



MANITOBA PROVINCIAL
REPORT

Tell Them From Me:
Bullying and School Safety

1. Introduction

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The Province of Manitoba is committed to supporting school communities in providing safe and caring learning environments for all students. Since 2001, the government has issued a number of amendments to *The Public Schools Act* to promote safety in schools and establish respect for human diversity policies. Most recently, Bill 18, *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools)*, was proclaimed into law in September of 2013. In this act, bullying is “behaviour that is intended to cause, or should be known to cause, fear, intimidation, humiliation, distress or other forms of harm to another person’s body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation or property; or is intended to create, or should be known to create, a negative school environment for another person. Bullying may take place by any form of expression, including written, verbal or physical, or by means of any form of electronic communication (also referred to as cyber bullying), including social media, text messaging, or e-mail.”¹ The Act requires that school boards expand their policies to address the issue of bullying, in all of its forms, and promote supportive and inclusive school environments.

1.1 What is *Tell Them From Me*?

Tell Them From Me (TTFM) is an online student survey, created by The Learning Bar (TLB), which allows students to provide their input into school improvement anonymously. Surveyed students are asked questions regarding their perceptions of the prevalence of bullying in the school, when and where bullying occurs, and what coping strategies they are most likely to use when they are bullied or see other students being bullied.

Bullying and school safety theme

The “bullying and school safety theme” is a focused 15-minute survey which includes questions and accompanying definitions about bullying, exclusion (a form of bullying), and school safety. Secondary students are asked additional questions regarding feeling unfairly treated by school staff and being sexually harassed. For most of the questions, students are asked to consider their answers on the basis of “the past four weeks.”

Bullying is defined by TLB as “behaviour where the same person has pushed or punched you more than once (physical bullying), called you names or teased you more than once (verbal bullying), told lies about you or tried to make you look bad more than once (social bullying), or used email or text messages to tease or threaten you more than once (cyber bullying) in the past four weeks. The bully usually has power over the person being bullied, such as when the bully is bigger or more popular. Sometimes a group of students will bully others.”²

1. *The Public Schools Amendment Act* (Bill 18, *Safe and Inclusive Schools*), S.M. 2013, c. 6
2. *Tell Them From Me Elementary and Secondary Bullying & School Safety 2013-14, Student Survey Questions.*

Exclusion is defined by TLB as “behaviour that makes a student feel left out by other students.”³

Sexual harassment is defined by TLB as “any unwanted or inappropriate language or touching that makes you feel upset, hurt, or angry. It can be verbal, such as comments about your body, sexual remarks, or the spreading of rumours about a person. It can be physical, such as touching, rubbing, pinching, or hugging in a sexual way. It can be a request for a sexual favour in return for something else. It can happen to both boys and girls.”⁴

Thematic reports for schools and school divisions

Following the administration of the elementary and secondary surveys, thematic reports are produced by TLB which provide valuable information for shaping effective learning strategies, reducing barriers to learning, and ensuring that schools and school divisions offer the safest and most welcoming environment for all students. In addition, participating schools can access TLB’s online interactive tool which allows them to look at the data in a variety of ways including by gender and by individual grade level, while maintaining student anonymity.

1.2 Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning and *Tell Them From Me*

TTFM is a critical component of the anti-bullying initiative supported by the province. A successful pilot project of TTFM was conducted in May and November of 2012 with over 8,000 students participating from grades 7 to 12. Given the widespread support of the student survey and TLB’s powerful interactive tools which provide schools and school divisions with survey data for school improvement in terms of bullying and school safety, Education and Advanced Learning entered into a 3-year agreement with TLB to include students from grades 4 to 12. Beginning in 2013/2014, schools will survey their students once or twice per school year in terms of the bullying and school safety theme. This will be repeated in the 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 school years.

A safe school environment is critical for students’ learning and well-being. Schools are safer when staff, students, parents, and community agencies work together to prevent bullying and exclusion. The TTFM provincial initiative is helping to bring bullying and school safety to the forefront in schools throughout Manitoba and providing school and school division administrators with reliable and timely data to support evidence-based practice.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

1.3 What happened in 2013/2014?

- The Fall 2013 implementation of TTFM included 34 out of 37 school divisions.
- Over 84,000 students participated (approximately 30,000 students from grades 4 to 6 and 54,000 students from grades 7 to 12) from 525 schools in rural, urban, and northern Manitoba.
- Webinar sessions were provided by TLB for division and school coordinators. These sessions included an orientation to TTFM, training sessions for both new and returning division and school coordinators, and report features training for both new and returning division and school coordinators. Sessions were recorded to facilitate further access to the information required for the successful administration of the elementary and secondary student survey.
- TLB provided ongoing technical support for all participating schools.
- Education and Advanced Learning provided a cost-sharing arrangement for all participating school divisions and will continue to provide support in 2014/2015 and 2015/2016.
- Education and Advanced Learning and TLB worked in partnership to ensure the smooth administration of TTFM for grades 4 to 12 students across the province.
- Participating schools in the province now have baseline data on the rate, types, and locations of bullying affecting students in their schools, as well as their students' feeling of safety at school.

Statements made by division coordinators:

- As a result of the TTFM data obtained from students, our school division is changing the structure of the change rooms in our schools to make them safer. As requested, individual cubicles are being installed to increase the privacy for each student. We have told our students that this change is occurring as a direct result of their responses to the survey. Our hope is that, if they see positive change happening as a result of their feedback, students will continue to take the TTFM survey seriously.
- What's important about the TTFM survey is that it's based in research and also provides a great collection of accompanying resources. It's a tremendous opportunity to be a part of this initiative.
- As a direct result of our TTFM data, we have changed our break time supervision. Students identified that bullying was occurring in the canteen and in the stairwells during breaks and class changes. Teachers are now posted in the canteen and stairwells during break times and over lunch, and students are reporting that less bullying is occurring in these areas.
- With TTFM, we can listen to the views of our students directly. There is no doubt that the specificity of the data has helped our schools plan for targeted improvement. We learned that we had underestimated the incidence of

bullying in unsupervised areas. We also learned about how troubled students are by verbal bullying, especially when it refers to their appearance or their grades. Trustees and senior administration have discussed the data and have set the priority in our divisional plan to: nurture positive and respectful relationships among students, teachers, school leaders, parents, and the community.

- Our schools, school division staff, and school board have used the data as part of our division and school plans. We have also implemented strategies to address bullying in our schools.
- For many years, our school division has supported safe schools and communities by listening to students tell us about issues of safety in their school experiences. The TTFM data has been an excellent resource for our school staff, providing us with timely information about safety and bullying in site-specific areas. Our schools are safer places to learn because of the strategies being used at the school level and the importance we are placing on student voice.
- TTFM is an extremely effective tool to collect data related to student voice. The data from TTFM is used for planning in our school division.