

“Tell Them From Me” School Climate Surveys

The Keewatin-Patricia District School Board used the *Tell Them From Me* school climate survey process to learn about the education experiences of students in grades 7 to 12 by listening to their voices. The survey results were analyzed to identify dissonance between how school administrators viewed their school climate and how students perceived it. School teams then developed response plans to address specific student concerns. The school response plans were embedded into each school improvement plan as aligned with the Board Improvement Plan. While all students were surveyed, the board’s Character Development Team and School Administrators Group were particularly focused on the feedback from historically marginalized groups such as Aboriginal students, those with low academic achievement and students experiencing mental health issues. The character development project funding supported the board in taking actions in response to the student voices by increasing its support for initiatives that address issues such as bullying, racism, gender harassment, mental health and substance abuse - significant deterrents to student actualization of success and graduation rates.

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- An overwhelming number of students identified the absence of a ‘caring adult’ in their school as having a negative impact on their success at school. As a result of these responses, staff ownership of the learning experience of every student is now a central component of board and school improvement planning.
- A large number of students indicated that attaining an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) and graduating from high school was not a priority for them. Further analysis of the survey identified that students lacked understanding about how graduation from high school would lead to future success. Plans were put into place to increase learning opportunities in this area.
- A large number of students reported experiencing emotional difficulty, depression and other mental health issues. As a result, the board has given greater priority to the development of a system plan to address student mental health challenges. The board has also revised its special education services plan, with increased emphasis on proactive counselling and decreased emphasis on reactionary attendance responses.

Lessons learned for moving forward ...

- The results of the *Tell Them From Me* school climate surveys were compiled in a comprehensive report and presented to trustees at a board meeting. The report supports the trustees’ continued focus on system-wide inclusionary practices to address the issues of marginalized students, of students achieving below expectations and of students who have been victims of bullying.
- There is an increased awareness of the need to promote student resilience to help students address and overcome life’s challenges and obstacles, and find their way to success.
- To strengthen student self-actualization of graduation from secondary school, the board has created an action plan which focuses explicitly on the importance of attaining an OSSD.