

Police, staff key to Toronto school safety plan

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Toronto public school students will see more police officers in their schools, gender-based violence and harassment programs, better trained staff and the expanded use of video surveillance, if the board adopts recommendations of a panel it struck to make schools safer.

The action plan is a formal response to a damning report on school safety commissioned after the shooting death of 15-year-old Jordan Manners at C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute last May.

Authored chiefly by Toronto lawyer Julian Falconer, the report described Canada's largest school system as rife with weapons, violence and sexual assaults, many of which go unreported because teachers and staff fear that speaking out will bring down the displeasure of their superiors.

The board struck a "leadership action team" after Mr. Falconer's report to conduct an exhaustive review of school policies and programs. Their 12-page report *On The Road to Health* was released Tuesday and will be presented to trustees at Wednesday's board meeting.

Internet Links

- **Read:** The report (pdf) [↗](#)



Among its recommendations:

- bring more Toronto Police Service officers into schools to strengthen safe-schools related programs, such as student leadership programs, traffic safety, street proofing and Internet safety
- support marginalized youth with dozens of new staff, including social workers, attendance counsellors, psychologists and more; expand early language and literacy programs for primary-aged pupils;
- train additional staff in anti-racism and equity programs
- train school administrators to expand community involvement in schools
- implement the board's Jan. 29 decision to establish an Africentric alternative school
- designate "safe spaces" in every secondary and middle school

"We said we would listen and we would act," said Gerry Connelly, the board's director of education, in a press release. "This is exactly what we have done and will continue to do with even more initiatives to support student success and safety in our schools."

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