

# Shared Solutions English Language Board Survey Results

## Introduction

In April 2009, the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch conducted a survey of school boards and school authorities on the impact of *Shared Solutions* on conflict prevention and dispute resolution in schools. A total of 86 boards and authorities participated: 54 English boards (out of 60 total), 16 English school authorities, 10 French boards (out of 12 total) and three French school authorities.

The survey was undertaken to help further support dispute prevention and resolution as outlined in *Shared Solutions* and to guide future policy development.

The following document summarizes the findings of this survey. Given the wide range of responses submitted by French and English language boards and authorities, results are being reported separately.

The survey consisted of 28 questions on the following eight key areas related to *Shared Solutions*:

- Effective Communication
- Positive School Climate
- Conflict Prevention
- Conflict Resolution
- Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflicts
- Overall Usefulness of *Shared Solutions*
- Professional Development
- Impact of Professional Development on Planning and Instruction

## Provincial Overview

These provincial results indicate that *Shared Solutions* has continued to facilitate a culture of collaboration across the province. Specifically, the survey shows that

- Over two-thirds of all boards plan to undertake initiatives to further prevent conflict following the guide's release.
- Over 85% of all boards reported that parents and educators used the collaborative approaches found within the guide.
- Over two-thirds of all boards are planning professional development activities in order to implement features found within *Shared Solutions*.

The document further provided assistance to administrators, educators, special education advisory committees (SEACs) and other sectors in creating collaborative school climates, as reported by boards. The resource guide is clearly making a positive impact on the education system, and all boards agreed that it has made an overall impact on building collaborative cultures. Given the

important linkages between *Shared Solutions* and the Ministry’s core priorities—reducing achievement gaps and increasing public confidence in our education system in particular—we hope that the principles in *Shared Solutions* become more widely disseminated throughout the province, and that continued positive results in conflict prevention and dispute resolution occur.

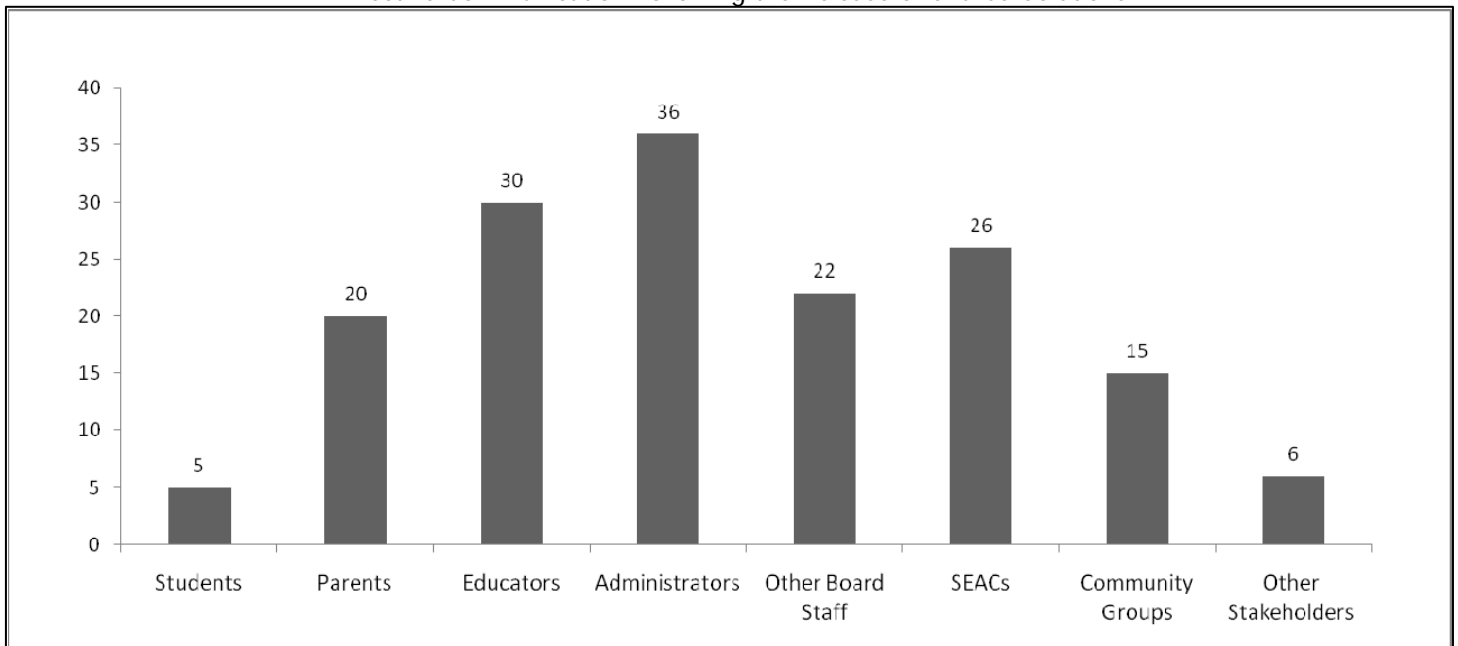
## **ENGLISH SURVEY RESULTS**

### **Effective Communication**

School boards were asked to determine the overall impact of *Shared Solutions* on improving effective communication in their board. Over half (56%) of school boards found the resource guide had an overall impact in improving effective communication in their board. The remaining boards (44%) reported that they are unable to determine the extent of the impact at this point (note that many boards and authorities have had various initiatives and procedures in place prior to the release of *Shared Solutions*, and thus found it hard to determine the exact impact of the guide. Additionally, some school authorities have had too few conflicts to provide definitive answers).

To elaborate on the positive impact of *Shared Solutions* on effective communication, boards were asked to identify the stakeholder groups who gave positive feedback on the resource guide. The four most commonly identified were: administrators, educators, SEACs and parents.

Stakeholder Groups that Indicated an Increase in Effective Communication Following the Release of *Shared Solutions*

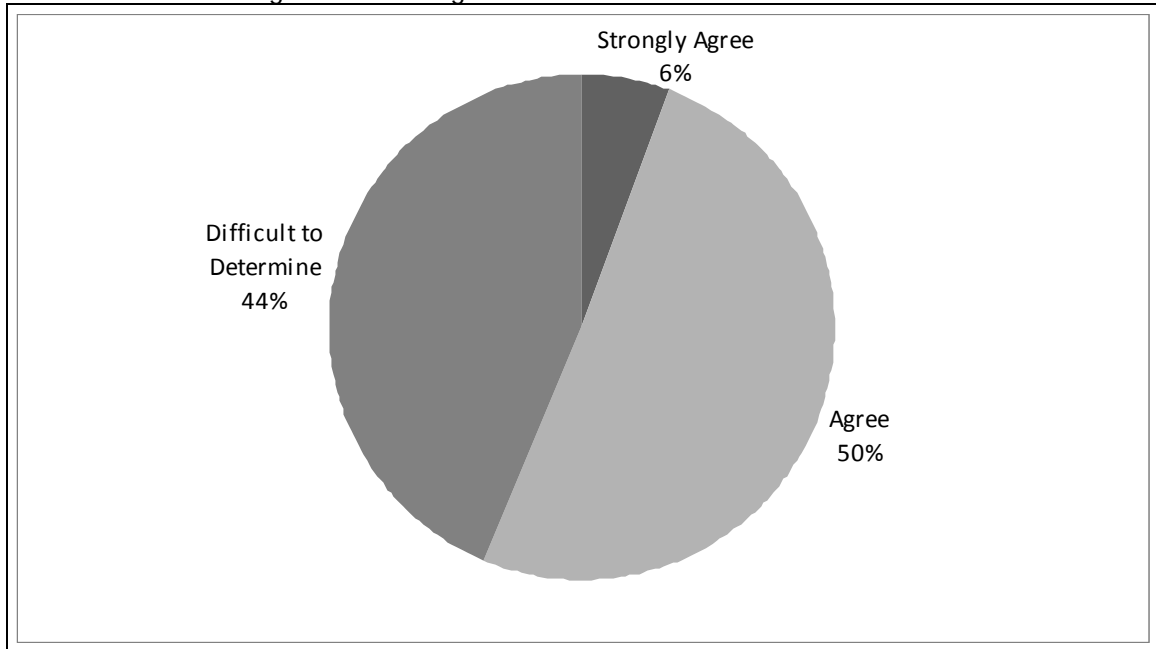


Note: Responding boards identified more than one stakeholder group.

## **Positive School Climate**

School boards were asked to determine the impact of *Shared Solutions* on creating and sustaining positive school climates in their board. A majority of boards (56%) found the resource guide had an impact on increasing positive school climates. The remaining boards reported that they were unable to determine the extent of the positive impact at this point.

Respondents who felt that *Shared Solutions* Contributed to Creating and Sustaining Positive School Climates in their School Board

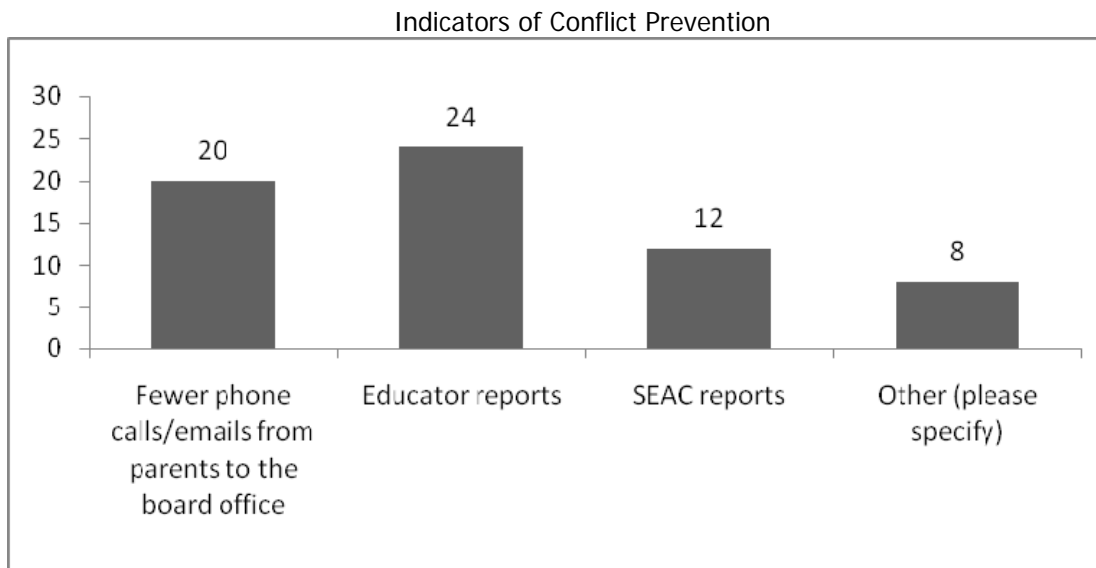


## **Conflict Prevention**

Almost half (48%) of boards indicated that *Shared Solutions* has had an impact on preventing conflict in their school board. 52% of boards indicated they have not yet been able to determine the impact on conflict prevention.

The following stakeholder groups were most often identified as noting an increase in conflict prevention activities in their school boards: administrators, educators, school board staff and SEACs.

School boards identified reports from educators, fewer phone calls and emails and reports from SEACs as the highest indicators of conflict prevention.



Note: Responding boards identified more than one indicator of conflict and prevention.

54 boards indicated that they had undertaken initiatives to prevent conflict following the release of *Shared Solutions*. The following types of initiatives were most commonly indicated as underway by boards:

- strategies for use before during and after a meeting directly from *Shared Solutions*
- the use of the principles of successful conflict prevention and resolution directly from *Shared Solutions*.

### **Conflict Resolution**

As a result of *Shared Solutions*, 7% of boards had implemented a new communications protocol based on the example in the resource guide, while 66% already had a protocol or similar process in place prior to the release of the resource guide. 27% took no action to date.

53% of board respondents agreed that *Shared Solutions* had an impact on resolving conflicts; 46% of boards indicated that they were not yet able to determine the impact on conflict resolution.

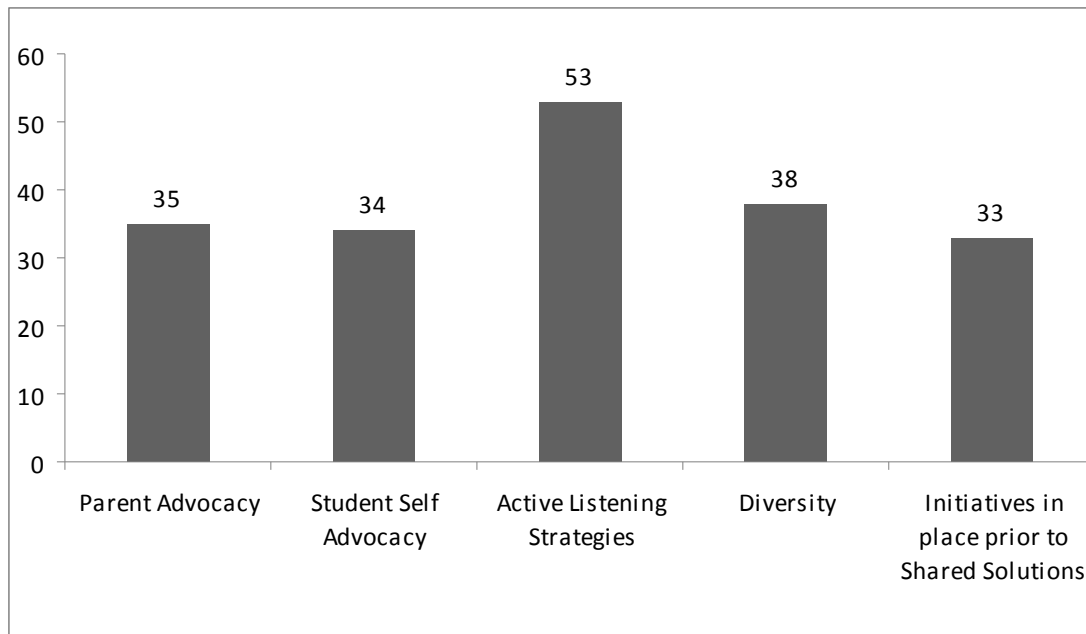
As with conflict prevention, school boards chose indicators that conflict was being resolved; the most common replies were reports from educators, fewer phone calls and emails and reports from SEACs.

Boards were asked which stakeholder groups were noted to have indicated increases in conflict resolution; the most commonly identified were administrators, educators, school board staff, SEACs and parents. The reported increases in conflict resolution from parents attest to a greater shared understanding and mutual respect between boards and parents.

95% of boards indicated that they had undertaken initiatives to resolve conflict following the release of *Shared Solutions*. The types of initiatives most often

identified as underway by boards include: active listening strategies, diversity training and parent advocacy, followed closely by student self-advocacy. Attempts to achieve higher levels of parent advocacy indicate that boards are encouraging parents to become active participants in decisions related to programs and services for their children. As one board noted, “*Shared Solutions* is a helpful resource to support members of our teams and as a resource to our parent community.” The initiatives in diversity training indicate the importance of culturally-sensitive awareness in conflict resolution.

Initiatives School Boards have Undertaken to Resolve Conflict



Note: Responding boards identified more than one initiative undertaken to resolve conflict.

### **Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflicts**

88% of boards indicated that, to their knowledge, both parents and educators were using the collaborative approaches (Problem Solving, Finding Common Ground and Using a Facilitator) found within *Shared Solutions*.

Over two-thirds (69%) of boards indicated that the collaborative approaches to resolving conflict from *Shared Solutions* contributed to conflict resolution in their school board.

School boards were asked to choose from the following collaborative approaches as the most effective in resolving conflict: Problem Solving, Finding Common Ground and Using a Facilitator. 53% of boards indicated that using two or more of these approaches tandem yielded the highest rate of conflict resolution.

## **Overall Usefulness of Shared Solutions**

School boards identified the *Conflict Resolution Dos and Don'ts* as the most helpful resource in the guide, followed by *Roles and Responsibilities in Special Education*.



Note: Responding boards identified more than one most helpful resource.

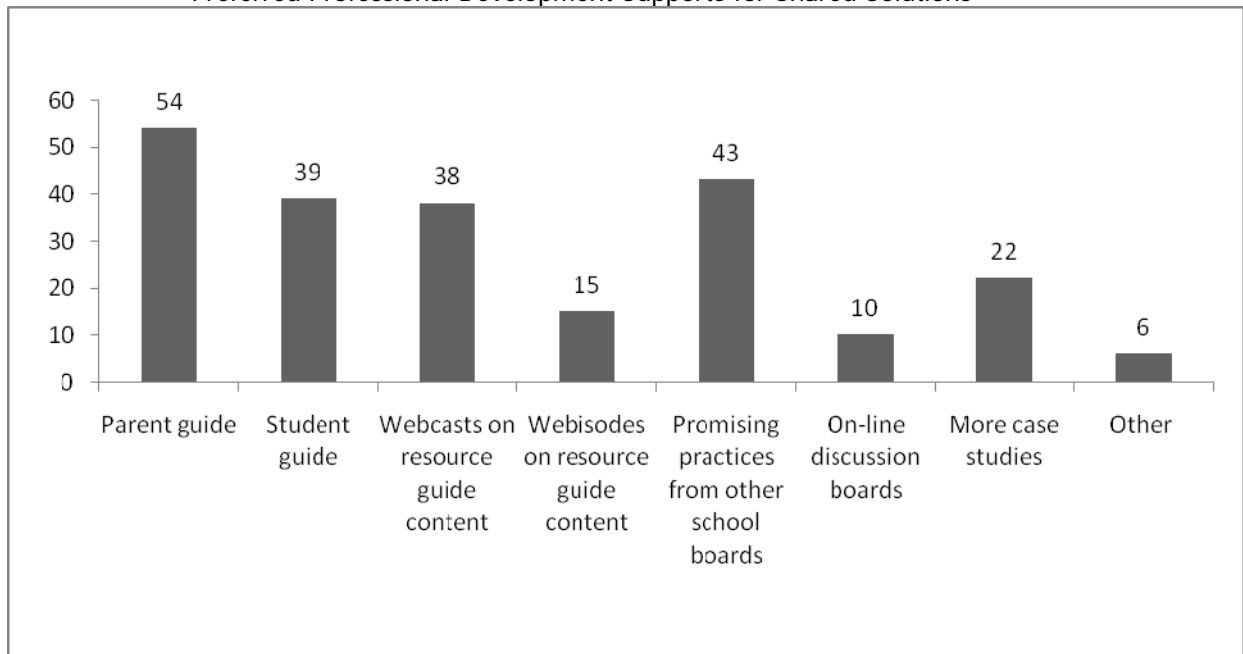
## **Professional Development**

72% of school boards indicated they had undertaken professional development for their staff following the release of *Shared Solutions*. Types of professional development included discussions with SEACs or other parent groups, as well as further staff training in conflict/dispute prevention and resolution and discussion at professional development days.

When asked what professional development supports for *Shared Solutions* they would like to receive, boards indicated the following: a parent guide, promising practices report from other school boards, a student guide and web casts. The strong desire for these products indicates that boards are taking a concerted effort to provide products for their key partners in education, including parents and children. Other professional development supports suggested by school boards included:

- DVD support
- Professional Development packages for principals to use with teachers
- Examples of support and processes to reach out to parents
- Examples of professional development materials that integrate the supportive practices within Shared Solutions to other Ministry initiatives
- Custom made professional development support for small boards

Preferred Professional Development Supports for Shared Solutions



Note: Responding boards identified more than one preferred professional development support.

### **Impact of Professional Development on Planning and Instruction**

65% of school boards indicated that *Shared Solutions* supports assessment-based instructional strategies for students with special education needs.

55% of boards indicated that *Shared Solutions* had a positive impact on how staff problem solve around learning and instruction in meetings, while the remaining boards indicated it was that they were not yet able to determine the impact.

### **Other Comments by Boards**

“*Shared Solutions* is a good resource and will very likely be utilized more as our system and the community adjust to the changes.”

“The *Shared Solutions* resource compliments, supports, and validates existing resources in the board such as the Special Education Process flow chart for problem-solving. The pyramid of interventions found in the Student Success Framework also aligns with the conflict resolution model found in *Shared Solutions*.”

“*Shared Solutions* is an excellent resource. It is well organized and easy to use. The appendices provide a great overview and are helpful as review when working to resolve conflict. ‘*Shared Solutions on the Go*’ is also very helpful as a reminder/review for all parties involved.”

“*Shared Solutions* should be a document that is highlighted each year with teachers and administrators and used as a guide throughout the year.”

“We have more that needs to be done with *Shared Solutions* - our approach is that the document is here to stay and that we need to continually refer to it in our messaging to staff and the community.”

“Our schools are now incorporating collaborative, inclusive, problem-solving approaches to resolving conflict. *Communities of Peace*, a Board document was created and distributed to all staff and families within our Board in response to *Shared Solutions*.”

“We emphasized the resource as supporting a variety of issues that school teams might discuss with parents which might include: Safe Schools, Positive School climate initiatives, diversity/equity issues, and accommodations where the same principles of conflict prevention, resolution and communication strategies are essential.”

“In our Board, the resource was highlighted as an integral part of our Catholic community where we engage in positive discussions from a Catholic perspective of understanding, empathy, respect with all stakeholders.”