Students in *John Caldwell School* "Tell Them From Me" about Bullying and School Safety - Secondary (2014-15)

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 *Tell Them From Me* 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 Tell Them From Me 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 John Caldwell School completed the *Tell Them From Me* 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, 41.9% of students in John Caldwell 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, *Tell Them From Me* classifies students as being moderate or severe victims. Figure 1 - shows the results for all students in John Caldwell 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 John Caldwell School. The results are based on students' reports of being victims of physical, social, verbal and cyber bullying in the previous 30 days.

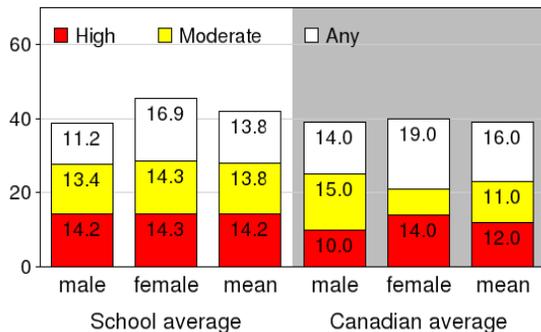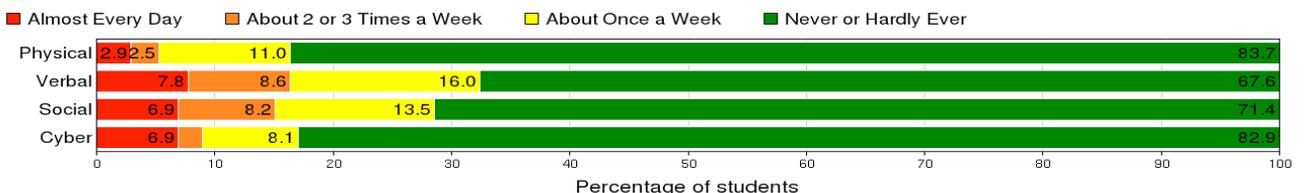**Figure 1: Prevalence of bullying at John Caldwell School**

Figure 2: Bullying by Type at John Caldwell 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 John Caldwell 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 John Caldwell School
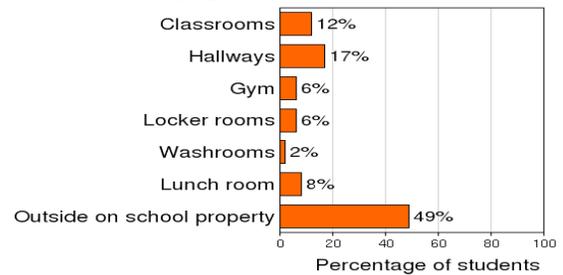
The students at John Caldwell School were also asked when bullying most often occurred. Figure 4 displays the results.

Figure 4: When bullying occurs at John Caldwell School
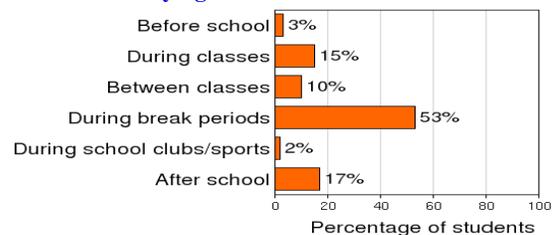
3. How students respond to bullying

Students in John Caldwell 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 John Caldwell School

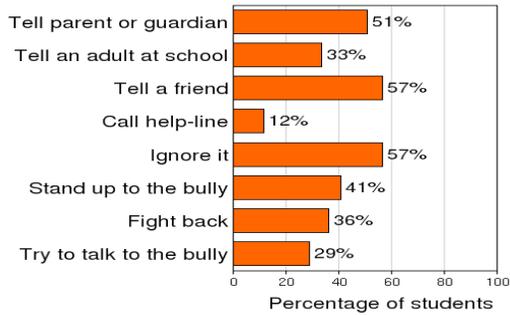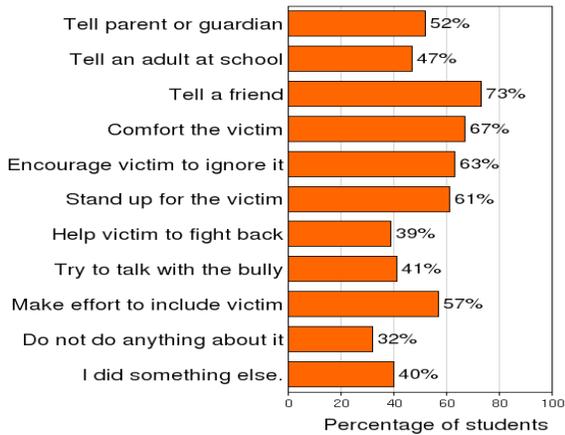| Response	Percentage
Tell parent or guardian	51%
Tell an adult at school	33%
Tell a friend	57%
Call help-line	12%
Ignore it	57%
Stand up to the bully	41%
Fight back	36%
Try to talk to the bully	29%

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 John Caldwell School

Response	Percentage
Tell parent or guardian	52%
Tell an adult at school	47%
Tell a friend	73%
Comfort the victim	67%
Encourage victim to ignore it	63%
Stand up for the victim	61%
Help victim to fight back	39%
Try to talk with the bully	41%
Make effort to include victim	57%
Do not do anything about it	32%
I did something else.	40%

Percentage of students

4. 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 7 shows the percentage of students who felt excluded by other students for various reasons.

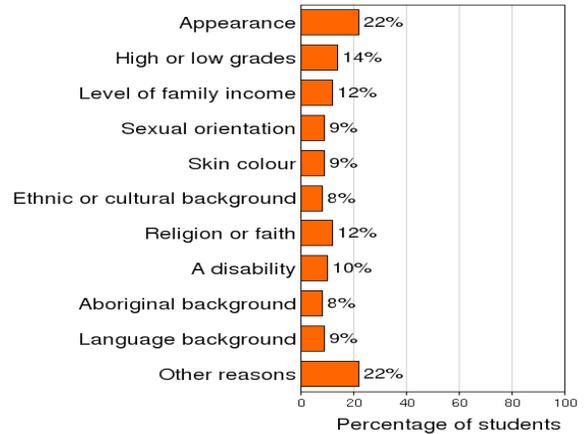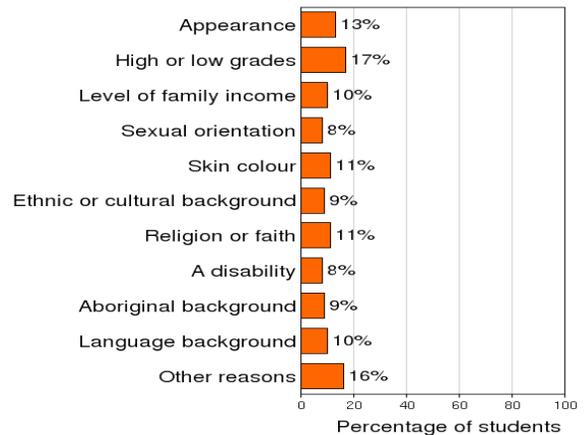**Figure 7: Reasons students feel excluded at John Caldwell School**

Reason	Percentage
Appearance	22%
High or low grades	14%
Level of family income	12%
Sexual orientation	9%
Skin colour	9%
Ethnic or cultural background	8%
Religion or faith	12%
A disability	10%
Aboriginal background	8%
Language background	9%
Other reasons	22%

Percentage of students

Figure 8 shows the percentage of students who felt they were treated unfairly by school staff for these same reasons.

Figure 8: Reasons students feel they are treated unfairly by staff at John Caldwell School

Reason	Percentage
Appearance	13%
High or low grades	17%
Level of family income	10%
Sexual orientation	8%
Skin colour	11%
Ethnic or cultural background	9%
Religion or faith	11%
A disability	8%
Aboriginal background	9%
Language background	10%
Other reasons	16%

Percentage of students

5. Feeling Safe at School

Students were asked whether they felt safe at school, and safe going to and from school. Overall, 14.2% of girls and 22.5% of boys in John Caldwell School indicated that they did not feel safe at school. A further 21.7% of girls and 14% of boys indicated a neutral position, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that they felt safe at school. Figure 9 shows the percentage of students that felt safe at school.

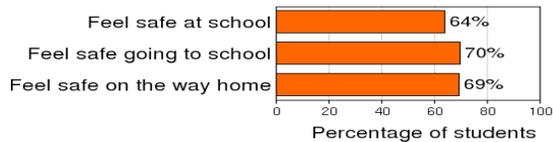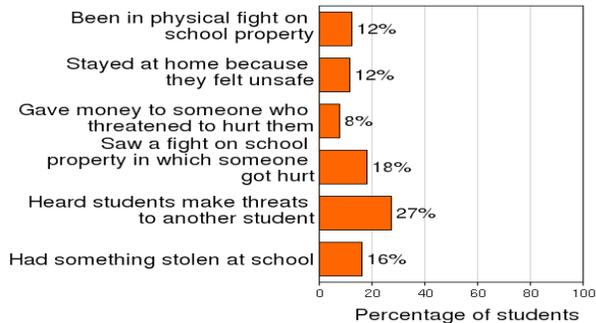**Figure 9: Students who feel safe at John Caldwell School**

Figure 10 shows students' responses to six other questions concerning how safe they felt at school.

Figure 10: Indicators of an unsafe environment at John Caldwell School

About *Tell Them From Me*

Tell Them From Me 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, Director of the Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy at the University of New Brunswick. It was based on data from 244 students at John Caldwell School that completed the *Tell Them From Me* student survey in 2014. 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.