



Centre for Research
on Violence Against Women and Children



Working With Communities.

Youth Leadership and Safe Schools Implementation

Investigator: Cathy Hird

Date: June 2004

Funded by: Scotia Bank, London District Catholic School Board Safe Schools Advisory Committee

Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children

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ISBN#

1. Project Identification:

Project Title: Youth Leadership in Safe Schools Implementation	
Project Sponsor: London District Catholic School Board Safe Schools Advisory Committee 165 Elmwood Avenue East London, Ontario	Project Location: City of London and the counties of Elgin, Middlesex and Oxford
Project Duration: 2003 -2004	Project End Date: June 30, 2004
Project Coordinator: Cathy Hird, Secondary Teacher and former chair of the Safe Schools Advisory Committee for the London District Catholic School Board (1999-2003)	

2. Project History:

The mandate revisions made by the Safe Schools Advisory Committee of the London District Catholic School Board (1999) reflect a more comprehensive and formal process for implementing policies and directives from the Ministry of Education and directives approved by the District. The mandate specifically provides directives in the Advisory Committee's function to provide leadership in the areas of assisting school communities to identify, develop and introduce new programs and policies and facilitate partnerships with system-level resources and community-level organizations and initiatives. (Refer to Appendix 1)

From 1999 to 2003 this mandate was realized through the implementation of three inter-related and inter-dependent components:

- Policies and procedures;
- Violence prevention and intervention;
- Community partnerships.

Violence prevention has the overall purpose of empowering school communities to create safer and caring learning environments by introducing and implementing prevention and intervention strategies. The vision of Catholic education is the foundation and context from which violence prevention is developed and implemented. Faith development through the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and skills demonstrate to students the enduring essentials of living in relationships and striving toward the common good.

As an integral component of safe schools implementation, violence prevention encompasses a board range of strategies. A holistic and systemic approach is critical and supports the involvement of the entire school community. The school community works together to form positive relationships with all children, nurtures a sense of belonging and inclusiveness, and addresses the academic, spiritual, and social-emotional needs of members of the school community.

The involvement of students in safe schools implementation has been a longstanding violence prevention strategy through their participation in school-based, district-wide and community-based initiatives. The development of a formalized process for secondary youth to participate in safe schools implementation began after youth from area high schools participated in a youth conference as part of an international conference organized by the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System of the London Family Court Clinic (June 2001).

Participants at this conference not only attended sessions that focused on raising their awareness of violence in interpersonal relationships, but also assumed an active role in identifying school-based concerns and strategies for promoting nonviolence in their respective school communities. The youth were encouraged to assume leadership roles through their participation in the conference and promoting school-based initiatives subsequent to the conference.

In an attempt to assist youth from our Catholic schools in their efforts to introduce school-based initiatives, two focus groups were organized (September 2001 and April 2002). Structured opportunities were provided for youth to identify and share safety concerns, learn from one another and devise an action plan for future youth-driven school initiatives. The action plan included the establishment of a youth advisory subcommittee of the Safe Schools Advisory Committee of the London District Catholic School Board. The Safe Schools Advisory Committee approved the establishment of this subcommittee and its mandate. (Appendix 2)

The initiative funded by the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Child through the Scotia Bank Community Research Grants Program, constitutes Phase I of the project and is school-based participatory action research. The objectives of the overall project are as follows:

- Solicit input from secondary students on identifying and responding to interpersonal violence and school safety concerns;
- Provide opportunities for students to develop leadership skills, heighten their awareness of violence against women and children, and promote peer facilitation skills;
- Develop a model for the inclusion of student involvement in safe schools policy.

The process would involve:

- Pre and post assessment of students' attitudes, understanding and active engagement in responding to youth –related interpersonal violence;
- Establish a youth advisory committee of the Safe Schools Advisory Committee – London District Catholic School Board;
- Facilitate the introduction of school-based violence prevention initiatives that respond to the needs of respective school communities;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of students' involvement in committee and school-based initiatives.

Phase I of the project consisted of the implementation of a youth leadership conference and post-conference initiatives. The conference, **P.E.A.C.E Movement** (*Promoting Equality, Acceptance & Compassion Everywhere*) allowed for a system-wide process for introducing the involvement of secondary students in assuming leadership roles in safe schools implementation.

3. Conference Overview:

The P.E.A.C.E. Movement conference was attended by 119 student delegates, 19 staff advisors, and several community representatives. All eight Catholic secondary schools sent delegates to the conference (79 student leaders and 13 staff advisors). In addition, four Catholic secondary schools from two neighbouring school districts participated in the conference (35 student leaders and 6 staff advisors). Guidelines were provided for the selection of the youth leaders for Phase 1 of the project. Each secondary school was encouraged to select 10 to 12 youth from grades 11 and 12 who were representative of various groups within their

respective school community (i.e., peer programs, Student Council, athletics, chaplaincy teams, clubs such as Peace and Development, special interest groups, etc.) Since the students were asked to make a one-year commitment to the project, the selected participants would be returning for the 2004-05 school year.

A student survey regarding safety concerns in schools and a conference evaluation were completed by the youth delegates. Post-conference activities were developed to provide leadership opportunities for youth delegates and gather information from respective school communities for Phase II of the project.

4. Project Objectives and Progress:

Stated Objective:	Progress:
Solicit input from secondary students on identifying and responding to interpersonal violence and school safety concerns.	A. A comprehensive overview and directives of the project were developed for use by school administrators and staff advisors.
Provide opportunities for students to develop leadership skills, heighten their awareness of violence against women and children, and promote peer facilitation skills.	B. The conference held on February 11, 2004 at St. George Catholic Parish. Guest Speaker: Mr. Serge LeClerc, Prairie Ministries (Manitoba); conference planning and leadership facilitation by Sanchez-Keane & Associates and the Servant Retreat and Training Centre
Develop a model for the inclusion of student involvement in school schools policy.	C. The youth leaders completed a student survey and conference evaluation (February 11, 2004) D. Each participating school was presented with comprehensive resource materials for post-conference use in secondary schools. The resources could be used for team meetings, classroom presentations and as resources for staff advisors. Resources included: the curriculum Choices for Positive Youth Relationships (produced by The Speer Society), and video resources and curriculum from Classroom Connections, and a copy of the book And Words Can Hurt Forever (Garbarino and deLara, 2002) E. Analysis of surveys by the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children. (May 2004) F. Establishment of a P.E.A.C.E. team at 8 secondary schools with the LDCSB to oversee post-conference initiatives and Phase II implementation. Since all secondary schools sent Chaplains as one of the staff advisors, the team will be connected to existing chaplaincy structure for student involvement. (Ongoing) G. A student survey was developed with input from delegates for use in the general school population. (April 2004) H. Distribution of the student survey to a sample of the student population in all secondary schools (May – June 2004). Student delegates in several schools were actively involved in conducting surveys.. Total number of completed student surveys gathered from the secondary schools = approx. 2,200 (June 2004)

<p>If there any differences between objectives and results, what were the reasons for those differences?</p>

<p>All the stated objectives were met with some revision to the process due to the project coordinator's return to full-time teaching. In consultation with Ms. Barbara MacQuarrie, Community Development Coordinator- Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children, adjustments were made to the expenditures to accommodate the fees for a project consultant and augment the role of school-based youth leadership teams.</p>
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5. Project Impact:

Phase I of the project allowed for the establishment of a formal process to ensure the inclusion of student involvement in safe schools implementation at each of the secondary schools. Conference evaluations clearly reflected students' strong desire and willingness to assume active leadership roles in identifying and addressing issues related to interpersonal violence and general safety in schools. This commitment and motivation to take responsibility and action have been clearly demonstrated through their participation in post conference activities. Students have assumed leadership roles for committee functioning. These responsibilities have included chairing meetings, making announcements, recording minutes of meetings, and other vital committee roles and tasks. Statistics from one secondary school show that the P.E.A.C.E. team organized ten post conference meetings to implement directives.

As a result of their participation in the leadership conference and post-conference activities in their respective schools, students are more aware of:

- the nature and scope of the leadership roles in safe schools implementation;
- how they can be empowered to make a difference through collaborative efforts with other groups in their school community;
- the challenges associated with gaining an understanding of interpersonal violence and safety concerns in schools,
- the importance of systemic responses to safe schools implementation.

Media coverage of the conference reflected a public sensitivity and interest in the potential of student involvement in safe schools implementation. Respective school communities highlighted the participation of local youth in the P.E.A.C.E. Movement through newspaper articles (community and school-based), yearbook pages, student news network, posters and artwork. This further developed another form of peace education in violence prevention and intervention.

The analysis of conference evaluation forms indicates that a large majority of the student leaders found that the conference helped them understand youth empowerment to make school safer (91%) and that they began to identify ways to work together with team members as a result of the conference activities and topics (87%).

5. Summary of Expenditures – Grant: \$5,000 Secondary Students’ Involvement in Safe Schools Implementation Policy

Expenditures:	Scotiabank Grant Funding		In-Kind Contributions	Additional Funding Sources	Amount:
	Planned	Actual			
Transportation of students and staff facilitators	500	0	Transportation cost incurred by each secondary school Coverage costs covered by schools	Registration fees received from 6 schools with LDCSB: (\$200 per school)	1,200
Release Time for facilitators	500	0			
Administrative costs Supplies – paper, folders, labels, etc. from Grand and Toy Supplies – Staples Photocopying (User ID#1225 – St. Thomas Aquinas)	0	183.22	157.32 352.64	Outstanding registration fees: as of July 2004 School A = \$200 School B = \$230 Note: Arrangements for payments have been made	430
Meals and refreshments: Lunch	500	500	395.00	Registration fees received from other school districts (\$400/school)	1,600
Refreshments and snacks			422.96		
Resources: Choices for Positive Youth Relationship Curriculum Crosses (gold plated) (150 @ .80) 12 copies of And Words Can Hurt Forever (Chapters)	1000	1049.00	138.00 161.78	Donation from London Student Crime Stoppers	250
Recommended media resources	1000	0	Materials at no cost through Peace Connections	Registration fee for additional participants	20
Professional and community consultations Guest Speaker’s Fee and Expenses Hotel Accommodations Consultation Sanchez-Keane and Associates – Installment #1 Conference planning Installment #2 – Conference fees and post conferences services	1,500	800 2,000 467.78	504.99 122.08 1,244.22		
Project Coordination	-	-	No fees incurred from Project Coordinator or the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children		
Total:	5,000.00	5,000.00	3,498.99		3,500.00

LDCSB ACCOUNT NUMBER: 410-21-380CP-6

6. Findings:

The student survey was intended to provide self-reported perceptions on topics of violence at school, school connectedness, and the effect of faith on personal attitudes towards others and towards acts of violence. Although these student leaders reported that their faith plays a role in guiding their interpersonal relationships, and that they feel connected to their schools, many of them experience violence themselves and even more witness violence amongst their peers while at school. Some of the violence that these student leaders and their peers experience at school is physical but more appears to be non-physical such as sexual and verbal harassment, social exclusion, rumours, and threats.

The prevalence of non-physical violence is of concern since these forms of violence are more difficult to detect by school staff, students, and parents. In addition, non-physical forms of violence may be chronic in nature and may have lasting emotional/psychological effects that are comparable or more significant than incidents of physical violence.

Students reported violent incidents to parents, friends or school staff; however, not enough information was gathered in the survey to make any conclusions about the nature of this reporting. It is encouraging that although they may not experience firsthand what their peers face, student leaders are aware of and do interact with others who experience the violence. Their understanding of the culture of violence in their school communities could potentially be beneficial when trying to reach more marginalized youth through interactions and planned school-based initiatives.

Generalizations about the data gathered can not be made since the student leaders are not representative of the Catholic secondary student population. Conclusions drawn from these data could be generalized to other student leaders in Catholic schools, but not to secondary school students in general.

To obtain a representative sampling of secondary school student population, a revised survey was completed in each secondary school between May-June 2004. The approximate number of secondary students in the LDCSB who completed the survey is 2,200. These surveys have been forwarded for analysis to the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children (June 2004).

6. Future Considerations and Recommendations:

1. The assigned responsibilities for project coordinator need to be assumed by a member of the Safe Schools Advisory Committee of the London District Catholic School Board. Associated tasks and responsibilities would include:
 - Ensuring the coordination of the District-wide project. Specific directives would include seeking additional grant funding for implementing Phase II of the project, establishing the Youth Advisory Subcommittee, and ongoing liaison with school-based P.E.A.C.E. teams.
 - Reporting of project progress to Senior Administration;
 - Continuing the research partnerships with the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children. Specifically, monitoring the progress of data entry and analysis of student

- surveys and assisting in writing the reports to be sent to each secondary school and the overview of secondary population surveyed.
- Reporting the findings of secondary school student population survey to the Safe Schools Advisory Committee, Senior Administration, P.E.A.C.E teams, school administrators, Catholic School Council and the broader community.
 - Identifying and encouraging the implementation of multidimensional strategies for primary and secondary violence prevention (i.e., curriculum resources, TAP sessions, assemblies, peer education, etc.)
2. The provision of opportunities for staff advisors to meet, discuss and support their facilitative roles in empowering student participation in safe schools implementation.
 3. The provision of assistance for school-based teams to address needs identified by the information gathered on self-reported perceptions of school safety, connectedness and faith on personal attitudes towards others and towards acts of violence.
 4. The planning of a gathering, preferably in the form of a leadership conference, for student leaders and advisors to continue developing leadership skills, share school-based initiatives among schools, and identify further directions for youth involvement in safe schools implementation.
 5. The continued identification of community partnerships for addressing and meeting the complexity of needs related to interpersonal violence and school safety concerns is highly recommended. Additional funding partnerships that can be explored are: the Monsignor Feeney Foundation (violence prevention funding) and United Way of Greater London – Youth In Action Fund. Accessing the expertise of professionals from the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children is highly recommended for possible funding partners and research applications.

Report Prepared by:

Cathy Hird, Project Coordinator – May 2002 – June 2004

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Addendum:

This report was presented by C. Hird and discussed during a meeting held on July 5, 2004 with Catherine Sexton, Superintendent of Education, Sharon Wright-Evans, Chair of the Safe Schools Advisory Committee of the London District Catholic School Board, and Terry Spencer, Research Officer for the London District Catholic School Board. A copy of the P.E.A.C.E. Movement conference program was distributed and reviewed.

While reviewing the conference program, the Action Planning component described the following process for the participants at the conference:

Spring 2004

Survey school population

- *Survey provided – how do students in your school feel about school safety?*
- *Who will you survey?*
- *How will you survey?*
- *When will you survey?*

Fall 2004

Attend the P.E.A.C.E. Movement Leadership Conference II in order to:

- *Share results from the survey*
- *Brainstorm ways to meet the needs of your peers*
- *Plan a school initiative to address the safety issues of your student population*

Delegates to attend the Youth Anti-Hate Program

Delegates to attend the Crime Stoppers Conference

Winter 2004

Implement your initiative at your school

Appendix 1:

The Safe Schools Advisory Committee of the London District Catholic School Board was established to provide support to schools in their ongoing efforts to enhance the safety of students. Specifically, the mandate of the committee is to:

- Respond to, interpret, and disseminate directives from the Ministry of Education that relate to issues of school safety;
- Act in an advisory capacity to assist schools in the implementation of both Ministry and system-level directives;
- Provide leadership by identifying schools' needs, and linking schools to relevant system-level resources and community-level organizations and initiatives;
- Provide guidelines for schools to use in the development, selection, and introduction of new programs and policies relating to safe schools;
- Evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of policies and programs relating to safe schools;
- Make recommendations to senior administration with respect to system needs and the programs and resources that are required to meet these needs;
- Work with the various law enforcement agencies in implementing a policy of violence-free schools.

Appendix 2

The Youth Advisory Committee of the Safe Schools Advisory Committee is established to promote youth perspectives and efforts in making schools safer and caring places for learning. The goals of the subcommittee are to:

- Provide students with opportunities to identify and address concerns that relate to issues of school safety;
- Identify strategies and programs which can serve to promote safety in schools;
- Assist in the evaluation of programs and policies relating to safe schools;
- Make recommendations to the Safe Schools Advisory Committee with respect to students needs relating to school safety;
- Provide leadership development for participants in the area of violence prevention;
- Assist in identifying community resources which can be accessed to promote safer and caring school communities.

Terms:

1. Youth representatives (2-3) and one staff facilitator from each secondary school will be invited to participate.
2. The youth advisory committee will meet approximately four times each academic school year.
3. Participants are encouraged to share information and directives of the advisory committee with their respective school communities.