

# **REPORT OF THE SAFE SCHOOLS - SYSTEM VIOLENCE PREVENTION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2003 April**

Over the past eight months The Safe School Review Advisory Committee has researched, surveyed, collected data, analyzed data, drawn conclusions and made recommendations regarding the system's violence prevention programs. The content of the review is contained in the following report and appendices. The opinions expressed by all stakeholders (students, facilitators, teachers, school administrators, parents and community partners) are consistent and carry a common message to The Thames Valley District School Board.

The central coordination and funding structure of the programs is vital to its current and future success. This means that we have quality, equitable programs using materials that have been developed to ensure a delivery method that is effective with students and conveys a consistent planned message from JK to senior secondary. The central funding means that implementation of these programs is equitable throughout the board and is not dependent on the financial situation, parent support, staff expertise or priorities of individual school communities. Central coordination ensures that all Thames Valley students have equal access to the system's violence prevention programs.

The demand for individual programs and numbers of presentations has expanded greatly over the past four years. The board's expenditure of about \$150,000 paired with the community expenditure of almost \$400,000 has allowed the board to offer specific programs at all grade levels, leadership opportunities for elementary and secondary school students and partnership ventures that result in student activities that are easily integrated into the regular curriculum. Despite all efforts, the present level of funding and personnel resources have not allowed us to meet requests in all program areas. Most importantly, the current level of resources does not allow program expansion in the area of bullying.

Communities are becoming less and less tolerant of bullying behaviour and are requesting pro active programming and support services to deal with the issue.

In order to maintain the level of commitment and funding from our community partners it is critical to have board personnel at the central office to coordinate program development and delivery. The violence prevention coordinator's job has expanded far beyond the mandate of program delivery and now demands the time to communicate and consult with community partners, school administrators and parents. If this service is to continue, and programs are to expand to meet increasing demands, and the issue of bullying is to be addressed, then additional personnel and funding will be necessary.

Administrators, teachers and students all report observable changes in school culture and student behaviours with ongoing programming. In addition, students' written and oral responses demonstrate that the messages that they have learned from the presentations meet program expectations.

If this exemplary work, that offers programs to all 80,000 plus Thames Valley students, is to continue, it will necessitate an addition of personnel and financial support.

**Thus it is the recommendation of the committee:**

**THAT the current position of Learning Coordinator for Violence Prevention be maintained and violence prevention initiatives continue to be centrally funded and coordinated.**

**THAT the Board endorse in principle the expansion of its current violence prevention programs, and develop a comprehensive, elementary, school-based anti-bullying program, and refer the following recommendations to the budget process for consideration:**

**THAT a .5 teacher be seconded to the central office to work with the violence prevention coordinator to allow program growth in the area of preventing and addressing bullying at the elementary level. (\$19,301.)**

**THAT the dedicated secondary drama lines be expanded to three (from two) to facilitate the elementary focus on preventing bullying. (\$6,433.)**

**THAT additional clerical support be allocated to assist with violence prevention initiatives.**

**THAT an effort be made to increase the program budget line to \$129,000 (2000-01 requested level of funding).**

## **REPORT OF THE SAFE SCHOOLS - SYSTEM VIOLENCE PREVENTION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **THE REVIEW**

In June of 2002, Senior Administration made a commitment to the Thames Valley District School Board to complete a review of System Violence Prevention Programs during the 2002-2003 school year.

The **Purpose of the Review** was to:

**Determine if we are successfully meeting the expectations of system violence prevention programs within the violence prevention portfolio.**

### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

An advisory committee was formed and included:

<b>Karen Dalton</b>	<b>Chair</b>
<b>Diana Anstead</b>	<b>Trustee Representative</b>
<b>Frank Galizia</b>	<b>Elementary Administrator Representative</b>
<b>Paul Tufts</b>	<b>Secondary Administrator Representative</b>
<b>Steve Killip</b>	<b>Staff, Research and Assessment</b>
<b>Gwen Orr</b>	<b>Staff, Program Department</b>
<b>Katie Steele</b>	<b>Staff, Administrative Support</b>
<b>Ray Hughes</b>	<b>Staff, Resource to Committee</b>

The committee held ten half day meetings between October 11, 2002 and April 1, 2003.

The **Mandate of the Review** was to:

**Review system violence prevention programs to determine the degree of success of meeting program expectations and system needs; and**

**Make recommendations regarding the future of system violence prevention programs.**

### **THAMES VALLEY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD - SAFE SCHOOLS INITIATIVES**

The Thames Valley District School Board's approach to Safe Schools is a comprehensive strategy which depends on the initiatives of all departments and schools, and the collaborative efforts of a variety of personnel and community partners.

***(Appendix 1)***

The Thames Valley District School Board's commitment to safe schools is reflected in its policies and procedures. In its *Procedures - Safe Schools* (Procedures submitted in accordance with the direction and format provided by the Ministry of Education and Training) it is stated that its **purposes and goals** include:

***“Enabling students to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to prevent violence and to deal with violent and potentially violent situations; Educating students about violence and violence prevention; and Encouraging the whole community to support violence-prevention initiatives.”***

The **underlying assumptions** explain that:

***“The Board is committed to supporting a system strategy; and Schools have a responsibility to assist students to develop appropriate behaviour patterns.... and to include programs in their curriculum that reenforce this expectation.”***

The **System Strategy** states that:

***“It shall include programs to support safe, positive learning environments and the development of appropriate student behaviours.”***

The **Board Commitment** is articulated as:

***“The system strategy shall include programs to support safe, positive learning environments and the development of appropriate student behaviours; To include violence prevention into all aspects of the curriculum from junior kindergarten to the end of secondary school; and Establishing appropriate forms of prevention and intervention.”***

***(Appendix 2)***

The intent of this review was to examine the success and future direction of the system violence prevention programs which fall under the responsibility of the Violence Prevention Learning Coordinator. ***(Appendix 1)***

It was concluded that the initiatives within this portfolio assist in:

ensuring that the **purposes and goals** are met;  
demonstrating the **board's commitment**;  
putting into action the **underlying assumptions** and **system strategy**; and  
supporting school personnel in their responsibilities as articulated in its *Safe Schools Policy and Procedures*.

## **VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS**

### **Program Offerings**

Under the direction of the Violence Prevention Coordinator the Thames Valley District School Board offers 16 different programs which address a variety of topics for junior kindergarten students to those in senior secondary school. ***(Appendix 3)***. Over the past four years, the demand for programs has escalated dramatically and as a result, additional programs have been developed and implemented and the number of presentations offered throughout the board has increased. Funding restrictions, limited personnel and the cost of material resources have made it impossible to meet all requests for programs.

Maximum levels of participation have been established by limiting the number of (system supported) presentations per school, establishing criteria for involvement, establishing a multi year roll out, and/or working with community partners.

In spite of creative and collaborative efforts to meet the demands of all schools, the following program areas could not meet demand this past school year due to limited resources: **Stand By Me Mentorship, Steps to Respect, Elementary Drama Presentations, and Drama Lines**. Research findings have identified a number of key elements and considerations for effective violence prevention programming. (**Appendix 4 and 5**) Some of these elements and considerations include:

- T identifying personnel at a system level to oversee prevention programming;
- T having students recognize and define various forms of violence;
- T accounting for gender differences;
- T promoting non-violent values and the development of non-violent skills to incorporate into daily behaviour;
- T capitalizing on various means of active student participation as opposed to didactic delivery;
- T utilizing standard materials and methods throughout the system;
- T offering multiple programs over multiple years rather than one-time events;
- T engaging youth in violence prevention leadership opportunities;
- T fitting programs into the broader perspective of school culture;
- T engaging the community as active partners; and
- T ensuring that school based initiatives have strong support from school board and school administration.

In reviewing the programs it was concluded that the TVDSB fulfills each of the above listed elements and criteria of effective violence prevention programming as found in the research. The only area of concern lies in the advantage of “the organization having secure administrators, low staff turnover and plenty of resources.” It is acknowledged that our school administrators are less experienced than in past years, staff turnover has been extensive, and resources are limited due to budgetary restrictions.

An examination of the links between system violence prevention programs and curriculum expectations discovered that the range of program initiatives met curriculum expectations in a variety of subject disciplines at all grade levels. (**Appendix 6**) This strong link enabled school staff to fulfill their responsibilities to meet curriculum expectations and violence prevention programming simultaneously.

## **Program Feedback (Primary and Junior)**

The evaluation of *Kids on the Block* indicated that close to 100% of the staff (n=180) agreed that they liked the play content and quality; the discussion and activities benefitted students; and students now had a better understanding of bullying and strategies to deal with bullies. An important result was that 97% of staff indicated that they would spend more time on discussion and follow up activities regarding bullying. (**Appendix 7**)

Similarly, the evaluation of *Yvette's Puppet Show* resulted in almost 100% of the staff (n=540) agreeing that they liked the play content and quality, and the participation level of students. They also felt that this play gave students a better understanding of bullying and strategies to deal with bullies and that they would spend more time on this topic in the future as the messages could be reinforced easily in class. (**Appendix 8**)

The *Stand By Me Mentorship* program has been one of the fastest growing and most highly requested programs. It requires an ongoing partnership between the Board and Community Partners to be sustained, and a commitment to multiple training programs throughout the school year to provide the adult mentors for high risk youth. The intense investment of system and community resources has had concrete results for the youth involved. These benefits included decreased office referrals, increased attendance, and positive relationships between mentors and youth. **(Appendix 9)**

## **Program Feedback (Intermediate and Senior)**

The S.A.V.E. Workshop provided an opportunity to develop elementary school leaders in the area of violence prevention. Students (n=535) over two years, gave very positive feedback on the overall workshop, on the specific program components, and in their comments at the end of the evaluation form. Changes to the workshop, the action planning component and the follow up with student leaders, have resulted in innovative student led initiatives in the schools, especially in the area of bullying. **(Appendix 10 & 11)**

Students (n=over 20,000) and staff (n= over 800) evaluated eight different dramatic presentations over 4 school years. The plays covered topics which included gang violence, violence in relationships, bullying, stereotypes, positive interventions, forms of abuse, anger management, homophobia, conflict resolution and identifying abuse and violence. The typical auditorium style presentations were followed by peer led discussions in a classroom environment. Close to 90% of students agreed favourably with statements regarding the quality of the plays and discussions, and the clarity of the messages that were presented. The majority of students were able to respond in writing to an open ended question asking them to identify the key messages of the play. The messages reflected the desired expectations of the productions and involved themes such as: people should be treated with respect and that there are ways other than violence to solve problems.

Discussion sessions were very well received by students. They strongly agreed that there was ample opportunity to participate, the quality of discussion was high, and the topics of discussion were important. They also stated that their awareness increased regarding the various aspects of violence, and moreover, they were able to articulate in writing something new that they learned through the facilitation. Students also indicated that they learned more and new information about types of violence, the various forms of violence, when/where it occurs, coping strategies, warning signs, how to help others, and that abuse and violence is wrong. The new knowledge acquired related directly to the violence prevention program expectations.

**(Appendices 10 -18)**

## **School Feedback**

### **Secondary Principals**

Secondary Principals (n=29), in conjunction with school staff members, completed a survey to determine support and need for system violence prevention programs. **(Appendix 19)**

Strong support for these programs was noted from a number of perspectives. Clearly, principals expressed a need for and value in the direction the system currently takes with regard to the availability and delivery of these programs to all students.

Participation has increased over the last four years with every school choosing to participate in at least one program this school year. About two thirds of the principals indicated that they offered the programs to address school based problems, contribute to school culture, or to capitalize on strong staff/student initiative. About one third indicated that the programs were preventative in nature. Some school staff complemented the system initiatives with additional outside speakers, school programs (e.g., Peer Mediation), and visits from community personnel.

About half of the principals identified observable changes at the school that they attributed to the system programs including increases in disclosures and at earlier stages, student interventions, student initiated activities, and enhanced social skills. Almost one third identified a change in the number of referrals or a decrease in the number of violent incidents. A small number did not see any changes or found it difficult to say exactly what the impact had been.

Just over half of the principals indicated that they observed an improvement in student learning through improved school climate, increased feelings of safety, reduced harassment, a greater student understanding of issues, opportunities for drama students, or increased conflict resolution skills.

Principals believed that a loss of these programs would undo existing benefits, lose the impetus for change, or result in loss of current depth and quality if left to schools to implement on their own.

All principals but one felt that the programs needed to be organized centrally by a Learning Coordinator. The reasons were as follows: there is a system-wide need for organization and coordination due to the sheer size of the undertaking; there is a need for someone to work with resources and external agencies; there is a need to ensure high quality, equitable and consistent programs; school staff do not have the time to offer comprehensive, varied and high quality programs; there is a need for a high level of expertise in this area; and there is value in a common message to the system.

All principals responded that staff supported the programs and listed very concrete evidence of that support.

### **Elementary Principals**

Elementary Principals (n=98), in conjunction with school staff members, completed a survey to determine support and need for system violence prevention programs. (**Appendix 20**)

Participation has increased over the past four years. Reasons cited were that programs address problems in the school community, are utilized in a preventative manner, contribute to school culture initiatives, capitalize on strong staff/student initiative, or are a result of parental concerns. Some principals indicated that they complemented the system programs with specific social skills or anti-bullying programs, student recognition programs, or visits from community personnel.

Evidence of the benefits to students (attributed to the delivery of the programs) was seen through decreased problems related to violent incidents, incidents of bullying, and office referrals. Further observations included greater demonstrations of respect for others, improved social skills, greater use of appropriate language, more student initiated activities and interventions, more solutions by students, greater support/cooperation of parents, increased consistency in the approach to discipline issues, and more frequent application of program messages in other curriculum areas.

About half of the principals saw a direct link between the programs and improved student learning. They felt that the programs resulted in students using improved social skills, settling into the learning environment more quickly, spending more time “on task”, being less disruptive in class, and engaging in more productive class discussions and group work due to more respectful behaviours.

Fewer than 10% of principals indicated that their limited involvement was due to the fact there was no time, no staff member available to coordinate delivery, they already had initiatives in place that dealt with violence prevention, or their request couldn't be accommodated.

Most principals thought that the loss of the system violence prevention programs would have a negative impact on schools. They felt that the loss would result in increased incidences of violent behaviour, the loss of expertise and valuable system resources, a strain on the school in terms of time and cost, would send a message to the community that violence prevention/intervention is not important, or parents would see this as the system not supporting their school. A few principals indicated that the loss would have little impact as violence was not a problem at their school or that the system programs simply supported what the school already implemented.

About 80% of the principals indicated that the programs needed to be organized centrally by a Learning Coordinator. Providing a system perspective and critical evaluation of what is out there, allowing for liaison with the community, ensuring consistency and equity of access across the Valley, offering cost effective programs, keeping violence prevention visible, sending a clear and consistent message to all stakeholders, and the lack of school staff time and expertise were all reasons given to justify this position.

Over 90% of the principals indicated that there was strong support from their staff for system violence prevention programs and provided evidence to support this belief.

## **Teachers**

Yasmine Hussein, a research assistant with *The Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children* held interviews with 21 staff from 14 secondary schools and 11 staff from 9 elementary schools from across the Thames Valley geographic area. Her findings corroborated the results of the above principal surveys. (**Appendix 21**)

All participants expressed that violence prevention education is imperative and it is the responsibility of schools to pro actively teach students the skills needed to deal with violence in our society. They expressed strong enthusiastic support for the board's system violence prevention programs and the need for these programs to be developed and organized at the board level. Only one staff member felt that programming could be developed at the school level should adequate resources be provided.

The system focus ensured consistency, equity, quality, and maximum effectiveness. Further specific benefits included: uniformity and continuity of messages throughout the system and grade levels, well organized easily used materials, “buy in” as a board rather than an individual school, well researched and effective student activities, and materials that easily integrate into the regular curriculum.

The programs themselves were believed to have a positive impact on students. Concrete evidence of this impact included the ability of students to recognize and respond appropriately to a bully, peer pressure or an unhealthy relationship. Open discussions of issues in a safe environment, increased numbers of students seeking support following a presentation, students making more positive choices and problem solving, the modeling of appropriate behaviour, more frequent demonstrations of respect and tolerance, and an increased knowledge of standards and expectations were all observable changes that principals noted. Furthermore, there was an increased awareness of educators. They commented that some benefits were recognized in the short term (e.g.,. Mentorship programs) and others were visible over time (e.g.,. dramatic presentations).

They believed that the strength and success of the programs were due to the fact that they were peer driven, empowered students to participate and make a difference, encouraged students to become leaders and influence others in a positive direction, were dramatic presentations that related to students' experiences and pushed them to think about the outcomes of their actions, and provided follow up discussion.

All participants spoke of the importance of a violence prevention coordinator. This position provided support to school personnel, advice, and assistance through the time dedicated to the initiatives and the expertise within the area. In addition, it allowed for sustainable programming year after year that was not dependent on individual school community's financial situation, support of parents, expertise of staff, or support of current administration.

Suggestions for the future focused on more program availability to schools, sustaining programs that start with the very young and continue throughout all years in school, more integration with the regular curriculum and increased awareness for administrators and staff on issues of violence prevention.

### **Student Feedback**

Yasmine Hussein, research assistant with *The Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children* held interviews with 71 senior students involved in the drama presentations and 5 grade nines from 8 secondary schools. All students felt that violence prevention programming was necessary and the issues needed to be addressed in school. **(Appendix 22)**

They believed that the programs had a positive impact on students and were successful in increasing the understanding of violence, and encouraged students to reflect seriously upon their own behaviours and the steps they can take to protect themselves.

It was felt that the success of the secondary programs was due to the use of drama as the teaching tool and the fact that students were teaching students. Drama was effective because it engaged students; it was well written and entertaining; it involved issues relevant to their lives; it allowed the audience to relate to the characters; it provided a safe environment for students to think and feel about the issues; it was interactive; it taught practical strategies; it showed consequences of behaviours; provided options for positive choices (that were not easy answers); and it offered an opportunity to discuss what was experienced.

Senior students involved in the presentations gained personally from their participation. They discussed and exchanged ideas with their peers and provided one another with support. They changed some of their personal attitudes; improved their communication skills; gained better problem solving skills; became advocates for anti-violence; became better friends and role models; were more comfortable intervening to resolve situations at school; and were more motivated to take on further leadership roles.

All students felt that it would be a great loss not to have violence prevention programs in the schools. They believed that problems would escalate and if anything, there is a need for *more* programming, especially at the elementary level. They also noted that it cannot be an isolated event but needs to be addressed on an ongoing basis.

In addition, 42 peer facilitators from two secondary schools completed a written questionnaire regarding their thoughts on the presentations. **(Appendix 23)** Once again, all students believed that the plays were valuable and confirmed the benefits summarized above. The advantages to the development of their leadership skills were reiterated. They stated that they developed very specific skills such as: thinking on their feet, planning and organizing information and activities, speaking to a group, improving listening skills, developing materials, handling tough questions, maintaining control, and working as a team. They also believed that the presentations had an impact on the students. They could confirm the impact through the questions asked, the examples provided, student enthusiasm, engagement in the discussion, and answers to questions. They stated that the facilitation sessions were critical because they made students think through the issues, cleared up questions, gave an opportunity to express and listen to different view points, reenforced the play's messages, and forced students to take the topics more seriously.

## COMMUNITY

### PARTNERSHIPS

Twelve programs involved **29 community partners that provided \$386,400** for the delivery of programs to students across Thames Valley. In addition, in kind contributions of extensive people resources, training, support, busing etc. have not been assigned a monetary value. This funding was acquired because the Violence Prevention Coordinator established partnerships and agreements with community organizations that otherwise would not have been involved. Without the funds and support from our community partners, the depth and breadth of the programs would be reduced significantly. **(Appendix 24)**

### COMMUNITY PARTNERS' FEEDBACK

Yasmine Hussein, research assistant with *The Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children* contacted 33 individuals from 24 community partners. Nineteen of the agencies provide direct service within our elementary and secondary schools. Four agencies also assist with staff training, five provide volunteers for the board's programs, and six groups stated that they received regular disclosures from students following presentations. **(Appendix 25)**

All agencies felt that it was the board's responsibility to provide these initiatives. They believed that without the central coordination and funding that the overall prevention work in schools would fall apart and that their initiatives would be affected greatly. All community partners praised the current collaborative framework for delivery. The board wide nature of the established partnerships would not be present without the violence prevention coordinator's ability to establish the necessary links between them, school administrators and teaching staff. Their relationship with the system violence prevention coordinator ensures that their services are known and visible to schools; their access to schools is facilitated through referrals; they are able to offer more effective and curriculum friendly programming that complements the school curriculum due to the assistance they receive; and research groups are able to partner their expertise (and funding) to develop best practices for teachers across the board.

Without the violence prevention coordinator, nine agencies stated that the delivery of their services would be compromised as they don't have the personnel to make the school contacts and coordinate delivery. Eight agencies stated that the loss of system board programs would increase the demands on their services that they would not be able to meet. Currently, two agencies cannot meet the schools request for services.

All partners stated that without the Board's continuation of pro-active system wide violence prevention education that a large gap in servicing would result. It was made clear that they do not have the funding, resources, time, access, or system and curriculum expertise to carry out integrated violence prevention programming. Their partnerships with the Board's coordinator ensures equity and consistency across schools. They expressed concerns that the gains of partnerships would be lost without the Board acting as primary conduit for all the necessary stakeholders involved in anti-violence programming.

Recognition was given to the TVDSB for their leadership in this field. The partners also noted that student interest in programs was strong and needs to be expanded. It was felt that through continued collaboration, and high quality, effective, consistent and responsive programming we could continue together to meet the challenge of keeping schools safe and caring learning environments.

## **PARENT FEEDBACK**

Seven parent groups, from all regions across Thames Valley were consulted regarding their thoughts on the need and value of system violence prevention programs. In addition, 10 individual School Councils forwarded written submissions following discussions with regional School Councils. (**Appendix 26**)

All groups agreed that there is a large need for violence prevention programs at their schools to model and teach respect, address today's violence issues and prevent occurrences of violence. Ideally, they felt that this education should be a shared responsibility between the community and school, however, they recognized that the burden of responsibility has unfortunately fallen on the shoulders of the school to take the leading role and set the standard of acceptable behaviour for our communities. They felt that children must feel safe at school if they are going to learn; the lessons learned from the programs are life skills that children need today; schools are the best place for ALL children to be educated about this topic regardless of their background; and schools have an opportunity to teach parents through their children. They emphasized the need for schools to communicate with the parent community regarding program initiatives that were taking place and to invite parents to be part of the discussions or presentations.

Time and time again, parents emphasized the need for programming to address bullying. They felt that this is a board wide concern with no demographic boundaries and that schools needed activities, resources, training and support to address the issue.

Central funding was a necessity that all groups supported adamantly. They stated that central funding was the only way to ensure equal access, to capitalize on monetary and people resources, to prevent 150 schools trying to do the same thing, to minimize the reliance on the wealth or priorities of individual communities to offer programs for students, and to avoid having schools rely on the willingness and availability of a school staff member to take on the burden of developing, coordinating or organizing materials and events.

When asked for additional comments at the end of discussions, the need to address bullying was repeated in most of the sessions.

## **OTHER BOARDS**

Yasmine Hussein, was able to make contact with five of the 10 largest school boards in Ontario regarding their violence prevention initiatives. All boards acknowledge the need for programming to address issues of bullying and student behaviour but none have the position of Learning Coordinator assigned to such a task. Only the Toronto and York District School Boards provide some system programming with many initiatives school based. **(Appendix 27)**

The Toronto DSB is eager to see more programming in this area and the Waterloo DSB recently completed a pilot phase of pro-active initiatives and hopes to establish some system programming in the future.

While boards recognized the value of preventative education, they admitted that the majority of their work focused on reactive and disciplinary interventions. The concept of 'safe schools' at other boards was generally implemented by emphasizing measures of suspension and discipline that related to a 'zero tolerance' practice.

The Thames Valley District School Board is indeed a pro-active leader in this field in terms of system programming that is preventative in nature, centrally funded, and centrally coordinated in terms of both schools and community partners.

## **VIOLENCE PREVENTION COUNSELLOR**

In a *Report to the Attorney General of Ontario by the Joint Committee on Domestic Violence* (August 1999) the Thames Valley District School Board's use of a Violence Prevention Coordinator and dramatic presentations was lauded and used as an example of "best practices" for Ontario. **(Appendix 28)**

The violence prevention coordinator was asked to maintain a detailed working log for one month (23 working days). **(Appendix 29)** It was noted that the demands on the coordinator's time are many and varied. The expected 29 school visits and monitoring of 35 performances were recorded. The unexpected came with the areas of communications and liaison. He is in contact with administrators and teachers many times throughout each day. All but 4 days realized contact with school administrators and 3 days per week with parents regarding violent incidences. The extent to which the coordinator was being used as a resource by administrators and parents was

unanticipated. In addition, the coordinator was in contact with community partners (on the average) three times per day. Added to this schedule was an average of two nights per week devoted to committee meetings, consultation sessions with school councils or parent presentations, and the necessity to do 80% of the administrative work, review of resources and program materials in the evenings.

The working log illustrated clearly that the original job of coordinating and developing program had expanded dramatically in the area of communicating with stakeholders (administrators, parents, and community partners), with no additional personnel resources to assist with this growth.

## FUNDING

During the 2002-2003 school year the following funds have been provided to bring programming to over 80,000 students.

### Thames Valley District School Board

Violence Prevention Coordinator	
Replacement Cost of Teacher (\$33,861 + 14% benefits)	\$38,602
Responsibility Allowance	5,500
2 Drama Lines (1/3 of \$38,602)	12,867
Program Department VP Budget	82,000
Operations Department VP Budget	9,000
<b>Total TVDSB Funds</b>	<b>\$147,969</b>

**Community Partners have provided funding in actual dollars totaling \$386,400**

For a detailed account of program costs, please see **Appendix 3 “Safe Schools: Violence Prevention Programs”**. Expenditures are necessary to cover the cost of performance, punting, training, handbooks, educational kits, supply teacher costs and busing.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee recommends:

- #1 **THAT the Board continue to support the initiatives/programs currently within the violence prevention portfolio.**

### Rationale

Each individual program review (with students and staff) rated programs highly and indicated that programs benefitted students. Feedback from administrators, staff, senior students, parents, and community partners all confirmed the individual program reviews. It was found that system programs complemented school efforts and regular curriculum expectations and were meeting the desired specific and general program expectations. Many of the stakeholders encouraged the board to expand the program offerings. Research literature indicated that the comprehensive system approach that the TVDSB has chosen is the most effective and that the current program delivery and contents comply with the key considerations for violence prevention programming. All stakeholders surveyed were adamant that programs remain as centrally funded system offerings to ensure equal access and consistency across the board.

- #2 **THAT the two secondary lines dedicated to drama production be maintained.**

### Rationale

Each individual program review of the grade 7 to OAC drama presentations (with staff and students) rated programs highly, indicated that the programs benefitted students, and praised the chosen delivery model (drama followed by peer facilitated discussion) as the appropriate strategy to impact students. Feedback from administrators, staff, senior students, parents, and community partners all confirmed the individual program reviews and urged the system to maintain the coordinated delivery of the program to all secondary schools.

The delivery of the presentations depends on the additional two lines for senior drama production. This allows two schools to dedicate a group of students to the presentations across the Valley schools. These presentations are augmented by other schools' drama departments committing a small number of presentations to complete the schedule of events. In addition, the dedicated drama lines allow for one additional play per year to be written and produced by a senior drama class in conjunction with the drama teacher. It is critical that a new play be developed annually to have fresh material to present to schools on an annual basis. The research shows that violence prevention must be an ongoing consistent message if positive changes are to be made. Bringing the drama presentations into schools not only provides education for the student body but allows an opportunity for the development of student leaders through the facilitator training and delivery. It has been found that this is the group of students that realize the greatest (immediate and long term) benefit from the programs and have the potential to influence the school's culture following the program presentation.

- #3 THAT beginning September 1, 2003, the Board initiate the development of a comprehensive, elementary, school based anti- bullying program.**

**Rationale**

Of all violence topics, bullying has received the most concern over the past school year. Phone calls from parents, staff and administrators seeking advice and guidance in dealing with the issue have escalated. This was the one common topic of concern with each parent focus group and individual school council submission. Students response at the S.A.V.E. conference indicated a strong need in this area. Elementary students, staff and parents would benefit from a comprehensive program that involved learning activities, school based events, presentations, parent communications, and teacher support.

- #4 THAT the equivalent of one secondary line (1/6 of a teacher of drama) be added to facilitate the development of a comprehensive, elementary, school-based anti-bullying program.**

**Rationale**

Currently the system cannot meet the number of requests for grade 7 and 8 drama presentations. (This is despite the fact that the two schools with dedicated drama lines plus the four schools presenting limited number of productions were scheduled for the maximum amount of time that they could be out of their schools). The addition of one line (or 1/6 of a teacher) would permit a new play to be developed to address the issue of bullying in the elementary schools and dedicate 1/3 of a teacher for one semester to the production and presentation of the play. This would facilitate both the demanded focus on bullying and the unmet demand for presentations to grade 7 and 8 students.

**Cost: \$6,433.00 (1/6 beginning teacher + benefits).**

- #5 THAT a .5 teacher be seconded to the central office to work with the violence prevention coordinator to allow program growth in the area of preventing and addressing bullying at the elementary level.**

and

- #6 THAT additional clerical support be allocated to assist with violence prevention initiatives.**

**Rationale**

If the board is to sustain the current level of system program offerings, community partner contributions and involvement, AND expand system initiatives to address bullying in elementary schools, the addition of personnel will be necessary. It is clear that the present demands on the violence prevention coordinator go far beyond program coordination and development. To introduce new programming that involves staff, administration, students and parents will necessitate the addition of staff. It appears that the most effective and financially feasible approach would be to second a teacher half time who has a background in violence prevention and the skills to develop and deliver programs and resources. Furthermore, additional clerical support for administrative tasks would allow the coordinator more time to focus on supporting staff and students.

**Cost: \$19,301.00 (.5 beginning teacher + benefits).**

**#7 THAT an effort be made to increase the program budget line to \$129,000 (2000-2001 requested level of funding).**

**Rationale**

Budget cuts over the past years have necessitated strict guidelines on the number of program initiatives and presentations that the system can offer. It has been impossible to fulfill all requests for *Stand By Me Mentors*, *Steps to Respect* programming, and *Elementary Drama* presentations. A return to the prior level of funding would allow additional training of mentors for the *Stand By Me* program, additional kits and training days to expand the *Steps to Respect* program into more of the 65 schools requesting the program, and supply the busses and training required to meet the demand for *Elementary Drama Presentations*.

**#8 THAT the position of Learning Coordinator for Violence Prevention be maintained and the current coordinator's position be renewed for a four year term commencing September 1, 2003.**

**Rationale**

Feedback from administrators, staff, parents, and community partners all confirmed the value of system wide programs coordinated by a central office staff member. Some of the recurring reasons given for this included: there is a system-wide need for organization and coordination due to the sheer size of the undertaking; there is a need for someone to work with resources, evaluate materials and liaise with community partners; a coordinator is necessary to maximize use of funds and acquire needed funds from outside the board's resources; there is a need to ensure high quality, equitable and consistent programs; school staff do not have the time to offer comprehensive, varied, and high quality programs; programs need to be coordinated through all grade levels to ensure a building of skills and knowledge; there is a need for a high level of expertise in this area; the coordinator is used as support to administrators, staff and parents; and there is value in a common message to the system.

The expertise and time of the Learning Coordinator has multiplied exponentially across the system. Under the direction of the Learning Coordinator, the Secondary Violence Prevention liaison teachers have implemented programs in all secondary schools and expanded knowledge and skills with key teachers throughout the board. Working with these key teachers begins in regular system meetings and then is expanded to support at the school level, to assist with student training, program organization, community support contacts, staff presentations, and community communication.

The extensive multi grade nature of the TVDSB programming is able to be offered to all schools across the board equally due to the funds dedicated to the programs from the board and its community partners. The almost \$400,000 provided by community partners is funding that is not available to Boards of Education and is only possible through the involvement of the Learning Coordinator. The Learning Coordinator's time dedicated to working with the partners developing programs, organizing delivery of programs, coordinating the collaboration between board and community staff, pursuing funds jointly and referring services upon request and/or need all contribute to the success of the multi partners. The investment in a Learning Coordinator is returned to the board nine times over in community dollars dedicated to our students.

It has been made very clear throughout the review that the loss of this position would mean the loss of quality programs that are provided consistently and equitably to all schools throughout the Board. In addition, the comprehensive multi-grade approach with a view to long term board wide planning would disappear, and in its place would be individual school efforts that would be dependent on the financial status of the school community, the size of the school staff, the available time, and the expertise and willingness of staff to dedicate themselves to the development and implementation of violence prevention programming.

**Therefore, the Committee recommends to the Board:**

1. **That** the current position of Learning Coordinator for Violence Prevention be maintained and violence prevention initiatives continue to be centrally funded and coordinated.
2. **That** the Board endorse in principle the expansion of its current violence prevention programs, and develop a comprehensive, elementary, school-based anti-bullying program, and refer the following recommendations to the budget process for consideration:
  - **that** a .5 teacher be seconded to the central office to work with the violence prevention coordinator to allow program growth in the area of preventing and addressing bullying at the elementary level (\$19,301);
  - **that** the dedicated secondary drama lines be expanded to three (from two) to facilitate the elementary focus on preventing bullying (\$6,433);
  - **that** an effort be made to increase the program budget line to \$129,000 (2000-2001 requested level of funding).