The Learning Bar

A safe school environment is critical for students' learning and well-being. Schools are safer when school staff, students, parents and community agencies work together to prevent bullying, exclusion and sexual harassment. ***Bullying*** is when a person tries to hurt another person, and does it more than once. It can be physical, verbal, or social, and can also take place over the internet with emails or text messages. Sometimes a group of students will bully others. ***Exclusion*** is when students feel excluded or treated unfairly at school because of ethnic or cultural background, gender, social class, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or other perceived categorical boundary. ***Sexual harassment*** is any unwanted or inappropriate language or touching that makes a person feel upset, hurt or angry. Exclusion and sexual harassment are forms of bullying, and often students that are excluded or harassed are victims of other forms of bullying. Students who are bullied are prone to experiencing low self esteem, anxiety, depression, and disaffection from school. In extreme cases bullying can lead to suicide.

Key Findings from the Research

- Data from *OurSCHOOL* surveys in 2009-10 found students who reported being victims of bullying were five-and-a-half times as likely to be suffering depression, and were almost three times as likely to have a low sense of belonging at school. They were also less likely to be intellectually engaged.

- Schools vary in their reported prevalence of moderate and severe bullying. In 2009-10, data from *OurSCHOOL* found that among middle schools the prevalence of moderate and severe bullying varied from 4% to 52%, with one-half of all schools having a prevalence between 24% and 35%. The prevalence of moderate and severe bullying reported was less in secondary schools; on average it was 22% compared with the middle school average of 29%.

- There are several actions schools can take to prevent bullying, exclusion and sexual harassment. School staff must be able to recognize different forms of bullying and be willing to step in when they observe a student being bullied.[1] Positive school policies and practices can make it safe for students to report bullying when it occurs and ensure that there are clear consequences for bullying that are consistently enforced. Schools can help equip students with appropriate strategies to deal with bullying, exclusion and sexual harassment.[2]

- Data from students can help school staff develop positive practices and policies.

Students from Stanley K-12 School completed the *OurSCHOOL* survey which included questions about bullying, school safety and exclusion and sexual harassment. This report summarizes their views.

1. The prevalence of school bullying

The literature distinguishes between bullies, victims and those who are both bullies and the victims of bullying.[3] The percentage of students who report being victims of bullying is a useful school-level measure of the extent of bullying and its potential effects on youth. Students' reports of taking part in bullying and students' accounts of witnessing bullying are less useful as a school measure, because even a single incident of bullying may be seen or talked about by a wide range of students.

Overall, 50% of students in Stanley K-12 School reported being a victim of bullying about once a week or more often, for at least one of the four types of bullying. In addition, *OurSCHOOL* classifies students as being moderate or severe victims. Figure 1 - shows the results for all students in Stanley K-12 School, and separately for boys and girls, compared with the national average. Figure 2 indicates the types of bullying most often experienced by the students at Stanley K-12 School. The results are based on students' reports of being victims of physical, social, verbal and cyber bullying in the previous 30 days.

**Figure 1: Prevalence of bullying at Stanley K-12 School**
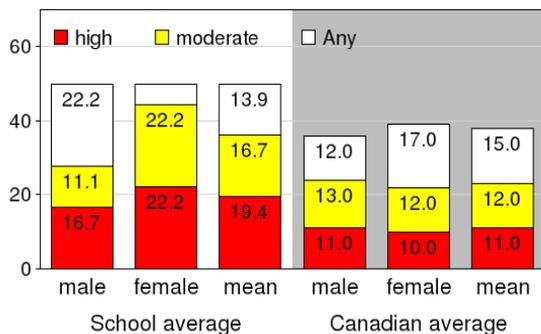
Figure 2: Bullying by Type at Stanley K-12 School
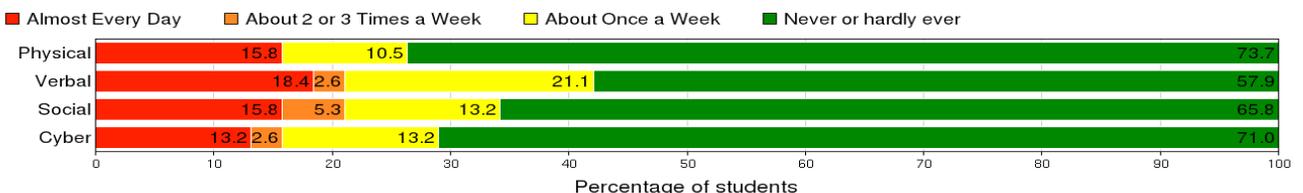

2. Where and when bullying occurs

Bullying tends to occur most frequently in classrooms, hallways and the lunchroom, but this can vary among schools.[4] Students quickly learn where the 'hot-spots' are, which tend to be places where there is inadequate supervision.[5] Students at Stanley K-12 School were asked where bullying happened most often in and near their school. The results are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Where bullying occurs at Stanley K-12 School
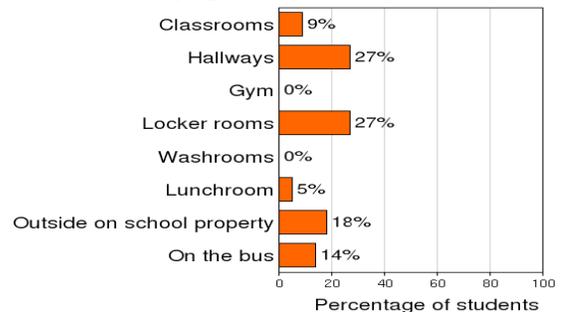
The students at Stanley K-12 School were also asked when bullying most often occurred. Figure 4 displays the results.

Figure 4: When bullying occurs at Stanley K-12 School
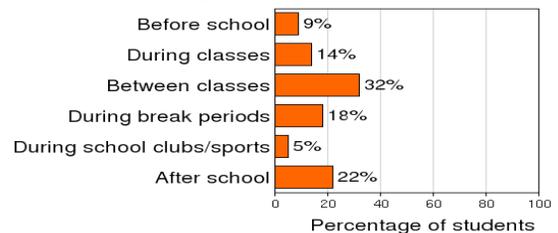
3. How students respond to bullying

Students in Stanley K-12 School who reported being bullied in the past 30 days were asked what they did the last time they were bullied. Figure 5 summarizes their responses.

Figure 5: How students respond when bullied at Stanley K-12 School

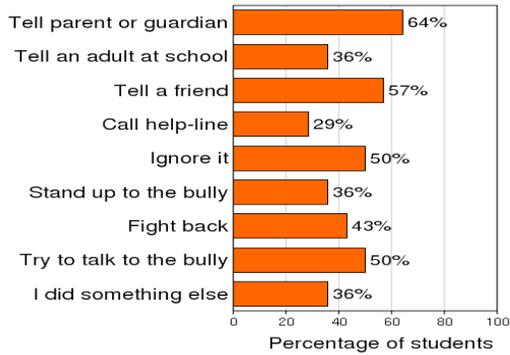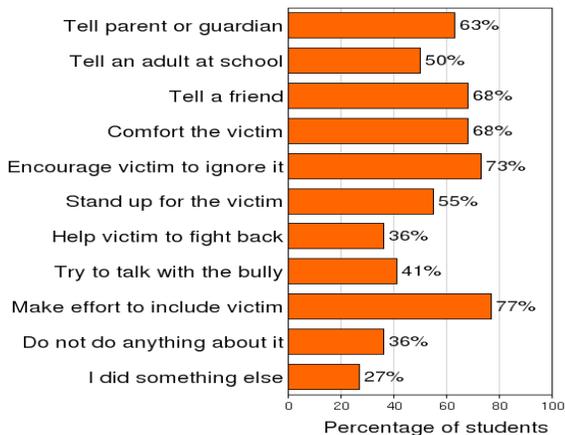| Response	Percentage
Tell parent or guardian	64%
Tell an adult at school	36%
Tell a friend	57%
Call help-line	29%
Ignore it	50%
Stand up to the bully	36%
Fight back	43%
Try to talk to the bully	50%
I did something else	36%

Percentage of students

Figure 6 summarizes student responses when they saw or heard about a student being bullied.

Figure 6: Response when others are bullied at Stanley K-12 School

Response	Percentage
Tell parent or guardian	63%
Tell an adult at school	50%
Tell a friend	68%
Comfort the victim	68%
Encourage victim to ignore it	73%
Stand up for the victim	55%
Help victim to fight back	36%
Try to talk with the bully	41%
Make effort to include victim	77%
Do not do anything about it	36%
I did something else	27%

Percentage of students

4. Measures to prevent bullying

School policies and practices can help prevent student bullying. Students at Stanley K-12 School indicated the extent to which they felt certain anti-bullying measures were practiced in their school. Figure 7 shows the percentage of students that agreed or strongly agreed that these practices were evident in their school.

Figure 7: Measures to prevent bullying at Stanley K-12 School

Measure	Percentage
School staff can identify bullying	43%
School staff step in quickly	38%
There are safe ways to report it	56%
Clear consequences are enforced	49%
There is adequate supervision	46%
Staff that victims can talk to	58%
Staff help students understand it	44%
Staff teach students what to do	51%

Percentage of students
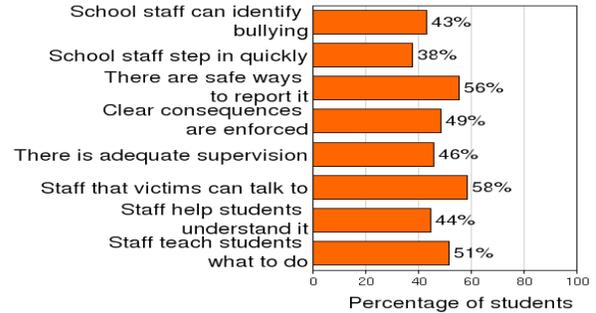
5. Students who feel excluded

Many students feel excluded by their peers or treated unfairly by school staff because of their ethnic or cultural background, gender, social class, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or other perceived categorical boundaries. Figure 8 shows the percentage of students who felt excluded by other students for various reasons.

Figure 8: Reasons students feel excluded at Stanley K-12 School

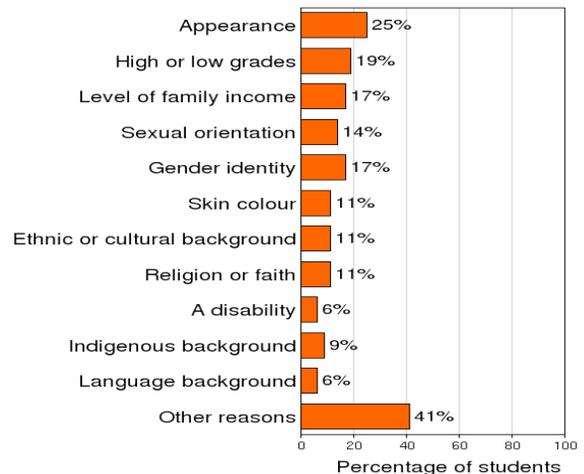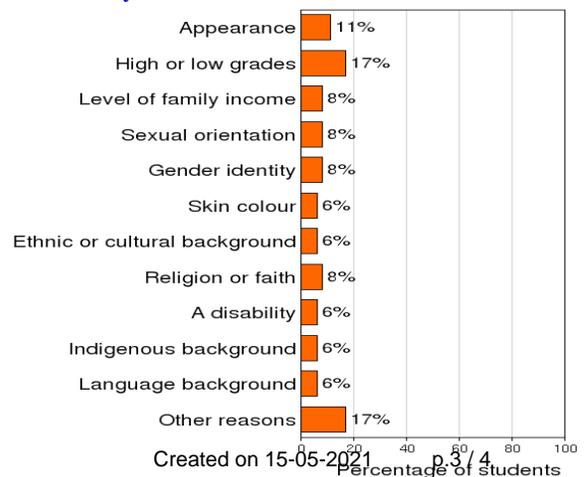| Reason	Percentage
Appearance	25%
High or low grades	19%
Level of family income	17%
Sexual orientation	14%
Gender identity	17%
Skin colour	11%
Ethnic or cultural background	11%
Religion or faith	11%
A disability	6%
Indigenous background	9%
Language background	6%
Other reasons	41%

Percentage of students

Figure 9 shows the percentage of students who felt they were treated unfairly by school staff for these same reasons.

**Figure 9: Reasons students feel they are treated unfairly by staff at Stanley K-12 School**

Reason	Percentage
Appearance	11%
High or low grades	17%
Level of family income	8%
Sexual orientation	8%
Gender identity	8%
Skin colour	6%
Ethnic or cultural background	6%
Religion or faith	8%
A disability	6%
Indigenous background	6%
Language background	6%
Other reasons	17%

Percentage of students

6. Sexual harassment at school

Students were presented with a definition of sexual harassment and asked if they had felt sexually harassed at school in the past 30 days. In Stanley K-12 School, 35.3% of girls and 25% of boys felt they had been sexually harassed. Those who indicated being sexually harassed were asked how they responded at the time. Figure 10 summarizes their responses.

Figure 10: How students respond if they are sexually harassed at Stanley K-12 School
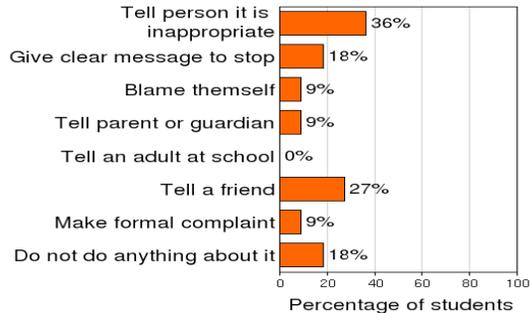
7. Feeling Safe at School

Students were asked whether they felt safe at school, and safe going to and from school. Overall, 6.3% of girls and 25% of boys in Stanley K-12 School indicated that they did not feel safe at school. A further 18.8% of girls and 25% of boys indicated a neutral position, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that they felt safe at school. Figure 11 shows the percentage of students that felt safe at school.

Figure 11: Students who feel safe at Stanley K-12 School
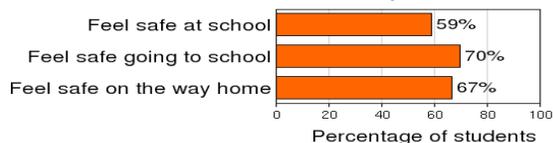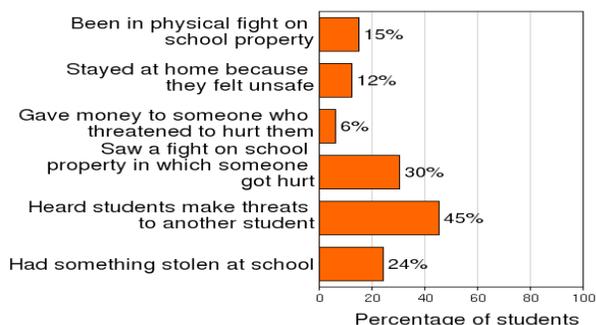

Figure 12 shows students' responses to six other questions concerning how safe they felt at school.

Figure 12: Indicators of an unsafe environment at Stanley K-12 School

About *OurSCHOOL*

OurSCHOOL is an evaluation system that includes a dynamic web-based student survey, and optional teacher and parent surveys. The system provides leading indicators of student engagement and wellness, and the aspects of classroom and school learning climate that research has shown affect student engagement and learning outcomes. Please see www.thelearningbar.com for further information.

About this School Report

This report was prepared by Dr. J. Douglas Willms, President of The Learning Bar. It was based on data from 37 students at Stanley K-12 School that completed the *OurSCHOOL* student survey in 2020. Schools can print this report free of charge for use in staff meetings and professional development activities. It can also be reproduced for distribution to parents.

References:

1. Pepler, D. J., Craig, W. M., Ziegler, S. & Charach, A. (1994). "An Evaluation of an Anti-Bullying Intervention in Toronto Schools". *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 13(2): 95-110.

2. O'Morre, M. (2000). Critical issues for teacher training to counter bullying and victimisation in Ireland. *Aggressive Behaviour*, 26, 99-111.

3. Haynie, D. L., Nansel, T., Eitel, P., Crump, A.D., Saylor, K., Yu, K. and Simons-Morton, B. (2001). Bullies, victims, and bully/victims: Distinct groups of at-risk youth. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 21, 29-49.

4. Leff, S. S., Power, T. J., Costigan, T. E., & Manz, P. H. (2003). Assessing the climate of the playground and lunchroom: Implications for bullying prevention programming. *School Psychology Review*, 32, 418-430.

5. Craig, W. M. & Pepler, D. (1997). "Observations of Bullying and Victimization in the School Yard". *Canadian Journal of School of Psychology*, 13(2): 41-60.