



**School Safety** and  
**Engaged Communities**

# **School Safety and Engaged Communities**

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*In Memory of Hamid Aminzada 1995 - 2014*

March 2015

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On September 23, 2014, a tragic event occurred in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB or the Board). A student at North Albion Collegiate Institute (NACI), Hamid Aminzada, was fatally stabbed.

While parents and siblings mourned the death of their son and brother, the impact of the death was felt profoundly by the students, parents and staff of NACI and reverberated across the community and the education system. The Director of Education, Donna Quan, committed to reviewing the circumstances leading to the incident and Toronto District School Board's response to the tragedy. A Steering Team (referred to as the Review Team or the Team), with expertise in safety and security, community engagement and Toronto District School Board policies, procedures and practices, was appointed to conduct a review.

The primary focus of the review was on NACI's crisis response procedures and practices, the overall tone and safety of the school's environment, and the school's engagement with the community. A secondary focus of the Team was to widen the scope in order to gather information, insights and knowledge on school safety and community engagement from a wide variety of stakeholders both from the system and the community. The end result of the consultation was to make recommendations, where appropriate, not only for NACI but also for the system as a whole. The following report contains 41 recommendations for action in the following four areas:

- i. Crisis Response;
- ii. Caring and Safe Environments;
- iii. Policies, Procedures and Practices for Safety in Schools; and
- iv. Community Engagement and Support

### CRISIS RESPONSE

Those who were present at NACI at the time of incident reported that the crisis was, for the most part, handled well. Staff and emergency services personnel responded quickly to attend to Hamid and place the school in "lockdown."

Central staff members came together from across the system to function as a crisis response team. The teams worked with emergency services personnel and school staff to assist in achieving a resolution to the situation and to support the affected students and staff. This is a credit to the organization and to the dedicated staff who stepped into their roles.

Over the period of the lockdown, there were a number of issues around communication that could be remedied by a review of crisis response procedures and the addition of enhanced

emergency management procedures. In light of these issues, it would be advisable for Toronto District School Board to transition their crisis response teams to an Emergency Management Response Teams (EMRTs) and train them according to the Ontario's Incident Management System (IMS).

Following the incident, significant support was provided by central staff to assist students and staff in dealing with the impact of the incident and viewed as helpful and sufficient with a few exceptions. Research indicates that some people experience grief and trauma long after the event has occurred. While vulnerable students and staff continue to be monitored at NACI, there needs to be a systematic follow-up process created to monitor students and staff over the mid and long-term.

Debriefing the incident occurred at the school and in the system, but there is a need to have thorough and systematic debriefings within schools and families of schools after both drills and actual lockdowns involving, where possible, feedback from Emergency Services. There is also a need to enhance procedures and training related to lockdown exercises in situations where people are in open areas or when people arrive who are not familiar with the procedures.

## **CARING AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS**

School environments should be safe, clean, nurturing and stimulating where those who work and learn feel pride and comfort in their surroundings. This type of environment is created by having a supportive, respectful and positive tone in the school, a building which is clean and safe, programs that support students and help them excel, and processes that are clear and easy to follow.

While devices such as cameras assist in keeping schools secure, establishing healthy, respectful relationships between and among staff and students cannot be underestimated. Many students, staff and parents said that NACI is a good school with students and staff who feel they are connected to the school and each other. The Team noted that NACI offers several initiatives, such as the breakfast and snack programs, orientation programs for new students and leadership camps. Both Athletics and the Arts are popular at NACI and build spirit and contribute to a positive climate. All these programs and others help build relationships and respect among students, staff and administration.

Students mentioned that there should be more peer mentoring for those entering grade nine at NACI to help them feel connected and welcomed.

Staff at NACI and from other schools emphasized that the vast majority of students behave appropriately, but there is a small minority that does not. Despite the number of initiatives and programs that exists in Toronto District School Board, bullying and cyber-bullying continued to

be raised as concerns by stakeholders from across the system. An analysis as to the effectiveness of bullying and cyber-bullying programs, procedures and data sets must be conducted, and a dashboard developed to track incidents.

There was also a concern among administrators across the system about the “near misses” — those incidents that are averted but could have ended badly—and the need for a dashboard to record and track them.

A number of teachers stated that some students come to grade nine without the requisite skills. There can be many reasons for this, but one that concerned many teachers was the practice of transferring students in elementary school (even if they do not meet the minimum standards for promotion). The intent is to place students in grades according to their age. There are programs in place to help these students reach the appropriate grade level in both the elementary and secondary panels, but they are not always successful. In some cases, the effort needed to “catch up” becomes too much, and, sadly, some students become disruptive or “drop out.” There must be an assessment of the supports available to these students to determine if they are sufficient to ensure students who are transferred gain the skills they need for success at the secondary level.

NACI, in particular, has seen many changes in administrative staff over the years resulting in changes in leadership and management styles which can erode efforts to build collaborative teams. The Review Team observed that there is a discrepancy between teachers and administration as to what constitutes effective discipline and this should be addressed.

A number of teachers, administrators and central support staff associated with NACI reported there are not enough opportunities and time to meet and collaborate. They are concerned that they are beginning to lose touch with each other. Time and processes must be put in place to ensure that collaborative discussion occurs on such issues as school climate, safety, student behaviour and discipline.

NACI’s school building has seen far better days. Paint is peeling, floors are dirty and windows are broken. There are holes in the ceiling, windows without curtains and fluctuations in temperatures which can reach as high as 36 degrees Celsius. These conditions and others contribute to an overall feeling of neglect and lack of care. Of particular concern is an area known as the “Pod.”

Similar conditions in buildings and grounds are found not only at NACI but also, the Team was told, at many other schools. Research indicates that poor school environments can have negative effects on morale, student achievement and behaviour. An assessment of repairs and maintenance that are required at NACI must be undertaken, and a plan developed and implemented to improve the physical condition of the school and grounds.

Many Toronto District School Board buildings are in poor condition and need repair; this is estimated at a cost of 3.0 billion dollars. The Team has been told that measures have been put in place to find efficiencies and cost savings. However, these steps have not been enough; consideration must be given to address these conditions in the development of the Capital Plan, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

The students at NACI benefit from many programs that are provided by the school, Board and the community to meet their diverse social, behavioural, emotional and academic needs. Focus on Success, credit recovery, LEAP, Pathways to Education, Men of Distinction, Ladies on the Rise, Micro Skills, and the Health Clinic are some of the programs that are found in the school. Students and staff, by and large, value these programs highly, but some staff recommended that some programs should be evaluated to identify and resolve issues. Many staff and students also said that there needs to be more discussion, information and support around issues such as mental health, racism, respect and appropriate behaviour.

NACI staff and administrators stressed the need for more counselling for students. NACI receives one day of social work support per week and an allocation of 2.5 guidance counsellors. Praise was high for these services, but some students who are dealing with significant social, emotional, behavioural and academic issues need intensive support from Professional Support Services' staff. Almost all who spoke to the Team indicated that was a need for more staff in these services. Also recommended were the use of discussion circles and town halls to discuss relevant issues and fuller implementation of restorative justice to deal with inappropriate behaviour. For students who, despite the many supports and programs available to them, continue to struggle with behavioural and academic issues there should be more alternative programs available to them across the system.

Administrators cited the need for more transitional support for students who are non-discretionary, administrative transfers (i.e., students who are moved from one school to another when certain Board criteria are met). Currently, these students receive support for approximately six weeks from a Child and Youth Worker, but it was reported often that more support is needed.

Across the schools, staff and administrators were clear on one thing--time is stretched and paperwork has increased. This takes away from their ability to perform their prime roles – i.e. teaching or leading. These issues have arisen before and attempts made to address them but not to the degree that is needed.

## **POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES FOR SAFETY IN SCHOOLS**

The Review Team found that most stakeholders felt relatively safe in schools. Some staff did describe situations which, at times, caused them to feel less secure. Most interviewees,



regardless of whether or not they had seen weapons in schools, believed that they, particularly knives, are present in schools. Those interviewed believed that students carry weapons primarily for protection going to and from school.

Similar to the opinions of many participants, the Team does not endorse the use of metal detectors in schools (although some respondents expressed a need for them). The logistics and cost of moving and monitoring hundreds (and in some cases, thousands) of students into secondary schools at the beginning of each day would be significant with little or no impact on prevention.

The Team recommends other less intrusive security measures that would limit access to intruders, complement adults supervising the school halls, keep students and staff safer, and assist emergency services personnel in responding to a crisis.

Secondary schools are not required to lock their doors (although some do) nor do they routinely monitor the main door with cameras or have a remote entry system. Teachers, administrators and students reported that, at times, intruders enter their schools. The Team recommends that secondary schools should manually lock their doors after the start of the school day. Entry should be monitored by a system similar to the one used in elementary schools. This system would not stop all intruders but would limit the possibility significantly.

Administrators that currently have electronic access controls on their schools report that they are advantageous in keeping schools safe. An electronic access control system would assist in informing administrators that all exterior doors were locked during an emergency in a timely and safe manner. Likewise such a system could be accessed remotely during the daily operations of the school, at the end of the day, at nights, weekends and on statutory holidays.

During a lockdown, procedures and best practices dictate that classroom doors should be locked or secured as best as possible. Time is lost and the safety of staff is jeopardized when staff must step into the hall to lock the doors from the outside. A system of interior locking devices on classroom and office doors which could also be disengaged from the inside would be faster and safer. Students with whom the Team met reported that cameras in schools make them feel safer.

The challenge is that many of the camera systems in the Toronto District School Board are aging, and there is no on-going maintenance program for the existing CCTV or DVR systems; systems are attended to only when they require repairs. It is critical that a phased-in process is initiated to update the systems (beginning at NACI) and that a regular maintenance schedule for the systems is established.

Moreover, central monitoring of CCTV systems would provide daily attention on preventing unknown persons from entering schools. Additionally, monitoring would generate valuable information to emergency services personnel particularly if it was networked with the Toronto Police Operations Centre.

In the Toronto District School Board, there is a system called “School Connects” being used primarily to notify parents of student absences, school activities and events. This system could also be used to support safety in the school and on school property during a lockdown or hold and secure situation.

During our review, staff confirmed that receiving updated information during the lockdown at NACI would have alleviated some of the stress experienced by both students and staff. The teachers stated that any updates that they did receive came from students monitoring CP24 on their personal devices--generally not the best way to keep people informed as unreliable information could be disseminated. Upon fully implementing School Connects, procedures should be developed so that the system could be used in emergency situations.

A school's Public Address system (PA) is an essential communication device which is utilized during emergency situations. The Team was informed that the system was aging and not always fully operational. A review of the operational and repair status of the existing PA systems is necessary to determine needed repairs and upgrades.

Hall monitors play an important role in the safety of secondary schools--moving students along in the halls, alerting the administration to emergent issues, escorting students from a class when required and helping them understand and meet school expectations. A number of teachers suggested that the responsibilities of hall monitors should be clarified and that hall monitors should receive regular training given that they interact with youth in challenging situations.

School safety is everyone's responsibility which requires controls plus due diligence. It should not be delegated to only a select few. Some teachers, and many administrators and superintendents reported that hall monitors (if a school has one) and administrators patrolling the building are not enough to keep a building safe.

Currently, secondary school teachers in the TDSB are required to do 27 half-periods of 'on call' and/or 'supervision'. Additionally, teachers can be required to perform supervision under special circumstances. The TDSB is one of the few boards in Ontario that does not have regular supervision duties scheduled into teacher timetables. Attention must be given in the 2015 collective bargaining process to increasing the supervision duties of secondary teachers.

Ensuring proper documentation of incidents is critical when administering progressive discipline. All appropriate staff must have information to determine the frequency and nature of the behaviour, interventions that have been put in place and what, if any, discipline has occurred. One of the existing electronic systems should be designated to provide ready access to information by those who need it.

The Toronto District School Board maintains a security division which occasionally assists Caring and Safe Schools' staff. The Team was informed that the staffing was inadequate to perform these duties on a regular basis and that training of security personnel was limited. They should receive ongoing, regular training in areas such as emergency management, crisis management, conflict resolution, mental health and other school safety topics.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

Students live in a larger community beyond the school which impacts them significantly. Many of the issues that have been identified in this report such as poverty, violence, mental health, "run down" housing, racism and the lack of resources inform the home lives and communities in which Toronto District School Board students live. As students face some of these conditions in their daily lives, it is critical that students, families, schools, social services, and secular and faith based agencies collaborate to create positive and healthy environments.

NACI is located close to the Rexdale Community Hub that houses agencies that provide services. However due to lack of resources, NACI is not able to connect fully with them and take advantage of what they offer.

The Team also spoke to several faith based organizations and was impressed with the efforts they are taking to assist not only their congregations but also the neighbourhoods around them. The Toronto Police Service has also played an important role in outreach across the Toronto District School Board with 23 Division working specifically within the Rexdale community.

Clearly, the school and the community provide, to the best of their abilities, services and supports to students and their families. However, many stated that more resources and agencies to provide them are required. One community worker said that, "Rexdale feels like the forgotten community."

One solution to ensuring resources are maximized and available to the community is to promote greater collaboration between the Toronto District School Board and community service providers. There are a number of community "tables" in the neighbourhood such as Focus Rexdale and across the city that bring organizations and agencies together to pool resources and maximize their impact on the surrounding area. Community workers indicated that Toronto District School Board would benefit from connecting and collaborating with these

groups. A 'Connector' program spearheaded by Toronto District School Board is being recommended to address this.

Many discussions took place during the review about the interdependent relationship of the Toronto District School Board and the City of Toronto. Assessing and addressing safety concerns are not the responsibilities of any one agency or organization but rather a multi-pronged approach with many stakeholders including the students and parents.

A partnership should be considered with the Toronto District School Board, Toronto Police Service and the City with the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy on the feasibility and development of a joint analytical and assessment unit focused on school safety. This option would provide all these stakeholders with forward-thinking information to assess the effectiveness of services, resource allocation and programs.

The Review Team heard that parents and caregivers, particularly those new to Canada, feel separate from the schools their children attend because they don't understand the system, are unaware of the available services and as a result, can't advocate effectively for their children. Accessing the significant amount of information that the Toronto District School Board does produce can be challenging for newcomers. It is being recommended that the Toronto District School Board reviews their communication methods and vehicles keeping in mind the changing profile of the community.

NACI and the surrounding community have been through a lot. Media attention associated with the incident was, in the opinion of students, intensive and negative and will be again when the case against the suspect comes to trial. In the aftermath of this tragedy, it is incumbent on the Board to implement a communication plan that highlights positive stories about the achievement of the students, staff and families of North Albion Collegiate Institute and others.

The recommendations found throughout this report and summarized in the next section have been developed to contribute to school safety and engaged communities. It is further recommended that an external team conducts an audit of progress on the recommendations outlined in this report after a period of nine to twelve months and provides that feedback to the Board.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1.0 RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS AT NORTH ALBION COLLEGIATE

#### **Recommendation 1.1:** Crisis Response Procedures

*The Toronto District School Board should review and update, in collaboration with the Toronto Police Service and other relevant partners, the emergency response procedures (at a minimum Principal 911 and Operational Procedure PR695, Threats to School Safety) to include operational issues, communication protocols, key and card access, and open space issues during lockdowns.*

#### **Recommendation 1.2:** Emergency Management

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *transition their current model of crisis response teams to formalized emergency management response teams (EMRTs); and*
- *consult with the Toronto Police Service and other external stakeholders to train regional Emergency Management Response Teams (EMRTs) using the Incident Management System (IMS) developed by Emergency Management Ontario.*

#### **Recommendation 1.3:** Lockdown Training Related to Open Areas

*The Toronto District School Board should consult with the Toronto Police Service and other external stakeholders to:*

- *develop and expand the lockdown procedures and training initiatives to include strategies for managing people in open areas of the school and/or those unfamiliar with the procedures; and*
- *mandate that at least one drill per year be held during the day when people are in open areas.*

#### **Recommendation 1.4:** Monitoring for Students and Staff Affected by a Crisis

*In addition to the support provided by Professional Support Services' staff immediately following tragic events, a systematic follow-up process should be created to monitor affected students and staff over the mid-and long-term.*

#### **Recommendation 1.5:** Communication to Parents on Emergency Procedures

*The Toronto District School Board should develop communications translated into multiple languages to inform parents and the public of caring and safe schools' procedures such as lockdowns and hold and secures.*

## **2.0 CARING AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS**

### **Recommendation 2.1: Supports for Transferred Students**

*The Toronto District School Board should conduct a review to determine if appropriate supports are in place to assist students who are transferred from one grade to another in elementary school to gain the skills they require for success in secondary school.*

### **Recommendation 2.2: Collaborative Staff Discussions**

*Time and processes should be put in place at NACI to ensure that collaborative discussion on issues such as school tone and safety, student behaviour and discipline are implemented.*

### **Recommendation 2.3: Development of Metrics Related to Positive School Climate**

*A review should be conducted on procedures, programs and data sets related to positive school climate, safety, bullying and cyber-bullying to:*

- *determine and implement metrics required to measure the effectiveness of programs;*
- *apply the metrics to the programs to determine and improve their effectiveness; and*
- *develop and establish a dashboard which tracks positive climate, bullying and cyber-bullying.*

### **Recommendation 2.4: Dashboard for “Near Misses”**

*The Toronto District School Board should develop and make available to administrators a dashboard to record and track reported “near misses” in order to analyze and address these incidents.*

### **Recommendation 2.5: Repairs to North Albion Collegiate Institute**

*An assessment of repairs and maintenance that are required at NACI should be undertaken and a plan developed and implemented to improve the physical condition of the school and grounds to build student and staff pride and reduce safety risks.*

### **Recommendation 2.6: Financial Support for Backlog of Repairs to Schools**

*Consideration should be given, in the development of the Capital Plan, to significant infrastructure issues of schools in need of repair, particularly in disadvantaged communities.*

### **Recommendation 2.7: Evaluation of Programs**

*NACI staff and students, with the support of central staff, should develop metrics to evaluate programs offered in the school and address any issues that might impede their effectiveness.*

**Recommendation 2.8:** Allocation of Additional Professional Services to North Albion C.I.  
*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *allocate one Child and Youth Counsellor to NACI; and*
- *increase the allocation of social work support to NACI to deal more effectively with issues related to the social, emotional and behavioural needs of students.*

**Recommendation 2.9:** Student and Staff Discussions

*Students and staff at NACI should use strategies such as circle talks, town halls and restorative justice to discuss and address issues related but not limited to health and well-being, behaviour, and race and culture where appropriate.*

**Recommendation 2.10:** Implement Peer Mentoring Program

*NACI students and staff should develop a peer mentoring program to ensure that every incoming grade nine student is paired with a senior student in September to assist in the transition from elementary school to secondary.*

**Recommendation 2.11:** Allocation of Additional Social Workers

*The Toronto District School Board should allocate additional social workers to their current complement to support students, staff and families across the system.*

**Recommendation 2.12:** Transitional Support for Students Requiring Transfers

*The procedure for transitioning non-discretionary transferred students should reflect flexibility for addressing individual needs and not be limited to six weeks.*

**Recommendation 2.13:** Additional Alternative Programs

*The Toronto District School Board should increase the number of alternative programs to provide support for select students who require more social, emotional, behavioural and academic support than is currently available in many secondary schools.*

**Recommendation 2.14:** Time and Workflow Analysis

*Discussions should be held at all levels of the Toronto District School Board to determine time and workload pressures placed on staff and administration and measures taken to address them.*

**Recommendation 2.15:** Administrative Stability at North Albion C.I.

*Attention should be paid to monitoring transfers of administrative staff at NACI to ensure stability for the school.*

### **3.0 POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES FOR SAFETY IN SCHOOLS**

#### **Recommendation 3.1: Controlled Entry**

*Secondary schools should be required to lock all doors after the beginning of the school day with only one point of controlled entry. Following entry, all visitors should report to the office and receive identification.*

#### **Recommendation 3.2: Electronic Access Control on Exterior Doors**

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *undertake a comprehensive review of the access control systems in all schools;*
- *develop and implement a plan to upgrade existing electronic systems into one system;*
- *acquire new electronic systems for schools that do not have them; and*
- *integrate all systems into one electronic system.*

#### **Recommendation 3.3: Interior Door Locking Devices**

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *research the installation of locking devices on all interior, common area doors, specifically classrooms and offices, which can be locked and unlocked from the inside; and*
- *develop a phased-in implementation plan of interior door locking devices*

#### **Recommendation 3.4: Review of Closed Circuit Television Cameras in Schools**

*The Toronto District School Board Facility Services - Security Infrastructure Steering Committee personnel should:*

- *review and replace the current CCTV system at NACI;*
- *review the current Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) systems in schools to determine the condition and life cycle of the equipment, placement of cameras to exits and entry points, identification of blind spots and clarity of images; and*
- *develop a plan for a phased-in upgrade of the system prioritizing schools with older systems.*

#### **Recommendation 3.5: Implementation of a Maintenance Program for the CCTV System**

*The Toronto District School Board should initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a maintenance program by an external stakeholder for all CCTV systems and Digital Video Recording Devices (DVR).*



**Recommendation 3.6: CCTV Central Monitoring Centre**

*The Toronto District School Board should establish a central CCTV monitoring centre to be integrated with the current building alarm and fire alarm monitoring centre.*

**Recommendation 3.7: Communications during Emergent Events**

*The Toronto District School Board should place resources and support into completing the implementation of the Synrevoice “School Connects” system and develop procedures for its use in emergent and emergency situations.*

**Recommendation 3.8: Public Address System**

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *undertake a review of the operational and repair status of the existing Public Address system(s);*
- *ensure systems are repaired where appropriate;*
- *develop a plan for a phased-in upgrade of PA systems prioritizing schools with older systems; and*
- *require all schools to have a secondary means of communication such as a megaphone accessible in the event of an emergency.*

**Recommendation 3.9: Training for Hall Monitors**

*Hall monitors should receive timely and ongoing training provided by the Toronto District School Board to ensure that they have the most up-to-date knowledge and skills with which to fulfill their roles.*

**Recommendation 3.10: Hall Supervision by Teachers**

*Attention should be given in the 2015 Collective Bargaining process to increasing flexibility, usage and total amount of supervision duties of secondary teachers outside of their assigned instructional duties.*

**Recommendation 3.11: Recording and Monitoring Progressive Discipline**

*The Toronto District School Board should mandate the use of an existing or a new, electronic information management system to ensure that proper reporting and documentation of incidents occur and that information of incidents is accessible to all appropriate staff.*

**Recommendation 3.12: Allocation of Staff to the Security Unit**

*The Toronto District School Board should review the role of the Security unit, increase the staff complement allocated to the Security Unit and implement an ongoing training schedule.*

**Recommendation 3.13:** Occupational Health & Safety Act– Workplace Violence (OSHA-WV):

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *review and revise Procedure 540 to clarify the information to be shared about a student or employee who is likely to pose a threat of harm to another student or employee in the workplace;*
- *train all administrators on the revised procedures to ensure consistent application; and*
- *develop a policy with supporting procedures on receiving, disseminating and storing the information.*

#### **4.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

**Recommendation 4.1:** Toronto District School Board Communications Plan

*The Toronto District School Board should conduct a review of the current communications plan to ensure that the content effectively addresses the ever-changing profile of Toronto District School Board families.*

**Recommendation 4.2:** Communications Plan for North Albion C.I.

*The Toronto District School Board, as a result of the incident at NACI, should develop and implement a communication plan that highlights positive stories about the achievement of the students, staff and families of North Albion C.I.*

**Recommendation 4.3:** Connector Program

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *partner with the City – Housing, Community Welfare, United Way and others-- to build a “Connector Program” that brings the agencies and organizations together on a regular basis to share views, knowledge and resources;*
- *create a position entitled Coordinator of Stakeholder Relations and appoint a person who will develop and operate the program;*
- *pilot this program in the Rexdale community with a review two years after implementation to determine the feasibility of rolling out similar programs in other regions of the city; and*
- *collaborate with the Toronto Police Service, the City of Toronto with its Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (TYES) and its related agencies such as Housing and Health, to form a joint analytical and assessment unit focused on school safety.*

**Recommendation 4.4:** Faith Based Outreach

*The Toronto District School Board should establish community outreach programs with faith based organizations in the Rexdale community to strengthen connections with families.*

**Recommendation 4.5: Open School Facilities to Community Programs**

*The Toronto District School Board should partner with some community associations to locate after hours, community-led programs at no cost in schools in the North Region Family of Schools in order to provide services to students and their families.*

**Recommendation 4.6: Communication Vehicles**

*The Toronto District School Board and schools, in light of the constantly changing demographics, should enhance the use of texts, emails, the School Connects voice mail system, web page banners, Twitter and Instagram in its communications with parents.*

**Recommendation 4.7: Family Friendly Website**

*The Toronto District School Board should continue to assess and update its website so that information and links to individual school websites are easily accessible to families of diverse ethnic backgrounds, especially for new Canadians and for those for whom English is not their prime language.*

**5.0 FUTURE AUDIT**

**Recommendation 5.1: Audit of Recommendations**

*The Toronto District School Board should appoint an external team to conduct an audit of progress on the recommendations outlined in this report after a period of nine to twelve months and provide that information to the Board of Trustees.*



School Safety and  
**Engaged Communities**

**DETAILED REPORT**

## BACKGROUND

On September 23, 2014, a tragic event occurred in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB or the Board). A student at North Albion Collegiate Institute (NACI), Hamid Aminzada, was fatally stabbed. What made it even more shocking was that it occurred within the walls of a school—traditionally a place expected by parents and educators alike to be a safe environment for children in which to learn and grow.

While parents and siblings mourned the death of their son and brother, the impact of the death was felt profoundly by the students, parents and staff of NACI and reverberated across the community and the education system. Students created a memorial to Hamid in a display case, a candle light vigil was held, a memorial fund was established, community agencies came together to provide support to the family and a funeral was held while many people continued to mourn the loss of a family member, a friend and a student.

Following the death, the Director of Education, Donna Quan, committed to reviewing the circumstances leading to the incident and the Toronto District School Board's response to the tragedy. A Steering Team was established to conduct an independent review surrounding the events leading to and following the death of Hamid Aminzada and to make a report on its findings and recommendations.

The Steering Team comprised three individuals:

- Kim Derry –President of Executek International, a security and risk management organization, and former Deputy Chief of Police for the City of Toronto;
- Sharifa Khan—President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Balmoral Multicultural Marketing with expertise in community voice and engagement; and
- Karen Forbes—Former TDSB Executive Superintendent of Education with an extensive understanding of the Board's educational programs, student support services and secondary schools.

To that Steering Team, the following two individuals were added to what will be known as the Review Team or the Team throughout this report:

- Kim Carr—Director of Investigations and Special Operations for Executek International, with 30 years of policing and over eleven years in public sector safety and security; and
- Gautam Nath—Vice President at Balmoral Multicultural Marketing in charge of strategic and business development with expertise in communications, marketing, market research and change management.

An interim report was submitted to the Board in November 2014 with the final report completed by March 2015

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

- i. The task for the Steering Team was to review the facts surrounding the events leading to and following the fatal stabbing of Hamid Aminzada including:
  - a) the circumstances pertaining to the occurrence of the tragic event in the school and the system response following the occurrence;
  - b) whether effective crisis response procedures were already in place to assist staff in their response; and
  - c) whether in responding to the tragic event, there was effective cooperation and communication by Toronto District School Board staff with: other Toronto District School Board staff, with parents and students, and with agencies such as the Toronto Police Service, Paramedic Emergency Services, the media and other agencies.
- ii. The Steering Team was to examine whether there was effective and supportive engagement between the school community, the broader community and community agencies.

Recommendations were to include the following:

- a) how the procedures used by the Toronto District School Board and all of its schools could be improved in the future in dealing with tragic occurrences;
- b) with a view to improving school safety and school-community engagement, ways in which schools can successfully reach out to their communities to foster mutual respect and understanding and to ensure that all students and their families receive the support they need to be able to participate fully in public education and in the life of their school; and
- c) any other matter that the Steering Team considered relevant to school safety or community engagement.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., how the environment of the schools and communities impact safety.

## SCOPE OF THE REPORT

The primary focus of the review was on NACI's crisis response procedures and practices, the overall safety and tone of the school's environment, and its involvement with and engagement of the community and vice versa. As the work of the Team progressed, it became important to the members to understand if what they were hearing and seeing at NACI was representative of the system as a whole. A secondary focus of the Team was to widen the scope in order to gather information, insights and knowledge on school safety and community engagement from a wide variety of stakeholders both from the system and the community. The end result of the consultation was to make recommendations related to the mandate not only for NACI but also for the system as a whole.

The Review Team was brought together and briefed by the Director of Education, Donna Quan, on October 16, 2014. Between October 22<sup>nd</sup> and October 31<sup>st</sup>, the Team developed the flow of work to be done (Appendix A) established the terms of engagement for review participants and created a discussion guide for the interviews to provide some degree of standardization. Interviews commenced on November 5<sup>th</sup> and were held during the month of November up to December 18<sup>th</sup> when schools closed for the holidays. During that time, an interim, preliminary report was submitted to the Director mid-November. Final interviews and two public meetings were conducted during the first three weeks of January, and the Team began to summarize their findings and develop their recommendations. The final report was submitted at the end of January, 2015, to the Director.

## METHODOLOGY

Between November 5 and December 18, 2014, and for the first three weeks in January, 2015, the Team conducted interviews and focus groups, and held several parent and community meetings. Discussions varied in format ranging from individual sessions, to small groups of two or three, to focus groups and two public meetings.

Participation was voluntary, and people were invited to bring a support person with them or, in the case of employees, a representative from their union or associations. The Team indicated that while comments might be attributed to groups, individuals would not be named.

Confidentiality would be preserved as much as possible unless legal requirements dictated that individuals be identified. People were informed that the report would focus on how the school and the system could move forward rather than to lay blame.

By the end of the process, close to 500 people had participated in over 80 sessions. The team met with NACI administrators, students, staff and parents (including Hamid's parents) as well as the support staff who provide direct service to the school. The scope was then broadened to include students, staff and administrators from across the system, executives from unions and professional associations who represent Toronto District School Board employees, leaders from religious and cultural groups, and students and staff from community organizations and associations. Meetings were held with Toronto Police Service (TPS) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and two public meetings were held in the east and west areas of the city (Appendix B).

The location of meetings for those associated with NACI was held at the school, although several, at the participants' requests were conducted off site. Interviews with those not directly tied to NACI were held at locations convenient to the participants.

Over 35 written submissions were accepted from staff and members of the public, and documents were requested by the Team from various system leaders so that policies and procedures could be reviewed and appropriate recommendations made. Assessments were made of the facilities and the Closed Circuit Television Camera (CCTV) systems at NACI. Of note, staff from the Caring and Safe Schools' department, the Superintendent of Education (SOE) responsible for NACI and school staff provided considerable assistance to the Team.

The following report is a review of the circumstances of Hamid's death and the response by the school and the system to that tragic death. The report outlines the approach undertaken to conduct the review, the events leading to Hamid's death and the response by Toronto District School Board and City of Toronto staff to the tragic event. This report presents the perspectives of a wide variety of stakeholders related to keeping schools safe and engaging



communities. This report concludes with 41 recommendations for actions in the following four areas:

1. Crisis Response;
2. Caring and Safe Environments;
3. Policies, Procedures and Practices for School Safety; and
4. Community Engagement and Support.

These recommendations focus on improving school safety and community engagement.

## CONTEXT

The Toronto District School Board is the largest school board in Canada and one of the largest in North America, with approximately 250,000 students, 565 schools and 39,000 full-time and part-time staff. It is one of the most multilingual and multicultural school boards in the world with 75 languages spoken in homes across the Toronto District School Board. Twenty-seven percent of its students are born outside of Canada with 43% of that demographic having English as their first language.<sup>2</sup>

NACI is a secondary school located within the Toronto District School Board. The school, established in 1962, is overseen by a principal and two vice-principals with approximately 70 teachers and currently serves approximately 1000 students largely from the Rexdale neighbourhood in which it is located. “The mission of North Albion Collegiate Institute as a culturally diverse school in an urban setting is to graduate knowledgeable, skilful and ethical individuals by offering a wide range of activities in a safe, harmonious, caring environment. Innovative programs and partnerships with the community, post-secondary institutions, business and industry, teach our students leadership and responsibility.”<sup>3</sup> The school has a strong math and science focus as well as a very active arts program and a wide range of co-curricular activities such as leadership camps, athletics, drama, music, dance and cultural clubs that allow students to immerse themselves in school life.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.Toronto District School Board.on.ca/AboutUs/QuickFacts.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://schools.Toronto District School Board.on.ca/northalbion/>.

## THE DEATH OF HAMID AMINZADA

On September 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2014, at about 12:30 p.m., the lunch hour at North Albion Collegiate Institute (NACI) had just ended and students were beginning to move to their classes.

On the main floor of the school near the auditorium, two students became involved in an altercation. The suspect of the incident allegedly pulled out a knife and stabbed Hamid Aminzada, a grade 12 full time student at NACI, in the chest despite other students and cameras being present.

Hamid walked a short distance down the hallway before collapsing where he was attended by several students on the scene. The suspect fled the school while another student ran to the office for help. Two members of the administrative team and several other staff members rushed to the scene.

Upon receiving notice of the incident, staff called 9.1.1. at 12:40 p.m., and the school was placed in lockdown<sup>4</sup> pursuant to the Ministry of Education's (MOE) and the Toronto District School Board's school safety protocols. Toronto Police Service (TPS), Toronto Fire Service (TFS) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responded quickly and attended to Hamid who was transported to hospital where he succumbed to his injuries that afternoon.

After it was verified that the suspect was no longer in the building, the lockdown at NACI was systematically lifted by the police. Witnesses were secured at the school and interviewed by police. This resulted in the suspect being identified, arrested, charged with Second Degree murder and placed before the courts.

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<sup>4</sup> *Lockdown* is used in a serious emergency situation where the threat is inside a school, on or very near to school property. A lockdown minimizes access and visibility in an effort to shelter students, staff and visitors in secure locations. <http://www.Toronto District School Board.on.ca/ElementarySchool/CaringSafeSchools/HoldandSecureLockdown.aspx>.

## 1.0 RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS AT NORTH ALBION COLLEGIATE

### PERSPECTIVES ON: CRISIS RESPONSE PROCEDURES

The Team interviewed those who were at NACI at the time of the incident including students, administration, school and central staff, and emergency services personnel. Collectively, they reported that the crisis was handled satisfactorily. All staff interviewed said that administrators and staff responded quickly and appropriately to attend to Hamid. It was noted that students were helpful at the scene, and teachers assisted to clear the area. The administration reported that the police attended within minutes of the call, with EMS personnel following quickly thereafter. A lockdown was called by police, and the staff secured students in classrooms, following lockdown procedures. Staff indicated that students knew the procedures and responded well to instructions. A message was put on the phone regarding the status of the school, and the information was provided to the Superintendent of Education (SOE), Toronto District School Board head office and neighbouring schools. The SOE, a communications officer, Caring and Safe Schools' personnel and others proceeded to the school to assist.

Interaction between the administrator, office, support staff and the police was effective and professional, but it was noted by NACI staff that at times, communication could have been a little clearer. Several administrators from the region reported that they were not contacted as to when the lockdown started or finished. The lack of communication compromised their abilities to secure their own schools. One person who stayed in her office during the lockdown was not released from her room by police and remained sequestered until the custodian found her long after the crisis was over.

The lockdown took place over two hours. Although there were some reports of challenges keeping the students occupied during such a long period of time, most staff indicated that students stayed quietly in the classroom with many checking CP24 on their cellphones. Staff and students found the lack of communication from administration and/or police over the two hour time period stressful.

Once police established that the building was safe to be emptied, they went from room to room releasing the occupants and exiting them from the building. It was expected that students would retire to the Community Hub across the street, but this did not happen. Social workers connected with the school expressed concern that there was not a gathering of all students following the lockdown in order to protect them from the media and to give them emotional support before they left for home. Staff gathered at the back of the building once students had left to be briefed on the next day's activity, and a subsequent call later in the evening informed staff to attend an eight o'clock staff meeting the following morning.

At the morning meeting, the Director and Associate Director responsible for the western region along with the SOE, Caring and Safe Schools' personnel and others gathered with staff to provide updates and plan the rest of the day. Social workers were available to provide direct support to students and staff. Most teachers appreciated the presence of the executive and central staff; however, a few were concerned that the school was re-opened before they had time to deal with their own grief and debrief the incident.

It was suggested that a delay in opening the school by a few hours, would have allowed staff to have some time to grieve, process the incident and make arrangements to have the crime scene cleaned thoroughly.

Principals of neighbouring schools suggested that they would have appreciated being at the morning meeting to be briefed along with staff, given the impact the crisis had on their schools as well. Upon reflection, review participants from all groups, recommended that lockdown drills should also be carried out at times when students are outside of classrooms and the school (e.g., lunch, period changes or just as classes dismiss).

Approximately ten social workers who were visually representative of the school's population were reassigned to NACI in some cases for several weeks. They responded to requests for support from students and staff. With the assistance of interpreters, they focussed on English as Second Language (ESL) students who seemed to be in the most distress--many of whom knew Hamid and/or the suspect (also a student at the school). It was recognized that the incident had impacted students in the neighbouring elementary and middle schools who knew the students involved and/or their siblings, so social workers went from class to class in those schools to allow students to talk about their feelings. It was suggested that names of siblings of registered students should be entered on student data cards so that in the event of a crisis, the siblings' schools can be alerted.

Understandably, staff all had various experiences in dealing with their own emotional reactions and those of the students, but most felt their social and emotional needs were met after the incident. Some found it very challenging to talk to the students and relied on the social workers to support them personally as well as to provide support for the students. Many reported that they did not seek support at the time but recognized that they may require it at a later date. Staff said they were exhausted emotionally and physically. Most are aware that social work support is available if they require it, but many suggested that follow-up should be ongoing, formalized and publicized.

On the Professional Development Day held in November, the agenda for the day was altered, and the Administration brought in a speaker who helped staff discuss and process their experiences. Reports were positive about the session, and it was recommended that all staff including hall monitors should have been invited to the event.

Similar to staff, students had different reactions to the event. Students accessed social work and guidance staff, but some were more comfortable talking to their classroom teachers or to each other. NACI staff, social workers associated with the school and community workers indicated that students seem to be moving back to routine, with the senior students more ready to move forward. Some English as a Second Language (ESL) students are still struggling with their feelings of grief and fear. The school social worker continues to monitor staff and students (particularly those who are vulnerable) and to meet with those who request support.

Following the incident, NACI held a Grade Nine Parents' Night and reported unusually high attendance. The Principal spoke about the incident, but he stated that concerns about safety did not become an issue during the event nor did he receive communication from parents after the incident regarding safety concerns or issues. However, community workers told the Team that some parents are still dealing with the death and are fearful for their children. Community workers indicated that parents do not fully understand crisis response procedures and recommended that more information should be made available to them before crisis occurs.

As previously noted, the response to the crisis was satisfactory, but the following changes should be considered due to advancements in technology, current research on best practices and previously unanticipated needs that would improve communications:

- Toronto District School Board protocol dictates that lockdown exercises are practised in every school twice a year. Where possible, Caring and Safe Schools' personnel as well as Toronto Police Service's staff should be invited to attend the drills and to provide feedback as to their observations.
- Included in the protocol should be the requirement that administrators and the SOE of each family of schools (FOS) should debrief all drill and actual lockdowns so that experiences can be shared and any identified issues resolved. If possible, police as well as caring and safe school personnel should be included in these sessions to share their experience and expertise.
- Standard operating procedure is to instruct all those in a lockdown to block visual access to classrooms and power their cellphones down so that suspects will move past quiet rooms assuming no one is there. However, in some situations, this direction has had negative effects. Lockdowns can occur over a long period of time, and a need may arise for teachers to receive updated information from or send information to those in charge in order to reduce misinformation.
- Anxiety and stress can be reduced if those in lockdown can receive timely information. Additionally, parents want to communicate with their children to ensure they are safe. A review of procedures related to cellphones can address noise by directing everyone to place cell phones on silent or vibrate and to communicate only through text.

- There was some confusion alerting neighbouring schools to the lockdown at NACI. Procedures should clearly state who is responsible for informing neighbouring schools about a lockdown, when the lockdown begins and ends, and what the status of those schools should be.
- The Toronto District School Board should continue to work with the Toronto Police Service in their development of the notification process for all lockdowns, “hold and secures”<sup>5</sup> and subsequent response by neighbouring schools. Consideration should be given to using the recently implemented, 24/7 operation centre called T-POC (Toronto Police Operations Centre) for such notification.
- There was also one person who was not released from the office in which s/he was sequestered. Procedures should ensure that every room, not just classrooms, have been checked.

### **Recommendation 1.1: Crisis Response Procedures**

*The Toronto District School Board should review and update, in collaboration with the Toronto Police Service and other relevant partners, the emergency response procedures (at a minimum Principal 911 and Operational Procedure PR695, Threats to School Safety) to include operational issues, communication protocols, key and card access, and open space issues during lockdowns.*

### **PERSPECTIVES ON: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

A number of schools have had to deal with catastrophic events that impacted the school, feeder schools and the community. No administrator can be fully prepared for all events, but when it happens s/he becomes a key person to manage the event, the needs of the students, parents and staff, and the impact on the local communities. S/he must stabilize the situation, take part in a number of investigations, and at the same time, attend to his/her own feelings. These are extreme responsibilities added onto an already stressful position.

The Toronto District School Board is sensitive to the needs not only of administrators but also those of students and staff. In the event of a significant crisis where support is required, staff such as the Family of Schools SOE, social workers, Caring and Safe Schools’ staff, and Communications personnel come together to function as a crisis response team . The teams work with emergency services personnel and school staff to assist in achieving a successful resolution to the situation and to support the affected students and staff. This is a credit to the organization and to the dedicated staff who step into the roles.

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<sup>5</sup> *Hold & Secure* is a response to a threat and/or incident in the general vicinity of a school, but not on or very near to school property. School life continues as normal inside the school; however, as a precautionary measure, outer doors are locked and no one enters or leaves the building. <http://www.Toronto District School Board.on.ca/ElementarySchool/CaringSafeSchools/HoldandSecureLockdown.aspx>

Often, the Family of Schools SOEs, the Caring and Safe Schools' coordinating and supervising principals, social workers and selected staff from Communications are part of the crisis response teams. After the incident at NACI, a number of issues arose that required coordination and expertise that was not readily available such as aligning with cultural and religious practices, keeping apprised of activities on social media, determining the timeframe for reopening the school and cleaning up the crime scene. In light of these issues, it is recommended the TDSB transition the crisis response teams to emergency management response teams (EMRTs). Consideration should be given to adding and training staff from Equity, Security, Health and Safety, and Facility Services along with several identified experienced principals, vice-principals and guidance staff.

In addition to the skills each member of the team brings, staff on these teams should be trained on Ontario's Incident Management System (IMS) which provides standards for those who respond to emergencies.<sup>6</sup> IMS is an integrated, structured, "command and control" process that is an internationally recognized benchmark for emergent and emergency situations. The result of training, the Toronto District School Board's EMRT would be knowledgeable, highly trained staff that would use consistent procedures across the Board aligned with the training received by professional emergency services' personnel.

Initial training and accreditation for Basic Emergency Management and IMS can be accomplished on line through Emergency Management Ontario training portals. This training can then be supported with advanced training from the Toronto Emergency Management Office. Further training and live exercises can take place with the Toronto Police Service and external stakeholders. This transition by the Toronto District School Board aligns their response to that of emergency services' reducing any conflicts over roles, responsibilities and documentation.

### **Recommendation 1.2: Emergency Management**

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *transition their current model of crisis response teams to formalized emergency management response teams (EMRTs); and*
- *consult with the Toronto Police Service and other external stakeholders to train regional Emergency Management Response Teams (EMRTs) using the Incident Management System (IMS) developed by Emergency Management Ontario.*

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.emergencymanagementontario.ca/english/emcommunity/ProvincialPrograms/IMS/ims\\_main.html](https://www.emergencymanagementontario.ca/english/emcommunity/ProvincialPrograms/IMS/ims_main.html).



## **PERSPECTIVES ON: LOCKDOWN TRAINING RELATED TO OPEN AREAS**

Training and exercises on lockdown procedures take place at least twice each year in schools throughout the Toronto District School Board. Students, teachers and administrators raised the concern that training supported with lockdown exercises does not always include strategies to deal with students, staff, visitors and contractors who are in open areas of the school. Such areas are hallways, playgrounds, cafeterias, auditoriums, parking lots and sports fields. Additionally, while some drills and actual lockdowns have occurred at times when areas were crowded such as lunch, school entry or exit, or during assemblies, it was reported that such drills are not consistent across the Board.

There are also issues around people coming to school late or from off-site events, and visitors, parents and itinerant staff attending the school who are not familiar with procedures. One Professional Support Services' staff reported that when a lockdown happens in a school with procedures that she is not familiar with, she, "just follows the crowd." Additionally, if the cellular phones or devices of school staff were linked with the "School Connects" telephone system, staff off-site or on the playground or sports fields could be alerted to the lockdown occurring at the school and provided with appropriate direction (Section 3.0).

### **Recommendation 1.3: Lockdown Training Related to Open Areas**

*The Toronto District School Board should consult with the Toronto Police Service and other external stakeholders to:*

- *develop and expand the lockdown procedures and training initiatives to include strategies for managing people in open areas of the school and/or those unfamiliar with the procedures; and*
- *mandate that at least one drill per year be held during the day when people are in open areas.*

## **PERSPECTIVES ON: MONITORING STUDENTS AND STAFF AFFECTED BY A CRISIS**

As previously mentioned, staff and students appreciated the support provided by the social workers. Many of those did not avail themselves of the services at the time but recognized that they might experience some trauma in the future. Several social workers noted that thought must be given to how the Board will support staff and students when the court case begins.

To ensure that people are aware that follow-up support is available after the event, it was suggested that a systematic and well communicated follow-up process be put in place to provide regular checks particularly with vulnerable staff and students. It is not easy to determine how to mandate a systematic follow-up because each situation is different, and some people are triggered by constant reminders of the event. However, some staff indicated a need for a more structured follow-up process. One teacher suggested providing one or more

mandatory sessions for staff (and potentially students as well) to process their emotions such as was held on the November 2014, Professional Development Day for the NACI staff.

**Recommendation 1.4: Monitoring for Students and Staff Affected by a Crisis**

*In addition to the support provided by Professional Support Services' staff immediately following tragic events, a systematic follow-up process should be created to monitor affected students and staff over the mid-and long-term.*

**PERSPECTIVES ON: COMMUNICATION TO PARENTS ON EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

Community workers told the Review Team that many parents particularly those who are newcomers to the country and/or do not speak English as their first language are unsure of what these emergency procedures entail and are fearful of them. There is some information on the Toronto District School Board website, but it is difficult to find particularly for some segments of the public, and it is not always translated into other languages. School agendas, such as the one NACI produces, have information on safety and security but do not mention procedures which might be unfamiliar to newly arrived parents such as lockdowns and hold and secures. A communication strategy around such safety procedures would assist in educating parents and visitors to the schools along with reducing fear and anxiety.

**Recommendation 1.5: Communication to Parents on Emergency Procedures**

*The Toronto District School Board should develop communications translated into multiple languages to inform parents and the public of caring and safe schools' procedures such as lockdowns and hold and secures.*

## 2.0 CARING AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

School environments should be safe, clean, nurturing and stimulating where those who work and learn feel pride and comfort in their surroundings. This type of environment is created by having a supportive, respectful and positive tone in the school, a building which is clean and safe, programs that support students and help them excel, and processes that are clear and easy to follow. This section of the report examines those factors that produce caring and safe environments in schools and is divided into three sub-topics:

- Tone/Climate;
- Physical Condition of Schools; and
- Programs and Processes.

### **PERSPECTIVES ON: TONE/CLIMATE**

Many students, staff and parents said that NACI is a good school with students and staff who feel they are connected to the school and each other. NACI offers several initiatives that help to build a positive association between the school and the students; notable among them are the breakfast club, grade nine orientation week, the fruit and snack program, and the Camp Tamarack Leadership program. Students and staff had high praise for the Tamarack program which provides months of leadership training for senior students and an opportunity for all grade ten students to come together to develop skills and build a sense of community.

Students commented on the support that they provide each other. After Hamid died, many turned to each other for consolation. Some said that when they face challenges, they often go to their friends for advice and support. Those interactions must be capitalized on and formalized through peer mentorship opportunities particularly for students entering grade nine at NACI so that they feel connected and welcomed to the school.

Both Athletics and the Arts are popular at NACI; they build spirit and contribute to a positive tone. Students new to Canada and the school system have the option of joining the NOW program (Newcomer Orientation Week) run by the North Etobicoke Local Immigration Partnerships. NOW, with the aid of volunteer students, helps new students understand the Canadian educational culture and integrate into the school. All these programs and others help build relationships and respect among students, staff and administration.

However, the Team was told that there are challenges that threaten the tone not just at NACI but also at many schools. Students, parents, and staff from both NACI and other areas of the Toronto District School Board brought forward concerns about bullying and cyber-bullying. At NACI, this is particularly true for the students coming from the elementary level as well as for those new to Canada. Despite the number of initiatives and programs that exists in Toronto

District School Board, bullying and cyber-bullying continued to be raised as concerns. Parents at the public meetings spoke about a lack of transparency and victim support, and the inconsistent implementation by some staff in dealing with these concerns.

Inappropriate and disruptive behaviour was also spoken of as a factor that diminishes the tone of a school. Staff at NACI and from other schools emphasized that the vast majority of students behave appropriately, but there is a small minority that does not. Students, known as “hall walkers”, who skip or leave classes during the period, were described by some as intimidating and bad influences on other students. Concerns were raised at NACI about the amount of profanity that is heard throughout the school.

There was also a concern among administrators across the system not only about incidents that end in violence but also about the “near misses”—those incidents that were averted but could have ended badly. A dashboard to record and track reported “near misses” needs to be developed and made available to administrators so that discussions can occur in school and at family of schools’ meetings around this issue.

A number of teachers stated that some students come to grade nine without the requisite skills. There can be many reasons for this, but one that concerned many teachers is the practice of transferring students in elementary school (even if they do not meet the minimum standards of promotion) so that they will be in classes with students of their own chronological age. There are programs in place to help these students reach the appropriate grade level in both the elementary and secondary panels, but they are not always successful. In some cases, the effort needed to “catch up” becomes too much for some students, and sadly, some students become disruptive or “drop out.”

Other reasons were also given as to why the environments at NACI and other schools are not as positive as they could be. Staff reported that they are sometimes intimidated by some students and, “turn the other way” rather than confront the situation. They also felt that, at times, consequences for misbehaviour are too lenient so they are not motivated to address it. The Team observed that there is a discrepancy between staff and administration as to what constitutes effective discipline.

NACI, in particular, has seen many changes in administrative staff over the years which erode efforts to build collaborative teams. Because of this constant turnover, students, staff, administration and central support staff are not getting enough opportunities to talk to each other. They have begun to lose touch with each other and tend to operate in silos.

**Recommendation 2.1: Supports for Transferred Students**

*The Toronto District School Board should conduct a review to determine if appropriate supports are in place to assist students who are transferred from one grade to another in elementary school to gain the skills they require for success in secondary school.*

**Recommendation 2.2: Collaborative Staff Discussions**

*Time and processes should be put in place at NACI to ensure that collaborative discussion on issues such as school tone and safety, student behaviour and discipline are implemented.*

**Recommendation 2.3: Development of Metrics Related to Positive School Climate**

*A review should be conducted on procedures, programs and data sets related to positive school climate, safety, bullying and cyber-bullying to:*

- *determine and implement metrics required to measure the effectiveness of programs;*
- *apply the metrics to the programs to determine and improve their effectiveness; and*
- *develop and establish a dashboard which tracks positive climate, bullying and cyber-bullying.*

**Recommendation 2.4: Dashboard for “Near Misses”**

*The Toronto District School Board should develop and make available to administrators a dashboard to record and track reported “near misses” in order to analyze and address these incidents.*

**PERSPECTIVES ON: PHYSICAL CONDITION OF SCHOOLS**

NACI’s school building has seen far better days. To one voice--students, staff, administrators and parents were in agreement--there is still a lot to be done in bringing up the level of repair and cleanliness in the school. Paint is peeling and windows are broken. There are holes in the ceiling, windows without curtains and fluctuations in temperatures which can reach as high as 36 degrees Celsius. Over 100 lockers are not occupied and have not been bolted. Empty unsecured lockers present a safety risk as they can be used to hide drugs and weapons.

A large area of NACI on the second floor which is now referred to as the “Pod” was built in an “open concept” style. Classrooms were not defined by walls; rather, several classrooms were accommodated in the open space. As years went by, the Pod was closed in to make individual classrooms. The results are very narrow hallways and windowless, stuffy, hot classrooms in the spring and fall. To make it worse, over the years, the roof has leaked, holes have been punched in the walls and wires have become exposed. Of equal concern are the gyms with large sections of the ceiling exposed and falling down.

These conditions and others contribute to an overall feeling of neglect and lack of care of not only the building but also the people in it. Research indicates that poor school environments

affect morale and student achievement negatively. Some review participants believed, rightly or wrongly, that schools in less affluent areas are in more disrepair than those in higher socio-economic areas.

Similar conditions in buildings and grounds are found not only at NACI but also, the Team was told, at many other schools. Poorly kept facilities result in a lack of respect for the building that can lead to people littering and vandalizing. This is what is normally referred to as the “broken window” syndrome. The “broken window” theory was explained by George Kelling and James Wilson in 1982. In brief, they explain that, “at the community level, disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked, in a kind of developmental sequence. Social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepaired all the rest of the windows will soon be broken. This is as true in nice neighbourhoods’ as in rundown ones.... rather, one unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing. (It has always been fun.)”<sup>7</sup>

Philip Zimbardo, a Stanford psychologist, reported in 1969 that, “Untended property becomes fair game for people out for fun or plunder and even for people who ordinarily would not dream of doing such things and who probably consider themselves law-abiding.” He went on further to speak about vandalism which is one of the issues at hand within the Toronto District School Board’s facilities. He states, “past experience of no one caring—vandalism begins--the sense of mutual regard and the obligations of civility are lowered by actions that seem to signal that no one cares.” Staff interviewed believed that these theories account in part, for the lack of respect for the building and the inappropriate behaviour of some students.

Many Toronto District School Board buildings are in poor condition and need repair; this is estimated at a cost of 3.0 billion dollars.<sup>8</sup> The team was told that the TDSB’s backlog in infrastructure repairs is much greater than those of other Boards in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and in the States. Measures have been put in place related to quality control, accountability, risk management, fiscal responsibility, and increased productivity and training to lower the cost of repairs and maintenance. However, these steps have not been enough; other creative solutions need to be examined. Consideration must be given to address these conditions in the development of the Capital Plan, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

### **Recommendation 2.5:** Repairs to North Albion Collegiate Institute

*An assessment of repairs and maintenance that are required at NACI should be undertaken and a plan developed and implemented to improve the physical condition of the school and grounds to build student and staff pride and reduce safety risks.*

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/198203/broken-windows>, 1982, The police and neighbourhood safety by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, Broken Windows, The Atlantic Online | March 1982 | Broken Windows.

<sup>8</sup> The 2010-2011 Vision of Hope Environmental Scan of the Toronto District School Board, Pg. 110 – 112.

**Recommendation 2.6:** Financial Support for Backlog of Repairs to Schools  
*Consideration should be given, in the development of the Capital Plan, to significant infrastructure issues of schools in need of repair, particularly in disadvantaged communities.*

## **PERSPECTIVES ON: PROGRAMS, SUPPORTS AND PROCESSES**

The students at NACI benefit from many programs that are provided by the school, Board and the community to meet their diverse social, behavioural, emotional and academic needs. Focus on Success, Credit recovery, LEAP, Pathways to Education, Men of Distinction, Ladies on the Rise, MicroSkills, and the Health Clinic<sup>9</sup> are some of the programs that are found in the school. Students and staff value these programs highly. Some teachers believed that some of the programs could be used more effectively and recommended that the programs in question be evaluated to identify and resolve issues. Several students suggested that other programs such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters would be beneficial as well.

Despite the number and quality of programs and initiatives, students and staff said that there needs to be more discussion and information around such issues as wellness, mental health, respect and appropriate behaviour. Students, in particular, stressed the need for greater access to the clinic that operates on Mondays at NACI and more information on mental health.

Many students at NACI and across the system deal with issues of poverty, mental health, dysfunctional homes, personal and parental unemployment, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), cultural shock and others. The Team was told that racial tensions exist at NACI and in other schools just as they do in society. There is a clear need for students and staff to discuss these issues and integrate all students in positive ways within schools. Also recommended were the use of discussion circles and town halls to discuss relevant issues and fuller implementation of restorative justice to deal with inappropriate behaviour.

NACI staff and administrators stressed the need for more counselling for students. NACI receives one day of social work support per week and an allocation of 2.5 guidance counsellors. Praise was high for these services, but some students who are dealing with significant social, emotional, behavioural and academic issues need intensive support from Professional Support Services' staff. Social workers, child and youth workers (CYWs), child and youth counsellors (CYCs), psychologists and others provide support to ensure that all students' needs are met in the most equitable and inclusive environment possible. Almost all those who spoke to the Team indicated that there was a need for more staff in these services as gaps continue to exist.

Administrators cited the need for more transitional support for students who are non-discretionary, administrative transfers (i.e., students who are moved from one school to

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www2.tdsb.on.ca/MOSS/asp\\_apps/school\\_landing\\_page/pdfs/web/2807\\_4pageLayout.pdf](http://www2.tdsb.on.ca/MOSS/asp_apps/school_landing_page/pdfs/web/2807_4pageLayout.pdf).

another when certain Board criteria are met). Currently, these students receive support for approximately six weeks from a CYW, but it was reported that often more support is needed.

Some students, regardless of the interventions provided in the school setting, continue to struggle and require intensive support of alternative programs. Teachers and administrators from across the system were of the opinion that more alternative programs are required to meet the needs of these youth.

Toronto District School Board teachers and administrators are clear on one thing. Time is stretched and paperwork has increased. These pressures take away from their ability to perform their prime roles – i.e. teaching and leading. Teachers and administrators reported feeling overwhelmed by the number of initiatives and tasks they deal with. Mandated curricular initiatives, reduced budgets and support staff, and required training have resulted in employees finding themselves stretched for time. There was a belief that some of the initiatives did not meet the needs of students and the Board's core business. Teachers and administrators were concerned about the number of times that principals were summoned to meetings leaving, particularly at the elementary level, schools with less supervision. These issues have arisen before and attempts made to address them but not to the degree that is needed. These issues must continue to be addressed.

**Recommendation 2.7: Evaluation of Programs**

*NACI staff and students, with the support of central staff, should develop metrics to evaluate programs offered in the school and address any issues that might impede their effectiveness.*

**Recommendation 2.8: Allocation of Additional Professional Services to North Albion C.I.**

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *allocate one Child and Youth Counsellor to NACI; and*
- *increase the allocation of social work support to NACI to deal more effectively with issues related to the social, emotional and behavioural needs of students.*

**Recommendation 2.9: Student and Staff Discussions**

*Students and staff at NACI should use strategies such as circle talks, town halls and restorative justice to discuss and address issues related but not limited to health and well-being, behaviour, and race and culture where appropriate.*

**Recommendation 2.10: Implement Peer Mentoring Program**

*NACI students and staff should develop a peer mentoring program to ensure that every incoming grade nine student is paired with a senior student in September to assist in the transition from elementary school to secondary.*



**Recommendation 2.11:** Allocation of Additional Social Workers

*The Toronto District School Board should allocate additional social workers to their current complement to support students, staff and families across the system.*

**Recommendation 2.12:** Transitional Support for Students Requiring Transfers

*The procedure for transitioning non-discretionary transferred students should reflect flexibility for addressing individual needs and not be limited to six weeks.*

**Recommendation 2.13:** Additional Alternative Programs

*The Toronto District School Board should increase the number of alternative programs to provide support for select students who require more social, emotional, behavioural and academic support than is currently available in many secondary schools.*

**Recommendation 2.14:** Time and Workflow Analysis

*Discussions should be held at all levels of the Toronto District School Board to determine time and workload pressures placed on staff and administration and measures taken to address them.*

**Recommendation 2.15:** Administrative Stability at North Albion C.I.

*Attention should be paid to monitoring transfers of administrative staff at NACI to ensure stability for the school.*

## 3.0 POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES FOR SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

### PERSPECTIVES ON: CONTROLLED ENTRY AND DOOR LOCKING DEVICES

Unlike elementary schools, secondary schools are not required to lock their doors (although some do), nor, as in the case of elementary schools, do they have a camera trained on the main entrance with a remote device by which to lock and unlock the door so that access to the building is controlled. At NACI, the doors remain unlocked so that students and staff can go in or out at will, but this leaves the school vulnerable to intruders who may want to cause harm or commit a criminal act. Students, teachers and administrators reported that unknown people enter their school at various times of the day. The configuration of many secondary schools allows for visitors to go in several different directions after they enter the school. At the very least, NACI and other secondary schools should manually lock their doors after the start of the school day so that entry could be monitored by a system similar to the one presently used in elementary schools. This solution wouldn't stop all intruders from gaining entry but would limit their access significantly.

An electronic access control system on all exterior doors would assist in informing administrators that all exterior doors were secured during a lockdown in a timely and safe manner. Likewise, such a system could be accessed remotely during the daily operation of the schools, at the end of the day, at nights, weekends and on statutory holidays. Such systems require programming to ensure one door could safely be opened during a lockdown for emergency services and police to enter. It was noted to the Team that access control systems at TDSB sites have undergone a significant shift since amalgamation. Many different access systems remain within the schools however TDSB is attempting to standardize on two systems; card readers and speak & release systems, in addition to key access and controls.

During a lockdown, procedures and best practices direct that classroom doors should be locked or secured as best as possible. At NACI and many other Toronto District School Board schools, when a lockdown is called, as was the case on September 23rd, the teacher must open the classroom door, insert the key into the lock to activate it and then close the door. Precious time could be lost in locating the key, and the teacher's safety could be jeopardized by stepping into the hall to lock the door. An interior locking device which could also be disengaged from the inside would be faster and safer. It was noted to the Team that there were a large number of lock manufacturers' products in use and Facility Services was looking at ways to convert them into being locked from the inside.

#### **Recommendation 3.1:** Controlled Entry

*Secondary schools should be required to lock all doors after the beginning of the school day with only one point of controlled entry. Following entry, all visitors should report to the office and receive identification.*

### **Recommendation 3.2:** Electronic Access Control on Exterior Doors

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *undertake a comprehensive review of the access control systems in all schools;*
- *develop and implement a plan to upgrade existing electronic systems into one system;*
- *acquire new electronic systems for schools that do not have them; and*
- *integrate all systems into one electronic system.*

### **Recommendation 3.3:** Interior Door Locking Devices

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *research the installation of locking devices on all interior, common area doors, specifically classrooms and offices, which can be locked and unlocked from the inside; and*
- *develop a phased-in implementation plan of interior door locking devices*

## **PERSPECTIVES ON: CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION CAMERAS**

Communities in Canada, the States and Britain reported feeling safer in areas where cameras are installed.<sup>10</sup> Evaluation conducted in 2007 by the Canadian Police Research Centre in Toronto resulted in analytics and metrics that showed an increase in safety perception in communities when public space cameras were deployed.<sup>11</sup> The perception of safety is consistent with the perception of enhanced safety people have when police officers in uniform are visible in communities or when increased lighting is introduced around isolated areas.<sup>12</sup>

Courts use video imagery every day to show suspects at or near crime scenes to aid in the prosecution of criminals. Bill Crate, Security Director of the Canadian Bankers Association (CBA), reports that the use of cameras in banks resulted in 90% of those incidents being solved through arrests.<sup>13</sup>

CCTV images are also important to police who are responding to emergencies not only to identify the suspect but also to determine if the incident is over or if the suspect is still on the premises, possibly armed or with hostages. Additionally, immediate access and timely copying of CCTV files during a crisis are critical for police.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://avigilon.com/press-tools/press-releases/cctv-drives-public-s-safety-perception-but-image-quality-reduces-effectiveness-as-a-tool-against-crime/>.

<sup>10</sup> <http://geeksandglobaljustice.com/wp-content/TPS-CCTV-report.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Canadian Police Research Centre-Toronto Police Public Space CCTV Project, 2005-06.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.citylab.com/housing/2014/02/streetlights-and-crime-seemingly-endless-debate/8359/>.

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2013/04/26/bank\\_robbers\\_why\\_do\\_they\\_even\\_bother\\_anymore.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2013/04/26/bank_robbers_why_do_they_even_bother_anymore.html).

Students with whom the Team met reported that cameras in schools make them feel safer. When a minor crime is committed at NACI, the administration uses the images from the cameras to identify students alleged to have committed the act. Administrators at NACI state that probably over 80 percent of minor incidents are solved by using the camera, and a message is sent to students that there is a very good chance that they will be caught if they steal.

Police used the CCTV system during the incident at NACI but found it difficult to view the images because they could only be viewed at a single station and were not on a large screen. The ability to obtain a copy of the footage was also challenged given the equipment available. Additionally, because the cameras were not placed at all entry or exit locations, the officers were unable to determine if the suspect was still in the building or if he had re-entered. Consequently, the lock down was maintained for a considerable time while the police ensured the school was safe to release. Much of the incident was captured on camera so that police and staff could see the vicinity where it occurred and who was likely involved. However, because there were blind spots at the location of the stabbing, the whole incident was not visible.

The challenge is that many of the camera systems in the Toronto District School Board are aging (which is true of the system at NACI). Some camera positions that were deemed appropriate 15 to 20 years ago need to be relocated given new High Definition cameras and new technologies.

An inspection of NACI's cameras and recording systems revealed that they are not adequately maintained and are near the end of their life cycle. Currently, there is no ongoing maintenance program for the existing CCTV or DVR systems installed in Toronto District School Board facilities. Facility Services (Security Infrastructure Steering Committee personnel) rely on the users to report any problems or outages in the system, and the calls for service are prioritized against the magnitude of repairs currently outstanding within the entire system.

The Team was notified that maintenance of the CCTV systems falls under the Maintenance & Construction Skilled Trades Council collective agreement and currently there are inadequate resources to provide this service.

While cameras are an important component of an overall security program, it is equally important that monitoring be carried out on a consistent basis. The Toronto District School Board has invested millions of dollars installing CCTV systems, perimeter and fire alarms in schools. The perimeter and fire alarms are currently monitored at a central location; however, the CCTV systems in schools are not centrally monitored. It was reported to the Team that 90% of the CCTV systems currently installed are networked and could be monitored, but there is no central facility in place.

In the case of a fire, staff in the centre monitoring CCTV systems could update Toronto Fire Service on their observations so informed decisions could be made regarding the firefighting apparatus required. Central monitoring would also allow the Toronto District School Board to live-monitor lockdowns and hold and secures so that accurate information about the crisis could be provided to emergency services. Additionally, with the limited number of mobile security guards currently in place, live monitoring of an event would allow central staff to prioritize mobile security's response to calls for service and increase the Toronto District School Board's ability to mitigate liability.

Additionally, integrated camera feeds could be provided if the Toronto District School Board CCTV system was networked with the Toronto Police Operations Centre (T-POC), similar to the agreement with the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC). Personnel situated at T-POC would have the ability to live-monitor an event as it unfolded and direct responding officers to critical areas within the school. Information, confirmed by police on the scene, could reduce the amount of time that a facility remained in lockdown and assist in determining what security measures should be taken by neighbouring schools. Integration of live monitoring of all systems such as perimeter alarms, fire alarms and CCTV would increase safety and security in all Toronto District School Board facilities and is an accepted standard within today's security environment. The Team was notified that currently agents at the Oakburn Call Centre (OCC) informally use the CCTV systems to monitor ongoing situations at schools but this information is not easily shared with first responders. There is generally no proactive monitoring of CCTV systems by the OCC. This informal arrangement has no controls or procedures in place to protect privacy and should be formalized or stopped.

**Recommendation 3.4:** Review of Closed Circuit Television Cameras in Schools

*The Toronto District School Board Facility Services - Security Infrastructure Steering Committee personnel should:*

- *review and replace the current CCTV system at NACI;*
- *review the current Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) systems in schools to determine the condition and life cycle of the equipment, placement of cameras to exits and entry points, identification of blind spots and clarity of images; and*
- *develop a plan for a phased-in upgrade of the system prioritizing schools with older systems.*

**Recommendation 3.5:** Implementation of a Maintenance Program for the CCTV System

*The Toronto District School Board should initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a maintenance program by an external stakeholder for all CCTV systems and Digital Video Recording Devices (DVR).*

### **Recommendation 3.6: CCTV Central Monitoring Centre**

*The Toronto District School Board should establish a central CCTV monitoring centre to be integrated with the current building alarm and fire alarm monitoring centre.*

## **PERSPECTIVES ON: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS DURING EMERGENT EVENTS**

The Synrevoice, School Connects system, used by many schools in the Toronto District School Board, is a mass communication tool that enables boards of education, school administrators and teachers to quickly send phone calls, emails and SMS text messages to parents and/or staff regarding any kind of school related event.<sup>14</sup> In the Toronto District School Board, this system is being used primarily to notify parents of student absences, school activities and events. Education and training into the use of this system is currently on-going but not complete.

This system could also be used to support safety in the school and on school property. Staff could be notified on their cellular phones or other personal devices via text messaging of a lockdown, hold and secure or other emergent situations with a short emergency message. System and school-specific messages could be prepared and stored within the system and then activated at the onset of a situation. Updates on the situation could also be activated to keep people informed as to how to respond. For students and staff on route to a school, administrators and SOEs in the area, Caring and Safe Schools' personnel and the community at large, the School Connects system could be used to notify them and others of the situation at a school and provide appropriate instruction. The system could assist emergency services in forwarding critical information to teachers during an emergent situation as well as informing people when the crisis ended and where staff, parents and students should assemble.

During our review, most staff confirmed that they keep their personal cellular devices with them while at work. They agreed that receiving updated information during the lockdown at NACI would have alleviated some of the stress experienced by both students and staff. The teachers stated that any updates that they did receive during the lockdown came from the students who were monitoring CP24 on their personal devices. Although not a problem in the NACI situation, receiving reports from the media during a crisis is generally not the best way of keeping people informed as unreliable information could be disseminated.

A school's Public Address system (PA) is an essential communication device which is utilized during emergency situations such as lockdowns, hold and secures, fire alarms or other emergent situations. It is a life-safety device, and its operational efficiency is paramount to the Toronto District School Board's ability to control and coordinate such events effectively for the safety of all students, staff and others on the premises. In speaking with teachers,

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.synrevoice.com/>.

administrators and staff from Facility Services, the Review Team learned that many of the existing systems are older, out of date and not fully operational.

Facility Services' staff advised that when an older system is removed from a building and replaced with a new system, the old equipment is warehoused and parts from that system are used to repair older systems because new parts are no longer manufactured. This process is not a dependable way to repair a system. Used parts are not as reliable as new ones and that makes the repairs a short term solution to a potentially bigger problem. The time invested into the repair may not be of value if the part only lasts a short period of time, and the system breaks again.

NACI teachers reported that "call buttons" used by teachers in the classrooms to signal the office do not always function. This situation could create a life-safety issue in the event that a student has a medical problem in the classroom or if students become confrontational with each other or with the teacher. Of further concern is that some staff members spoke of broken "call buttons" or other malfunctions that had not been repaired.

At NACI, the system had broken down a number of times in the past, including at the beginning of the year, and Facility Services attended and conducted the necessary repairs. During the lockdown on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, the system was operational and used to its fullest extent. However, one person reported that she did not hear that the lockdown had ended because there was no speaker in her office. When upgrading P.A. systems, consideration should be given to installing speakers in all offices and near all entrance doors.

An additional concern is that a secondary back-up such as a megaphone was not readily available to the administration. One megaphone inconveniently located in the gym is not sufficient back-up for an emergency. Consideration should be given to ensure that all schools have at least two megaphones with extra batteries for use during fire drills, lockdowns and other similar events. Accessibility to a megaphone or other device would make the back-up plan more effective.

### **Recommendation 3.7:** Communications during Emergent Events

*The Toronto District School Board should place resources and support into completing the implementation of the Synrevoice "School Connects" system and develop procedures for its use in emergent and emergency situations.*

### **Recommendation 3.8:** Public Address System

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *undertake a review of the operational and repair status of the existing Public Address system(s);*
- *ensure systems are repaired where appropriate;*

- *develop a plan for a phased-in upgrade of PA systems prioritizing schools with older systems; and*
- *require all schools to have a secondary means of communication such as a megaphone accessible in the event of an emergency.*

## **PERSPECTIVES ON: MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF HALLS**

Hall monitors play an important role in the safety of secondary schools--moving students along in the halls, alerting the administration to emergent issues, escorting students from a class when required and helping them understand and meet school expectations. It was apparent from some comments that there is a lack of clarity about their roles and responsibilities. Hall Monitors do not currently receive on-going training, but the majority of those interviewed agreed that they should be provided it given that they interact with youth in challenging situations. Training should include but not be limited to conflict mediation and resolution strategies, restorative justice, stress management and positive behaviour strategies.

School safety is everyone's responsibility and requires controls plus due diligence. It should not be delegated to only a select few. Some teachers and many administrators and superintendents reported that hall monitors (if a school has one) and administrators patrolling the building are not enough to keep a building safe.

Currently, secondary school teachers in the Toronto District School Board are required to do 27 half-periods of "on call" and/or "supervision." Additionally, teachers can be required to perform supervision under special circumstances. However, the Team was told that the Toronto District School Board is one of the few Boards in Ontario that does not have regular supervision duties scheduled into teacher timetables. Attention must be given in the 2015 Collective Bargaining Process to increasing the supervision duties of secondary teachers.

However, the Team heard from a number of teachers that they do not always feel supported not only when supervising the halls but also when they refer students to the office. Teachers and administrators also expressed concern that communication regarding incidents can be inconsistent. It is important that school staff has meaningful discussions about progressive discipline strategies, consequences and reporting protocols.

### **Recommendation 3.9: Training for Hall Monitors**

*Hall monitors should receive timely and ongoing training provided by the Toronto District School Board to ensure that they have the most up-to-date knowledge and skills with which to fulfill their roles.*



**Recommendation 3.10: Hall Supervision by Teachers**

*Attention should be given in the 2015 Collective Bargaining process to increasing flexibility, usage and total amount of supervision duties of secondary teachers outside of their assigned instructional duties.*

**PERSPECTIVES ON: PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE**

Ensuring documentation of incidents is critical to administering effective progressive discipline. A student who has behaved inappropriately and requires intervention beyond that provided by the classroom teacher can be spoken to by any number of people such as a guidance counsellor, a child and youth worker or counsellor, a Focus on Success teacher and others. Before implementing the appropriate level of support and/or progressive discipline, all appropriate staff must have information to determine the frequency of the behaviour and the interventions and disciplinary measures used in the past. Staff also needs information to track changing or changed behaviour and provide timely pro-active, intervention to address not only the behaviour but also the underlying issues causing the behaviour.

NACI has various systems in place to record the referral—paper forms, Notepad—a feature in the Student Information System (SIS) to record information and the Transitions Tracking Tool—a web-based tool which provides a variety of information and tracking functions. The paper forms tend to be used only between the teacher referring the student and the person to whom the student is sent. They are not usually accessible if several staff members are involved. Providing access to an electronic system such as Notepad or the Transitions Tool to all staff who make or receive referrals would ensure that documentation and appropriate intervention would occur. In implementing such a system, concerns regarding privacy would have to be addressed.

**Recommendation 3.11: Recording and Monitoring Progressive Discipline**

*The Toronto District School Board should mandate the use of an existing or a new, electronic information management system to ensure that proper reporting and documentation of incidents occur and that information of incidents is accessible to all appropriate staff.*

**PERSPECTIVES ON: SECURITY INTERVENTION**

The Toronto District School Board is a licensed business entity under the Private Security and Investigation Services Act, 2005, (PSISA) legislation of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Service for the Province of Ontario, and employs thirty four guards, two supervisors and a security team leader who are licenced pursuant to the PSISA.

Their roles and responsibilities are focused on the physical security of buildings, conducting mobile patrols, responding to calls for service and assisting the twenty four hour operation of the Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada (ULC) licensed call centre for security and fire alarms.

Security staff operates on a 24/7 basis and is called upon from time to time to assist Caring and Safe Schools' (CSS) staff to respond to incidents. Over time, CSS has come to rely on Security for response to issues at schools, drawing staff off the road and into schools during the day shifts. The initial establishment of the Security unit did not contemplate guards on duty during day shift and so resources are being stretched. Security staff reported that there are insufficient personnel to perform these duties on a regular basis. In 2015, the security unit is deploying a two-man patrol vehicle to address other safety concerns. This should be implemented on all three shifts, but there is not sufficient personnel. The new iTrack system scheduled for 2015 that documents calls for service and response should provide data to support this request.

The training for security guards within the Toronto District School Board is limited. They are not receiving ongoing, regular training in areas such as emergency management, crisis management, conflict resolution, mental health issues and other school safety topics.

**Recommendation 3.12:** Allocation of Staff to the Security Unit

*The Toronto District School Board should review the role of the Security unit, increase the staff complement allocated to the Security Unit and implement an ongoing training schedule.*

**PERSPECTIVES ON: OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY – WORKPLACE VIOLENCE**

Violence in the workplace is an unfortunate reality within all workplaces in Ontario. The Toronto District School Board is bound by the Occupational Health and Safety Act which mandates that the risk of violence be identified, investigated, and prevented when and where possible.

Information sharing with employees may be necessary to meet the requirements of the OSHA-WV legislation. The Act states:

Employer's duties Section 28 of the OSHA:

28(2) Without limiting the strict duty imposed by subsection (1), an employer shall:

(h) take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker;

PART III.0.1 Violence and Harassment, Section 32.0.1 of the OSHA:

Provision of Information:

(3) An employer's duty to provide information to a worker under clause 25 (2) (a) and a supervisor's duty to advise a worker under clause 27 (2) (a) include the duty to provide information, including personal information, related to a risk of workplace violence from a person with a history of violent behaviour if,

(a) the worker can be expected to encounter that person in the course of his or her work; and

(b) the risk of workplace violence is likely to expose the worker to physical injury.

Under section 32.0.2 (2)

(b) include measures and procedures for summoning immediate assistance when workplace violence occurs or is likely to occur;

The Toronto District School Board manages a wide range of students, the majority of whom pose no risk of violence. A small sample, however, do pose a risk to students, staff and employees of the Toronto District School Board. When staff members interact with students, it is their expectation that their employer has exercised due diligence in ensuring that the student does not pose a known risk to their safety.

In the event that a student is being reintroduced to the school setting after being charged for committing a violent offence, understandably there is an expectation that the employer will have a process in place by which to determine whether or not the violent act poses any risk of future violence in the school setting. The current process should be reviewed to ensure that each returning student provides sufficient disclosure of the charges and release conditions to Toronto District School Board staff. This information must be screened (as part of a formal violence risk assessment process) to alleviate any concern by the staff of the Toronto District School Board. Information sharing with staff must occur in the event that this is deemed necessary to reduce risk. Information (only as much is necessary) must be released to those working directly with the student to ensure a safe working environment.

A joint news release issued by the Ontario and B.C. Privacy Commissioners (BC & Commissioner/Ontario, 2008) states that, "If there are compelling circumstances affecting health or safety...privacy laws allow disclosure to next of kin and others, including school officials, and health care providers...Privacy is important, but preserving life is more important."<sup>15</sup>

In a similar report entitled *Who Do You Want to Sue You? Confidentiality and community risk management* (Cross, 2011), the author Pamela Cross identifies that the Supreme Court of Canada's decision (*Smith v Jones*) "sets out three factors to be considered when determining whether or not a breach of confidentiality in sharing information is appropriate."<sup>16</sup>

1. Is there a clear risk to an identifiable person or group of persons?
2. Is there a risk of serious bodily harm or death?
3. Is the danger imminent?

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<sup>15</sup> BC, O. o., & Commissioner/Ontario, I. a. (2008, May 9). Ontario and B.C. Privacy Commissioners issue joint message: personal health information can be disclosed in emergencies and other urgent circumstances. *News Release: Information and Privacy Commissioner/Ontario; Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia*.

<sup>16</sup> Cross, P. (2011, July). *Who Do You Want to Sue You? Confidentiality and community risk management*. The Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children.

The issue of thorough and relevant information sharing is critical to a successful threat assessment process. The current process should be reviewed and education of those tasked with assessing risk be incorporated into that process. All potential participants in a threat assessment process must be aware of what constitutes relevant information and must be confident that information sharing is sanctioned and necessary when managing cases which pose a risk of harm. Protection of information and the refusal to share appropriately could ultimately result in death or serious injury.

#### Current Dissemination of Information

Caring and Safe Schools' personnel do not currently receive the Recognizance of Undertaking (Recognizance – "Bail papers") of a student who has been charged with a criminal act and has been granted bail conditions. The process should incorporate the forwarding of a copy of the Recognizance to Caring and Safe Schools' Coordinating Principal and the Principal of the school where the student will be attending.

The Review Team has learned that the court imposed conditions on a student who is charged with an act(s) of violence is not consistently shared with the staff who may encounter that student during the course of employment. In the event that a student is charged with offences of serious violence, there is an expectation that a thorough process is in place to ensure the safety of all in the school. An inconsistent process results in a safety concern to the staff and students and a liability to the Toronto District School Board.

Amendments to the current procedure, PR 540, support the provisions of the OSHA; however, a new supporting procedure is required to ensure that the recognizance is received from the Court. How to receive, store and disseminate the information listed on the Recognizance in a timely manner to school-specific staff is vital to ensure that the provisions of the OHSA are met and must also be in the new procedure. This new policy and procedure should be included within the 'Violence Risk Assessment Protocol.'

This rationale relates to incidents where a student has been investigated by the Police and a criminal charge has been laid. We recommend the same disclosure that has been described above be provided to staff when the investigation has taken place at the school level and no involvement with the Police has occurred.

The results of internal school investigations and any imposed conditions on the student, as well as any and all Recognizance identifying Court imposed conditions, must be included when students who pose a risk of violence are placed into a school.

Any variance of imposed conditions, whether it is school imposed or court imposed, must be immediately disclosed. Notification of the conclusion of imposed conditions must also be disseminated to all staff.

#### Information to be shared

Only as much information is to be shared as necessary. This determination as to how much information should be shared should be decided by a multi-disciplinary team. Identifiers or

information such as the address or date of birth of any person who is acting as a surety for the student should be vetted.

**Recommendation 3.13:** Occupational Health & Safety Act– Workplace Violence (OSHA-WV):

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *review and revise Procedure 540 to clarify the information to be shared about a student or employee who is likely to pose a threat of harm to another student or employee in the workplace;*
- *train all administrators on the revised procedures to ensure consistent application; and*
- *develop a policy with supporting procedures on receiving, disseminating and storing the information.*

## 4.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

### **PERSPECTIVES ON: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

Students live in a larger community beyond the school which significantly impacts them. To provide the support that young people need, communities must be clean, safe and stable, and offer opportunities and social supports to meet their needs and those of their families. They need to come home to caring adults who themselves have the resources and supports they require to establish a healthy home environment in which families are involved with and supportive of each other. Sadly, this is often not the case for many youth.

Many of the issues that have been identified in this report such as poverty, violence, mental health, “run down” housing, racism and a lack of social, emotional and financial resources effect the home lives and communities in which Toronto District School Board students live. As they face some of these conditions in their daily lives, it is critical that students, families, schools, social services, and secular and faith based agencies collaborate to create positive and healthy environments.

The social agencies and service organizations in the community spoke highly of how NACI staff support the students. School and central staff are adult points of contact who work to identify youth who may be at risk and build support systems for them.

Both within the school and beyond its walls, there are a number of social services, community agencies and faith based organizations that provide essential assistance. At NACI, there are community groups and services that come into the school to provide educational, financial, social, emotional and settlement support. They include MicroSkills, the North Etobicoke Local Immigration Partnerships, Pathways to Education, Toronto Public Health and Trust 15.

NACI is located close to the Rexdale Community Hub which houses a number of agencies together to provide services for the community. They include Albion Neighborhood Services, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Toronto, Community Micro Skills Development Centre, Delta Family Resource Centre, Micro Skills Pro Tech Media Centre, Rexdale Community Health Centre, Rexdale Community Legal Clinic, Rexdale Employment Services and Rexdale Women’s Centre.

The Team spoke to several faith based organizations and were impressed with the dedication and the efforts they are taking to help not only their congregations but also the neighbourhoods around them. The International Muslim Organization (IMO) mosque received a grant from the provincial government to build a gym to be completed by 2015 to give all youth in the neighborhood a space to come to and engage in physical and recreational activities. The Toronto Police Service, especially 23 Division, has played an important role in

outreaching to the community and has formed a Somalian Liaison Unit composed of both police and community members.

Clearly, the school and the community provide, to the best of their abilities, services and supports to students and their families. However, many stated that more resources are required. One community worker compared the support Rexdale receives to that which other disadvantaged communities receive and felt that Rexdale is under resourced.

One solution to ensuring resources are maximized and available to the community is to promote greater collaboration between the Toronto District School Board and community service providers. Challenged by thinning budgets, the growing needs of the community and the responsibility to deliver on their own mandates, community service providers and the Toronto District School Board currently tend to operate in isolation. Better collaboration would allow for sharing of facilities and resources.

There are a number of community “tables” in the neighbourhood and across the city that bring organizations and agencies together to pool resources and maximize their impact on the community. One such entity is Focus Rexdale which includes representatives from the Rexdale Hub, United Way, Toronto Police Service and others. Community workers indicated that the Toronto District School Board would benefit from joining initiatives such as Focus Rexdale and others like it.

Representatives from one Muslim group said The Toronto District School Board used to convene a meeting twice a year, where the Mosque, Police Services, agencies, community leaders, parents, care givers and youth could come together to discuss issues that were of concern in the surrounding community. There were frank discussions and open dialogue on ways and means to resolve problems and improve the environment. This initiative stopped three years ago and is missed in the community. Muslim religious groups said that they believe there is now a disconnect between the Toronto District School Board and the communities because they come together only when there is an immediate challenge rather than on a regular basis. The Review Team sees this as one example of the lack of communication and collaboration between the community and the Toronto District School Board in the Rexdale area.

A ‘connector program’ spearheaded by the Toronto District School Board would be critical in bringing together the various agencies, stakeholders and schools to optimize communications and services.

The Review Team heard that some parents and caregivers, particularly those new to Canada, feel separate from the schools that their children attend. Often, they find the Canadian education system different from what they experienced in their home countries. They don’t

understand the system, are unaware of the available services and can't advocate as effectively for their children as can those who have been in Canada longer.

While a lot of information is available from the Toronto District School Board, the Team was told that it can be difficult to access by some newcomers and is not always available in translations. As well, the ways in which people communicate has changed. Phone calls, letters and newsletters have been replaced by texts, apps and Twitter. Both local schools and the system must use these vehicles to impart information in a manner that is useful and understandable by parents and caregivers, especially for those people who are new to Canada.

NACI and the surrounding community have been through a lot. Media attention was intensive at the time of the incident and will be again when the case against the suspect comes to trial. Students found the attention intrusive, and many of the stories negative. They reported being harassed by reporters and offered money to speak to the press. Sadly, they did not think their experience differed much from the way media usually treats their community. In the aftermath of this tragedy, it is incumbent on the Board to implement a communication plan that highlights positive stories about the achievement of the students, staff and families of North Albion C.I.

## **PERSPECTIVES ON: JOINT SCHOOL SAFETY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

### **PARTNERSHIP**

Many discussions took place during the review about the interdependent relationship between the Toronto District School Board, Public Health, federal agencies and the City of Toronto about such issues as housing, refugees, immigration, public health, mental health and others. Many stakeholders raised concerns about the inability to share information due to privacy concerns. These issues may be accurate but need to be assessed and resolved in cooperation with the Privacy Commissioner. Assessing and addressing safety concerns are not the responsibilities of any one agency or organization. There must be a multi-pronged approach with many stakeholders including the students and parents.

A partnership should be considered with the Toronto District School Board, Toronto Police Service and the City with the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy. In that partnership, the TDSB and others should consider the feasibility and development of a joint analytical and assessment unit focused on preventative measures that address school and community violence, and bullying. This partnership would provide all the stakeholders with forward-thinking information to assess the effectiveness of service, resource allocation and programs.

There is space within Toronto District School Board facilities to house this analytical and assessment unit along with a central video and security monitoring centre. This configuration would serve the Toronto District School Board and their partners in bringing together a multi-pronged, integrated approach to address school, community and public safety issues.



**Recommendation 4.1:** Toronto District School Board Communications Plan

*The Toronto District School Board should conduct a review of the current communications plan to ensure that the content effectively addresses the ever-changing profile of Toronto District School Board families.*

**Recommendation 4.2:** Communications Plan for North Albion C.I.

*The Toronto District School Board, as a result of the incident at NACI, should develop and implement a communication plan that highlights positive stories about the achievement of the students, staff and families of North Albion C.I.*

**Recommendation 4.3:** Connector Program

*The Toronto District School Board should:*

- *partner with the City – Housing, Community Welfare, United Way and others-- to build a “Connector Program” that brings the agencies and organizations together on a regular basis to share views, knowledge and resources;*
- *create a position entitled Coordinator of Stakeholder Relations and appoint a person who will develop and operate the program;*
- *pilot this program in the Rexdale community with a review two years after implementation to determine the feasibility of rolling out similar programs in other regions of the city; and*
- *collaborate with the Toronto Police Service, the City of Toronto with its Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (TYES) and its related agencies such as Housing and Health, to form a joint analytical and assessment unit focused on school safety.*

**Recommendation 4.4:** Faith Based Outreach

*The Toronto District School Board should establish community outreach programs with faith based organizations in the Rexdale community to strengthen connections with families.*

**Recommendation 4.5:** Open School Facilities to Community Programs

*The Toronto District School Board should partner with some community associations to locate after hours, community-led programs at no cost in schools in the North Region Family of Schools in order to provide services to students and their families.*

**Recommendation 4.6:** Communication Vehicles

*The Toronto District School Board and schools, in light of the constantly changing demographics, should enhance the use of texts, emails, the School Connects voice mail system, web page banners, Twitter and Instagram in its communications with parents.*

**Recommendation 4.7: Family Friendly Website**

*The Toronto District School Board should continue to assess and update its website so that information and links to individual school websites are easily accessible to families of diverse ethnic backgrounds, especially for new Canadians and for those for whom English is not their prime language.*

## 5.0 FUTURE AUDIT

The recommendations found throughout this report have been developed to contribute to safe schools and engaged communities.

### **Recommendation 5.1:** Audit of Recommendations

*The Toronto District School Board should appoint an external team to conduct an audit of progress on the recommendations outlined in this report after a period of nine to twelve months and provide that information to the Board of Trustees.*



October 16, 2014

**STAGE I**  
BRIEFING

Director and Counsel TDSB briefs Steering Team on situation and terms of reference.

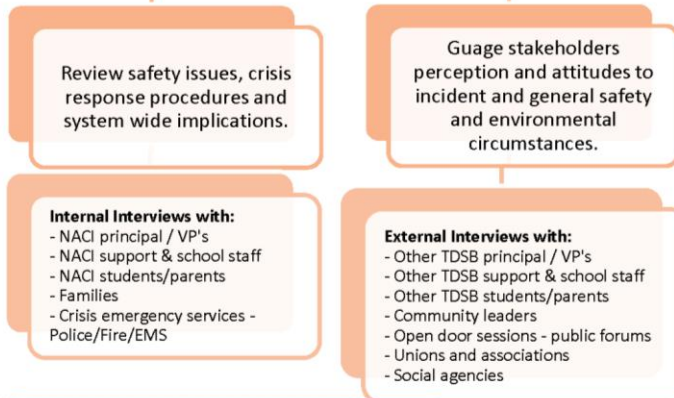
October 22 - 31, 2014

**STAGE II**  
UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION

Team lead is debriefed by Superintendent and in turn briefs the Steering team. Broad direction for action and involvement of each steering team member decided. Discussion guide developed. NACI Administration team & staff introductions.

Oct 2014 – Feb 2015

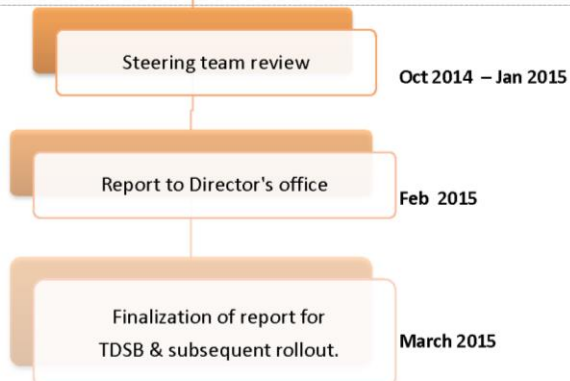
**STAGE III (A)**  
GATHERING INFORMATION ON SAFETY PROTOCOLS AND STAKEHOLDERS' FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES



**STAGE III (B)**  
DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION'S PROTOCOLS



**STAGE IV**  
REVIEW OF ALL INFORMATION GATHERED; DEVELOP AND VALIDATE RECOMMENDATIONS, SUBMIT REPORT



## REVIEW PARTICIPANTS

| STAFF  | UNIONS & ASSOCIATIONS                                       | TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD DEPARTMENTS      | STUDENTS & PARENTS                          | COMMUNITY                                      | OTHER                    |
|--|---|--|---|--|--------------------------|
| Curriculum Leaders & Assistant Curriculum Leaders - NACI | Canadian Union of Public Employees 4400                     | Caring & Safe Schools                          | Ladies on the Rise – Student Group          | Business Improvement Association - Weston      | Family of Hamid Aminzada |
| Elementary Teachers - Regional                           | Elementary Teachers of Toronto                              | Facility Services                              | Men of Distinction – Student Group          | East Region Public Meeting                     | Traumatologist           |
| Principals & Vice-Principals NACI & Regional             | Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation – District 12 | Health & Safety                                | NACI Parent Council                         | Emergency Services                             |                          |
| Secondary Teachers – NACI & Regional                     | Professional Student Services Personnel                     | Organizational Design & Information Management | NACI Parent Meeting                         | International Muslim Organization (IMO) Mosque |                          |
| Social Workers – NACI & Regional                         | Toronto School Administrators' Association                  | Student Support Services & Care                | NACI Student Council                        | MicroSkills                                    |                          |
| Superintendents of Education - NACI & Regional           | Toronto Supervisory Officers' Association                   | Security                                       | Rexdale Women's Centre – Student Group      | North Etobicoke Local Immigration Partnership  |                          |
| Support Staff – NACI                                     |   |  | Toronto District School Board Super Council | Pathways to Education                          |                          |

| STAFF | UNIONS & ASSOCIATIONS | TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD DEPARTMENTS | STUDENTS & PARENTS | COMMUNITY                    | OTHER |
|-------|-----------------------|---|--------------------|------------------------------|-------|
|       |                       |   |                    | Rexdale Hub                  |       |
|       |                       |   |                    | Rexdale Women's Centre       |       |
|       |                       |   |                    | Success Beyond Limits        |       |
|       |                       |   |                    | Toronto Police Services      |       |
|       |                       |   |                    | Toronto Public Health        |       |
|       |                       |   |                    | Trust 15                     |       |
|       |                       |   |                    | Ummah Nabawiah Masjid Mosque |       |
|       |                       |   |                    | West Region Public Meeting   |       |