

Key recommendations for safer schools

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The Falconer report makes 126 recommendations to the Toronto District School Board, Queen's Park, City Hall and various other public agencies. Here are some key ones:

SECURITY

Uniforms: All students should wear uniforms unless a school council opts out. **Identification:** Students should be required to wear identification cards around their necks.

Canine unit: Board canine units should be used as part of immediate stepped-up security that includes regular searches of lockers for weapons. **Police:** Should create a staff superintendent for school safety to liaise between the force and schools on student safety. **Penalties:** Board should develop a policy on sexual assault and gender violence detailing definitions, penalties and reporting procedures. Also establish programs from Grade 4 onward for students who commit repeated acts of gender-based violence, for prevention and re-integration into society.

STAFF

Social workers: Hire 20 new full-time social workers and 20 more child and youth counsellors dedicated to high-needs schools.

Attendance counsellors: Hire 24 more attendance counsellors to help meet provincial move to lower high school dropout rate.

Supervision: Negotiate with teachers' union to increase supervision duties – and pay – for teachers. It should also increase the number of school hall monitors.

Aboriginals: Teachers' colleges should provide more training on working with aboriginal students and each Toronto school with more than 5 per cent aboriginal students should have a full-time native counsellor within two years. The board should fund a vice-principal at its First Nations School.

Professional development: Teachers, support staff and administrators should get more education on the causes of, responses to and prevention of gender-based violence.

Employment equity: The board should establish specific targets and timeframes regarding employment equity, including hiring more internationally trained teachers.

Class size: Lower class sizes in high-needs secondary schools to increase staff.

Native justice: The board should immediately hire an external consulting agency to develop an aboriginal-specific conflict resolution and restorative justice program for the First Nations School.

SCHOOLS

Space: Set up "safe space" program in high schools for females and other vulnerable people. **Black schools:** African-centred perspectives should be incorporated into the curriculum.

COMMUNITY

Community hubs: Schools in at-risk neighbourhoods should be declared community hubs, which would see them host more area organizations, clubs and programs to increase the connections with residents. The board must ensure there are enough caretaking staff to handle that bigger role.

Activities: More club programs and recreation at all schools.

Public relations: Launch awareness campaign on sexual assault and gender violence in schools.

Justice system: Education of Crown attorneys, judges and justices of the peace on the impact of the justice system, in terms of the impact of sentences and interim release, on access to education.

Funding: Queen's Park should dedicate funds for programs designed to ease the socio-economic issues for "at-risk" students.

TRUSTEES

Trustee conduct: There should be a code of conduct for school board trustees, which includes prohibiting them from becoming involved in matters of internal school discipline.

Board chair: The chair of the school board should be paid a salary in line with the full-time nature of the position rather than the current amount of \$35,000.

MONITORING

Task force: Education ministry should strike a task force to oversee implementation of the report.

Research: Queen's Park should fund a comprehensive study on the safety of female students in schools and create a "violence prevention co-ordinator" responsible for implementing programs that are gender-sensitive and focused on the principles of equity and diversity.

Surveys: Student and teacher surveys should be conducted every five years on such topics as feelings of safety at school, witnessing violence, perceptions of racism and use of police at school.

Expulsion impact: By March 31, the board should analyze the impact suspensions and expulsions have on students who are visible minorities or disabled.