SAFE SCHOOLS RECOMMENDATION 10.3 IN 2023

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November 2024

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Acknowledgements

This report and the study that this report was based on was conducted in collaboration between the Child Health Specialization of the Bachelor of Health Sciences program at McMaster University and the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB). The primary authors, Izzah Khairi, Avery Rhind, and Jiwon Hwang, would like to express our heartfelt thanks to our supervisors at McMaster University, Jennifer Pearson and Margaret Secord, for their guidance and constructive feedback throughout the research process. In our partnership with HWDSB, Jason Rizza, Lorraine Valmadrid, and Sharon Stephanian, have been generous in their time and attention to this project, not to mention their stalwart encouragement and trust. As well, special thanks to Kate Feightner for her constant and invaluable role as a sounding board, providing thoughtful perspectives into this work.

We would also like to thank our research participants for their willingness to share their experiences and expertise on an issue that is personal and important. You have provided us with a deeper understanding of the complexities around developing oversight for HWDSB's anti-bullying plan. This gratitude extends to the wider Hamilton community involved. Your commitment to confronting the substantial and complex issue of bullying has been a driving force behind this study. We sincerely hope that what we have learned here will encourage future learnings around how Hamilton can come together to take action against bullying.

Executive Summary

In 2021, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) created their *Safe Schools Action Plan 2021–2023* based on the Safe Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Review Panel's recommendations. While many recommendations are currently being implemented by HWDSB, the focus of this report is on recommendation 10.3, which calls for the establishment of "a community-led, independent table with broad representation, including from HWDSB, to oversee implementation of review panel recommendations at the highest level."

Over the past two years, there have been significant changes in the landscape of schools and the education system; namely, the COVID-19 pandemic. However, progress has also been made within Safe Schools work itself through the development of Advisories (Student, Parent, Community, and Organization), as well as working groups (Healthy Relationships, Policy & Procedure, Where Bullying Happens/Supervision, Responding, School Improvement Planning) that did not exist when the *Action Plan* was first released. These groups have allowed for continued learning within Safe Schools. It was during this period that a team from HWDSB and McMaster University conducted a literature review of oversight structures to address bullying (Dulai et al, 2022). From this review, it was identified that further research needed to be conducted to determine other oversight models from sectors and jurisdictions beyond K-12 education, as well as to elucidate the community's perspectives on oversight for Safe Schools.

Accordingly, in the second phase of the project in 2022-2023, the team from HWDSB and McMaster conducted a follow-up literature review of additional models, as well as performed interviews and focus groups with individuals currently connected to HWDSB (e.g., students, parents/guardians/caregivers, individuals affiliated with community organizations, community advocates, and HWDSB staff) in order to identify key elements that would be the most applicable to recommendation 10.3. General findings from the literature review included models of oversight, as well as monitoring and evaluation used in the sectors of education, nonprofits, policing, and more. In conjunction with this review, the interviews aimed to assess whether recommendation 10.3 was needed or helpful from the perspectives of participants, with which the majority of individuals agreed.

A thematic analysis of the primary (interviews) and secondary (literature review) research was performed to better understand how findings from the literature review may support, contradict, or complement the findings of the interviews, and vice versa. As the themes identified within the literature review were overall present in the themes from the interviews, the secondary research was used to support findings from the primary research, as opposed to being reported individually. A summary of the amalgamated themes is as follows.

Form before function (pre-work to consider the purpose(s) of oversight for Safe Schools, along with certain conditions that may increase the likelihood of successfully achieving the aforementioned purpose(s)):

- **Why have oversight** for Safe Schools: including the original intention of independent accountability, having the oversight be oriented towards action, balancing opposing timelines of acting promptly while being considerate of the fact that work still needs to be carefully planned, and the role of oversight within Safe Schools work in general
- **Co-development** of the recommendation: board and community coming together to determine shared definitions, agreed-upon boundaries within which the oversight can operate and what power it might have
- Importance of **ensuring buy-in**: recognizing the value in providing resources and funding despite competing demands, as well as putting in time and effort to learn how to engage in partnership with each other

Design considerations (considerations for the "who," "what," "when," and "where" of the oversight's design):

- Considering **who might be involved**: engaging relevant stakeholders and the logistics of their involvement (i.e., recruitment, compensation, length of involvement, group size), as well as a key component of having a well-resourced backbone team
- Considering **what the oversight's format might look like**: participants' preliminary ideas of how the oversight may be structured
- Considering **what tasks the oversight might undertake**: checking in on progress and process, monitoring of the oversight itself, and also how the general public may be involved and kept informed
- Considering **when meetings might take place**: including appropriate meeting frequency and time of day when meetings may occur
- Considering **where meetings might be held**: format (i.e., in-person, virtual, hybrid) and location

Operational considerations (considerations for "how" the oversight might operate):

- Considering **how decisions might be made**: decision-making styles and the role of data
- Considering **how might members interact with each other**: working in collaboration and building relationships between members
- Considering **how to encourage member attendance and engagement**: key conditions including timely and transparent communication, finding mutual times to meet, visibility of recommendation 10.3 and/or Safe Schools with the broader public, and accessibility with regards to language and technology

As bullying is an issue with roots and impacts beyond the scope of schools, the team recognizes the importance of approaching and developing recommendation 10.3 that involves stakeholders at the board and in the community, along with engagement beyond the sector of education (Cornu et al., 2022; *Facts & solutions,* n.d.). In creating safer and belonging spaces of learning for our students and children, this work can only truly be successful through the lens of a "whole city" approach, with collaborators across Hamilton joining together to tackle this deeply harmful and persistent issue.

1. Introduction

In 2021, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) released the *Safe Schools Action Plan 2021–2023* in response to the death of Devan Bracci-Selvey, a 14-year-old student who was the victim of a bullying-related incident while attending Winston Churchill Secondary School. The recommendations in the *Action Plan* were informed by extensive community consultations conducted by the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Review Panel, a group of experts from the Hamilton community (Dr. Jean Clinton, Brenda Flaherty, and Dr. Gary Warner). The *Action Plan*, which is connected to HWDSB's Positive Culture and Well-Being strategic priority for 2022, outlines 11 broad recommendations that address one of the following categories: students, parents/guardians/caregivers, schools, HWDSB at a system level, the Hamilton community, and the Ministry of Education. Each recommendation for Safe Schools has multiple phases that are currently in progress by HWDSB at various stages of implementation.

Recommendation 10 is categorized under the collaboration between HWDSB and community. The first phase of this recommendation, numbered 10.3, stipulates the following:

> *"Establish a community-led, independent table with broad representation, including from HWDSB, to oversee implementation of review panel recommendations at the highest level. This entity should also identify and address barriers to school-community working relationships that are specific to bullying prevention and intervention and overall student well-being. Ensure the entity's terms of reference give it moral authority for and public recognition of its oversight role without impinging on the board's authority. Consider building upon existing community structures that bring together a range of partners to address the health and well-being of children and youth in Hamilton."*

To explore how this recommendation may be put into action, HWDSB collaborated with the Child Health Specialization of the Bachelor of Health Sciences program at McMaster University to research this subject area. In 2021-2022, a literature review of oversight structures related to K-12 education and bullying was conducted (Dulai et al., 2022). The report revealed a lack of formal oversight related to anti-bullying programming and initiatives in schools; however, it was also able to provide key elements and considerations for the implementation of an oversight structure, including organizational features, communication, amplification of voices, group composition, measurement systems, training, monitoring, and anticipated challenges.

Since Dulai et al.'s review covered oversight models exclusive to the K-12 school context, an identified research gap was oversight extending beyond K-12 environments. In addition, there was a recognition of the opportunity to investigate the Hamilton community's perception of oversight for Safe Schools. With these objectives in consideration, a follow-up study was conducted in 2022-2023 consisting of two components:

1) a literature review of oversight models including and beyond K-12 education; and
2) interviews of Hamilton community members and HWDSB staff.

2. Methodology

2.1 Literature review

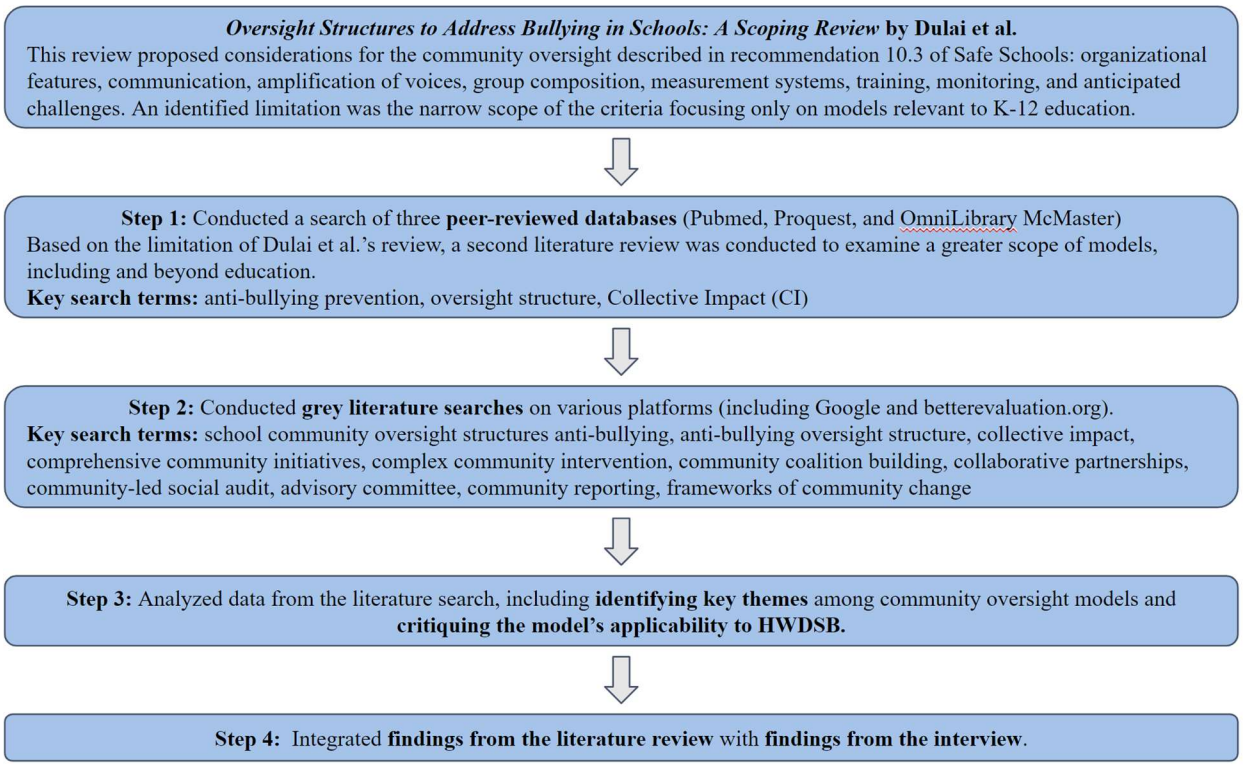
The literature review was conducted by Jiwon Hwang and Avery Rhind during the months of January through April 2023. Initially, searches were run through peer-reviewed databases; however, given the nature of the research topic, few results were deemed relevant, and therefore the search strategy was broadened to include grey literature, which is information not from traditional or academic publishing. As well, based on Dulai et al.'s suggested future directions, some searches were based around collective impact (CI) (a known model of community work) and its limitations, revealing some models as reported in section 3 of this report.

Grey literature was searched using Google and betterevaluation.org with the search terms described in *Figure 1*, which were primarily based on the terms used by Dulai et al. to conduct the previous literature review on this topic. Moreover, some terms were developed through consultation with librarians at McMaster University, recommended by colleagues and supervisors, or developed by Jiwon Hwang and Avery Rhind.

When conducting searches on Google, the date and time of the search was recorded, and the first 20 results were examined due to time and resource constraints. Sources deemed relevant to the research topic were explored in greater detail, and detailed notes of the contents of the source were recorded. No specific exclusion or inclusion criteria was utilized, as it was discussed and agreed upon by the research team that relevant insights on community-based oversight may not be directly linked to any specific location, time, or setting of a model. However, discussions amongst the research team, as well as based on Dulai et al.'s work in the preceding year, guided the researchers to determine relevant models for the report.

Following collection of relevant models, each source was reviewed again to ensure they remained relevant to the research question. A thematic analysis was conducted, wherein main ideas were extracted from each source and commonalities between ideas were established. This analysis process of the literature review was done independently of the analysis of the interviews to mitigate any influences that the latter would have on the results of the review. A total of eight themes based on commonality among sources were compiled (see Appendix A). Stark differences in ideas between sources were also evaluated, as well as notable, distinct ideas.

Figure 1. Literature review methodology, including key terms



2.2 Interviews and focus groups

Concurrent to the literature review was primary research of semi-structured interviews and focus groups (both henceforth referred to as "interviews") facilitated by Izzah Khairi. Participants included students, parents/guardians/caregivers (henceforth termed "parents"), individuals affiliated with community organizations, community advocates, and HWDSB staff, and are categorised as such in this report. It must be acknowledged, however, that while participant identities have been simplified to one demographic for the purposes of this report, individuals often crossed multiple profiles. Focus group sizes ranged from two to four participants, and participants involved in these groups were always paired with others of the same category.

Interviews were held between the months of April and May 2023, and were either conducted virtually on Zoom or in-person. Participants were recruited either through personal networks, or by reaching out to contacts on the Safe Schools email list. A total of 19 participants were interviewed, with parents comprising the largest category, while students comprised the smallest category (see *Table 1*).

Table 1. Participant demographics

Student	2
Parent/guardian/caregiver	6
Individual affiliated with community organization	2
Community advocate	5
HWDSB staff	4
Total	**19**

2.3 Thematic analysis

Thematic analyses of the interviews (performed by Izzah Khairi) and literature review (performed by Avery Rhind and Jiwon Hwang) were conducted separately, each producing their own set of themes. For the interviews, the themes generated from participants were checked with the themes in Dulai et al.'s report. This initial separation in analyses was done to minimize the influence of either part of the study on the other.

Following completion of the separate analyses of the literature review and interviews, all three student researchers independently examined both analyses together to determine where the information from the primary and secondary data converged, diverged, or complemented one another in a process known as "triangulation."

Finally, all three researchers convened to finalize the themes of both parts of the study by merging, separating, removing, and re-working elements of the data. As such, the findings shared in this report are reflective of themes developed in combination from both the interviews and the literature review (see Appendix A).

3. Models from the Literature

Eleven models were identified from the secondary literature review and are briefly described in this section. These models were also independently analysed from the interviews and combined into themes specific to the secondary research (see Appendix A). A chart matching models to the aforementioned themes can be found in *Table 1*.

Bond Oversight Committee

The Ferndale School District's Bond Oversight Committee By-Laws is a set of guidelines used to govern the **bond oversight committee** within the Ferndale School District (*Ferndale School District*, 2019). The main function of the bond oversight committee is to oversee taxpayer funds in relation to bond measures being used at the board. The by-laws describe logistical considerations, including the function and responsibilities of the board, limitations of its committee members, membership (including how members are chosen, membership requirements, and the role of members), conflicts of interest, conflict resolution, how meetings will run, as well as involvement by administration and the general public.

Civilian/Community Oversight

The concept of **civilian or community oversight** was identified in two sources related to policing in the United States. The first, written by the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement, is a general description of civilian oversight when implemented to oversee a law enforcement system ("Community oversight," n.d.). This particular civilian oversight aims to increase transparency and accountability of police services within their communities. The organization describes what is needed within an oversight body in order for oversight to be meaningful, and also describes various components to avoid.

The second source, an ordinance enacted in State College, Pennsylvania describes the implementation of a **community oversight board** that oversees the municipality's police service (*Ordinance 2164*, 2021). The intentions of this community oversight board are to work towards "smart, equitable, community-oriented policing," and repair the relationship between the community and police service. The ordinance includes details the purpose of the oversight board; roles, responsibilities, and limitations of the oversight board; as well as a description of how the board would be staffed. The second source builds upon the first by providing an example of how the concepts described by the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement might look in action.

Coalition

Prevention Institute is a nonprofit national center dedicated to improving community health that has developed an eight step guide for developing effective **coalitions**: 1) analyze the program's objectives to determine whether to form a coalition, 2) recruit the right people, 3) devise a set of preliminary objectives and activities, 4) convene the coalition, 5) anticipate the necessary resources, 6) define elements of a successful coalition structure, 7) maintain coalition vitality, and 8) make improvements through evaluation (Cohen et al., 2011). This model aims to

incorporate community participation and promote equitable health outcomes amongst various social and economic groups.

Collective Impact 3.0

Collective impact 3.0, a progression of the original CI framework, acknowledges some benefits to CI, including its ability to describe ideas clearly and lay out new operating systems for effective community change (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016). However, it also points out the limitations of CI, such as its excessive focus on short-term data, an over-investment in backbone support, and (perhaps most importantly in the context of the HWDSB board) its insufficient attention to the role of community in its change efforts. CI 3.0 proposes upgrades to the five foundational elements of CI, and also its leadership paradigm. Specifically for the latter, the paradigm has shifted from a managerial approach to a movement-building approach, which focuses on *reforming* and *transforming* systems, as opposed to simply improving systems. As improving a system implies the preservation of the current system, the community may be suspicious of any bold measures being taken, resulting in resistance or blockage of transformative ideas.

Community Change Initiative

Community change initiatives (CCI) focus on four types of investments necessary to community building: 1) developing individual leadership, 2) increasing organizational capacity, 3) increasing social capital and a sense of community among residents, and 4) increasing civic capacity and voice (Kubisch, et al., 2010). Investments can generate policy and system changes when there is an emphasis on positive returns for the neighbourhood over long-term periods. The model also provides certain "alignments" that are commonly associated with success: having intentionality in action; assessing and building capacity; effective management of partnerships and collaborations; and learning and adapting along the way. CCI does, however, suffer from theory failure and implementation failure. Theory failure highlights how CCI is often overly optimistic in expecting a major improvement with only a small amount of finances or resources; whereas implementation failure relates to how underinvestment in balancing objectives and relationships between community groups can result in weak capacity and lack of sustainability.

Community Organizing

The Neighbourhood Leadership Institute Workshop defines **community organizing** as the "process of bringing together members of a community to work towards common interests" *(Basics of Community Organizing,* n.d.). The guide underscores the importance of pre-work; that is, establishing fundamentals before community development takes place, which include stakeholders' alignment of issue(s); developing a common mission and strategies; timelines; and identification of allies. Tools for recruiting and engaging people for community change are also cited.

Community Progress Reporting

Two sources on **community progress reporting** were identified. The first source describes how to prepare a community progress report, including having a committee for evaluation;

collaboratively selecting and agreeing upon certain outcomes and performance indicators; selecting a format for how the information in the report will be shared with others; assigning specific members to tasks; agreeing on a deadline; and searching for opportunities where the results of the report can be shared (Seppanen, 1998).

The second source is a community progress report by Truckee Meadows Tomorrow, an organization based in Nevada, United States that aims to strengthen its community and collectively address challenges through collaboration between various stakeholders, such as schools, businesses, and the government (*2022 community progress report*, 2022). To inform the general public of the progress they have made, the organization published their version of a community progress report. This report includes updates of their key outcomes and indicators, as well as descriptions of what makes their indicators, and report in general, successful.

Community-Led Social Auditing

Community-led social auditing aims to provide a voice to the public and is a method of building social accountability, wherein the public may hold institutions, service providers, and/or the government responsible for their actions (*Community-led social audit*, 2017). Social auditing can take different forms, examples of which include the use of tools like community score cards and citizen report cards, or even certain processes such as having the public directly participate in building budgets. As evidenced, participation by the public is a key component of community-led social auditing, and the process of social auditing itself is often initiated by groups within the public. One important benefit of social auditing is that it may help in building trust between the community and the institution being audited.

An example of social auditing in action is its implementation by Equal Education. This organization in South Africa used social auditing to educate the public on certain flaws within the education system and also to gather opinions from the public with questionnaires (*A guide,* 2015). The results of this social auditing were ultimately used to demonstrate to the government the need for community-led oversight of the South African education system.

Connected Community Approach

The **connected community approach (CCA)** was first introduced in Scarborough and focuses on the backbone organization of community development, such as the connectedness of residents, organizations, and cross-sector players participating in change (Gloger, n.d.). The objective is not to exclude or replace neighbourhood projects or programs, but rather to build upon them. CCA emphasizes clearly communicating various priorities of involved community groups, the need for place-based interventions, and the understanding that learning should remain constant. CCA's main limitations are its a structural approach to community development; an over-reliance on qualitative measurements (which poses a problem for funding allocation); and the requirement of a high-functioning, local organization that is already well-established, has trusting relations with both residents and external organizations, and already possesses the necessary funding.

Needle-Moving Community Collaboratives

The Bridgespan Group is a global nonprofit organization that supports a variety of organizations in increasing their impact on societal challenges and issues (Jolin et al., 2012). The organization published a report identifying the core principles, key characteristics, and resources to support successful **needle-moving community collaboratives** in the United States. This report provides insight on four successful components of community-based organizations and collaboratives aiming to address community challenges: 1) a shared agenda amongst all stakeholders, 2) effective leadership, 3) adequate resources, and 4) alignment of resources towards strategies previously proven effective. For example, the Strive Partnership designed a "cradle-to-career" approach to support students facing poverty in reaching post-secondary education in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky. Collaboration from a wide range of stakeholders and system leaders was a significant part of their ability to develop their approach.

Rainbow Framework

The **Rainbow Framework** organizes strategies and processes related to monitoring and evaluation into the following clusters: Manage (including decision-making, logistical considerations, management, review of evaluations, and the capacity for evaluation); Define (describing what is being evaluated); Frame (defining the purpose of the evaluation); Describe (detailing data collection and analysis); Understand Causes (determining what has caused the outcomes obtained during data collection); Synthesize (integrating data); and Report & Support Use (developing a report or other format to share findings and recommendations) (*Rainbow Framework*, n.d.).

Table 1. Themes based on models from the literature review

	Use of resources	Cohesion among stakeholders	Adaptability	Involvement of community	Independence	Logistical details	Utilisation of data collection and outcome measures	Standout ideas
Bond oversight committee by-laws					X	X		X
Civilian/community oversight	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Coalition	X	X	X			X	X	
Collective impact 3.0	X	X	X	X				
Community change initiative (CCI)	X	X	X	X				
Community organizing		X						X
Community progress reporting		X		X		X	X	
Community-led social auditing		X		X				
Connected community approach (CCA)	X	X	X	X			X	
Needle-moving community collaboratives	X	X	X					
Rainbow Framework		X		X			X	

4. Findings and Themes

Since all of the themes from the literature appeared in the interviews, themes from the interviews will be presented in this section, supported by examples from the literature review where that theme was found (see Appendix B). (As a note, the theme of data was more detailed in the literature, whereas it was spoken to more generally by participants during the interviews.)

4.1 Is recommendation 10.3 needed?

Considering that the *Safe Schools Action Plan* was released two years before the beginning of this study, and the world has undergone a pandemic in the intervening years, it was paramount to first investigate if community members viewed recommendation 10.3 as still needed or relevant to Safe Schools. Of the fifteen participants who were non-HWDSB staff, fourteen individuals agreed that the recommendation was needed or helpful, with a few doing so under specific conditions (e.g., for coordination purposes, for accountability, with the assurance that the oversight would take on a supportive approach), and one disagreed about the recommendation being needed. For the latter, the individual was concerned about whether the recommendation would merely be tokenistic in nature or only satisfy a "public relations" role. They also wondered if resources for the oversight could potentially be better used elsewhere to address bullying.

> *"Someone needs to just make sure if they're saying, 'Here are the recommendations. This is what the board's committed to address in the recommendations.' Yes, there needs to be an agency, a body, something, whether it's you or whoever that says, 'How has this process gone? Have they met the targets of the things they said they were going to do?'"*
>
> *— Community advocate*

> *"Checking in on us, because we don't want to do this last second, then it won't be done perfectly. We need to make sure this is good and accurate information, and good guidelines that will actually work. If someone checking in on us, they can hold us accountable very easily."*
>
> *— Student*

> *"Maybe it has meetings, and it says stuff, but it doesn't have any genuine contribution. It has no substantive contribution. Or it is window dressing. It's public relations. It is merely a token."*
>
> *— Individual affiliated with community organization*

The significance of going into the Hamilton community to investigate their perspectives of oversight is corroborated by the literature, as seen in models such as **civilian oversight**, which asserts that initiatives should be tailored towards the needs of the community ("Community oversight," n.d.).

4.2 Form before function

Following an identification of whether community members viewed the recommendation as relevant in 2023, the next step would be to determine the purpose of the oversight, as well as its expectations and capabilities. That is, a) what are the objectives of the oversight, and b) what should (or can) it do to address that purpose? These questions about function would need to take place before the oversight's "form" can be determined.

> *"For me, form should follow the function, and I think it's not quite clear yet. I think it is worth spending the time exploring and thinking about purpose and function. And then the form will flow from there."*
>
> *— Community advocate*

Two models from the literature that create time for this pre-work are **community organizing** and **needle-moving community collaboratives** (*Basics of community organizing*, n.d.; Jolin et al., 2012). While both models note that this process of determining a shared vision for the group can be time-consuming, they also note that doing so generally leads to greater success for the initiative.

4.2.1 Why have oversight?

Accountability in addressing bullying

While the specific purposes of the oversight will need to be further clarified and agreed upon by partners in future discussions, one recurring theme from participants regarding recommendation 10.3 is that it should provide accountability and also be independent in said accountability. Participants mentioned that an element of neutrality could come from involving (an) independent individual(s) unaffiliated with either HWDSB or the community. In the literature, this type of independent oversight is found in models of a **bond oversight committee** and **civilian oversight** ("Community oversight," n.d.; "Ferndale School District," 2019).

> *"I feel like you also need, like, you want somebody that's neutral to you. Like, I love this idea of the board partnering with the university."*
>
> *— HWDSB staff*

> *"Maybe a kind of a secondment, or an outside consultant, or some kind of ombudsman office. I don't know. Some sort of independent office within the HWDSB but outside of […] That might be a good way to do it."*
>
> *— Individual affiliated with community organization*

For some participants, another aspect of accountability came from the history behind why the *Safe Schools Action Plan* was created in the first place and also the potential of the oversight. Many recognized the vast undertaking that remains to be accomplished and expressed a desire for the oversight to adhere to and strive towards the original goal that the board promised to achieve. As part of this commitment, viewing the work through the lens of students could be

helpful to ground the work, as is the lens of any individuals who are experiencing or have experienced bullying, as the problem extends beyond student-to-student.

> *"We need to hold the school board accountable, because something needs to be done. […] I just feel like they're not moving fast enough; this has been two years in the works."*
>
> *— Parent*

> *"Students know what's going on at school a lot of the time. We can't make guidelines without student voice, or it might not completely work."*
>
> *— Student*

> *"Because bullying happens student-to-student, student-to-teacher, sometimes teacher-to-student, teacher-to-teacher, principal-to-teacher, director-to-teacher. It's not as simple as people think."*
>
> *— Community advocate*

Without question, addressing bullying will take time, and there can be no short-term plan of a few years. Rather, as participants have stressed, there must be long-term commitment in the magnitude of, for example, decades. **Needle-moving community collaboratives** highly endorse this longer timeframe, such as with an acknowledgement that there needs to be a sustainment of such activities even when objectives have already been met (Jolin et al., 2012). As well, a few participants highlighted the fact that school boards tend to work by school year, with demands and priorities varying throughout. Consequently, they identified that the oversight's activities should continue regularly in order to retain the drive for this work.

> *"Because, again, the past experiences, it gets forgotten after, what, five years. Basically. So having a sample written in such a way with some markers down the line — five, ten, fifteen years down the line, with a really long-term commitment – is very essential."*
>
> *— Community advocate*

> *"There's the risk of losing sight and losing structures because it's the end of a calendar year or a school year. So something that has connections to outside of the school board, with a bit of a broader mandate, with longer timelines […] to sustain commitment and focus on this issue beyond the usual school year cycles."*
>
> *— Community advocate*

Action-based

While a few participants expressed that there may be value in holding conversations about the work in of itself, there was a greater bias from both staff and non-staff participants that the oversight be action-based, with tangible and specific outcomes or tasks. In the literature,

coalitions similarly advocate for generating activities with a tangible product in order to sustain member motivation (Cohen et al., 2011).

> *"I'd want it to be an action-based committee, and not just a 'Hey, we're going to meet and share anecdotes and stories.' Let's do something."*
>
> *— Individual affiliated with community organization*

> *"That 41-page recommendation document. It's very 'overall.' And the time now is to break it down into action."*
>
> *— Parent*

> *"What we hear from communities is the last thing we need is another group of people talking about the things when, actually, what we need is a bias toward action."*
>
> *— HWDSB staff*

Timelines and adaptability

Along with the wondering around when to act, it became apparent from conversations with both staff and community members that there was a fine balance between the pressure of delivering a product as soon as possible, versus taking the appropriate time and space to ensure the oversight is set up for success. Moreover, from a practical and engagement angle, participants also noted that rushing work for the sake of manufacturing a product may also be unlikely to achieve the desired outcome.

> *"I just think that if something like [the oversight] does happen, it needs to start happening and accumulating the information and then see where it goes from there, as opposed to making a plan, trying it, being, 'if it works or not' — I mean, the plan is* already *there. […] The time now is to break it down into action."*
>
> *— Parent*

> *"What I worry about is requirement of a level of suspension. And what I mean by 'suspension' is we are so quick to want to jump to the outcome. […] And yet, if this is indeed a community, co-created, dialogic, emergent space between two actors — communities and school board — then we need to suspend our focus on the outcome and sit in the emergent process of discovery, which happens in a conversation about what we want to do and how we want to come together around an issue we care about. And that can be very hard. Because the system, traditionally, is set up to really point to the product, and I'm talking about the process, which takes a long time."*
>
> *— HWDSB staff*

> *"I feel like we're just meeting deadlines for the sake of meeting deadlines, and we've lost the true purpose."*

— Community advocate

With regards to this balance, "patient urgency" emerged as a concept from the interviews, which essentially involves exploring and experimenting to prepare well for when an opportunity arrives, and then seizing upon the opportunity when it arrives, while being able to adjust as things develop. For example, as one participant mentioned, anticipating a change of policy at the government level could mean embedding the right conditions and culture such that when a change does occur, recommendation 10.3 and Safe Schools will be prepared for it. Expecting external (and internal) changes is also found in the literature review with **coalitions** (Cohen et al., 2011). To some extent, there is an aspect of having the courage to enter into something without knowing the end might look like and also of having the expectations that things will evolve. From the literature, one of the core tenets of the **civilian oversight** model is this very acknowledgement of change being a natural part of the journey ("Community oversight," n.d.). Because of that, the model recognizes that the work will be an iterative process.

> *"[Patient urgency] is this balance between allowing space and time to explore, and for relationships to form, but to also make sure you're still making progress and checking about where you're headed. So I feel like that's important here. They don't have to wait until all the answers appear before they can start acting on some of this. At the same time, they don't want to jump too quickly to step five when it's really clear they need to spend some time on step one."*
>
> *— Community advocate*

This ability to adapt is also found in other models in the secondary research. For example, as stated by the Bridgespan Group, **needle-moving community collaboratives** are open to adapting approaches based on data collected, as further described in 4.4.1 (Jolin et al., 2012). As well, **CCIs** recognize that a key component of evaluations is the means for constant reflection and seeking improvements based on new learnings (Kubisch, et al., 2010).

Supporting Safe Schools work

Another potential key purpose of what recommendation 10.3 could be used for is that of supporting Safe Schools work and problem-solving together, as opposed to a top-down approach of tasks being dictated. For example, if set targets have not been met, the oversight could use an inquiry approach that seeks to understand why and also aims to troubleshoot any problems that might arise.

> *"In my mind, it would be the group coming together and saying, 'I see there's a challenge. And how can we co-create solutions to this dilemma?'"*
>
> *— Community advocate*

> *"If you feel like your school needs a meeting to make sure all the implementations are good, or if something came up and this implementation's not doing well in*

this school, [then] 'Oh, can we go into a meeting this time and maybe discuss ways we could help the school have these implementations.'"

— Student

"My initial feeling is making sure that there's an inquiry-based approach of what's actually happening and how can we make this work. […] I would go with an inquiring or questioning based approach — [as in], asking questions with the intent to seek information and clarity, not to seek blame."

— Individual affiliated with community organization

"I think if you come at [Safe Schools] with a supportive lens, [then] the work that's recommended is going to be much more well received than without that support."

— HWDSB staff

Should this be the approach that the oversight takes, participants clearly stated that communicating the oversight's purpose to all individuals involved in Safe Schools will be important in facilitating collaboration. By doing so, it may reduce the possibility of the oversight being viewed as an autocratic force, which could lead to individuals becoming defensive or closed-off.

"I would hope that this committee or this oversight community group always has that understanding or appreciation of what happens at the ground level, because that's really how we're going to help create action that reduces bullying. If we take it as approach that we're all in it together. So that for me is a caveat. And sometimes – to use the term 'oversight' – some people feel like 'Well, there's someone looking over you, making sure you're doing your job.' So I think that's the thing that I would just be weary, or mindful, that the approach is not that."

— Individual affiliated with community organization

4.2.2 Co-development

A major theme involved in determining the various aspects of the oversight's function was the question of who would be in charge of determining said function. Based on the spirit of the recommendation, a clear answer by most (if not all) participants was that it needs to be co-developed by both HWDSB and the larger community of Hamilton. As is evident, bullying is an issue that extends beyond schools, and therefore addressing it requires a cooperative effort by the entire city (e.g., individuals, private organizations, public institutions).

"I think the key word in all of this is community, right? We're in a community, and we're not an island. […] It's a city. To me, there's got to be more of a city approach, not just a school board approach."

— HWDSB staff

"It's building on the motion of the co-creation, which is that we are all responsible […] because it is our community, and it is our children."
— Community advocate

While this whole-city approach may first appear daunting, an example of institutions (including HWDSB) and community successfully working together is the Hamilton Community Foundation's Community Research Partnership. This collaboration took a few years for members to build genuine relationships, a subtheme further elaborated in 4.4.2, and there may be other valuable lessons to be learned from this partnership that may be extrapolated for recommendation 10.3's own collaboration. In the literature, **needle-moving community collaboratives** also actively involve community, meaning community members are fundamental members to the collaboration who offer perspectives and engage directly in the development process, as opposed to, for example, only being able to provide input via focus groups (Jolin et al., 2012).

Community-led

While recommendation 10.3 explicitly specifies that the oversight be "community-led," there was no unanimous answer in the interviews supporting or contradicting this designation. A few instances of models in the literature that are community-led include **social audit** and **civilian oversight**, with the latter asserting that the individuals or groups most impacted by an issue should be the ones who either wholly, or partly, conduct the act of oversight (*A guide*, 2015; *Community oversight*, n.d.) In support of the oversight being community-led, a risk of not doing so, as identified by a participant, was community voices potentially becoming muffled. By contrast, a few participants expressed hesitancy around the notion of the oversight being community-led, which could have stemmed from feelings that community members do not have the power, resources, or expertise to implement such an initiative; or feelings that with their own day job, community members may not have the availability and time to actuate this extensive recommendation.

"Community-led is more complicated. Community-led is more difficult. And maybe it would be better if it was internal."
— Individual affiliated with community organization

Shared definitions

Alongside the co-development of purpose and who leads the work is the importance of a common understanding of definitions. In terms of shared terminology, many participants questioned what the terms "oversight" or "community" meant. For example, community could be as narrow as the local neighbourhood around a school, to as broad as any individual or organization involved with students and young people. The diverse answers in defining these terms demonstrate how difficult it can be to proceed without a common understanding of what is being discussed. Having a common vocabulary early on, as endorsed by **coalitions**, may help minimize issues in the future (Cohen et al., 2011).

"I feel like the word community is so general; like, what is community?"
— Parent

"What constitutes 'community oversight'? I think it's in the eye of the beholder, really."
— HWDSB staff

Setting boundaries

Concurrent to defining terms together would be the crucial step of articulating the boundaries within which the oversight operates. When convening, as is also found with **coalitions**, a few participants noted the challenge of members entering the group with different ideas about what is possible (Cohen et al., 2011). This mismatch in expectations could cause harm. To minimize this potential tension, the board and community could discuss what pathways exist within the system for action, and also what actual power the oversight might have. For example, can it only provide feedback, can it enact any final decisions, or is there a medium answer somewhere in between. With that questioned answered, a participant remarked that individuals could make an informed decision about whether or not they want to engage in the oversight.

"Without a clearly articulated, co-developed definition of what we mean by oversight, as well as a clearly articulated boundaries around what is on and off the table when it comes to the proposed outcomes of this oversight group, I feel like it could actually do a lot of harm. Because there would be mismatched expectations from community sitting on this community-led independent table and the expectations of board. Not even just the expectations on board, but what is actually possible within the current structures and systems, which are very difficult and take a lot of time to move."
— HWDSB staff

Moreover, in order to minimize overlap, some participants articulated the need for differentiating the unique role of this oversight, such as how this oversight differs from the other structures in Safe Schools (e.g., Advisories, working groups), or even how oversight from recommendation 10.3 differs from oversight by the Board of Trustees. Participants who shared this concern cited personal experiences of being involved in initiatives that involved multiple groups, wherein having several groups actually detracted from the work.

"This is something we find in my work, too, is [that] when there's so many groups and people doing it, nothing gets done. Because then you're just too busy spending all your time communicating and updating people, instead of actually getting to the work."
— Parent

4.2.3 Ensuring buy-in

Funding and resources

In addressing the aforementioned concerns in 4.2.2 about recommendation 10.3 being community-led, an idea shared by some participants involved HWDSB taking on the role of helping to provide funding and resources for the oversight. However, this also brought a few concerns, such as the question of independence for community-led oversight; as well as a wondering as to whether the board might view the oversight as something worth funding but perhaps not necessarily leading.

As expected, this pre-requisite of adequate funding is also found in models from the literature. For example, **needle-moving community collaboratives** without adequate financial support struggle to perform their tasks, whereas successful collaboratives have the foresight to invest in staff and infrastructure, such as from in-kind contributions or resources from partners (Jolin et al., 2012). Additionally, it is also worth mentioning that because recommendation 10.3 is, at its core, intended to be a partnership between multiple stakeholders and across sectors, the oversight may also receive support in funding and resources from related organizations and institutions invested in addressing bullying.

> *"You need expertise and dedicated resources for something to be community-led in a successful manner. […] And so, I think, part of it is making sure the backbone in organizing infrastructure is there, that allows something in the community to exist and be successful. Because you can't just expect them to pick it up — one organization to volunteer. So there has to be careful consideration around the resources required for something like this to work, and where they can come from, and who can support. And so it's not the burden of one organization, necessarily."*
>
> *— Community advocate*

Partnership

Aside from buy-in from HWDSB with regards to funding and resources, participants shared that it would be crucial for buy-in with regards to the board as a whole recognizing value in taking time to learn how to partner with community. This challenging but necessary piece of learning about other ways of being is also present in the literature, such as in the **Rainbow Framework**, which asserts that the building of capacities can aid in improving the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation processes (*Rainbow Framework*, n.d.). This includes human capacities (e.g., members acquiring new skills and knowledge) and organizational capacities (e.g., organizational culture, improved ways to function). The Strive Partnership of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky presents an example of an initiative taking the time to learn how to work together (Jolin et al., 2012). That is, because the **needle-moving collaborative** engaged various organizations and institutions across sectors, each with their own way of being and doing, the members involved made an effort to find common ground amongst school staff, labour unions, individuals representing nonprofit institutions, and more.

While some community members in the interviews described challenging experiences of working with HWDSB, one participant suggested that they could look to how a community

functions and organizes themselves. That is, processes like an application process of who can or cannot participate, or participation by certain voting or non-voting members are not ways in which community comes together to affect change. In other words, it is known that when communities rally, they do not necessarily think about following the same guidelines or rules of institutions. There is, simply, less of that "red tape." If the board views this learning as important, one potential avenue they could seek guidance from is in their existing partnerships with certain communities (e.g., an interfaith group at HWDSB).

> *"I think the board really has to ask themselves — not just the board, but it's part of this process — do we want involvement? Is this what we really want? Because […] you could hear things you may or may not want to hear. […] Because I hear we want parents to be involved, but every time all my experiences getting involved [with the board], there [are] barriers. It's strenuous. And when we're not making it easy to be involved, you've got to ask yourself, do you really want that involvement? […] It's very, very formal. That's the thing: I think what the board needs to reconcile is that that's not the way that community runs. When the community gathers for anything, whether it's church or recreation, it's not like that. So if we really want a gathering of the community, we have to look at how the community gathers."*
>
> *— Parent*

As a simultaneous consideration, since this change in how an institution exists and acts with community is unlikely to happen anytime soon, it could be beneficial in the interim for the *community* to hear from the *board* as to why it operates the way it does, which could encourage greater understanding and two-way partnership. This reciprocity may also aid in building the community's knowledge base of the board's structural policies or requirements. One participant described that doing so may help the community cultivate a greater nuance or awareness of Safe Schools work, which could subsequently allow for more equitable and/or pertinent contributions by all members of the oversight regardless of background.

Competing interests

While HWDSB may be a clear partner to potentially help resource the oversight, there is to be an acknowledgement of schools potentially having their attention drawn elsewhere, such as attending to the lasting effects of a pandemic. When the *Safe Schools Action Plan* was released in 2021, it was tied to the Positive Culture and Well-Being priority of the board's Strategic Direction. In accordance with this, it is crucial that Safe Schools work continues to align with the board's future Strategic Directions in order to substantiate its importance in a system with competing demands. Should the Directions encompass key points relevant to the success of recommendation 10.3 (e.g., collaborative processes, transparent communication), then that could signal that conditions are ripe for pursuing recommendation 10.3. Additionally, as the Strategic Directions are informed by public consultations, seeing such appetite from community with regards to partnership would provide further rationale in collaborating with the wider community.

"I think we're still in pandemic recovery mode a little bit. And the world's changed, right. It's a busier place for many reasons."

— HWDSB staff

Referring back to the concept of patient urgency in 4.2.1, however, regardless of whether Safe Schools sees itself reflected in the Strategic Directions, the work must continue in intervening periods in terms of laying the right foundations, such that when the window of opportunity opens, the implementation of the oversight can be enacted in full force.

4.3 Design considerations

While it was emphatically emphasized by participants that specific details regarding structure (the "who," "what," "when," "where") of the oversight should be based on its purpose, individuals were, nonetheless, able to share broad considerations that have been captured in this section.

4.3.1 Who might be involved?

Important stakeholders

It is apparent that to adequately address bullying, representation is required from both community members and board members. Identified stakeholders from participants included students, parents, school staff (e.g., teachers, principals, bus drivers, crossing guards, school nurses), community organizations involved with students (see Appendix C), experts in the field of bullying, and those in sectors beyond the field of education (e.g., public health, municipal government). The last category is also found **coalitions** as well as **needle-moving community collaboratives** (Cohen et al., 2011; Jolin et al., 2012).

Of these stakeholders, it was identified in multiple interviews that student input is paramount; however, gathering that input may first involve asking students if they would like to be involved in oversight and then, if so, how they would like to be involved (e.g., through direct representation on a committee, surveys).

"The student voice is paramount, because who knows better [how] to help each other than students? And I think that's the advocacy piece where we want to advocate for students, but we need to inquire in terms of what do they need, and how can we best help."

— Individual affiliated with community organization

"[Students] need to be involved. They could be part of the committee. […] I think it kind of would depend on what the students feel like they want to be part of and need."

— Individual affiliated with community organization

"I have seen some of the questions in [the Middle Years Development Instrument], and how that can be broken down. I think something like that is great. My only concerns with that [is] do kids have the capacity to be able to understand [and complete] those questions accurately? Maybe even shorter versions of that would be great. […] I like the idea of anecdotal where kids are having those conversations that are a bit objective, especially [where they're with] somebody who knows how to guide those questions without probing."

— HWDSB staff

Additionally, diversity *within* student voice could be considered for the oversight. That is, obtaining involvement or feedback from students who have been former perpetrators, students who are neither bullies themselves nor being bullied, and/or students who do not typically participate in such activities. This consideration for diversity could also extend to other stakeholder categories, such as involving staff from the "ground level" to those "higher-up," or individuals from different community sectors (e.g., recreation, faith) and doing work related to various grade levels (e.g., elementary, middle school, high school).

"Student participation is one group. And, particularly, the students who have perpetrated bullying in the past [and] perpetrated bullying in the present, but also random students who are not even involved at all."

— Individual affiliated with community organization

"You could also look at having the liaison for certain groups at certain levels, because someone who is dealing with a bully in grade 8, grade 9, grade 10 is going to have a different perspective."

— Parent

"I think [recommendation 10.3] would require some representation at different levels. Different levels of representation from the school board. Different perspectives."

— Community advocate

"You see the same faces over and over again. So I don't feel like using the word 'community' is right, because we're not involving the community; we're involving the same set of people over and over and over again in the same meetings."

— Parent

Power dynamics

Due to the combination of community and board members coming together in this work, participants commented on the possibility of issues stemming from the perceived differences in power based on the positions that members hold (e.g., a principal and student on the oversight). This concern is mirrored in **coalitions**, which note that a failure to properly address perceived

power imbalances can lead to ineffective group dynamics and has the potential to impact decision-making processes (Cohen et al., 2011).

> *"I think we really have to be attentive to power structures, and I mean those you can do things [about]. Even just how you set up the meeting room can address power structures, and what the terms of reference are. I think if those people in positions of power are going to be part of [the oversight], then they really need to make sure they're attentive to power structures throughout the rest of what the committee does, like in the terms of reference, in the physical setup of the meetings, everything."*
>
> *— Parent*

A common idea by several participants to address this potential tension is to have individuals connect with each other as people first, prior to any mention of roles being introduced, which connects to the concept of relationship-building in 4.4.2. Other ideas included making time to establish group norms or giving attention to the physical set-up of the space during meetings (e.g., mixed seating).

> *"We know [from] facilitation research if we had more of a U-shape setup where everybody's mixed in. […] Or just the structures of the meeting is, is it somebody* presenting *information (and the physical setup [could] be part of that), or [is it] the structure of 'We're bringing you an update. We're bringing you this,' as opposed to an action or a discussion item. You have to look at the structure, the agenda, the physical structure of the room.*
>
> *[For example] my work with youth coming in, when an adult works with young people, we always had to have group norms. We looked at ratio. We always had to have youth-adult ratios, so that their youth voice wasn't overshadowed. So [for recommendation 10.3] maybe it's a ratio scenario, where it's two community members to one board staff. We [also] always had group norms that were created collectively with the young people. We had youth co-chairs. So, again, maybe it's a community or co-chair model."*
>
> *— Parent*

Listening to and amplifying voices

Special attention should also be given to voices that are not typically heard at the table. Although the majority of bullying cases may not involve minority groups, it is also understood that bullying can disproportionately affect certain populations (identified communities from interviews included BIPOC, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, and special needs), and so it would be crucial for the oversight to consider the issue from multiple perspectives and involve those voices in the conversation. One interviewee in particular highlighted the importance of *proactively* seeking out the voices of minority groups. In general, participants provided examples of how this may be achieved, including reaching out to agencies representing such groups,

engaging student leadership and organizations for outreach (e.g., student trustees, CC:ROSE), or leveraging upon existing relationships. Regardless, when speaking to these individuals, it is important to first ask for their interest in being involved with recommendation 10.3, and also to be mindful that their perspective may not be generalized to the entire group.

> *"I would say that particular attention has to be paid to voices that don't speak up, don't get hold of it, so as we try to seek out community, I use the lens of, 'Whose voice is less likely to be heard?' To make sure that those voices are included."*
> *— Community advocate*

> *"Again, it's like what is 'the' Indigenous community, what is 'the' Black community? It's hundreds of thousands of people, all kinds of different beliefs."*
> *— Individual affiliated with community organization*

Recruitment

More broadly, ideas for recruitment of oversight members were diverse, ranging from job postings to individual recommendations by knowledgeable parties (e.g., respected principals in the community). If it is decided that recruitment will be open to any interested parties, participants suggested that a general call-out to the public might be useful, as they noted from their personal experiences that a sizeable portion of the community may simply not be aware of Safe Schools work or are unaware of whether they can join.

While some participants advocated that oversight membership should be open to anyone, others cited the value of being more selective, as they believed doing so may produce a more dedicated team able to invest the significant time and effort needed to enact properly recommendation 10.3. If a selection criteria will be applied, general considerations include individuals who

- have an understanding of bullying, and/or are involved in reducing bullying;
- work with diverse communities;
- Are somewhat impartial, yet still not entirely external;
- may not typically be found partaking in this work; and/or
- (specifically with regards to staff) genuinely want to be a part of the work, not because they are required to.

> *"You could have some sort of selection process. There are upsides to doing that, and you get, like, high quality people who you want to hear from. Whatever your criteria is, you're able to use that criteria to screen the correct kind of people — however you want to define what 'correct' means — but that necessarily means you're then diminishing the denominator. You have fewer people to select from. When it's open everybody, your denominator is giant, and so you might have a bigger numerator.*

> *The difficult part of community-led, etcetera, is participation. And that's part of what I'm identifying is when you try to do these kind of community-led things, like*

a committee of people, you got to have high investment from those people. Those people have got to be invested in order to regularly participate, and they're not going to be like, 'Oh, there's that thing, it's kind of optional,' and, 'I'm kind of busy, I think I'll not do it this time,' and then you got a meeting with two people."

— Individual affiliated with community organization

"I feel like it should be open to anyone. If you want to come, go ahead, come. And if you can't make it to some meetings, that's totally fine, schedules change very quickly. Just, yeah, anyone can come."

— Student

"I've seen this before, too, in my past work, where you have somebody who's close to retirement and just doesn't care anymore, they're just punching the clock and doing whatever they have to do to get through to their pension. So it's not going to be an easy process, but I think there should be some checks and balances in there as to who is part of this."

— Parent

On the topic of an open or selective recruitment process, Prevention Institute's **coalition** guide suggests having a mix of both, wherein certain individuals are recruited but all interested are welcome (Cohen et al., 2011). This compromise may be useful as it mitigates the impression of being exclusionary to individuals who are keen on being involved, while also keeping in mind that when having an entirely open meeting, the effect of variable attendance could potentially disrupt group process and progress.

Compensation

Perceptions of compensation for oversight members were mixed. Generally, participants stated that if members are volunteers, then their involvement may or may not necessitate compensation (e.g., none for a few hours a month, but perhaps tokens for a lengthier involvement). Additionally, a consideration raised was the possibility of the intentions of some individuals involved in the oversight potentially being skewed if financial payment is involved.

"When we start paying, are they community-led anymore? I agree, we need to show gratitude for service, for sure, absolutely. But I worry, or I think, that […] it's not truly community-led if we're paying people to do that work."

— HWDSB staff

"I think it really depends on what the ask is and the time commitment. […] Everybody just has to ask themselves, 'Would I, as a staff person, show up if I wasn't being paid?' And this is all the same work, and it just shows a level of value for what they're contributing, as opposed to just being. […] And it never has to be a lot. That's the thing. It never has to be a lot. So I definitely think compensation has to be considered or built in from the beginning."

— Parent

"I think, for a person like myself, not me particularly, but a community agency type [compensation is] not so important. […] And I think many people in my kind of role would see it the same way. Like, 'This is a part of my day job. It makes sense for me to contribute. I don't need to be compensated.' But as a parent, if my kid's school wanted me to do a monthly meeting for something or other, then I could see, like, the $150 Amazon gift card [edging] me towards participation."
— Individual affiliated with community organization

"I feel like when you're 12, and you get promised money or things like that, then they [may not be involved for the right reasons] — if you know what I mean? So when you're older and it's something that means a lot to you, or you're passionate about it, or something along the lines of that, and you're doing it with good intentions, then the compensation's just kind of a bonus or something like that — encouragement."
— Student

As a consideration, non-monetary compensation could also be provided to members and, for this, Maslow's hierarchy of needs could be taken as a model (e.g., food provided, transportation to meeting location, warm shelters, safer spaces).

"Working with young people, we always look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs. […] So are we providing food at a meeting? Are we giving them bus tickets to get there? Are we providing shelter? Is the meeting in a safe space where they're gonna be warm? And for that hour that they're with us, do they feel safe, [do] they have a support system, and stuff like that."
— Parent

It is important to note, however, that payment was deemed necessary if an individual is working on recommendation 10.3 as part of their job title or description, such as an individual part of a backbone team. This view aligns with the **CCA** model, which asserts that paying the individuals on this backbone team is a crucial part of success (Gloger, n.d.).

Backbone team

A dedicated backbone team for recommendation 10.3 was regarded as necessary by participants. This view of an indispensable core team was mirrored by virtually all of the models from the literature review, such as **needle-moving community collaboratives**, which similarly found in their own research of groups that "nothing happened between meetings" and the work "could not get done" without paid staff leading it (Jolin et al., 2012). Theisteam may be composed of strictly board members, or also include community members. Identified roles from the interviews were administration, data, and communications (see *Table 2*).

"You could have one person at the school who is the dedicated person. But then you have to give that person the opportunity to put their other work or things aside, and have a day, or a half day, or even just an hour, once a month, or whatever the case may be to say, 'We're going to sit down, we're going to focus on bullying, we're going to talk about it openly, whatever.' And have that person supported and given the tools that they need to make the changes right."

— Parent

"At some point moving forward, establishing the backbone is super important. Otherwise, everybody just keeps talking and talking and talking about it."

— Community advocate

"I like the idea of community partners in paid positions that have experience in — not just necessarily in an educational background — but definitely in the practical sense of implementing it."

— HWDSB staff

Table 2. Backbone team roles found in interviews and the literature review

Role	Description/Sample Tasks	Identified in Interviews	Identified in Literature
Activity Coordinator	Leading special events	No	Coalitions
Administration	Clerical and in-meeting duties	Yes	Bond oversight committee, civilian oversight, coalitions, community organizing, needle-moving community collaboratives
Communications	Development of materials to share with public	Yes	CCA, coalitions, needle-moving community collaboratives
Data	Collection and evaluation of data	Yes	CCA, coalitions, community progress reporting, needle-moving community collaboratives
Facilitator	For both meetings and networking	No	CCA, needle-moving community collaboratives
Fundraiser	Raising money	No	CCA, coalitions
Membership Supporter	Recruitment, orientation, and encouragement of members	No	Coalitions

Length of involvement

It was also suggested by participants that the oversight be balanced with regards to consistent and new membership, as having a stream of individuals constantly moving on may be disruptive to the group's function. As seen in **community organizing**, however, a few participants noted that it is to be expected that members' availabilities and priorities throughout the year (or years) change (*Basics of community organizing*, n.d.). Such changes to membership may present as a difficulty to the oversight, which is a challenge that is also identified in **coalitions** (Cohen et al., 2011). Two participants proposed facilitating such turnovers through the implementation of terms with a possibility for renewal, so that individuals clearly understand the timeline and commitment they are being requested to fulfill. The **coalition** model also stipulates that this consideration for members' time is important, as individuals will not have unlimited availability (Cohen et al., 2011). This extends to individual meetings, wherein keeping schedules to their pre-determined length might help in respecting the oversight members' valuable time.

> *"Maybe if you have a term. Like, 'Okay we're going to meet in this committee from, 'This is the starting point and this is the endpoint, we can always renew, but we want people to be committed for this time period.' That might be helpful. Just so that people know it's not just a forever thing, or it's not just a one-month thing.'"*
>
> *— Individual affiliated with community organization*

> *"I think if it's something that's going to be staff-led or led by a community member like a parent or guardian, I think there needs to be some very clear indication of the amount of commitment that's going to be needed at the beginning very early on prior to when things really want to be executed."*
>
> *— HWDSB staff*

An overlap of the respective start and end periods for incoming and outgoing members may aid in facilitating transfer of knowledge. Both **coalitions** and **community organizing** stipulate that new members should have a comprehensive orientation, and also be made to feel welcome and included so as to alleviate potential feelings they may have of not being able to provide anything new to the group (Cohen et al., 2011).

> *"If you have a structure where people are rolling off the committee and people are rolling on the committee, there needs to be like an overlap time. So if I'm rolling off the committee, and you're rolling on the committee, we need to have time where we're talking together, so that it's passing the torch. 'Okay, here's where we're starting, here's where we are now, here's where we think we have to go, but it's really up for this committee to kind of keep driving that.'"*
>
> *— Individual affiliated with community organization*

Group size

While the exact number of individuals on the oversight could not yet be determined, participants believed that a smaller group would be more conducive to decision-making, as further elaborated

in 4.4.1. Participants also stated the size of the group may not need to be confined to strict parameters and could instead be fluid. Both ideas from the interviews are supported by the **coalition** model, which notes that a larger group will likely face greater barriers in decision-making, and that the size of the group should depend on purpose (Cohen et al., 2011).

> *"It's hard to involve,* genuinely*, 15 people in a thing. Because there's too many people, and it will take a million years."*
>
> *— Individual affiliated with community organization*

4.3.2 What might the oversight's format look like?

While it may be preemptive to determine the format of recommendation 10.3 prior to its function, several ideas have, nonetheless, been included in this section to reflect the diverse perspectives at the time this report was drafted. In no particular order, participants' ideas of what the oversight may look like are:

- a "chain," where execution goes "down" while feedback of that execution goes "up";
- public consultations, with board staff and ward trustees actively going into their respective neighbourhoods/wards to obtain the community's input on Safe Schools, including how to improve;
- a body consisting of HWDSB and community members forming the oversight, supported by a dedicated backbone team coordinating logistics;
- to leverage upon current Safe Schools groups (Advisories, working groups) into an oversight role, as they would already be connected and invested in the work;
- a flowchart or progress chart detailing Safe Schools-related tasks and individual(s) responsible for said task.

4.3.3 What tasks might the oversight undertake?

Checking progress and process of Safe Schools

Participants who both had and had not partaken in Safe Schools Advisories unanimously shared that recommendation 10.3 should be used to check in on the *progress* of Safe Schools work (e.g., deadlines met, recommendations being adhered, consistency in addressing all recommendations equally), and many stated that oversight should also include checking in on how the *process* of that work was being carried out (e.g., if community members' voices are being heard, how communication between members has gone). Checking in on both progress and process can help with both the sustainability and maintenance of Safe Schools, so that it carries on into the long-term, but also so that improvements to the work may be identified.

> *"I think it can be easy for things to fall off. If anything, probably my greatest concern with anything implemented is its maintenance."*
>
> *— HWDSB staff*

Monitoring the oversight itself

Aside from the oversight's tasks being to "check in" on Safe Schools work, a few participants mentioned that this checking in could be extended to the oversight itself to ensure that it is

achieving its goals. Change will undoubtedly happen over time, such as through members finding more effective ways to function, or revisions to funding. In the literature, **community organizing** also explicitly mentions evaluating the initiative itself and taking time to reflect on how things have been going (*Basics of community organizing*, n.d.). Furthermore, this model states that all members in the initiative (which would be the oversight members in the case of recommendation 10.3) should participate in that evaluation.

> *"I feel like what might work this year, maybe in two years, we'll need to add more tweaks, just so it stays [in] a good environment."*
> *— Student*

Coalitions provide a more detailed approach to monitoring with "summative" and "formative" evaluations (Cohen et al., 2011). Similar to what participants shared, summative evaluations focus on the progress to assess whether the group is achieving the goals it intends to achieve, whereas formative evaluations focus on the process of the group.

Involvement of the general public

Participants highlighted communication to be the main way of involving the broader community in order to maintain transparency and accountability to the public. Continuing with the notion of a whole-city approach to effectively address bullying, a few participants expressed that it may be helpful for all partners in this work to be free-flowing with information. This concept of communication with the broader public was a major piece of the several models of the literature, including **community progress reporting**, which uses data to maintain communication and transparency; **civilian oversight**, which necessitates that meetings, reports, and operations should be made public; the **Rainbow Framework**, which stipulates that findings be shared with the audience the initiative was intended to affect; as well as the **bond oversight committee**, which involves the public sharing of meeting minutes within one week of a meeting (*Community oversight*, n.d.; "Ferndale School District," 2019; Seppanen, 1998; *Rainbow Framework*, n.d.). Such mechanisms to increase communication with the public may contribute to an increased capacity for more individuals to meaningfully participate in meetings if they are aware of what is happening.

> *"I find [not being free-flowing with information] hinders the process. Let's just be honest with each other. Whereas there's always that political red tape."*
> *— Parent*

Participants listed several avenues by which information could be disseminated to the public, including on HWDSB's website, through email, social media, material sent home with students, and even in-person (e.g., between teachers and students, with that potentially trusting relationship enabling students to be more comfortable in asking questions). Specifically for the website, while it was recognized as an avenue by multiple participants, these participants also described how it was difficult to navigate and access Safe Schools information with the site's current state. More broadly, the wide range of communication methods shared reflects the idea

that each person receives their information differently, and hence the importance of taking into account that diversity. For example, some participants mentioned email as a preferred format, while others opted for social media.

> *"I think, with teachers and students, there's a more level of trust […] So I think if it's someone like that explaining it to you, you might just comprehend it a bit more; or if you have questions, you could feel more comfortable asking them."*
>
> *— Student*

> *"You could [share Safe Schools information] on the website, but even [with] the website, I don't find a lot of people follow what's going on. I certainly don't. I read the newsletters, but I don't have a lot of time to go and visit the website. But just having a Safe Schools Twitter page, or something like that, or LinkedIn, or Instagram, or social media, or whatever. Just to get the information out there. […] You may even need to look at hiring a communication specialist."*
>
> *— Parent*

> *"I think maybe that's part of one of the tasks – is to figure out what's gonna work best for the demographic you're trying to reach. How do they get their information? Because I'm of an older generation, my generation uses Facebook. I can tell you that's an old person thing. But that's a way."*
>
> *— Individual affiliated with community organization*

It was also expressed during the interviews that data could be an element of this communication; however, there should be consideration for data literacy. One participant mentioned how this barrier could be managed by pairing data with story. As part of this idea, they described the "results-based accountability" framework as a method to share progress with the general public.

> *"I think there has to be some good story sharing elements to the data communication."*
>
> *— Parent*

> *"[Results-based accountability] is really a communication tool for taking data and putting it in products that people can understand about what we've done in our work. […] It basically seeks to answer mainly, if I drill it down [to] three questions: how much did we do, how well did we do it, and what was the impact?"*
>
> *— Parent*

The topic of volume of communication was also mentioned by a few participants. This concept is shared by the **community organizing** model, in that over-communication may cause messages to be buried, or individuals to be desensitized or disengaged (*Basics of community organizing*, n.d.). A lack of communication, however, may lead to a sense of being excluded and forgotten.

One consideration to deal with this fine balance of information volume is to communicate any large change within recommendation 10.3 or Safe Schools to the public.

> *"With me, personally, I think I would like to be updated somewhat often; but I think if things are mostly staying the same, and then if something just comes up or something's going to change, I think I'd like to be updated then. But I think it might start getting a bit annoying if I would get an email or things like that pretty often. So I think, even if things are going really good and nothing's really changing, and something does come up, maybe you just send an email or talk to someone about that. […] But just in general, maybe unless something big came up, or something's going to change, then maybe just kind of leave it like that."*
>
> *— Student*

While many cited communication to be the main avenue by which recommendation 10.3 can involve the broader public, as mentioned in 4.3.2, one participant explicitly cited public consultation as an example by which the oversight might seek input broadly. The literature hosted examples of generating direct community involvement beyond communication. For example, the **bond oversight committee** notes that public meetings should be open to the public, and that such public meetings should be advertised in order to increase visibility and engagement ("Ferndale School District," 2019). As well, during these meetings, there is designated time for public comment by any member of the community, and this opportunity to share is guaranteed by the committee's by-laws. As another example, **social audits** gather direct input from the public through the use of citizen report cards, a type of participatory surveys; and community score cards, a monitoring instrument (*Community-led social audit*, 2017).

4.3.4 When might meetings take place?

Meeting frequency

While specific frequency of meetings should be based on the purpose(s) and task(s) of recommendation 10.3, participants agreed that meetings should occur regularly to allow members to convene and plan. This idea of a regular meeting format is also found in **coalitions**, which notes that such an arrangement may contribute to greater participation (Cohen et al., 2011). Suggested timeframes of frequency from the participants ranged from biweekly to annually, with the most common suggestion being bimonthly or quarterly. They also noted that meetings did not need to be as frequent as other Safe Schools work. In support of participants' suggested meeting frequencies, the **bond oversight committee** provides consistent quarterly updates ("Ferndale School District," 2019). Meanwhile, **coalitions** implement a meeting frequency of every other month, with members being more likely to participate in smaller subcommittees when the larger, overall group meets less frequently (Cohen et al., 2011). This may be pertinent to Safe Schools, if some oversight members are also involved in Safe Schools Advisory groups.

> *"[Frequency] depends on what [the oversight is] trying to do. And without specifically knowing what they're trying to do, I would be hesitant to say. […] If*

it's checking-in and making sure, then I could see a monthly or quarterly being kind of in order. Bimonthly? Every second month? Something like that. It wouldn't need to be more frequent than that, I think. There's a big difference between monthly and quarterly, so it triples the amount, but something more on the scale of every second month. Quarterly. It wouldn't need to be weekly, biweekly, nothing like that."

— Individual affiliated with community organization

"I think it would depend on the work plan. What are the timelines laid out and the workplan? What are the reporting requirements?"

— Parent

"I think it depends on what the tasks are. But, you know, once a month, or once every couple of months, for sure. I think if you do it, like, three times a year, that's probably not enough, because I think it requires action — and also things change. So if you're meeting on more of a regular basis, then you can adjust to changes that are happening."

— Individual affiliated with community organization

Time of day

A major consideration for meetings was whether to host them during the day (when individuals may be working), or in the evening (when individuals may be preoccupied with other activities). The models of **coalitions** and **community organizing** shared these same considerations (*Basics of community organizing*, n.d.; Cohen et al., 2011). One participant noted how scheduling software may be used to help facilitate an overall time that works best for all members.

"Some of them were during the day, so I work — so I couldn't, unfortunately, attend, so I missed a couple."

— Parent

4.3.5 Where might meetings be held?

With the increase in online meetings in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be tempting to hold meetings virtually with the assumption that doing so will be more accessible or convenient for members. However, this assumption should be checked, as the general consensus from participants was that in-person meetings would enable greater engagement if they were to be involved.

"We work better [in-person]. Better than on a screen. That doesn't work well."

— Student

"I always attend anything in person, if I can. I just feel you get a sense of the room. You get a feeling. […]For me I need that physical [connection] […] But there's different types of people that don't like that."

— Parent

"In-person is always my preference. There's nothing like being in person, especially if the agenda requires participation. If I'm just going to hear a speaker present to me, that's fine to be online; but if you're asking me to provide input, or do some sort of group work, or share something […] I think the agenda might dictate the mode, too."

— Parent

A hybrid option could also be considered, granted that there is proper equipment to ensure that no members are left feeling disconnected. If meetings were to be held in-person, the location of the meeting should be considered for accessibility, which is supported by **community organizing** (*Basics of community organizing*, n.d.). For example, are meetings being held at a member's organization space, at a specific school, or even in spaces where students gather? **Coalitions**, likewise, consider meeting location, including comfortability (e.g., room size, ventilation) and rotation of sites (Cohen et al., 2011). Within the context of Safe Schools, switching between HWDSB and community sites could be done to demonstrate investment from both parties.

4.4 Operational considerations

4.4.1 How might decisions be made?

The three decision-making options discussed in interviews were: by a single individual, majority vote, and consensus. For all three approaches, however, participants emphasized that there should be space for discussions prior to any decisions being made. For example, if a single individual were to be responsible for the ultimate decision, they would need to first seek input from their fellow group members; in other words, a consultative decision-making style. Advantages of this approach would be that decisions could be made faster and the bystander effect (potentially seen in a consensus approach) could be mitigated.

However, whether directly or indirectly alluded to, the other two decision-making styles of consensus and voting were more popular with participants. Both are also commonly found in the models of **community organizing** and **needle-moving community collaboratives** (*Basics of community organizing*, n.d.; Jolin et al., 2012). As consensus typically requires more time to properly implement than other approaches, a technique by **coalitions** to mitigate this process is to frame a consensus as one in which the majority support, and that the minority can accept (Cohen et al., 2011). This consideration may be particularly salient if the community and oversight values timely actions, as conveyed in 4.2.1. Further, **community organizing** also shares that there could also be scenarios in which the typical decision-making approach (e.g., consensus) is superseded in favour of other approaches (e.g., voting); however, the model cautions that this must be stipulated and agreed-upon in advance by members (*Basics of community organizing*, n.d.; Cohen et al., 2011).

"Hierarchical is easier. Hierarchical is faster, smaller. […] It's harder to get 25 people to agree to what to put on a pizza than two. That's just true. When you're ordering pizza for a group of 25 it's like, "Let's make survey and try to get everyone's opinions on what's the favorite toppings." [Versus] it's you and your friend, it's easy to decide what to put on the pizza, and so it's no doubt easier and faster to have a structure. I actually think number of people is a big factor. […] It's easier to be consensus-building with four people than it is with 15. […] I think no matter which group of 15 or 20 people, lots of people are just going to be, like, 'Ah, whatever.'"

— Individual affiliated with community organization

As the chosen decision-making style has the opportunity to reflect the purpose and intentions of the oversight, considerable thought should be given to the selected approach, as recommended by **coalitions** (Cohen et al., 2011). This selection may be especially important for groups that aim to mitigate perceived power differentials amongst its members.

Data

An added dimension to the decision-making process mentioned by a few participants was the use of data to inform decisions and evaluate outcomes. Related to 4.3.1, an example of how data could be utilized is to scan the demographic of groups affected by bullying but not currently represented on the oversight, and then using that data to seek out the perspectives of those groups. Models in the literature that have a notably data-driven approach are **needle-moving community collaboratives** and the **Rainbow Framework** (Jolin et al., 2012; *Rainbow Framework*, n.d.).

"You have data. It tells you that these are groups that are being overly affected in an adverse way. Therefore, you have a special responsibility, reading the data, to make sure that you connect, as integrally as possible, with those groups, recognizing that you have to be careful, even within *those groups, to hear the voices that don't come out and speak. So you use your data to make sure that there are groups that are adversely affected, who you try to hear their voice, and to hear their experience, and all that you know, [to] best to respond."*

— Community advocate

While the interviews revealed the importance of collecting data and using that data for decision-making, only the literature produced more specific details about how that might manifest, starting with having clearly defined outcomes or performance indicators to track progress. When the organization Truckee Meadows Tomorrow used a **community progress report** to share their organization's updates to the community, they employed indicators that were actionable, meaningful, valuable, important, and measurable (*2022 community progress*, 2022). It should be noted that the method of establishing outcomes, however, can vary. For example, **needle-moving community collaboratives** use previously collected data to define the problem and establish outcome measures, whereas **collective impact 3.0** suggests that outcomes should be based on

community aspiration (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016; Jolin et al., 2012). Once outcomes and/or indicators have been explicitly determined, data corresponding to those measures can be collected.

The type of data may also be considered. For example, **CCAs** primarily use qualitative data as the basis for their work, whereas other models consider both qualitative and quantitative data (Gloger, n.d.). An oversight model that has implemented data collection is **civilian oversight** in State College, Pennsylvania.

4.4.2 How might members interact with each other?

Collaborative culture

As described in section 4.2.2, recommendation 10.3 should be, first and foremost, a cooperative effort involving community, HWDSB, and the city of Hamilton. Therefore, multiple participants maintained that the oversight should work collaboratively. Establishing a collaborative culture is also a common theme in the literature. As an example, **CCIs** emphasize unity as a requirement for members in the group (Kubisch et al., 2010). This might look like compromising for the bigger picture, or members not putting the blame on one another. The latter example is found in **community organizing**, which suggests that an individuals must develop a "broadened sense of self-interest" to encourage a more collaborative culture within the group (*Basics of community organizing*, n.d.).

> *"We need to work together. […] We all have a responsibility and a hand in this, and it's not just one person's job. It's communal."*
>
> *— Parent*

> *"And the more people that are on the same page and working together the better, for sure. But I think it's going to take some work to make sure we create that culture and that environment of 'We're doing this all together.'"*
>
> *— Individual affiliated with community organization*

Along with this collaborative culture, one participant noted that it is paramount for the members of the oversight to spend time outlining group norms, being explicit about their shared purpose and reasons for being involved in the work, as well as making explicit how the group will work together. This could help anchor the group's work in the "why" the oversight exists when challenges do inevitably arise.

Building relationships

A major condition for the aforementioned collaborative culture would be based on establishing genuine relationships and trust between members of the oversight. While this step may appear self-evident in a group with multiple partners, it may be challenging to enact in practice. Some obstacles to relationship-building as listed by **CCIs** include navigating the self-interests of involved parties; "cultural, historical, racial, or legal barriers"; and even financial costs to maintaining such connections (Kubisch, et al., 2010). In **CCAs**, developing connections between

stakeholders may necessitate a dedicated backbone team who can ensure shared power and mediate between players of varying sizes (e.g., grassroots and institutions). The presence of such a team in itself demonstrates the sheer ongoing effort required to build and maintain relationships (Gloger, n.d.).

Further, this relationship-building may also be vital considering that personal emotions could arise in the oversight's work. Some participants mentioned prior negative experiences they have had with the board, such as a failure to follow through with promises or the feeling of being used. If individuals involved with recommendation 10.3 have similar experiences coming in or throughout their time as part of the oversight, it is possible that neglecting to address such sentiments may cause further divide and less productivity for this intentionally collaborative partnership.

> *"Maybe there's poor relationships between certain partners and the board already that I'm not aware of — that could be possible. […] I think, could they bring that, [or] heated emotions into their decision-making and thoughts about how to implement things – maybe based on bias or their own lived experience."*
>
> *— HWDSB staff*

In addressing this, some participants provided ideas of how to build relationships between members. This included a commitment to being in the same room, having transparent and open dialogue, being empathetic, and meeting outside of scheduled meetings (i.e., going out for coffee to learn about their fellow members beyond the context of their role on the oversight). Similarly, the **community organizing** model proposes creating time for social events to build a sense of community amongst members (*Basics of community organizing*, n.d.). This team bonding is also in line with the **Rainbow Framework's** recommendation to strengthen social capacity via supportive relationships (*Rainbow Framework*, n.d.). Importantly, trust is formed when a person or group or institution acts on their commitments, which may appear simple on paper, but can be challenging and take time to enact in reality; however, that show of dedication is precisely what makes it so crucial.

> *"All of the players, they have to connect first. I need to know names, need to know what you're about. Do we share values? Do we share approach? Starts with that."*
>
> *— Individual affiliated with community organization*

This relationship-building could also help in addressing a potential tension related to the different positions and the perceived differences in power that those positions hold. For example, if the oversight were to involve a student and a principal, how might those individuals interact with one another and also with the group at large?

4.4.3 How to encourage member attendance and engagement?

Communication between oversight members

A major theme from the interviews was the importance of having clear communication. Some participants involved in Safe Schools connected a lack of communication to decreased attendance (as individuals did not know when meetings were happening) and engagement (through feelings of frustration).

For example, in an instance of Safe Schools work, multiple participants cited a potential technical issue with the emailing list leading to miscommunication, wherein community members never heard back after signing up for working groups. Some participants said that they were too busy to follow-up; and for those that did, many did not hear back. This situation caused individuals to not know if they were still part of Safe Schools work.

> *"During those initial meetings there was, like, 'Hey, we should have working groups. Hey, fill in this survey, which topics do you like?' And I filled in the topics I liked, and then I never heard anything about it. […] Somehow, everything was lost in translation for me. Maybe it's all in my junk inbox right now. I don't know."*
>
> *— Individual affiliated with community organization*

> *"I tried emailing them, but I didn't get an email back. So I'm not entirely sure about that. […] I don't think I am involved in Safe Schools anymore?"*
>
> *— Student*

> *"I signed up for every single one of them, because I want to be part of the whole process. […] I put my name down for every one, and there was a huge lapse where I didn't hear about any of them, so I thought, 'Oh, they've forgotten about me.'"*
>
> *— Community advocate*

In addition, participants mentioned that if they happened to be absent from one or a few Safe Schools Advisory or working group meetings, they were not updated on what they had missed, or would find that a meeting agenda was different from what was previously discussed. As such, participants suggested that it may be useful to have meeting minutes shared with all members so they could be caught up and follow along.

While this theme may have originated from previous Safe Schools work, it is still pertinent to recommendation 10.3 moving forward in terms of highlighting how attendance and engagement can be affected by a breakdown in communication. A few participants proposed that resolving such miscommunication may be achieved by relaying with a single point person.

> *"It's very difficult when there's one person saying one thing, another saying another thing, the third person being, like, 'What's happening?' So definitely one person doing the work of knowing who's doing what […] because you'd lose track very quickly of what's happening."*

— Student

Mutual meeting times

Another potential barrier to member attendance and engagement that was raised by participants was the lack of mutual meeting times. For example, if an individual wanted to be part of the oversight but was unable to do so due to conflicting schedules, they may feel left out after missing several meetings. To address this issue of availability, participants suggested:

- scheduling meetings based on community members' availabilities, not necessarily based on the working day (particularly if recommendation 10.3 is to be truly community-led);
- having a regular meeting time to make planning for a meeting or event predictable (otherwise, there may be a risk of extended time passing without a next confirmed meeting and hence individuals losing interest);
- if dates change, sharing those dates in advance (e.g., more than a week's notice) to allow members to prepare for meetings; and
- holding two of the same meeting at different times to accommodate for various schedules (with the caveat that what happens in both meetings is communicated to all members).

"I am on the Safe Schools Advisory as well. Haven't been able to successfully attend a meeting, though, because of the dates that it lines up."

— Parent

Visibility of recommendation 10.3

An often-cited barrier to participation during the interviews was simply a lack of awareness surrounding Safe Schools. Participants remarked that there were individuals they knew whom either did not know about this work or, if they did know about Safe Schools and were interested, did not know if or how they could be involved. As this challenge was apparent with Safe Schools overall, it may also occur specifically with recommendation 10.3. In particular, this may be an issue if a main objective of the oversight is to directly incorporate diverse perspectives as part of its membership. An idea provided by a participant to increase both the community and staff's knowledge of Safe Schools was to organize a round of promotion by directly going into communities. Another participant suggested leveraging upon existing models that already do that (e.g., charette) and adapting those models to the purposes of the oversight.

"The Safe Schools piece, it's been almost a year, and I still think there's some people that aren't aware that it's happening, or that they could join — and maybe they can't."

— Parent

"If there was advertising, things like that, I think a lot of the community would want to [join]. […] I don't know the exact statistics, but I know most people have been bullied, or have witnessed someone being bullied that's close to them, so they might not want to necessarily join and put it forward, but I think they'll

definitely want to know what's going on with it. So I think if more of the community knew about it, they might want to help out."

— Student

"I think you really need to make sure that staff are aware of the opportunities available to them for learning, and to potentially lead, or co-lead, or co-learn around some of the topics."

— HWDSB staff

"If you do it within the wards, you know, make it more intimate, have it more about the actual community. […] If you really tap into the heart, I think you'd get a better reaction."

— Parent

"Let's think outside of the box for how we want to work with people. Do we go to them instead of having them come to us? I think there's a lot of ways. […] And it goes back to so many models of, like, the Sage Model, or a lay health educator model, or a charette model from engineering."

— Parent

Accessibility

Accessibility may also be a barrier to participation for certain populations or individuals. The first topic that arose under the consideration for accessibility was that of language, with participants encouraging appropriate wording for all members, from staff to students and other potential members of the oversight. For example, any technical terms used could be accompanied by definitions, footnotes, or a glossary, and/or the opportunity to ask questions and talk though terms. As well, translation into multiple languages may be appropriate depending on membership, or in communications shared with the general public.

"You can get lost in the words. Like, 'This makes no sense. I can't even process half of this.' So something easier to read would help."

— Student

"Especially when you think about it, we're talking about bullying and communities. […] [Some new immigrants] don't speak our language, they come from a different culture, they don't feel like they belong. Why? Because we're not making it accessible. They can't be part of these meetings, they can't be part of these conversations, they're being sent documents in English, and if they want it in a different language, they have to go searching for it."

— Parent

The second topic under accessibility was technology, which has the potential to reduce barriers to participation but at the moment may not be fully taken advantage of (e.g., closed captioning

may be available but not used). If the oversight were to leverage upon technology in its internal work (e.g., virtual meetings) or external work (e.g., collecting data to evaluate Safe Schools initiatives), then a level of digital literacy (and corresponding training) needs to be considered.

> *"I feel like [the board is] not using technology enough to help connect those people. […] I just feel like from an accessibility standpoint, that comes into the bullying part, too."*
>
> *— Parent*

5. Conclusion

The main takeaways from this work are as follows:

1) pre-work for the oversight, specifically with regards to its *function* (the purpose of and expectations surrounding recommendation 10.3), must be conducted before its *form* can be delineated;
2) while there is work to be done ahead, there are also lessons from previous years of Safe Schools work that may be valuable to investigate; and
3) recommendation 10.3 (and Safe Schools in general) does not and cannot rely upon any one group to be actualized. Rather, a joint, reciprocal partnership between individuals, organizations, communities, institutions, and governments will be key in collectively tackling bullying for the safety and wellbeing of students in Hamilton.

5.1 Limitations and avenues for future work

A limitation of the work for the secondary research was the usage of Google as a database, which indicates that some of the sources found may be biased from Google's algorithm, as the search engine recalls and displays results based on user data. Moving forward, using a database that does not track the user's data (such as DuckDuckGo) may aid in reducing potential biased results from Google.

For the interviews, a major limitation was the fact that participants were individuals who had previously expressed interest in Safe Schools, and/or were involved with HWDSB in some other capacity. As such, in missing a key subpopulation of individuals who may not be as connected to and/or not want to be associated with work by HWDSB, the study's sample may not be representative of the wider population in Hamilton. Thus, there may be value in validating the findings from this study with a more diverse sample.

As well, while data was a prominent theme in both the interviews and literature review, participants only spoke on a broad level of the overall importance of collecting and reporting on data, whereas the literature thoroughly elaborated on the processes by which that might manifest. Moreover, considering that measurement systems were a major theme in the previous work by Dulai et al., future work may consider elucidating this theme with community members, HWDSB staff, and the larger city of Hamilton in greater detail. For example, in future discussions between the board and the larger community, individuals could be asked about what performance indicators, outcome measures, and/or types of data would be most appropriate for the oversight to use in measuring the progress and process of Safe Schools.

6. Appendices

Appendix A. Summary of secondary research findings

A brief description of the themes from the secondary literature review is as follows (within the report itself, these themes and their corresponding models have been integrated directly into the primary research).

Dedication of Resources and Capacity Development

As found in the literature, several models indicated the importance of dedicated resources, including human, financial, community, advocacy, and others. The concept of capacity development is heavily related to the dedication of resources as, in order to develop capacity, more resources are often required.

Cohesion and Agreement among Stakeholders, including Community

The literature stressed ensuring that all members and/or stakeholders involved are on the same page. This could be with regards to the outcomes being measured, agendas, any visions for the oversight structure, purpose(s) of oversight, usage of resources, and more. To facilitate cohesion and agreement, some methods described were to actively involve the community, gain support from external stakeholders, and reach agreement on outcome measures.

Adaptability and Openness to Learning

This theme refers to the adaptability and willingness of the group to constantly learn throughout the oversight's implementation and maintenance. Data collected before oversight implementation and during the oversight's operation may be used to adapt approaches, as well as align resources towards measures that are shown to be effective.

Involving the Broader Community

Involvement of the broader public (that is, members outside of the institution or the oversight board) could be found in many forms in the literature, such as direct involvement of the public through **community-led social audit**, the inclusion of businesses and organizations, or the importance of maintaining communication with the public through **community progress reporting**.

Independence

Many models highlighted the importance of the oversight board being independent from the organization or institution they are overseeing. Furthermore, they state that the oversight's independence should be clearly communicated to the public using explicit language such as an "independent advisory" or "independent board." This transparency may also allow for greater trust to be built between the oversight and the community.

Logistical Details

Key logistical details in models typically explained "who," "what," "when," "where," and "how." This included, but was not limited to, "who" is included on the board (members

explicitly relaying their role in the group and the expertise they may bring); "when" meetings are carried out (meeting frequency, time of day for meetings, meeting duration), and "how" meetings are conducted (common agenda).

Utilisation of Data Collection and Outcome Measures

Models, particular the **Rainbow Framework**, noted that the methods of utilising data, and also the intended goal(s) of collecting and reporting on outcome measures, should be established prior to the oversight beginning its operations. Outcome measures serve to inform the group of its progress, so resources may be allocated towards avenues for improvement. Another point was how findings should be reported on a regular basis (e.g., annually) and accessible shared with the community.

Distinct Ideas

While the previous themes had been found in several models, there were also notable ideas introduced in only one or very few of the sources that were explored. However, these were reported here as there were "distinct" or "stand-out" due to reasons such as similarity of the context to the HWDSB, or the presentation of ideas and perspectives that may be less traditional in K-12 education. The first idea was the use of negotiation, confrontation, and pressure to gain support from relevant stakeholders (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016). The second stand-out theme was the idea of providing tangible power to the oversight to act out decision (Gloger, n.d.). In this way, the group may not be perceived as limited to a performative role, and members may feel supported to make changes, introduce policy, and enact other recommendations as they see fit.

Appendix B. Themes involving the secondary research

Appendix B.1 Form before function

Category, theme, or subtheme	*Involves secondary research?*
Form before function	Yes
Co-development	Yes
Community-led (in "Co-development")	Yes
Shared definitions (in "Co-development")	Yes
Setting boundaries (in "Co-development")	Yes
Accountability in addressing bullying (in "Why have oversight?")	Yes
Action-based (in "Why have oversight?")	Yes
Timelines and adaptability (in "Why have oversight?")	Yes
Supporting Safe Schools work (in "Why have oversight?")	N/A
Funding and resources (in "Ensuring buy-in")	Yes
Partnership (in "Ensuring buy-in")	Yes
Competing interests (in "Ensuring buy-in")	No

Appendix B.2 Design considerations

Category, theme, or subtheme	*Involves secondary research?*
Important stakeholders (in "Who might be involved?")	Yes
Power dynamics (in "Who might be involved?")	Yes
Listening to and amplifying voices of groups (in "Who might be involved?")	No
Recruitment (in "Who might be involved?")	Yes
Compensation (in "Who might be involved?")	Yes
Backbone team (in "Who might be involved?")	Yes
Length of involvement (in "Who might be involved?")	Yes
Group size (in "Who might be involved?")	Yes
What might the oversight's format look like?	N/A
Checking progress and process of Safe Schools (in "What tasks might the oversight undertake?")	Yes
Monitoring the oversight itself (in "What tasks might the oversight undertake?")	Yes
Involvement of the general public (in "What tasks might the oversight undertake?")	Yes
Meeting frequency (in "When might meetings take place?")	Yes
Time of day (in "When might meetings take place?")	Yes
Where might meetings be held?	Yes

Appendix B.3 Operational considerations

Category, theme, or subtheme	*Involves secondary research?*
How might decisions be made?	Yes
Data (in "How might decisions be made?")	Yes
Collaborative culture (in "How might members interact with each other?")	Yes
Building relationships (in "How might members interact with each other?")	Yes
Communication between oversight members (in "How to encourage member attendance and engagement?")	No
Mutual meeting times (in "How to encourage member attendance and engagement?")	No
Visibility of recommendation 10.3 (in "How to encourage member attendance and engagement?")	No
Accessibility (in "How to encourage member attendance and engagement?")	No

Appendix C. List of organizations and individuals that participants suggested contacting (organized alphabetically)

- Affiliated Services for Children & Youth
- BGC Hamilton-Halton
- Empowerment Squared
- Equity Network
- Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion
- Hamilton Coalition for Bullying Prevention and Intervention *(defunct)*, including Judith Bishop and Dwayne Dahl
- Hamilton Encampment Support Network
- Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction
- Hamilton Students for Justice
- Jennifer Pearson
- John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington & Area
- Liberty for Youth
- Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton
- Tracy Vaillancourt
- Voices Against Bullying

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