

Accepting Schools Expert Panel End of Mandate Report

S U B M I T T E D T O T H E M I N I S T R Y O F E D U C A T I O N

June 2016

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Dear Minister Hunter,

It is with great pleasure that the Accepting Schools Expert Panel submits our End of Mandate Report. We are pleased to provide the Ministry of Education with our final reflections on the development and implementation of resources and practices to support a positive school climate in Ontario schools.

Since its inception, the Accepting Schools Expert Panel has supported the Ministry on the development of key resources, and we have provided advice to the Ministry on ways to mobilize knowledge, and engage the whole school community, including parents and community partners. Our work has resulted in the identification of a number of areas for the Ministry to focus on in order to continue to have a meaningful impact on student safety and well-being. The attached report, provides key reflections from our meetings over the past four years, and concludes with some action items for the Ministry to consider going forward.

Addressing bullying and violence in schools requires collaborative efforts with educators, parents, students and community organizations. Children of all ages and abilities thrive when they are immersed in a positive school climate. Thus, the creation of safe and caring school communities that support student well-being in every Ontario classroom is an imperative for the Ministry of education.

We encourage the ministry to continue to focus on raising the achievement levels and well-being of our Indigenous learners. In addition, we urge the Ministry to pay attention to the students who are on the margins based on socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, mental health, special education needs, sexual orientation and gender. Supporting the safety and the well-being of students in these groups goes a long way to supporting the overall well-being and safety of the entire school and community.

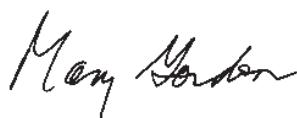
The members of the Expert Panel have endorsed enthusiastically the goals of the renewed vision for education in Ontario. Creating safe and supportive classrooms is a fundamental step in reaching our goal of excellence in achievement, equity and well-being for our students. We are proud of the vision and are confident that reaching these goals will make all of Ontario's citizens confident of the quality and worth of our education system.

Sincerely,



Bruce Ferguson

Co-Chair, Accepting Schools Expert Panel



Mary Gordon

Co-Chair, Accepting Schools Expert Panel

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Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant : *Rapport de fin de mandat du Comité d'experts en matière d'écoles tolérantes, 2016*.

Background

In December 2011, the government committed to creating an expert panel to provide advice on evidence-informed safe and accepting schools resources and practices that focus on a whole school approach, including prevention and early intervention, as part of its Comprehensive Action Plan for Accepting Schools.

The Accepting Schools Expert Panel (expert panel) was established in June 2012. The expert panel met on a quarterly basis, and their mandate ended June 2016. Their mandate was to inspire the culture change needed to support safe and accepting schools initiatives; advise the Ministry of Education on evidence-informed resources and practices that support building and sustaining a positive school climate in all Ontario schools; and advise on the best ways to share this knowledge.

The expert panel brought together a diverse group of members, who in turn brought their academic and practical expertise in the areas of:

- creating positive school climates;
- research in healthy child development;
- research in Indigenous education;
- equity and inclusive education;
- special education needs;
- developing bullying prevention and intervention supports;
- establishing student and parent engagement supports; and,
- mental health and emotional well-being resources.

The panel members also brought their diverse experiences and perspectives from Ontario's Public, Catholic, English and French education communities. (See *Appendix A for member biographies*)

Developing and sustaining a positive school climate is a complex challenge that requires considering evidence-informed solutions, a commitment to taking a whole school approach, and reaching out to parents/guardians, families and community partners to support the work of the school. The expert panel has communicated this message to the ministry throughout their mandate. A strong legislative and policy framework for safe and accepting schools has been put in place, but there is important work that the ministry needs to continue to help ensure that all Ontario schools are safe, inclusive and accepting learning environments for ALL students. The work of the expert panel has supported this transformation by identifying and advising on supports and linkages that have informed the implementation of legislation and policy, as well as resource development.

This report provides: (A) highlights; (B) achievements of the expert panel; and (C) reflections and advice from expert panel members on the continued implementation of safe and accepting schools in Ontario.

A

Highlights

- 1.** Between 2012 and 2016, the Accepting Schools Expert Panel met 19 times.
 - 2.** The Accepting Schools Expert Panel met with the following groups/organizations:
 - Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)
 - Independent First Nations (IFN)
 - Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC)
 - Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO)
 - Chiefs of Ontario (COO)
 - Egale Human Rights Trust
 - Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE)
 - The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations (OFSHA)
 - Parents partenaires en éducation (PPE)
 - People for Education (P4E)
 - Provincial Anti-Bullying Coalitions
 - Institute for Education Leadership (IEL)
 - Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet)
 - Terra Nova Market Strategies
 - l'Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
 - Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
 - Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)
 - 3.** The Accepting Schools Expert Panel met with the following government committees/groups:
 - Minister's Student Advisory Council (MSAC)
 - Curriculum Council (appointed by the Ministry of Education)
 - Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS)
 - Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC)
 - Ontario Women's Directorate
 - 4.** The following resources were developed by the Ministry of Education with the support and input from the Accepting Schools Expert Panel:
 - In Conversation: Understanding the Whole Child and Youth – A Key to Learning
 - Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan
 - Ministry of Education's: Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario
 - 5.** A sub-group of the expert panel identified the recommended recipients of the Premier's Awards for Accepting Schools in 2013, 2014 and 2015.
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B

Achievements

The achievements of the expert panel have been organized under the following three themes:

1. Discussions with Education Partners
2. Integration, Alignment and Making Connections
3. Resource Development

Discussions with Education Partners

The expert panel acknowledges that the Ministry of Education has put in place a strong legislative framework for safe and accepting schools, as well as the necessary policies to support schools in their work (e.g., bullying prevention and intervention, progressive discipline, equity and inclusive education). One area that the expert panel explored was the identification of gaps in resources, and the level of knowledge that exists in schools and school boards regarding the ministry's safe and accepting schools policies and resources. Expert panel members sought out the perspective of parents, students, educators and other key education partners to help identify gaps, and effective ways to share knowledge and information about existing resources and practices.

The expert panel engaged in a conversation with key partners on approaches to support the safety and well-being of Indigenous children and youth. The partners included the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), Independent First Nations (IFN), Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) and the Chiefs of Ontario (COO). Staff from the Ministry of Education's Aboriginal Education Office presented work underway, including the implementation of the Ontario First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework. A summary of the dialogue was shared with some of the key partners including the Aboriginal Education Office, and the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD) as the co-chair of the Ontario government's Joint Working Group on Violence Against Aboriginal Women. Information from the dialogue will inform next steps in the ministry's work on supporting safe and accepting schools initiatives for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. Expert panel members challenged the ministry to think about providing more supports for those students and families living in remote communities, and also transitional supports for Indigenous students moving from on-reserve to off-reserve to attend school. They also identified a need to enhance cultural competency, and cultural sensitivity and inclusion (for educators and students). It is important that there is an understanding of Indigenous students' lived experiences and context.

The expert panel met with specialists in digital best practices and cyber-bullying to discuss resources being used in schools. The expert panel shared comments and the ministry was asked to consider what more could be done in the area of cyber-bullying

in the future. Cyber-bullying is not well understood and as yet there are few resources to help educators respond effectively to the fast-changing ways in which “social media” can be used to bully and harass students. The expert panel encourages the ministry to follow the development of knowledge and effective interventions in this important emerging area.

The expert panel had a focussed discussion on how the ministry has been supporting LGBT students to feel safe and accepted in schools. The panel members had a dialogue with Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, and the three provincial principal associations (Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes, Catholic Principals’ Council Ontario, Ontario Principals’ Council) to discuss the current landscape and work done to date through the support of the Ministry of Education. The expert panel members acknowledged that there are children/youth in crisis that attend schools every day and applauded the work done to date. Their feedback focused on encouraging engagement efforts beyond system leaders. When discussing the planning process of this project, panel members suggested involving youth from the elementary to secondary school levels, in rural communities and youth who have “survived the system”. Another suggestion was to provide teachers with safe spaces to have conversations on collaborative approaches to support LGBT youth in the school community. Inviting Deans of Education to be involved in this conversation was also suggested as a partnership opportunity. Consideration should be given to taking an individualised approach for other student with diverse needs such as newcomers that may also be facing school climates that are not safe and welcoming. The expert panel noted that there is a need to go beyond providing resources and training. It is important that the education system facilitate these important conversations. Consideration should be given to creating video clips or short stories to make it easier for the day-to-day conversations to happen in schools to address complex issues and challenges students are facing.

Several members of the expert panel made keynote presentations at the annual Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) symposia between 2012 and 2016. Expert panel members provided presentations to parents on healthy child development and bullying prevention and intervention. Parents in attendance obtained practical materials, tips and strategies to support ongoing efforts to enhance overall parent engagement in their school board and community. The PIC symposia provided an opportunity for parents to participate in engaging sessions with expert panel members, and learn about new tools and resources to support student achievement and well-being. Some panel members contributed to the development of these tools, for example the Council of Directors of Education’s *Building Healthy Relationships: Parent Tool Kit & Guide* (2014) and *Inspiring Your Child to Learn and Love Math: Multimedia Toolkit* (2015).

The expert panel also met with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) and various branches from within the Ministry of Education. The MCYS provided a presentation on *Stepping*

Stones: A Resource for Youth Development, *Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed*, and *Ontario's Profile of Youth Well-Being*. The MOHLTC provided an overview of *Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care*, focusing on keeping Ontarians healthy component of the plan as it related to physical health and well-being of children and youth. The Ministry of Education provided an overview of ongoing work to support and measure student well-being, the first three years of the *Open Minds, Healthy Minds – Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy* and, finally, tools to support the promotion of healthy relationships and well-being in children 0–6 years of age. Expert panel members provided feedback on ways to think about aligning measures and initiatives from across government that are focused on the enhancement and promotion of child and youth well-being.

People for Education presented an overview of their *Broader Measures of School Success* which considers student success and well-being across five domains (Mental Health, Health, Creativity, Citizenship and Quality Learning Environment). Expert panel members provided People for Education with feedback on evaluative indicators, and engaged in discussions about measuring student success across the domains.

Several members of the expert panel met with representatives of parent anti-bullying coalitions from across the province. These coalitions spoke about the challenges that parents of children who have been bullied face supporting the needs and safety of their children. They also provided suggestions on strategies and practices that could contribute to promoting safe, inclusive and accepting schools in Ontario.

The expert panel met with the four Ontario provincial parent associations (Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education, the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, Parents partenaires en éducation, and People for Education). They also met with the French language directors of education. In addition, several expert panel members met with the Minister's Student Advisory Council. All of these conversations contributed to knowledge mobilization and informed the ongoing implementation and monitoring of initiatives to support safe and accepting schools.

Integration, Alignment and Making Connections

At the beginning of their mandate, the expert panel raised questions about how the safe and accepting schools work was connected to work happening in other areas of the ministry. Efforts were made to bring together staff from key policy areas of the ministry to present their work to the expert panel. Those branches of the ministry included the Safe Schools and Student Well-Being Branch, the Inclusive Education Branch, the Curriculum, Assessment and Policy Branch, and the Special Education Programs and Policy Branch. The panel suggested that staff from these areas should make stronger linkages to each other's work, and ensure that they connect with areas outside the ministry including other ministries, community partners, and researchers. The expert panel commended the ministry for creating and providing parents with

parent fact sheets created as part of the release of the revised health and physical education curriculum, as well as the School Mental Health ASSIST, and equity and inclusive education resources.

The expert panel met with the chair of the Curriculum Council to discuss how the ministry could strengthen equity and inclusive education principles and bullying prevention strategies across the curriculum. The expert panel provided advice to the ministry on how to support implementation in this area, including the importance of making connections for educators, fostering a culture change in schools, and the importance of engaging with parents and the whole school community.

The expert panel met with senior officials in the Ministry of Education on the ministry's vision for education. The expert panel provided a written brief during the Ministry of Education's vision consultations. The brief highlighted the importance of student well-being, with an emphasis on the relationship between cognitive development, physical, social and emotional well-being, and the importance of well-being as a necessary goal for all students in Ontario. The expert panel strongly recommended that the ministry add "the promotion and support of student well-being" to its goals and measures for education in Ontario. In April 2014, *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* was released and included the new goal of promoting well-being.

The expert panel met with the Ontario Institute for Education Leadership's leading safe and accepting schools project team to review survey results on the implementation of safe and accepting school policies in school boards. The survey gathered information from school and system leaders across Ontario on the challenges and successes of the ongoing implementation of safe and accepting schools. Survey findings pointed to a number of priority areas that need to be addressed, including: strategic alignment of related safe and accepting schools initiatives at the school and system levels; strategic planning, setting priorities, and aligning resources with the flexibility to make local choices; and data collection and analysis for decision making and improving practice. The expert panel acknowledged the importance of considering these results, and how the ministry supports principals in their analysis of data including school climate survey results.

The expert panel had a discussion about school climate surveys administered by schools every two years. Questions were raised about why the ministry does not collect a standardized set of data from boards, how the ministry currently supports schools with the analysis of their data, and whether the surveys should be broadened to include additional factors related to well-being. The expert panel advised that consideration should be given to making some questions mandatory to complete and submit to the ministry, as they did see value in the collection of consistent measures. They suggested that the data collection could be done with a sample number of schools or boards in the province, and not necessarily require all schools or grades to participate. Panel members pointed out that many schools do not have the capacity to use data or are unable to interpret the data correctly. There are differences across

the province where some larger school boards have internal capacity to analyse and interpret their data, whereas smaller boards may not have this capacity. It was suggested that the ministry could support school boards (especially smaller ones or ones with limited research capacity) to partner with universities to carry out effective school climate survey administration, data collection, analysis and response.

Resource Development

The Expert Panel members stressed the importance of using evidence to inform policy and resource development. They also challenged the ministry to consider how it supports school boards' efforts to do the same. To this end, the expert panel reviewed and provided feedback on fact sheets developed by Promoting Relationships & Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet) to help boards identify, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of evidence-based bullying prevention and intervention programs. Feedback from the expert panel was incorporated into the factsheets which were subsequently sent to all school boards in Ontario. The expert panel also advised on the future usefulness of the Ministry of Education's registry of resources for safe and inclusive schools and how to better support the use of evidenced-based/informed resources in schools.

As part of the *Accepting Schools Act*, 2012, the ministry committed to developing a model bullying prevention and intervention plan. The expert panel reviewed a draft provided by the ministry and provided comments to shape the development of this document. Discussion about this document included the importance of ensuring the elements contained in the model plan were supported by evidence, and that the model plan be shared widely across the sector. The model bullying prevention and intervention plan was distributed to Ontario school boards in January 2013.

A subgroup of expert panel members participated as part of the formal selection panel to recommend the recipients of the *Premier's Awards for Accepting Schools* for the 2013, 2014 and 2015 school years. The selection panel reviewed the applications submitted by schools and recommended the final award recipients. These expert panel members also reviewed *Promoting a Positive School Climate: A Resource for Schools* and made connections to the Premier's Awards for Accepting Schools which were incorporated into the selection criteria.

Select panel members provided expert interviews for an edition of the Ministry of Education's *In Conversation* bulletin. This edition entitled *In Conversation: Understanding the Whole Child and Youth – A Key to Learning* was provided to school boards in Spring 2014, and posted on the Ministry of Education's website. This bulletin spoke to the importance of: paying attention to child and youth development; building positive learning environments; developing relationships with caring adults; and establishing home-school-community connections.



Reflections and Advice on the Continued Implementation of Safe and Accepting Schools

As the mandate of the expert panel comes to an end, members would like to put forth some advice to assist the Ministry of Education as it continues to support safe and accepting school environments for all Ontario students. The information below is a summary of their reflections and advice.

Supporting a Positive School Climate

In order for children and youth to succeed and to realize their full potential, it is first necessary for them to have their basic needs met, including the need to feel safe and included. Reflecting upon having basic needs met, there are equity challenges that pose barriers to the educational and well-being needs of Indigenous students, including the sufficiency of funding in provincially-funded and federally-funded schools. In light of recent commitments from the federal and provincial governments to address the Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Report, there is an opportunity to further support improved achievement and well-being for all Indigenous students. This means, the ministry should consider enhancing supports for students transitioning from on reserve schools to provincial schools, as well as for students transitioning between the different levels of the provincially-funded schooling system. This could include providing schools with readiness tools to assess whether they are in a position to receive and support Indigenous students; building partnerships with community partners to support Indigenous students to be successful throughout their years of schooling; helping parents, caregivers and families navigate the school system; and increasing knowledge and awareness of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives and contributions for all students, school staff, teacher candidates, staff at Faculties of Education, school board staff, and school trustees.

At the school level, it is important for staff members to have the tools and the time to adequately and effectively respond to the strengths and needs of all members of the school community. These tools could take the form of assessment instruments, evidence-based programs or curricular and extracurricular supports. As well, ongoing dialogue between teacher and principals and the decision-makers at the board and provincial levels is vital to ensure that essential information is communicated in a way that facilitates prompt and effective responses to the identified strengths and needs of students.

Supporting a positive school climate has been an important part of the ministry's work. Attention should also be paid to the importance of school cultures, classroom climates, listening to all voices, and responsive and respectful relationships. Cultivating healthy relationships is crucial both at the school level and at the individual classroom level, and plays an important part in the successful implementation of safe and accepting schools policies and programs. All children need to be supported to learn. The demographics of Ontario are changing, and the ministry and schools must do their part to support students who need assistance e.g., newcomers.

All of our children and youth need to feel like they matter. They need to know that someone cares about them and knows who they are. One expert panel member asked that the ministry consider a quote from Dr. Seuss to sum this thought up, "To the world you may be one person but to one person you may be the world". The goal should be that each child is known to at least one adult in their school, so they have a "go-to person", and that no child "slips through the cracks".

It is essential for school boards to clearly identify the needs of their students and community in order to implement specific programs and targeted activities that will foster a sense of belonging, and well-being in the school environment. It is vitally important that all key players in the education sector be involved in the development of safe and healthy environments. Consequently, an approach that establishes shared priorities and specifies each person's duties and responsibilities will help to achieve our primary objective of academic success for all students.

Making Alignment across Policy/Program Areas

At the beginning of the mandate of the expert panel, there was a sense that the work of safe and accepting schools was not as connected as it could be to other relevant policy areas. Over the course of the mandate of the expert panel, increasing efforts have been made to bring areas together, make linkages, and align work. These conversations are happening more often within the ministry, and the panel would like to see this continue. The work of safe and accepting schools needs to be integrated with other relevant strategies for school boards to be able to have success. Making it a practice to connect across policy and program areas is essential. There is also a need to have an interdisciplinary approach that reflects the diversity of our populations. Although this work requires time and sustained effort, it is important to make sure it happens. The importance of partnerships and connecting with community organizations was raised. Administrators and educators should be encouraged to work with community partners including school resource officers, youth probation officers, as well as leads for mental health in boards.

The Ministry of Education should do their best to continue to make linkages across interrelated/relevant policy and program areas including: safe schools, healthy schools, equity and inclusive education, special education, curriculum, mental health and well-being. With the Ministry of Education's goal of student well-being having been articulated explicitly in *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*, there is an opportunity to bring the work of safe and accepting schools together with related areas to bring consistency to the work done internally, and to reduce confusion in school boards about how all the related work fits together and how it can be articulated at the school level. The panel is excited about the well-being strategy work underway including the consultations with the education sector over the new school year.

Remain Committed to Universal and Individualised Supports for Students

The ministry should continue to support safe and accepting schools on a universal scale, e.g. policies and resources intended for the whole school. However, it should also think about how it can continue to support students who require additional and unique supports, and what supports could be provided to teachers to meet the needs of their individual classroom. The expert panel spent time discussing what ministry supports have been put in place to support students with special education needs, students who identify as LGBT, and those from First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Efforts should continue in these areas. The ministry should also consider that additional students with diverse needs may require additional or unique supports and resources to foster their achievement, well-being and their connection to school e.g. newcomers, children/youth in care; children/youth that have been in youth justice facilities/in conflict with the law; those with mental health challenges; returning adult learners who were drop-outs; suspended/expelled youth; socially marginalized youth; and those of lower socio-economic status or cultural minorities. The ministry needs to work with other ministries and community partners to understand the needs of these students and how to better support their achievement and well-being.

Expert panel members asked the ministry to continue to raise awareness around the benefits of evidence-based or "proven" interventions/programs/models in schools. Schools have complex and diverse needs and there is no "one size fits all" program that can meet all the criteria. Instead it takes a variety of effective strategies and programs to do this. It is also important to conduct outcome evaluations to determine the actual impact that initiatives are achieving. From these evaluations, we can learn what is working and what is not and then invest in the ones that are showing real promise. Expert panel members felt that faculties of education and universities are underutilized as part of the ministry's policy development and implementation processes. The ministry should consider tapping into the expertise found in these institutions.

Awareness of Bullying Prevention Remains Important

Bullying prevention and intervention needs to continue to be addressed at many levels. The expert panel commented that more focus needs to be placed on education activities for the broader public to communicate that bullying is never acceptable. Students cannot deal with this issue alone and need supports to do so. The ministry has not yet fulfilled its commitment of a public education campaign on bullying, and should revisit it. Expert panel members reiterated that bullying is a societal issue and cannot be ended by schools alone. In the face of a complex and ever-changing world, a whole school approach is needed to create a positive school climate and prevent inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, discrimination, harassment, gender-based violence, and incidents based on racism and homophobia. It is imperative that everyone – government, educators, school staff, parents and the wider community – play a role in helping to achieve safe, inclusive and accepting schools in Ontario. Bullying takes many forms and various aspects of bullying should be addressed, such as the concepts of intersectionality, differential victimization, inclusion, and belonging. The reality of our ever-changing world needs to be acknowledged. Staff well-being is also essential and relationships amongst adults in the school also matter. Bullying is a relationship issue needing relationship solutions. There is a need to support teachers to be able to support their students' needs.

Expert panel members also suggested that a renewed focus should be placed on addressing racism and classism in schools. All students need to have access to quality educational opportunities, and many students continue to face inequities.

Policy/Program Implementation and Sharing Knowledge Across the Education Sector

The ministry has in place a strong legislative framework for safe and accepting schools, along with numerous supporting policies and resources for schools. Expert panel members have come across situations where they met with education stakeholders and shared Ministry of Education produced resources, and have found a lack of awareness that these resources exist. The ministry needs to make repeated concerted efforts to share existing knowledge and resources with the education sector. In addition, the ministry needs to provide enough time for the sector to work with these resources and reflect upon them. The theory of change acknowledges that implementation takes time, and school boards are at varying places in their implementation of policies supporting safe and accepting schools. Identifying areas of strength/effective practices and addressing gaps/areas for improvement is an iterative process.

Expert panel members also commented that there should be recognition of the practice of learning together, as there is knowledge in all parts of the sector. There should be mechanisms for sharing across the sector, for the ministry to learn from school boards, and for there to be mechanisms for boards to easily share knowledge and resources across the province.

The expert panel would like the ministry to spend time thinking about how it can share knowledge with the sector and seek ways to communicate the work that has been achieved that support safe and accepting schools. The expert panel suggests that the ministry consider how it can build more awareness of existing resources to ensure they get better integrated into the day-to-day life of schools and classrooms. This could include “re-launching” the bullying prevention fact sheets and model bullying prevention and intervention plan. Research shows that building and sustaining a positive school climate requires a systematic focus on developing healthy and respectful relationships throughout the whole school community.

In addition, the expert panel would like the ministry to consider a broad communications strategy for the dissemination of resources available, and create a process for monitoring how the resources are being used. Over the course of the mandate, the expert panel learned about many third-party resources that have been developed for the education sector through projects funded by the Ministry of Education. The panel found that there does not seem to be any system or awareness for how broadly or effectively resources are being used. It is important to not only assess the effectiveness of programs in schools, but also the effectiveness of the resources developed for schools, parents and the general public.

Consideration should also be given to standardizing the process to measure improvements in the education sector as part of the implementation of projects or resources, or as a condition of transfer payment agreements. This would answer questions such as: “Did this work have an impact on the student?”; “Did it translate on the ground?” Panel members supported the notion that if we change cognition, we change behaviour resulting in fewer students being bullied. Panel members agreed that the results/outcomes of these projects would be of interest to the education sector and providing access to this information would be valuable.

In light of the reflections and advice provided in the aforementioned section, the expert panel would like to put forward the following five themes for follow-up by the Ministry of Education:

- 1.** Provide tools and supports to encourage school boards to work together to support implementation of safe and accepting schools initiatives.
- 2.** Communicate to school boards, the importance of evidenced-based decisions based on empirical evidence and promote the need for boards to work from a data-driven approach.

- 3.** Continue to collaborate across program areas within the Ministry of Education as well as with other ministries to reduce duplication, and to ensure alignment between strategies that support student achievement and well-being.
- 4.** The expert panel urges the ministry to prioritize strategies and actions to meet the educational and health-related needs of Indigenous students and their families.
- 5.** Although the ministry has put in place supports for groups of students who are marginalized, the ministry should also consider whether there are students with diverse needs who may require additional or unique supports and resources to foster their achievement, well-being and their connection to school. To this end, the ministry should help ensure that there is a focus on addressing issues such as racism and classism in schools in order to support student well-being, achievement and to reduce bullying and inequity of opportunities.

Appendix: Accepting Schools Expert Panel Membership and Biographies (Current and Past)

BIOGRAPHIES

CHAIRS

DR. BRUCE FERGUSON was the Director of the Community Health Systems Resource Group at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids). He is Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto and has been a Visiting Scientist at the Biological Psychiatry Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health in the United States. Dr. Ferguson has advocated for the implementation of evidence-based interventions and standardized outcome measurement in health, mental health, social services and education, and worked to promote and facilitate integration and collaboration in service delivery. He was a member of the Minister's Advisory Group that lead to the plan to transform mental health services in Ontario and has been a member of several policy groups advising Ministries regarding implementation of the transformation.

MARY GORDON is the founder and president of Roots of Empathy and is recognized internationally as an award-winning social entrepreneur, educator, author, child advocate and parenting expert. Ms. Gordon has presented on early childhood development to gatherings organized by the World Health Organization and the United Nations. Ms. Gordon is also the founder of Canada's first and largest school-based Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, which she initiated in 1981. They have become public policy in Ontario, with hundreds of schools involved. In 2006 Ms. Gordon was awarded the Order of Canada for her many contributions to education.

MEMBERS

DR. LEENA K. AUGIMERI, is the Director, SNAP[©] Scientific & Program Development & Centre for Children Committing Offences at the Child Development Institute and Adjunct Professor at the University of Toronto. For the past 30 years this scientist practitioner's work has focused on the development of a comprehensive community crime prevention model for young children in the middle years with serious disruptive behaviour (aggression, rule-breaking and conduct problems) that focuses on timely community referral protocols, gender sensitive evidence-based

SNAP interventions, and risk need assessment tools (EARLs). She is a co-founder of the longest sustained gender sensitive evidence-based intervention for young children with disruptive behaviour problems (SNAP® Model) and leading the SNAP® National Expansion initiative. She is a noted author, consultant, scientist and presenter responsible for all national and international development, implementation and research/evaluation activities pertaining to SNAP® and young children in conflict with the law. Dr. Augimeri is a Fellow of the Academy of Experimental Criminology and the recipient of numerous awards such as the Child Welfare League of Canada's inaugural Outstanding Achievement Research and Evaluation award, the Elizabeth Manson Award for Community Service in Children's Mental Health in recognition of exemplary contributions to the promotion of children's mental health, and accepted on behalf of SNAP the Prime Minister's Award – Regional Social Innovation Award and the Toronto Star's 2015 Ruth Hindmarsh Award for its efforts to improve the lives of children.

MARTIN BERTRAND is the Director of Education at Conseil scolaire Viamonde, a French-language public school board that spans from its western limits in Windsor to its eastern border near Trenton and from Penetanguishene in the north to cover the Niagara peninsula in the south. Viamonde serves over 11000 students in its 47 schools. Having also served as Associate Director of Education at Viamonde, Mr. Bertrand began his career at the Carleton Roman Catholic School Board and the Conseil des écoles publiques de l'est de l'Ontario based in Ottawa. Throughout his 20 year career in education, Mr. Bertrand has held positions as a teacher, department head, teacher consultant, vice-principal, principal and superintendent.

DR. LISE BISNAIRE is the Director of Autism at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and Associate Investigator at the CHEO Research Institute. Prior to her current role, Dr. Bisnaire was Clinical Director of Inpatient Psychiatry and Professional Practice Leader for Psychology at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) for 12 years. She currently serves as a member of the Autism Spectrum Disorders Clinical Expert Committee with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Dr. Bisnaire has extensive experience as a service provider, clinical professor and researcher. She is internationally recognized for her work on assessing outcomes for children and youth both in the field of mental health and autism. She is involved in the development and implementation of the Total Clinical Outcomes Management approach to services for children, youth and their families. More specifically she is involved in embedding this philosophy of practice and the related Communimetric tools within the mental health and autism services in Ontario. Dr. Bisnaire holds a Ph.D in Clinical Psychology from the University of Ottawa.

HAROLD BRATHWAITE has served as department head, vice-principal and principal with the Halton Board, as well as Superintendent and Associate Director with the Toronto Board of Education. His extensive career culminated in his promotion

to Director of Education for the Peel District School Board in 1994, a position he held until 2002 when he retired. Throughout his career Mr. Brathwaite has been a vocal champion for public education, issues of equity, and building capacity in communities. He has received many awards including the Harry Jerome Award, the Urban Alliance on Race Relations Award, the McMaster Distinguished Award, the U of T Arbor Award, and the Order of Ontario. Mr. Brathwaite retired as Executive Director of the Retired Teachers of Ontario in July, 2015.

KIM CHRISTIANSON-GAGNON is the Project Lead for the Leading Safe and Accepting Schools Project for the Institute for Education Leadership. Prior to this, Ms. Christianson held a principal position at both the Elementary and Secondary levels since 2007 and holds a Supervisor Officer's Certificate. Presently seconded from the Conseil scolaire public du Nord Est de l'Ontario, she continues to support leaders from the 72 school districts across the province in improving student well-being. She also holds a contract as project lead with ADFO in a joint project with CPCO and OPC on supporting principles on supporting students who identify as LGBT. In addition she has a contract with the Moosonee District School Area Board as a Supervisory Officer/Principal for the French Language Unit. Ms. Christianson begun her career as a Restorative Dental Hygienist and is a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Health Administration program with the University of Phoenix. She is hoping to defend her dissertation in 2016 that focuses on access to health care services for Francophone living in rural remote communities in Northeastern Ontario since regionalization in 2006. Ms. Christianson was also nominated and member of the Minister's Principal's Reference Group at the Ministry of Education from 2010-2012.

DR. JEAN CLINTON is a Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster, division of Child Psychiatry. She is on staff at McMaster Children's Hospital with cross appointments in Pediatrics and Family Medicine, and an Associate in the Department of Child Psychiatry, University of Toronto and Sick Children's Hospital. She is also a senior scientist at the INCH (INFant Child Health) Lab at McMaster University. IN addition she is a Fellow of the Child Trauma Academy. She has been a consultant to children and youth mental health programs, child welfare, and primary care for almost 30 years. Dr. Clinton was recently appointed as an education advisor to the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Education. Dr. Clinton is renowned locally, provincially, nationally, and more recently internationally as an advocate for children's issues. Her special interest lies in brain development, and the crucial role relationships and connectedness play therein. Jean champions the development of a national, comprehensive child well-being strategy including a system of early learning and care for all young children and their families. She is equally committed to ensuring that children's and youths' needs and voices are heard and respected.

DR. DAWN HARVARD is a member of the Wikwemikong First Nation, president of the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) and the Southern Ontario Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative, as well as a professor in the Aboriginal and World Indigenous Studies Master's of Education Program at Queen's University. In 2011, Dr. Harvard earned a PhD in education from the University of Western Ontario and is currently an adjunct professor at the university. Dr. Harvard's research focuses on addressing achievement gaps and fostering academic success for Aboriginal students.

DR. PETER JAFFE is a professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario and the Academic Director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women & Children. Dr. Jaffe is also the Director Emeritus for the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, which is a children's mental health centre specializing in issues which bring children and families into the justice system. Dr. Jaffe has worked in the community as a psychologist specializing in child abuse and domestic violence and is also a trustee with the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB). He has been actively involved with trustee, teacher and parent groups in Ontario to raise awareness about the impact of media violence on child development. He has also served on many Board Committees and has provided leadership in the development of violence prevention programs within the school system.

MICHAEL PAUTLER served as teacher, department head, vice principal and principal with the Toronto Catholic District School Board, and as a Superintendent of Education with the Durham Catholic District School Board, prior to his appointment as Director of Education for the Halton Catholic District School Board, a position he held until his retirement in 2013. He currently is the Executive Director of the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) which brings together, works with and assists organizations that share responsibility for publicly-funded Catholic education. ICE serves as a centre for both research and dialogue for students, parents, teachers, principals, senior administrators and Catholic bishops in the Ontario English Catholic education community. He is also the Program Director of the Catholic Community Delivery Organization, overseeing the delivery of the Supervisory Officers' Qualifications Program for those aspiring to senior leadership roles in Catholic schools.

DR. TRACY VAILLANCOURT is a Canada Research Chair in Children's Mental Health and Violence Prevention at the University of Ottawa where she is cross-appointed as a full professor in the Faculty of Education (counselling psychology program) and in the School of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences. She is an elected member of the College of the Royal Society of Canada and is an adjunct professor in the Department of Psychology, Neuroscience, & Behaviour at McMaster University. Dr. Vaillancourt received her B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from the University of British Columbia (human development), her post-doctoral diploma from the University of Montreal and

Laval University (developmental psychology), and post-doctoral re-specialization in applied child psychology (clinical) from McGill University. Dr. Vaillancourt's research examines the links between aggression and children's mental health functioning, with a particular focus on social neuroscience. She is currently funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada, and the Ontario Mental Health Foundation

JOE VERYARD, ED. D. (OISE/UT) is Project Coordinator for the Institute for Education Leadership Leading Safe and Accepting Schools Project. In his thirty-one year career, he served as teacher, department head, secondary school administrator and system principal for Safe and Accepting Schools with the Ottawa Catholic School Board. His studies and professional work have focused primarily on addressing the needs of marginalized youth. Joe chaired the committee that established OCSB Focus Programs as well as a multi-agency team of first responders and education leads which developed a school emergency response protocol. As advisor to the A.C.T. Foundation, he helped develop the Canadian CPR in the Schools Program. Joe has worked with education leaders and community partners in the development of safe schools' policies and AQ guidelines, equity resources, and gang exit strategies. Joe has conducted research and presented on safe schools' issues at the local and provincial level. He sits on the Board of Directors for Youth Ottawa.

JOHN WILHELM is the Chief Social Worker with Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB). He is a member of the Board of Directors for Toronto Catholic Children's Aid Society and has served on the board of directors with not for profit organizations including Toronto Catholic Family Services Association and BOOST Child and Youth Advocacy Center. He is also past chair of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education. Mr. Wilhelm has been involved in developing partnerships with community children's mental health agencies and health organizations.

DR. COLLEEN WILLARD-HOLT is the Dean of the Faculty of Education with Wilfrid Laurier University. She received her Ph. D. in Educational Psychology from Purdue University. Prior to earning her Ph.D., Dr. Willard-Holt taught high school special education, high school mathematics, and gifted education K-12. At the university level, she has taught courses in general teaching methods, educational psychology, assessment, educational research, brain research, gifted education, and special education. Her areas of research include gifted children with disabilities, implications of neuroscience research for classroom teachers, multiple intelligences, international experiences for teachers, and pre-service teacher education.

PAST MEMBERS

LUISA CANGELOSI is the Principal of Marshall McLuhan Catholic Secondary School at Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB). She began teaching French, Italian and Religion at St. Thomas Aquinas Secondary in 1984 with the Dufferin-Peel Catholic School Board. After taking some time off to spend time with her children, Luisa returned to teaching in 1991 at Marian Academy in the Toronto Catholic District School Board. After teaching ESL, she became Head of the French and International Languages department. Luisa was Vice-Principal at Loretto Abbey Catholic Secondary School, Dante Alighieri Catholic Secondary School and Principal at St. Joseph's College.

JOAN CRONIN is a member of the Grey Sisters of Immaculate Conception (g.s.i.c.) and Executive Director of the Ontario Institute for Catholic Education (ICE), which serves as a centre of dialogue for students, parents, teachers, principals, senior administrators and Catholic bishops in the Ontario English Catholic education community.

DEBBIE DOUGLAS is the Executive Director of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI). Through her work at OCASI, Ms. Douglas has highlighted issues of equity and inclusion particularly in the areas of race, gender, economic class and sexual orientation within the immigration system and promoted the creation of safe, welcoming spaces within the settlement and integration sector. Ms. Douglas has also worked with community based service agencies and public institutions on organizational development and change. Ms. Douglas currently sits on the board of the Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement (CERIS), the board of Women's College Hospital and is the Public Interest Director on the board of the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council (ICCRC). Ms. Douglas was a member of the provincial expert panel on immigration which published the report 'Routes to Success' and led to Ontario's first Immigration legislation in 2015.

GYSLAINE HUNTER-PERREAUDET is a former Director of Education of Conseil scolaire Viamonde, a position she held from 2010 - 2015. Prior to holding this position, she was a supervisory officer in the same board from 2001 - 2010. Ms. Hunter-Perreault has had a long career in Education, having been a principal at both the Elementary and Secondary levels, as well as a teacher from kindergarten to University, including her involvement in the Teacher Training Program offered in the Centre South West region at the University of Ottawa from 1990 to 1997. She was the Chair of CODELF (Provincial Association of French-Language Directors of Education) for 2013-14 and the Chair of RNDGÉ (National Association of French-Language Directors) for 2013-15. Topics of particular interest to her include: the vitality of French-language communities across the country, equity and inclusive education and student engagement.

DR. ALICE PITT is an educational theorist and the Dean of the Faculty of Education at York University. Dr. Pitt has been a member of the Faculty of Education at York since 1995 and served as its associate dean from 2002 to 2007. As associate dean, Dr. Pitt led curriculum renewal efforts in the pre-service program, as well as the design of experiential components, including the expansion of partnerships with schools and community organizations. Dr. Pitt holds a PhD in education from the University of Toronto, with specializations in curriculum theory, critical/feminist pedagogy, and cultural studies in education. She has published widely in these fields, as well as in the areas of teacher education. Dr. Alice Pit is now the Vice Provost, Academic at York University.

DR. CAROLE RICHARDSON is the Dean of the Schulich School of Education at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario. Prior to becoming Dean, she served as Associate Dean and taught music methods for eight years. Before coming to Nipissing, Dr. Richardson taught classroom music in middle schools and conducted choirs in Ontario and in the Cayman Islands. Her research focuses on the importance of arts experiences in the lives of preservice teachers and the role of autobiographical and collaborative narrative inquiry in preservice education.

BILL TUCKER is a former Director of Education with the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB). Prior to becoming the Director of Education at TVDSB, Mr. Tucker held a Supervisory Officer position in the areas of Special Education and School and Community Services – Program Services as well as Superintendent of Human Resource Services. He was also a Principal at several public schools in London and St. Thomas, Ontario. Mr. Tucker has written and presented to School Boards across Canada in the areas of domestic and school based anti-violence programs and special education. He has served on the Developmental Disabilities Division Advisory Committee at the University of Western Ontario, served as a Board of Education Representative for London Children's Connection and has been a Board member of the London and Middlesex Children's Aid Society. Mr. Tucker was the 2012 United Way Cabinet Chair for London and Middlesex County. Currently, he is a Visiting Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education, Western University.

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