen among groups of students who are involved in all three roles and who struggle with the same developmental, safety and relationship issues.

- 1.10 Ensure action steps are aligned with and included in the Equity Action Plan as well as other appropriate student well-being initiatives, such as Mental Health Strategy and Indigenous Education and Indigenous Cultural Safety.

## PHASE TWO

- 1.2 Build on HWDSBs current expertise with student voice initiatives by establishing regular and consistent mechanisms for capturing student voices on the subjects of bullying and school climate. Both school and system levels and use a range of accessible and interactive methods, with School Climate Survey being only one example.
- 1.3 Ensure student voices are sought out and incorporated into the school's response to incidents of bullying. This includes asking student victims to identify what solutions they want to see put into place.
- 1.5 Share student voice data with full school community, including parents, guardians, caregivers and community partners. In keeping with the principles put forth in the Culturally Responsible and Relevant Pedagogy framework, demonstrate how student voices are used to inform school improvement processes and plans using clear, relatable examples. Co-develop these strategies with students and potentially with community partners.

- 1.7 Have students from Grades 4-12 participate as leaders on existing school improvement teams. With input from students, reflect upon the process, including criteria, for selecting student reps to ensure a range of identities are offered the opportunity to participate, especially those whose cultural, racial, faith, sexual, gender, ability or other identity is outside of the dominant socio - cultural norms. Clearly outline student roles and contributions as well as the mechanisms that will be put into place. Collect age-appropriate data from younger children, for example, by asking them how they feel in school. (ensure data can be disaggregated)

### **PHASE TWO AND THREE**

- 1.4 Include student voice and student-centred bullying metrics, such as bullying prevalence, descriptors of students who are being bullied, school belonging, and caring adult, in HWDSB's performance monitoring framework.
- 1.6 Within the context of a whole-school approach, develop interactive resources that provide students with concrete examples and scripts for being an ally or bullying upstander. Develop these with students. For examples, see WITS Program's Bystander Quiz and PREVNet's What Kids Need to Know resources.
- 1.8 Ensure all student-led activities and processes are implemented with appropriate adult allyship. Provide training in the importance of adult support and what constitutes an effective adult ally to educators, other school staff and school volunteers such as volunteer coaches.

## **PARENTS, GUARDIANS and CAREGIVERS – Action Steps**

### **PHASE ONE AND TWO**

- 2.1 Share available educational resources on bullying with all parents, guardians and caregivers, including information on the types of bullying (including cyberbullying); the difference between bullying, aggression and teasing; impact of bullying; specific examples of how to respond to bullying; and what they can do if their child bullies. Suggested resources: PREVNet, WITS, and Fourth R. websites.
- 2.2 Share new and emerging educational resources on cyberbullying with parents, guardians and caregivers as they become available over the coming months.

### **PHASE TWO**

- 2.3 Involve parents, guardians and caregivers in the co-creation, implementation and evaluation of bullying prevention and intervention activities and initiatives as outlined under Recommendation #3 and #4.

### **PHASE TWO AND THREE**

- 2.4 Establish ongoing, representative and accessible mechanisms for seeking parent input and feedback on bullying prevention and intervention initiatives and activities at both the school and system levels. Should include seeking feedback on bullying reporting and response processes from parents, guardians and caregivers, including those whose children have been involved in bullying in any role.

### **PHASE THREE**

- 2.5 Expand the ways parents, guardians and caregivers can get involved within HWDSB (such as school councils, PIC and Indigenous Education Councils) to participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of school climate initiatives and strengthen school-parent communication

## **HWDSB SCHOOLS – Action Steps**

### **ALL PHASES**

- 4.1 Ensure that school improvement plans prioritize positive culture and well-being and contain a feasible number of goals with clear measurable targets, for example a maximum of two goals with one already included in the board's Annual Plan.
- 4.3 Each school, including fully remote learning programs, should establish its own bullying prevention and intervention plan and be provided with the necessary resources and expertise to develop and implement a

whole-school approach. Direct more resources to schools with the greatest needs based primarily on a review of School Climate Survey results, particularly bullying prevalence, and principal reports. Key components of a whole-school approach include:

- (a) Capacity and resources at the school level. These should be sufficient to coordinate the safe school team as well as build new and strengthen existing school-level partnerships with local community groups, programs and service providers.
- 4.7 Establish consistent funding for ongoing board-wide professional learning opportunities for educators on bullying prevention and intervention. Examples include education and coaching to address complex peer interactions and challenging students; concrete, specific and effective strategies for early detection and intervention; forms of power abuse, whether by students, educators or parents, guardians and caregivers, and the forms of protection needed within classrooms and schools; and learning about educator roles and responsibilities for reporting bullying. Ensure the professional learning plan establishes and evaluates measurable outcomes. Use what is learned from past professional learning opportunities to select, develop and implement subsequent opportunities.
- 5.5 Identify ways to enhance supportive inclusion to mitigate the behaviour of some students with special education needs who have difficulty with self-regulation. Examples include developmental strategies, staffing levels and activities that foster students' empathy and support of peers.

## PHASE ONE

- 3.1 Establish a bullying prevention and intervention lead position at the board. Will lead system-level content and process efforts to create a culture of caring. Accountability shared with Exec Council.
- 3.2 Create Board-wide framework that establishes overarching expectations and procedures for a multi-tiered system of supports and programming including:
  - (e) Continue with existing practices that were identified as important and successful during the community consultations - including restorative approaches, TipOff, HWDSB Helps and We Help campaign.
- 3.3 Support students involved in bullying. Ensure selective and indicated supports, including mental health supports and other professional assistance, are made available to students who have been bullied or who have witnessed bullying. Ensure students who have engaged in bullying also receive appropriate supports. For example, continue to support the implementation and evaluation of the Nurturing Safer Schools: A Social Work Intervention pilot project in Grades 6 to 8. Expand the program's availability beyond the pilot sites if warranted by evaluation findings.
- 4.2 Immediately explore alternative sources of additional adult supervision outside of the classroom during non-instructional time. Options include parent volunteers; lunch buddy mentoring approaches (see Gregus et al., 2015 as one example); and staff from local recreation programs and youth-serving agencies, starting with the agencies already providing before and after school programming within schools. These alternative adult supervisors could offer unstructured opportunities to connect during recess as well as an additional caring adult in the hallways during breaks. Ensure these supervisors are involved in the co-creation of the role and expectations and are adequately trained in bullying prevention and intervention, as well as related school protocols and codes of conduct.
- 5.1 Review current research on the impact of placement in self-contained classes on student learning, belonging and engagement.
- 6.2 Address the areas of concern identified during the review panel consultations. Specific suggestions include:
  - (c) Ensuring students can report incidents of bullying in a safe, welcoming and accessible way that is both efficient and minimizes the possibility of reprisals. Reporting procedures must apply to victims of bullying and those who witness bullying. They must encourage parents, guardians, caregivers, teachers, coaches and other staff to report incidents of bullying. Examples include anonymous tip phone numbers, anonymous letter templates, and an independent student ombudsperson who listens to complaints and provides protection for and advice to students affected by misconduct and harassment.

- (g) Documenting bullying incidents, for example, in an education file, so they are on record for the student victim as well as the student or school adult who bullied.
- (h) Ensuring existing policies and guidelines do not punish student upstanders for intervening and trying to help.

- 6.4 Reaffirm the role of HWDSB's Equity Policy as a permanent guide to relations between HWDSB and the police.
- 6.6 Align and integrate the above action steps with HWDSB's Equity Action Plan where appropriate.
- 7.1 The new bullying prevention and intervention lead at the board should establish a review process to address inconsistent and ineffective application of safe schools policies and procedures and related guidelines or codes of conduct. The lead should establish clear timelines and accountabilities for any review committee.

## PHASE ONE AND TWO

- 3.2 Create Board-wide framework that establishes overarching expectations and procedures for a multi-tiered system of supports and programming including:
  - (d) Application of an intersectional lens to bullying prevention and intervention. Consider a student's multiple identity layers and the role of social and structural inequities. Recognize and work to remedy interlocking systems of oppression. Seek opportunities to align with other well-being initiatives, including Equity Action Plan, Indigenous Education and Indigenous Cultural Safety, Mental health, special education and other safe schools activities.
- 3.7 Collect school-level disaggregated data by identity on all reported incidents of bullying, both formal and informal, every six months. This data should be supplied at regular intervals to the dedicated lead position and annually to the board of trustees. Encourage full participation in School Climate Surveys and share results with students, parents, guardians, caregivers and the general public. This incident documentation should be broader and not limited to bullying- examples human rights and hate related incidents can be included. Invest on a data management tool that can capture this or PowerSchool
- 4.5 Ensure that students who are vulnerable or potentially vulnerable, whether or not they have been bullied, are supported in a variety of ways, for example, through a formal initiative that involves a designated staff member.
- 4.8 Collect school-level disaggregated data by identity on all reported incidents of bullying, both formal and informal, and report every six months to the dedicated lead position.
- 4.9 Encourage full participation in School Climate surveys and share results with students, parents, guardians, caregivers and community partners.
- 4.11 Ensure school-level plans are developed using an intersectional approach to bullying prevention and intervention so they reflect the co-occurrence of bullying and discrimination in its many forms. Plans should align closely with other student well-being activities at the school-level, including those connected to the Equity Action Plan, Indigenous Education and Indigenous Cultural Safety, mental health, special education and other safe schools initiatives.
- 5.2 Identify evidence-informed best practices to maximize student learning, belonging and engagement.
- 5.3 Review student achievement data in the context of HWDSB's priority goals, such as early reading and graduation.
- 5.4 Continue to review and refine the special education plan, including programs and services, in keeping with research on equity and inclusion for students with disabilities.
- 6.3 Ensure there is a plan to address, monitor and report on gaps in staff diversity and inequities in professional outcomes at all levels in the board. Examples of inequities in professional outcomes include higher turnover rates and fewer opportunities for promotion experienced by diverse staff.

- 7.9 Consider creating an independent student ombudsperson position for hearing incidents of bullying where the student, parents, guardians and caregivers do not feel safe following the line of authority from teacher to principal, superintendent and trustee. The ombudsperson would report to senior leadership and could be affiliated with HWDSB's Human Rights and Equity office.

## PHASE TWO

- 3.2 Create Board-wide framework that establishes overarching expectations and procedures for a multi-tiered system of supports and programming including:
- (a) Supports at three levels, leveraging universal, selective and indicated programs and activities (examples provided within report pages 69-70).
  - (b) Broad, representative student involvement to guide the selection of supports and co-create activities, initiatives and solutions at both the school level and individual incident level.
  - (c) Engagement of key stakeholder groups in the development and implementation process. Identify and recognize the bullying prevention and intervention expertise within the Hamilton community.
- 3.4 Develop the tools and resources to support schools in developing their own bullying prevention and intervention plans using the PREVNet whole-school approach and other whole-school resources. (see Recommendation #4).
- 3.8 Create clear lines of accountability and oversight for school plans, including expectations for monitoring and evaluation.
- 4.3 Each school, including fully remote learning programs, should establish its own bullying prevention and intervention plan and be provided with the necessary resources and expertise to develop and implement a whole-school approach. Direct more resources to schools with the greatest needs based primarily on a review of School Climate Survey results, particularly bullying prevalence, and principal reports. Key components of a whole-school approach include:
- (b) Ongoing, interactive education for all students and staff offered at least annually. Cover types of bullying; the difference between bullying, aggression and teasing; the impact of bullying; and how to respond to bullying, including specific examples. Material should acknowledge that bullying occurs between students, between staff and students, and between staff members. Incorporate role-playing scenarios and provide scripts for intervening in a positive way, for example, as a bullying upstander. Educational resources should be shared broadly with all school staff, including non-teaching staff, administrators, custodial staff, bus drivers and crossing guards, as well as parents, guardians and caregivers.
  - (c) Essential structures and processes. These should support building and strengthening school-level partnerships with those who share a common interest in addressing bullying. Should use outside expertise and resources; augment existing safe school teams with student, parent, educator and community representation; identify a leader or leaders within the school administration; and integrate bullying prevention into classroom learning curriculum
  - (d) Assessment. Suggestions include conducting an environmental scan of bullying frequency, including when and where bullying happens in a school; collecting and using school-level, disaggregated data to identify at-risk situations and students in ways that assure the confidentiality of those involved; and completing a bullying prevention needs assessment.
  - (e) School-level prevention and intervention. Each school plan should include a range of developmentally attuned and effective bullying prevention and intervention activities and approaches. These should be tailored to the school's needs by matching the level of risk to the level of intervention. They should also draw from the multi-tiered system of programming and supports discussed in Recommendation #3.
  - (f) Communication and evaluation of the school plan. Share the school's plan with all school stakeholders, including students, parents, guardians, caregivers, staff, unions and community partners. Evaluate how school initiatives are regarded by students, staff, parents, guardians and caregivers at least annually and make adjustments accordingly. Evaluations should incorporate standardized school level data collection and analysis on key bullying indicators, such as bullying prevalence, school belonging and caring adults.

- 4.4 Ensure student voices are sought out and incorporated into the school's response to incidents of bullying. This includes asking student victims to identify the solutions they want to see implemented.
- 6.2 Address the areas of concern identified during the review panel consultations. Specific suggestions include:
- d. Creating and documenting a student safety plan for the student experiencing bullying victimization when high-risk bullying involvement is reported. An example is PREVNet's Bullying Identification and Intervention Tool.
  - e. Clearly articulating and widely sharing the role played by each administrator and school staff member in bullying prevention and intervention. Include practical examples or case studies to illustrate how to respond in different situations and help distinguish bullying from other behaviours. PREVNet's tip sheet for differentiating between bullying, aggression and teasing is an example.
  - f. Creating clear communication guidelines and expectations for reporting and response that ensure parents, guardians and caregivers (especially those connected to the victims) are kept informed at every step of the bullying reporting and response process. This includes notifying them at the time of a reported bullying incident (or even earlier when concerning behaviours are identified), seeking their input with respect to an appropriate response, and communicating the outcome in a way that maintains privacy.
  - j. Ensuring each school has a full checklist of existing policies, guidelines, statutory duties and responsibilities and ensuring, in a systemic way, that staff, including temporary staff, are trained on them all.
  - k. Examining policies, guidelines and current practices related to progressive discipline through an equity lens, as well as according to inclusive education and human rights principles (Ontario Ministry of Education & Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2013). This examination should also take into consideration the concerns regarding discipline that were shared during this review and the need to provide clarity and consistency regarding how, when and for whom discipline is imposed. Consequences need to be educational or developmental to ensure that students are learning and developing optimally. Furthermore, when a student is suspended as a result of a bullying incident, there should be an articulated and shared re-integration strategy to promote healing and the student's positive development. HWDSB should monitor disciplinary outcomes, check in with involved students and their parents, guardians and caregivers, and seek feedback to improve protocol and process as needed.
- 7.2 The review process must proactively address the real and perceived unequal application of bullying policies and guidelines based on a student's identity.
- 7.3 The review process must address the need for accountability and transparency when a staff member is not following proper protocol, including identifying and addressing the abusive behavior of school staff toward students, other staff, and parents, guardians and caregivers.
- 7.4 The review process should examine ways to enhance understanding and support more consistent application of mitigating factors, as defined by the Ministry of Education policy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018b) on suspension and expulsion, when principals are making progressive discipline decisions about incidents of bullying.
- 7.5 Administration and staff should work together to develop a clear understanding of what information will and will not be shared, based on privacy obligations, and incorporate this understanding in updated policies and procedures. Policies and procedures should ensure that teachers, parents, guardians, caregivers and, where appropriate, other staff who regularly interact with students are not unnecessarily left "in the dark" about a student's involvement in a bullying incident, whether alleged or proven, and the outcome of the response. Such an understanding is consistent with the need to protect a student's privacy and prevent unnecessary disclosure.

## PHASE TWO AND THREE

- 3.6 Use data collection tools and procedures, including standardized tools, for more localized periodic school-based climate assessment between School Climate Survey cycles.
- 3.9 Establish a board-wide mechanism to positively acknowledge and share models of good practice at the

school level. For example, create a peer review team that reviews and provides guidance and feedback on school bullying prevention and intervention plans and shares what has worked well at other schools in the spirit of continuous quality improvement. This team's work should be guided by the board's dedicated lead position.

- 4.6 Ensure that assistance is available to parents, guardians and caregivers, including workshops, an inventory of available resources and information on all aspects of bullying. This assistance should be offered to parents, guardians and caregivers whose children have been bullied, witnessed bullying and engaged in bullying, as well as to those who are concerned about bullying.
- 4.10 Use available PREVNet resources to train all staff who have contact with students to respond appropriately when they observe bullying. Include non-teaching staff, administrators, janitors, bus drivers and crossing guards. Consider creating an online code of conduct for all staff that is specific to bullying prevention and intervention.
- 6.1 Establish a review process with representation from administration, educators and other school staff, principals, students, student councils, parents, guardians, caregivers, unions, Indigenous Education Councils, and community advocacy and service provider partners.
- 6.2 Address the areas of concern identified during the review panel consultations. Specific suggestions include:
  - (a) Using a consistent and comprehensive definition of bullying and the ways in which it can take place, including appropriate and inappropriate use of technology and social media. Ensure racist bullying, particularly micro aggressions, is explicitly defined.
  - (i) Providing schools with sufficient autonomy and flexibility to respond to the needs of their students and school community within the context of a whole-school approach (see Recommendation #4).
- 7.6 To prevent situations that cause inequities for students, encourage senior leadership, with input from unions, students and educators, to develop consistent messages about staff roles and responsibilities with respect to bullying prevention and intervention, including active supervision standards such as scope and quality of supervision. Consider union representatives as allies in the process and seek their assistance in providing consistent messages and sharing resources with their members.
- 7.8 Explore the feasibility of and costs associated with developing an electronic decision-tree resource for educators and school administrators based on PREVNet resources. This resource will guide the user through standardized bullying assessment, intervention and response protocols, including assessment questions and scripts; suggested response options to match the level of risk; and suggested next steps, including reporting and follow up requirements. Involve educators and school administrators in identifying user needs and system requirements. Consider developing a business case and seeking Ministry of Education funding for its development and implementation across school boards, with HWDSB serving as a pilot site.
- 7.10 Create a formal process for periodic review at multiple levels with a public accountability component. This review should include an examination of the overall procedures being implemented to ensure they effectively fulfill their intended purpose without creating bureaucratic gridlock.

### **PHASE THREE**

- 3.5 Work with the Ministry of Education to explore the effectiveness of additional digital monitoring tools specific to cyberbullying and cyber safety. Incorporate effective tools into HWDSB's multi-tiered system of supports and programming for bullying prevention and intervention.
- 6.5 Create a formalized process for periodic review of policies and procedures with feedback from educators, other school staff, principals, students, student councils, parents, guardians, caregivers, Indigenous Education Councils, unions and community partners. This review should take place every two years as per Ministry requirements and more frequently as improvement opportunities arise.
- 7.7 Determine, with the help of educators and administrators, what is required to increase uptake and maximize potential of available electronic tools so that critical student background information related to bullying behaviours and incidents is captured and can inform future decisions as the student moves through

the system, for example, as they change schools and transition between elementary and secondary. These tools can be used for reporting bullying incidents (for example, the digital safe schools infraction reporting tool), and capturing student log notes (such as the Student Information System). This may require developing documentation standards and protocols in partnership with educators and administrators.

## **HWDSB ORGANIZATION: SYSTEM-LEVEL – Action Steps**

### **ALL PHASES**

- 9.4 Ensure there is a plan to address, monitor and report on the gap in staff diversity and inequity of professional outcomes at the senior leadership level, for example turnover rates and opportunity for promotion.

### **PHASE ONE**

- 8.1 Develop, together with students, a commitment statement specific to bullying prevention and intervention that acknowledges the right of every child to have an education that is free from violence and discrimination. The commitment statement should state that identifying and removing discriminatory biases and systemic barriers at all levels are key activities to support positive school climates and decrease bullying. The statement should include clear and measurable goals.
- 8.3 Establish oversight and accountability structures at the school, system/HWDSB, governance and community levels. Build on existing, aligned structures where appropriate and indicate where new structures are needed. Structures should be:
- School level: for example, revitalized school climate teams with refreshed expectations.
  - HWDSB system-level: for example, a system-level steering committee charged with overseeing the implementation of review panel recommendations, with broad membership that includes students, parents, educators, unions and community partner representatives, plus at least one community advocacy group specifically focused on bullying. Consider a student and/or advocacy group co-chair.
  - Governance level: for example, a sub-committee aligned with current strategic directions.
  - Community level: for example, a community-led group (see Recommendation #10-3).
- 9.6 Consider using an external facilitator for the board's transformation process in order to add credibility and authenticity to the process in the eyes of the community

### **PHASE ONE AND TWO**

- 8.2 Establish, with input from students, parents, guardians, caregivers and staff, a set of core organizational values and operational principles that will ensure a culture of caring and respect.

### **PHASE TWO**

- 8.4 Incorporate consistent, standardized bullying outcome measures in the HWDSB performance monitoring framework. Examples of measures are bullying prevalence, demographic characteristics of students who are bullied, school belonging, caring adults and student voice.
- 8.5 Establish a transparent and timely monitoring system for reporting to the Board of Trustees and the broader community on HWDSB's bullying prevention and intervention efforts. This should be created in partnership with the review panel external advisors. Include targets and measures at the school and system level that are tracked between School Climate Survey cycles to ensure HWDSB knows where it is making progress and where it needs to improve. Localized school-based climate assessments will help schools tailor their bullying prevention and intervention activities and approaches
- 9.3 Leverage opportunities to reinforce the organizational values and culture shift described under Recommendation #8.

### **PHASE TWO AND THREE**

- 9.1 Identify and build upon current leadership best practices to create a culture of caring and positive school climate within HWDSB. Establish systems and processes to continuously spread these practices throughout the whole organization, for example, professional learning communities.
- 9.2 Identify the leadership competencies that will enable a whole-child, student-centred, nurturing environment



and incorporate them in current and future leadership and performance development opportunities throughout the organization. Examples include relational leadership, facilitation, coaching, integrated thinking and a continuous quality improvement mindset.

- 9.5 Establish the desired leadership performance outcomes for the board's leadership strategy. Then, using a model of continuous improvement, deliver training and support, monitor practice and measure to see if these outcomes have been achieved.
- 9.7 Recognize and celebrate great relational leadership work.

## **HAMILTON COMMUNITY – Action Steps**

### **PHASE ONE**

- 10.3 Establish a community-led, independent table with broad representation, including from HWDSB, to oversee implementation of review panel recommendations at the highest level. This entity should also identify and address barriers to school-community working relationships that are specific to bullying prevention and intervention and overall student well-being. Ensure the entity's terms of reference give it moral authority for and public recognition of its oversight role without impinging on the board's authority. Consider building upon existing community structures that bring together a range of partners to address the health and well-being of children and youth in Hamilton.

### **PHASE TWO AND THREE**

- 10.1 Co-create, implement and evaluate the bullying prevention and intervention activities and initiatives in Recommendations 3# and #4 in collaboration with a wide range of new and existing community partners. This action will reinforce HWDSB's strategic direction on Partnerships and enhance the range of bullying prevention and intervention resources and expertise available to students.
- 10.2 Utilize existing HWDSB community involvement structures such as parent councils, the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), SEAC, Indigenous Education Councils and HWDSB Community Advisory committees to support a strengthened focus on school climate.
- 10.4 Identify and learn from schools that have established strong working relationships between community and school for the purposes of bullying prevention and intervention and positive school climate work. Share lessons learned across HWDSB.
- 10.5 Identify and support opportunities to work with community partners to address the needs and gaps identified in the review panel process and implement the review panel's recommendations. Examples include:
  - Developing or enhancing an alternative suspension program with local youth-serving organizations.
  - Re-examining the use of restorative practices with local youth justice organizations.
  - Participating in the co-creation of educational curriculum, for example through the City of Hamilton's Hate Prevention and Mitigation Initiative.
  - Partnering with local recreation and children/youth-serving organizations to provide additional adult supervision during non-instructional time such as recess, lunch breaks and in hallways. Start with the organizations and programs already providing school-based programming before and after school.
  - Continuing to participate in and contribute to Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan at both the strategic and operational levels.
- 10.7 Assess, monitor and evaluate investments in bullying intervention and prevention programs in partnership with academics to improve programs and continuously align them with the recommendations in this report.

### **PHASE THREE**

- 10.6 Share strategies and experiences related to bullying prevention and intervention with the four local school boards.

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION – Action Steps****PHASE ONE**

- 11.1 Ask the Ministry for centralized, sustained funding for bullying prevention and intervention and positive school climate work, including a dedicated safe schools lead for each school board and resources to implement evidence-informed bullying prevention and intervention programs in schools.

**PHASE ONE AND TWO**

- 11.4 Ask the Ministry for funding for ongoing professional learning targeted at bullying prevention and intervention and safe schools.
- 11.5 Ask the Ministry to review current supervision policy to address the finding that areas and times of low or no supervision, such as breaks and outdoor recess, present the greatest risk for students.

**PHASE TWO**

- 11.2 Ask the Ministry to make centralized bullying prevention and intervention expertise and supports available to school boards over the long term. This could include guidance documents, standardized tools for school climate and supports for data analysis and interpretation.
- 11.3 Ask the Ministry to continue to update learning curriculum with additional emphasis on social-emotional learning, including empathy and perspective taking, that is implemented through an anti-racist, culturally responsive and relevant lens. This could include citizenship education and 21st century skills.

## Safe Schools Action Plan, 2021 - 2023

Note: Recommendations and Action Steps will be developed through system structures however implementation may be at the school, system or both levels as identified in the chart.

This Action Plan is a “fluid” document which may change throughout the implementation timelines

### DRAFT Timelines

Phase 1 March, 2021 to August, 2021

Phase 2 September, 2021 to August, 2022

Phase 3 September, 2022 to August, 2023

### IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (highlighted throughout chart)

1. *Reflect upon findings and recommendations and share widely*
2. *Create lead staff position*
3. *Coordinate efforts – align with other student well-being initiatives and work such as, Equity Action Plan and Mental Health Strategy*
4. *Make a commitment – develop commitment statement, establish core organizational values, establish timelines and clear, measurable outcomes*
5. *Ensure specialized supports for students affected by bullying.*
6. *Increase supervision outside of the classroom – pursue creative solutions*
7. *Collect and widely report school-level data on bullying*
8. *Design and distribute bullying awareness materials*
9. *Form a high-level steering committee with wide representation to oversee implementation*
10. *Develop a community-led, independent committee to advise on implementation at the highest level*

## Students

Recommendations	Recommended Action Steps (summarized)	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Implementation (School, System, Both)
<b>Recommendation #1</b> <i>Increase student ownership and seek out and listen to student voices</i>	1. Involve students in the co-creation, implementation and evaluation of all HWDSB bullying prevention and intervention activities and initiatives at the school-level and system level, including reviewing and updating related policies and procedures. (Phase 1 – student voice structure established)	X	X	X	Both
	2. Build on HWDSBs current expertise with student voice initiatives by establishing regular and consistent mechanisms for capturing student voices on the subjects of bullying and school climate. Both school and system levels and use a range of accessible and interactive methods, with School		X		Both

	Climate Survey being only one example.				
	3. Ensure student voices are sought out and incorporated into the school's response to incidents of bullying. This includes asking student victims to identify what solutions they want to see put into place.		X		School
	4. Include student voice and student-centred bullying metrics, such as bullying prevalence, descriptors of students who are being bullied, school belonging, and caring adult, in HWDSB's performance monitoring framework.		X	X	System
	5. Share student voice data with full school community, including parents, guardians, caregivers and community partners. In keeping with the principles put forth in the Culturally Responsible and Relevant Pedagogy framework, demonstrate how student voices are used to inform school improvement processes and plans using clear, relatable examples. Co-develop these strategies with students and potentially with community partners.		X		School
	6. Within the context of a whole-school approach, develop interactive resources that provide students with concrete examples and scripts for being an ally or bullying upstander. Develop these with students. For examples, see WITS Program's Bystander Quiz and PREVNet's What Kids Need to Know resources.		X	X	Both
	7. Have students from Grades 4-12 participate as leaders on existing school improvement teams. With input from students, reflect upon the process, including criteria, for selecting student reps to ensure a range of identities are offered the opportunity to participate, especially those whose cultural, racial, faith, sexual, gender, ability or other identity is outside of the dominant socia-cultural norms. Clearly outline student roles and contributions as well as the mechanisms that will be		X		School

	put into place. Collect age-appropriate data from younger children, for example, by asking them how they feel in school.				
	8. Ensure all student-led activities and processes are implemented with appropriate adult allyship. Provide training in the importance of adult support and what constitutes an effective adult ally to educators, other school staff and school volunteers such as volunteer coaches.		X	X	School
	9. When engaging students, consider and include the perspectives and experiences of the student experiencing bullying, the student with bullying behaviours and the student who witnesses. Important given the HWDSB Safe School Survey findings that indicate bullying tends to happen among groups of students who are involved in all three roles and who struggle with the same developmental, safety and relationship issues.	X	X		School
	10. Ensure action steps are aligned with and included in the Equity Action Plan as well as other appropriate student well-being initiatives, such as Mental Health Strategy and Indigenous Education and Indigenous Cultural Safety.	X	X		System
	11. Students to play a central role in developing and implementing all of the review panel's recommended action steps. (Phase 1 – student voice structure established)	X	X	X	Both

## Parents, Guardians and Caregivers

Recommendations	Recommended Action Steps (summarized)	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Implementation (School, System, Both)
<b>Recommendation #2</b> <i>Involve parents, guardians and caregivers in bullying prevention and response in meaningful ways.</i>	1. Share available educational resources on bullying with all parents, guardians and caregivers, including information on the types of bullying (including cyberbullying); the difference between bullying, aggression and teasing; impact	X	X		Both

	of bullying; specific examples of how to respond to bullying; and what they can do if their child bullies. Suggested resources: PREVNet, WITS, and Fourth R. websites.				
	2. Share new and emerging educational resources on cyberbullying with parents, guardians and caregivers as they become available over the coming months.	X	X		Both
	3. Involve parents, guardians and caregivers in the co-creation, implementation and evaluation of bullying prevention and intervention activities and initiatives as outlined under Recommendation #3 and #4.		X		System
	4. Establish ongoing, representative and accessible mechanisms for seeking parent input and feedback on bullying prevention and intervention initiatives and activities at both the school and system levels. Should including seeking feedback on bullying reporting and response processes from parents, guardians and caregivers, including those whose children have been involved in bullying in any role.		X	X	System
	5. Expand the ways parents, guardians and caregivers can get involved within HWDSB (such as school councils, PIC and Indigenous Education Councils) to participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of school climate initiatives and strengthen school-parent communication.			X	Both

## HWDSB Schools

Recommendations	Recommended Action Steps (summarized)	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Implementation (School, System, Both)
<b>Recommendation #3</b> <i>Develop multi-tiered supports and programming</i>	1. Establish a bullying prevention and intervention lead position at the board. Will lead system-level content and process efforts to create a culture of caring. Accountability shared with Exec Council.	X			System
	2. Create Board-wide framework that establishes overarching expectations and procedures for a multi-tiered system of supports and programming including:				
	a) Supports at three levels, leveraging universal, selective and indicated programs and activities ( <i>examples provided within report pages 69-70</i> ).		X		System
	b) Broad, representative student involvement to guide the selection of supports and co-create activities, initiatives and solutions at both the school level and individual incident level.		X		Both
	c) Engagement of key stakeholder groups in the development and implementation process. Identify and recognize the bullying prevention and intervention expertise within the Hamilton community.		X		System
	d) Application of an intersectional lens to bullying prevention and intervention. Consider a student's multiple identity layers and the role of social and structural inequities. Recognize and work to remedy interlocking systems of oppression. Seek opportunities to align with	X	X		Both

	<p>other well-being initiatives, including Equity Action Plan, Indigenous Education and Indigenous Cultural Safety, Mental health, special education and other safe schools activities.</p> <p>e) Continue with existing practices that were identified as important and successful during the community consultations - including restorative approaches, TipOff, HWDSB Helps and We Help campaign.</p>	X			Both
	<p>3. Support students involved in bullying. Ensure selective and indicated supports, including mental health supports and other professional assistance, are made available to students who have been bullied or who have witnessed bullying. Ensure students who have engaged in bullying also receive appropriate supports. For example, continue to support the implementation and evaluation of the Nurturing Safer Schools: A Social Work Intervention pilot project in Grades 6 to 8. Expand the program's availability beyond the pilot sites if warranted by evaluation findings.</p>	X			Both
	<p>4. Develop the tools and resources to support schools in developing their own bullying prevention and intervention plans using the PREVNet whole-school approach and other whole-school resources. (see Recommendation #4).</p>		X		School
	<p>5. Work with the Ministry of Education to explore the effectiveness of additional digital monitoring tools specific to cyberbullying and cyber safety. Incorporate effective tools into HWDSB's multi-tiered system of supports and programming for</p>			X	System



	bullying prevention and intervention.				
	6. Use data collection tools and procedures, including standardized tools, for more localized periodic school-based climate assessment between School Climate Survey cycles.		X	X	School
	7. Collect school-level disaggregated data by identity on all reported incidents of bullying, both formal and informal, every six months. This data should be supplied at regular intervals to the dedicated lead position and annually to the board of trustees. Encourage full participation in School Climate Surveys and share results with students, parents, guardians, caregivers and the general public.	X	X		System
	8. Create clear lines of accountability and oversight for school plans, including expectations for monitoring and evaluation.		X		System
	9. Establish a board-wide mechanism to positively acknowledge and share models of good practice at the school level. For example, create a peer review team that reviews and provides guidance and feedback on school bullying prevention and intervention plans and shares what has worked well at other schools in the spirit of continuous quality improvement. This team's work should be guided by the board's dedicated lead position.		X	X	System
<b>Recommendation #4</b> <i>Support Schools so they can establish their own bullying prevention and intervention plans</i>	1. Ensure that school improvement plans prioritize positive culture and well-being and contain a feasible number of goals with clear measurable targets, for example a maximum of two goals with one already included in the board's Annual Plan.	X	X	X	System

	<p>2. Immediately explore alternative sources of additional adult supervision outside of the classroom during non-instructional time. Options include parent volunteers; lunch buddy mentoring approaches (see Gregus et al., 2015 as one example); and staff from local recreation programs and youth-serving agencies, starting with the agencies already providing before and after school programming within schools. These alternative adult supervisors could offer unstructured opportunities to connect during recess as well as an additional caring adult in the hallways during breaks. Ensure these supervisors are involved in the co-creation of the role and expectations and are adequately trained in bullying prevention and intervention, as well as related school protocols and codes of conduct.</p>	X			System
	<p>3. Each school, including fully remote learning programs, should establish its own bullying prevention and intervention plan and be provided with the necessary resources and expertise to develop and implement a whole-school approach. Direct more resources to schools with the greatest needs based primarily on a review of School Climate Survey results, particularly bullying prevalence, and principal reports. Key components of a whole-school approach include:</p> <p>a) Capacity and resources at the school level. These should be sufficient to coordinate the safe school team as well as build new and strengthen existing school-level partnerships with local community groups, programs and</p>	X	X	X	Both

	<p>service providers. (Phase 1 – Structures)</p> <p>b) Ongoing, interactive education for all students and staff offered at least annually. Cover types of bullying; the difference between bullying, aggression and teasing; the impact of bullying; and how to respond to bullying, including specific examples. Material should acknowledge that bullying occurs between students, between staff and students, and between staff members. Incorporate role-playing scenarios and provide scripts for intervening in a positive way, for example, as a bullying upstander. Educational resources should be shared broadly with all school staff, including non-teaching staff, administrators, custodial staff, bus drivers and crossing guards, as well as parents, guardians and caregivers.</p> <p>c) Essential structures and processes. These should support building and strengthening school-level partnerships with those who share a common interest in addressing bullying. Should use outside expertise and resources; augment existing safe school teams with student, parent, educator and community representation; identify a leader or leaders within the school administration; and integrate bullying prevention into classroom learning curriculum.</p>		<p><b>X</b></p> <p><b>X</b></p>		<p>System</p> <p>Both</p>
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	<p>d) Assessment. Suggestions include conducting an environmental scan of bullying frequency, including when and where bullying happens in a school; collecting and using school-level, disaggregated data to identify at-risk situations and students in ways that assure the confidentiality of those involved; and completing a bullying prevention needs assessment.</p>		X		Both
	<p>e) School-level prevention and intervention. Each school plan should include a range of developmentally attuned and effective bullying prevention and intervention activities and approaches. These should be tailored to the school's needs by matching the level of risk to the level of intervention. They should also draw from the multi-tiered system of programming and supports discussed in Recommendation #3.</p>		X		System
	<p>f) Communication and evaluation of the school plan. Share the school's plan with all school stakeholders, including students, parents, guardians, caregivers, staff, unions and community partners. Evaluate how school initiatives are regarded by students, staff, parents, guardians and caregivers at least annually and make adjustments accordingly. Evaluations should incorporate standardized school level data collection and analysis</p>		X		Both

	on key bullying indicators, such as bullying prevalence, school belonging and caring adults.				
	4. Ensure student voices are sought out and incorporated into the school's response to incidents of bullying. This includes asking student victims to identify the solutions they want to see implemented. (duplicate)		X		School
	5. Ensure that students who are vulnerable or potentially vulnerable, whether or not they have been bullied, are supported in a variety of ways, for example, through a formal initiative that involves a designated staff member.	X	X		School
	6. Ensure that assistance is available to parents, guardians and caregivers, including workshops, an inventory of available resources and information on all aspects of bullying. This assistance should be offered to parents, guardians and caregivers whose children have been bullied, witnessed bullying and engaged in bullying, as well as to those who are concerned about bullying.		X	X	Both
	7. Establish consistent funding for ongoing board-wide professional learning opportunities for educators on bullying prevention and intervention. Examples include education and coaching to address complex peer interactions and challenging students; concrete, specific and effective strategies for early detection and intervention; forms of power abuse, whether by students, educators or parents, guardians and caregivers, and the forms of protection needed within classrooms and schools; and	X	X	X	System

	learning about educator roles and responsibilities for reporting bullying. Ensure the professional learning plan establishes and evaluates measurable outcomes. Use what is learned from past professional learning opportunities to select, develop and implement subsequent opportunities.				
	8. Collect school-level disaggregated data by identity on all reported incidents of bullying, both formal and informal, and report every six months to the dedicated lead position.	X	X		System
	9. Encourage full participation in School Climate surveys and share results with students, parents, guardians, caregivers and community partners.	X	X		Both
	10. Use available PREVNet resources to train all staff who have contact with students to respond appropriately when they observe bullying. Include non-teaching staff, administrators, janitors, bus drivers and crossing guards. Consider creating an online code of conduct for all staff that is specific to bullying prevention and intervention.		X	X	Both
	11. Ensure school-level plans are developed using an intersectional approach to bullying prevention and intervention so they reflect the co-occurrence of bullying and discrimination in its many forms. Plans should align closely with other student well-being activities at the school-level, including those connected to the Equity Action Plan, Indigenous Education and Indigenous Cultural Safety, mental health, special education and other safe schools initiatives.	X	X		System
<b>Recommendation #5</b> <i>Examine special education practices from a student-</i>	1. Review current research on the impact of placement in self-contained classes on student learning, belonging and engagement.	X			System

<i>centred learning perspective</i>	2. Identify evidence-informed best practices to maximize student learning, belonging and engagement.	X	X		System
	3. Review student achievement data in the context of HWDSB's priority goals, such as early reading and graduation.	X	X		System
	4. Continue to review and refine the special education plan, including programs and services, in keeping with research on equity and inclusion for students with disabilities.	X	X		System
	5. Identify ways to enhance supportive inclusion to mitigate the behaviour of some students with special education needs who have difficulty with self-regulation. Examples include developmental strategies, staffing levels and activities that foster students' empathy and support of peers.	X	X	X	Both
<b>Recommendation #6</b> <i>Review policies and procedures from equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression perspectives</i>	1. Establish a review process with representation from administration, educators and other school staff, principals, students, student councils, parents, guardians, caregivers, unions, Indigenous Education Councils, and community advocacy and service provider partners.		X	X	System
	2. Address the areas of concern identified during the review panel consultations. Specific suggestions include:  a) Using a consistent and comprehensive definition of bullying and the ways in which it can take place, including appropriate and inappropriate use of technology and social media. Ensure racist bullying, particularly micro aggressions, is explicitly defined.		X	X	System

	<p>b) Ensuring those connected with schools, including students, educators, other school staff and volunteers clearly understand their obligations to not participate in bullying and the expectations if they witness bullying or related conduct, including the misuse of social media to further demean the person bullied.</p>		<b>X</b>		System
	<p>c) Ensuring students can report incidents of bullying in a safe, welcoming and accessible way that is both efficient and minimizes the possibility of reprisals. Reporting procedures must apply to victims of bullying and those who witness bullying. They must encourage parents, guardians, caregivers, teachers, coaches and other staff to report incidents of bullying. Examples include anonymous tip phone numbers, anonymous letter templates, and an independent student ombudsperson who listens to complaints and provides protection for and advice to students affected by misconduct and harassment.</p>	<b>X</b>			Both
	<p>d) Creating and documenting a student safety plan for the student experiencing bullying victimization when high-risk bullying involvement is reported. An example is PREVNet's Bullying Identification and Intervention Tool.</p>		<b>X</b>		School
	<p>e) Clearly articulating and widely sharing the role played by each administrator and school staff member in bullying</p>		<b>X</b>		System



	<p>prevention and intervention. Include practical examples or case studies to illustrate how to respond in different situations and help distinguish bullying from other behaviours. PREVNet's tip sheet for differentiating between bullying, aggression and teasing is an example.</p>				
	<p>f) Creating clear communication guidelines and expectations for reporting and response that ensure parents, guardians and caregivers (especially those connected to the victims) are kept informed at every step of the bullying reporting and response process. This includes notifying them at the time of a reported bullying incident (or even earlier when concerning behaviours are identified), seeking their input with respect to an appropriate response, and communicating the outcome in a way that maintains privacy.</p>		<b>X</b>		System
	<p>g) Documenting bullying incidents, for example, in an education file, so they are on record for the student victim as well as the student or school adult who bullied.</p>	<b>X</b>			School
	<p>h) Ensuring existing policies and guidelines do not punish student upstanders for intervening and trying to help.</p>	<b>X</b>			System
	<p>i) Providing schools with sufficient autonomy and flexibility to respond to the needs of their students and school community within the context of a whole-</p>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	School

	<p>school approach (see Recommendation #4).</p> <p>j) Ensuring each school has a full checklist of existing policies, guidelines, statutory duties and responsibilities and ensuring, in a systemic way, that staff, including temporary staff, are trained on them all.</p> <p>k) Examining policies, guidelines and current practices related to progressive discipline through an equity lens, as well as according to inclusive education and human rights principles (Ontario Ministry of Education &amp; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2013). This examination should also take into consideration the concerns regarding discipline that were shared during this review and the need to provide clarity and consistency regarding how, when and for whom discipline is imposed. Consequences need to be educational or developmental to ensure that students are learning and developing optimally. Furthermore, when a student is suspended as a result of a bullying incident, there should be an articulated and shared re-integration strategy to promote healing and the student's positive development. HWDSB should monitor disciplinary outcomes, check in with involved students and their parents, guardians and caregivers, and seek feedback to improve</p>		<p><b>X</b></p> <p><b>X</b></p>		<p>System</p> <p>System</p>
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	protocol and process as needed.				
	3. Ensure there is a plan to address, monitor and report on gaps in staff diversity and inequities in professional outcomes at all levels in the board. Examples of inequities in professional outcomes include higher turnover rates and fewer opportunities for promotion experienced by diverse staff.	X	X		System
	4. Reaffirm the role of HWDSB's Equity Policy as a permanent guide to relations between HWDSB and the police.	X			System
	5. Create a formalized process for periodic review of policies and procedures with feedback from educators, other school staff, principals, students, student councils, parents, guardians, caregivers, Indigenous Education Councils, unions and community partners. This review should take place every two years as per Ministry requirements and more frequently as improvement opportunities arise.			X	System
	6. Align and integrate the above action steps with HWDSB's Equity Action Plan where appropriate.	X			System
<b>Recommendation #7</b> <i>Ensure policies and procedures are followed consistently</i>	1. The new bullying prevention and intervention lead at the board should establish a review process to address inconsistent and ineffective application of safe schools policies and procedures and related guidelines or codes of conduct. The lead should establish clear timelines and accountabilities for any review committee.	X			System
	2. The review process must proactively address the real and perceived unequal application of bullying policies and guidelines based on a student's identity.		X		System
	3. The review process must address the need for accountability and transparency when a staff member is not following proper		X		System

	protocol, including identifying and addressing the abusive behavior of school staff toward students, other staff, and parents, guardians and caregivers.				
	4. The review process should examine ways to enhance understanding and support more consistent application of mitigating factors, as defined by the Ministry of Education policy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018b) on suspension and expulsion, when principals are making progressive discipline decisions about incidents of bullying.		X		Both
	5. Administration and staff should work together to develop a clear understanding of what information will and will not be shared, based on privacy obligations, and incorporate this understanding in updated policies and procedures. Policies and procedures should ensure that teachers, parents, guardians, caregivers and, where appropriate, other staff who regularly interact with students are not unnecessarily left “in the dark” about a student’s involvement in a bullying incident, whether alleged or proven, and the outcome of the response. Such an understanding is consistent with the need to protect a student’s privacy and prevent unnecessary disclosure.		X		Both
	6. To prevent situations that cause inequities for students, encourage senior leadership, with input from unions, students and educators, to develop consistent messages about staff roles and responsibilities with respect to bullying prevention and intervention, including active supervision standards such as scope and quality of supervision. Consider union representatives as allies in the process and seek	X	X		System

	their assistance in providing consistent messages and sharing resources with their members. (Phase 1 – Union engagement structures)				
	7. Determine, with the help of educators and administrators, what is required to increase uptake and maximize potential of available electronic tools so that critical student background information related to bullying behaviours and incidents is captured and can inform future decisions as the student moves through the system, for example, as they change schools and transition between elementary and secondary. These tools can be used for reporting bullying incidents (for example, the digital safe schools infraction reporting tool), and capturing student log notes (such as the Student Information System). This may require developing documentation standards and protocols in partnership with educators and administrators.			X	Both
	8. Explore the feasibility of and costs associated with developing an electronic decision-tree resource for educators and school administrators based on PREVNet resources. This resource will guide the user through standardized bullying assessment, intervention and response protocols, including assessment questions and scripts; suggested response options to match the level of risk; and suggested next steps, including reporting and follow up requirements. Involve educators and school administrators in identifying user needs and system requirements. Consider developing a business case and seeking Ministry of Education funding for its development and implementation across school		X	X	System

	boards, with HWDSB serving as a pilot site.				
	9. Consider creating an independent student ombudsperson position for hearing incidents of bullying where the student, parents, guardians and caregivers do not feel safe following the line of authority from teacher to principal, superintendent and trustee. The ombudsperson would report to senior leadership and could be affiliated with HWDSB's Human Rights and Equity office.	X	X		System
	10. Create a formal process for periodic review at multiple levels with a public accountability component. This review should include an examination of the overall procedures being implemented to ensure they effectively fulfill their intended purpose without creating bureaucratic gridlock.		X	X	System

## HWDSB Organization: System-level

Recommendations	Recommended Action Steps (summarized)	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Implementation (School, System, Both)
<b>Recommendation #8</b> <i>Set the foundation for a culture of caring</i>	1. Develop, together with students, a commitment statement specific to bullying prevention and intervention that acknowledges the right of every child to have an education that is free from violence and discrimination. The commitment statement should state that identifying and removing discriminatory biases and systemic barriers at all levels are key activities to support positive school climates and decrease bullying. The statement should include clear and measurable goals.	X			System
	2. Establish, with input from students, parents, guardians, caregivers and staff, a set of core	X	X		System

	organizational values and operational principles that will ensure a culture of caring and respect.				
	<p>3. Establish oversight and accountability structures at the school, system/HWDSB, governance and community levels. Build on existing, aligned structures where appropriate and indicate where new structures are needed. Structures should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>School level:</b> for example, revitalized school climate teams with refreshed expectations.</li> <li>• <b>HWDSB system-level:</b> for example, a system-level steering committee charged with overseeing the implementation of review panel recommendations, with broad membership that includes students, parents, educators, unions and community partner representatives, plus at least one community advocacy group specifically focused on bullying. Consider a student and/or advocacy group co-chair.</li> <li>• <b>Governance level:</b> for example, a sub-committee aligned with current strategic directions.</li> <li>• <b>Community level:</b> for example, a community-led group (see Recommendation #10-3).</li> </ul>	X			System
	4. Incorporate consistent, standardized bullying outcome measures in the HWDSB performance monitoring framework. Examples of measures are bullying prevalence, demographic characteristics of students who are bullied, school belonging, caring adults and student voice.		X		System
	5. Establish a transparent and timely monitoring system for reporting to the Board of Trustees and the broader community on HWDSB's bullying prevention and intervention efforts. This should be created in partnership with the review panel		X		System

	external advisors. Include targets and measures at the school and system level that are tracked between School Climate Survey cycles to ensure HWDSB knows where it is making progress and where it needs to improve. Localized school-based climate assessments will help schools tailor their bullying prevention and intervention activities and approaches				
<b>Recommendation #9</b> <i>Strengthen the leadership skills needed for culture change</i>	1. Identify and build upon current leadership best practices to create a culture of caring and positive school climate within HWDSB. Establish systems and processes to continuously spread these practices throughout the whole organization, for example, professional learning communities.		X	X	System
	2. Identify the leadership competencies that will enable a whole-child, student-centred, nurturing environment and incorporate them in current and future leadership and performance development opportunities throughout the organization. Examples include relational leadership, facilitation, coaching, integrated thinking and a continuous quality improvement mindset.		X	X	System
	3. Leverage opportunities to reinforce the organizational values and culture shift described under Recommendation #8.		X		Both
	4. Ensure there is a plan to address, monitor and report on the gap in staff diversity and inequity of professional outcomes at the senior leadership level, for example turnover rates and opportunity for promotion.	X	X	X	System
	5. Establish the desired leadership performance outcomes for the board's leadership strategy. Then, using a model of continuous improvement, deliver training and support, monitor practice and measure to see if		X	X	System



	these outcomes have been achieved.				
	6. Consider using an external facilitator for the board's transformation process in order to add credibility and authenticity to the process in the eyes of the community	X			System
	7. Recognize and celebrate great relational leadership work.		X	X	System

## Hamilton Community

Recommendations	Recommended Action Steps (summarized)	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Implementation (School, System, Both)
<b>Recommendation #10</b> <i>Work with a wide range of community partners</i>	1. Co-create, implement and evaluate the bullying prevention and intervention activities and initiatives in Recommendations 3# and #4 in collaboration with a wide range of new and existing community partners. This action will reinforce HWDSB's strategic direction on Partnerships and enhance the range of bullying prevention and intervention resources and expertise available to students.		X	X	System
	2. Utilize existing HWDSB community involvement structures such as parent councils, the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), SEAC, Indigenous Education Councils and HWDSB Community Advisory committees to support a strengthened focus on school climate.		X	X	System
	3. Establish a community-led, independent table with broad representation, including from HWDSB, to oversee implementation of review panel recommendations at the highest level. This entity should also identify and address barriers to school-community working relationships that are specific to	X			System

	bullying prevention and intervention and overall student well-being. Ensure the entity's terms of reference give it moral authority for and public recognition of its oversight role without impinging on the board's authority. Consider building upon existing community structures that bring together a range of partners to address the health and well-being of children and youth in Hamilton.				
4.	Identify and learn from schools that have established strong working relationships between community and school for the purposes of bullying prevention and intervention and positive school climate work. Share lessons learned across HWDSB.		X	X	Both
5.	Identify and support opportunities to work with community partners to address the needs and gaps identified in the review panel process and implement the review panel's recommendations. Examples include: a) Developing or enhancing an alternative suspension program with local youth-serving organizations. b) Re-examining the use of restorative practices with local youth justice organizations. c) Participating in the co-creation of educational curriculum, for example through the City of Hamilton's Hate Prevention and Mitigation Initiative. d) Partnering with local recreation and children/youth-serving organizations to provide additional adult supervision during non-instructional time such as recess, lunch breaks and in hallways. Start with the organizations and programs already providing school-based programming before and after school.		X	X	System

	e) Continuing to participate in and contribute to Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan at both the strategic and operational levels.				
	6. Share strategies and experiences related to bullying prevention and intervention with the four local school boards.			X	System
	7. Assess, monitor and evaluate investments in bullying intervention and prevention programs in partnership with academics to improve programs and continuously align them with the recommendations in this report.		X	X	System

Ministry of Education					
Recommendations	Recommended Action Steps (summarized)	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Implementation (School, System, Both)
<b>Recommendation #11</b> <i>Ask the Ministry of Education for support</i>	1. Ask the Ministry for centralized, sustained funding for bullying prevention and intervention and positive school climate work, including a dedicated safe schools lead for each school board and resources to implement evidence-informed bullying prevention and intervention programs in schools.	X			System
	2. Ask the Ministry to make centralized bullying prevention and intervention expertise and supports available to school boards over the long term. This could include guidance documents, standardized tools for school climate and supports for data analysis and interpretation.		X		System
	3. Ask the Ministry to continue to update learning curriculum with additional emphasis on social-emotional learning, including empathy and perspective taking, that is implemented through an anti-racist, culturally responsive		X		System

	and relevant lens. This could include citizenship education and 21st century skills.				
	4. Ask the Ministry for funding for ongoing professional learning targeted at bullying prevention and intervention and safe schools.	X	X		System
	5. Ask the Ministry to review current supervision policy to address the finding that areas and times of low or no supervision, such as breaks and outdoor recess, present the greatest risk for students.	X	X		System

## HWDSB ALIGNMENT

HWDSB Equity Action Plan 2019/20 – 2021/22  
 HWDSB Employment Equity Action Plan 2020  
 HWDSB Mental Health and Well-Being Action Plan (2019)  
 HWDSB Indigenous Education Action Plan (2018)  
 HWDSB Reimagined: Strategic Priorities (2018)  
 HWDSB Equity and Inclusion Policy (2018)  
 HWDSB Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy (2015)  
 HWDSB Code of Conduct Policy (2019)  
 HWDSB Student Behaviour and Discipline Policy (2015)

## PHASE ONE - COMMUNICATIONS OVERVIEW:

- **Timelines:**
  - March – June, Inform on Report and Action Plan and Consult on communications;
  - September onwards, new communications/engagement *Building Healthy Relationships and an Inclusive, Caring Learning Environment Plan* based on the March-June work
- **Topics:**
  - Safe Schools: Bullying Prevention and Intervention Review Panel's Final Report, Roadmap, Initial Action Plan, and future communication opportunities/products
- **Communication tactics/tools:**
  - Video (thank you/panelists share overview),
  - One-pager 2021 edition *Building Healthy Relationship and an Inclusive, Caring Learning Environment Action Plan* ([summary](#) not [booklet](#)),
  - Powerpoint based on [Community Summary](#),
  - Graphic Roadmap
- **Website presence:**
  - [Safe Schools Review Panel](#) (Suggesting we keeping working through this page, remove 'panel', and until we can officially change to this page [Safe Schools](#))
- **Branding:**
  - Purple until we give Safe Schools rebrand through our communications research
- **Platform for engagement:**
  - MS Teams (virtual sessions)
- **Lead HWDSB committees (existing):**
  - Safe Schools Advisory Committee
- **Communications and Engagement Plan Development:**
  - Research (March-June),

- Planning - goals, objectives, strategies (July/August);
- Implementation – tactics and timelines (2021-22 school year); and
- Evaluation (spring 2022)
- **Other consideration:** What is the intersection between this plan with other positive culture and well-being priorities

Audience	Engagement	Dates
Students	Student Senate Student Networks The Hub	May/June
Parents	School Council Parent Portal (tbd)	School Council meetings in May
HWDSB Committees	Mandated, Trustee, Community Advisory committees	May/June
Staff	Principals meeting Staff meeting	May Admin. Learning May Staff meeting
Partners	Unions  Global Sharing opportunity via Teams (model after City's vaccine example) All parties invited through review	May/June  1. Early May 2. Mid-June