



# **Respectful Workplace Survey**

## **Summary Report**

**May 2010**

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This survey report is intended to give voice to the TSU members. Of all the scores and data we have placed so much emphasis on, this data was collected as a balance. This data is provided to create dialogue about other things that matter to our teachers.

The following is taken from the introduction of the TCDSB Respectful Workplace Policy

“Because God is active in creation, work serves as a means for the human person to live out that image by working with creation. To that end, the dignity of human work can only be achieved when the dignity of the human person is affirmed and considered essential to the social operation of the work place.”

As John-Paul states in the encyclical *Laborem Exercens*:

*“...the whole labour process must be organized and adapted in such a way as to respect the requirements of the person and his or her forms of life... there should never be overlooked the right to a working environment ... which is not harmful to the workers’ physical health or to their moral integrity.”*

## Respectful Workplace Survey June 2009 Summary Report

### Introduction

This survey report is intended to give voice to the TSU members. Of all the scores and data we have placed so much emphasis on, this data was collected as a balance. This data is provided to create dialogue about other things that matter to our teachers. We thank you all for your input and hope the report reflects all of your voices.

This report is written to reflect the feedback of TSU members. It is generally positive in many implications. It also identifies more specifically some serious concerns that need the combined attention of the school board and our members. This report is intended to provide information for effective advocacy at the board level and your local school level

The survey was undertaken by TSU in June 2009 with the knowledge of the TCDSB. The intention was to create a board wide summary that was framed by the TCDSB Respectful Workplace Policy. The design and questions were developed with a professional survey company. It was not intended to identify personal evaluation of individuals. The survey was not intended to identify specific schools in a public way.

Members commented that they want TSU to be sure that as teachers and as an association, we are introspective as well as reflective on such surveys; worthy advice indeed. Many members thanked TSU for undertaking this type of survey and many wanted to be sure to have some report back to them and to the board. Several members commented that this survey should have been online to save time and money. We had seriously considered this option but we still have a substantial number of members who wish to use hardcopy. Hardcopy survey responses through association reps did provide a response rate of over 40% which is high for such surveys. This was a great deal of work but we hope the results are useful.

**Note:** While there is much good news within the report, disparity in responses should cause us to reflect on the kinds of supports that either are or are not available for schools that face challenges that this report identifies. This survey report is also part of the dialogue that is being shared with the board. TSU actions and follow up are recommended.

## **PART I: Survey Question Answers**

### Q1 and 2

When teachers reflected on whether “**teachers are treated as professional colleagues**”(Q1) and if “**overall there is a collegial atmosphere among staff**”(Q2), the overall agreement response (agree and strongly agree) was over 70%. This is good news in general. However 1 in 5 members could not agree with this statement and there was a wide variation in overall school responses. Schools varied from a high of 95% to a low of 56% indicating some schools have a much greater challenge in this regard.

- In their personal and collective work teachers appreciate a sense of professionalism and collegiality.

### Q 3

When asked if there was “**a collegial approach among admin**” the overall response was lower than Q1 but still positive with an average response (agree and strongly agree) of 60%. Again school responses ranged from 86% to a low of 41%. This is certainly a cause for concern at some schools.

- Administration team solidarity and collegiality is critical to school success.

### Q 4

When asked if they have “**meaningful input to important decisions**” members agreement response (agree and strongly agree) was only 41% overall. The highest score was only 66% and the lowest response from a school staff was at 16%. Clearly teachers feel their experience and expertise is underutilized. Given that a sense of control directly affects workplace stress this is also a serious concern for teacher well being. A cultural change in management styles and higher level of consultation with teachers in this regard would clearly benefit students, teachers, and communities.

- Nurturing positive group dynamics, group dialogue and collaborative decision making are areas for further skill development across the board.

### Q 5 & 6

When asked if they have “**a sense of solidarity**” with other teachers and education colleagues the overall response was positive at 68% overall. Schools responses were as high as 93% (agree and strongly agree) yet several schools were under 50%. When asked if all teachers felt this solidarity there was a bimodal response indicating a clear sense of division among staffs in

some schools. Anecdotal responses at these schools suggested this issue is perceived to be exacerbated by administration although it involves colleagues as well. Anecdotal comments also recognize that the role of administration can be critical in overcoming staff division. Clearly the role of administration is pivotal to these challenges, and many members want to have support in improving these workplaces. These issues elicited some of the most emotional anecdotal responses and indicated real stress in the workplace.

- The *Respectful Workplace policy* needs to address staff workplaces that have a perception or sense of division. Specific supports must be developed and be made available.

#### Q 7-10

Q 7 and 9 - "**I feel secure from bullying**" (#7) "**and harassment** (#9) **in the workplace**". These questions had very similar response patterns. Individual agreement that "they" feel secure (agree and strongly agree) was in the 66-68% range with a high of 96% and a low of 26%. Intriguingly the overall response fell significantly to an average of 37-38%, (with a range from 50-20% - one school had 81%) when asked if "all teachers" feel secure from bullying (#8) and harassment (#10). Members cannot know exactly what others think and feel, however staffroom conversation and other factors lead teachers to feel that their colleagues in general do not feel as secure as they might feel personally. The range of scores here is another indicator for a need to address these particular concerns. We did not differentiate between student, parent, colleague or admin bullying and harassment because we did not want to point directly at particular individuals in our efforts. However, this survey provides the information we need - we know that we have schools that need particular proactive action and member support.

- The board needs to provide supports to schools that have low perceptions of safety from a bullying and harassment point of view.
- School climate surveys under the New Safe Schools act should be implemented through the Joint Safe Schools Committee

#### Q 11

The overall response to the statement, "**I know my admin team will support me**", is again a relatively positive response with a board wide agreement (agree and strongly agree) of 62%. It is certainly a concern that 25% of members, or 1 out of every four, does not feel this support. Again the disparity at the school level ranged from a high score of 86% to a disconcerting 33%. From a Safe Schools point of view, no effective policy can be implemented if members do not feel they have the support of their administration teams. This response will also be worth considering in review of a sense of solidarity and safety in the workplace in the questions above.

- Successful initiatives require attention to school safety, solidarity, and support as a critical foundation.

#### Q 12

**“The admin team is consistently fair in its treatment of all teachers”**. The response here reflected the bimodal response seen in questions 5 and 6, on the sense of solidarity in the school. There is a division in how many teachers experience this. The good news is that some administration teams score almost 90%, although the overall agreement response (agree and strongly agree) was below 50% and there are several schools under 30%.

- Fairness and consistency are necessary components of a respectful and safe workplace. Recognition of these issues and better clarity through policy and support are needed to address this.

#### Q 13

**“Communication between the admin team and staff is honest and open”**. Here the agreement response (agree and strongly agree) was over 50%. This question hoped to probe the member’s sense of communications. It is great that some admin teams again achieved scores of almost 90%. It is disconcerting that some staff perceptions response was only 25% agreement. These scores appear to be related to other areas of concern in this report.

- Communications is a vital part of school community building and this requires the development of strategies and supports for schools and administration.

#### Q 14

**“In my job I have the opportunity to use my professional talent, creativity, and ability”**. 79% of members agree or strongly agree with this statement. One school scored this response at 100% with no school lower than 64%.

- Many teachers are able to channel their passion and talents in their classes and personal work.

#### Q 15

**“In our school we nurture compassion and service to each other”**. This was another good news answer where members scored agree or strongly agree at 68% overall. There were communities who scored at 95% and we should be proud of such examples. Only one school scored under 50%. Based on anecdotal comments this is another important area for our members. In some schools where this is more of a challenge it is noted that some members hear admin or colleagues speak of “serving” students and showing them compassion when we seem to fail to model this among colleagues. In our imperfect state, Jesus cautioned us to judge others, colleagues or students, and called on us to share our gifts to make each other better.

- Compassion and service are integral to our Catholic values and are as important in how we all treat each other as how we treat students.

#### Q 16

**“Fostering a caring and supportive workplace environment for all staff, meaning teachers are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness”**. It is interesting that this response had a lower agreement response (47%) than Q15 above. The range of school responses were from 60% down to 25%. Some anecdotal comments enquired why we did not separate out admin, from colleague, parent, or students affected member’s consideration of these answers. We purposefully chose not to separate out groups in many questions because we were looking for the overall impression of our teachers for the school workplace rather than answers that would be personally directed. It is TSU’s intention that other tools be used to conduct a more precise analysis of specific issues that our members face.

- The workplace environment needs additional supports in some schools to provide more of a sense of respect and fairness.

#### Q 17

**“Maintaining a workplace where all teachers can fully use their professional talents, creativity, and ability”**. There was an overall agreement score of 52%. This result is interesting when compared to the more personal sense of this ability in Q 14. It would seem that members feel more empowered in their personal classroom or work space than they do in their school-wide “workplace” in a more broad sense. Again this follows a trend to less positive response when considering “all teachers” in a systemic view.

- It seems that teachers are more cynical and less positive in their systemic view of things.

Q 18

**“Maintaining a workplace that is free from harassment, threat, and intimidation”**. Agreement score of (55%) and a pattern that was very similar to the previous question. Disparity in workplaces was noticeable again and ranged from agreement levels of 84% down to 28%.

- There are some schools with much work to do to ensure members feel free from a sense of harassment, threats, or intimidation. This requires attention and dialogue between the Safe Schools and Health and safety Committee.

Q 19

**“Maintaining a workplace that is free from discrimination”**. 62% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. One school scored a 91% while the lowest scores were below 50%. Anecdotal comments certainly identified serious issues around this equity concern particularly as it relates to hiring and promotion.

- There is a need to address concerns across the board regarding discrimination particularly as it relates to hiring and promotion.
- We are glad the board has included a statement of commitment to fair and transparent hiring in the new Equity Policy. This needs to be a focus for concrete policy and procedure development.

Q 20 -23 There was a very good demographic mix in the responders, reflecting a fair representation of members.

No answers were tracked at a personal level

### **Part I: Further Summary comments**

- Individual perceptions of personal workplace experiences are more optimistic than broader school community or board systemic views which reflect significantly more cynicism.
- Members seem to have a harder time seeing collaborative effort or shared values in their view of system issues.
- Members want a clearer sense of purpose and a broader vision of what education means
- Schools that have concerns, seemed to have more than one area of concerns and were accompanied by comments indicating a need for a variety of specific supports.

## **Part II: Report of Anecdotal Comments**

The anecdotal comments were reviewed and four main themes were clearly dominant. They are presented here as a reflection of the comments and voice the members chose to add to the survey.

The four most significant themes in responses:

- I. **Politics and overload**
- II. **Administration**
- III. **Promotion and hiring**
- IV. **Catholic community and Gospel values**

### **I. Politics and overload**

This area had many responses and commentary. These comments can be largely reflected in several sub themes:

#### **Vision:**

Teachers expressed a bigger vision for what it is they do in classes and for what we mean as a Catholic public board. They spoke passionately to relationships, their passion, their talent and their creativity. They expressed a feeling that their gifts and passion for teaching are too often not respected by administration and the board. This clearly stresses and disappoints them. Pointed comments noted that our school board culture does not honour "master" teachers. While we are cautious that comments reflect perceptions, it is important to note how members see their school board. There is also expressed a cynicism that political compliance and nepotism are rewarded. Members stated that those who love the class and remain in the class are viewed sceptically because they did not go into administration. Referring to members who have given decades to build schools or teach our students, "people who have given so much, are overlooked and undervalued". They express a vision for a broad learning experience that is challenging and holistic and they have a great desire to be authentic contributors to this. There is opportunity for optimism as many members are still hopeful we can do better. They just define "better" differently than the politics, ministry dictates and the priorities they perceive. It is important that they care deeply about our board.

Summary:

- Teachers expressed a bigger vision for what it is they do in classes and for what it can mean to be a Catholic public board
- Teachers spoke passionately to relationships, their passion, their talent and their creativity
- Teachers believe the board does not honour "master" teachers
- There is opportunity for optimism as many members are hopeful that we can do better.

Workload

Members were clear that workload is a key issue. They called on both TSU and the TCDSB to advocate more on their behalf, and especially at the provincial level. They asked that the board “prioritize community needs over provincial politics”. It was notable that members’ comments again reflected a desire for a greater vision of their work and their desire to engage and inspire children rather than merely ‘produce’ data and reports.

Summary:

- Relations and **purpose** are critical to members and they believe they are the foundation for their success with students.
- Members are clear in their belief that their plate is too full to do their job in the way they believe they should to serve students properly.

Sample comments include:

“crushing workload ... demoralizing”

“creative ability in classroom is being eroded for ‘measurable results’”

“too much to use my full talent and creativity”

“Those darn initiatives, the board needs to calm down on these”

Advocacy (TSU/TCDSB)

It is a great cause for optimism that for many members their focus, even in pointing out challenges and problems, often turned to hopes and aspiration and specific suggestions for change. Many suggestions were simple, practical and fundamental. Some are shared within this report and some will be shared through the dialogue this report is intended to foster with the board and through local school level advocacy that we hope this fosters.

A great concern for us is that there is a common thread of cynicism. When members of TSU and the board widely share a goal of preserving and enhancing quality public Catholic Education, it is a serious concern that many member comments reveal “no more faith or respect in the

board” as a significant feeling. That this feeling is further reflected in the sense that “board policies” and “Catholic community” are “just words” is even more disconcerting. This suggests that the TSU executive focus on community and relations as a priority area for work with our board, has been well placed. Questions that seem to matter in the subtext of members comments include; What does it mean to be a Catholic board? What values do we prioritize?

Summary:

- Members want a greater sense of community and a feeling of respect and value from the board.
- Members struggle with a definition of excellence and success that sometimes seems disconnected from what their experience and passions tell them it should be for their classes.
- Cynicism and hope both exist in the membership

**II. Administration**

This area reflected that teachers recognize the important role administration plays in schools and communities. Members recognize that the relationships of administration and staff are critical. There is great news and great challenge here.

Administration is mentioned most often under the concern for harassment, but it is important to note that the responses around harassment under this section also reflected some similar concerns for harassment between colleagues. Member’s comments suggest we must keep in mind that TSU members sometimes contribute to harassment and play a role in helping improve such challenges. This was a very emotional topic with many personal comments. We share some comments in a general and not personal way, to express the voices shared, but we remind ourselves that such comments may sometimes apply to colleagues as well.

Administrations’ key role is reflected in the good and bad news. Where administration is seen to “choose favourites”, “blackball teachers”, be “manipulative”, “intimidating”, “push their own agenda: or “treat staff like pawns” the harassment between both admin and staff and among colleagues was markedly worsened. In such environments a few schools comments included: “faults are looked for”, “I never hated teaching until now”, “it is horrible”, “they only want to look good for promotion”. These exceptions are certainly not what we strive for and it raises the critical importance of supporting everyone in the school communities where these challenges exist.

It is important that we also recognize there are members whose comments reflect the best of examples in our schools; “I have been blessed working with good principals, “my staff and colleagues have been caring and respectful”. We should be proud that we have many good examples.

Anecdotal comments also suggest that frequent administrative changes are a problem and that this can exacerbate the other issues above. The preamble to the RWP policy reflects well stated ideas worthy of more effort and support.

Summary:

- Teachers recognize the important role administration plays in schools and communities
- The values we expect in our communities, as described in the *Respectful Workplace Policy*, require additional effort on all parts.
- The TCDSB needs to create a plan to develop the skills needed to address the impediments to creating more respectful workplaces. This plan needs to identify nurturing community and relations as a board priority and specify the supports that will be provided to allow us to meet the expectations of this Respectful Workplace Policy.
- How the board treats and moves administrators, as well as how we all support them in their challenging roles is an area that needs reflection.

We have an opportunity to make relationships work better and to reflect the values in the final section IV (Catholic Community and Gospel Values)

### III. Promotion and hiring

Promotion and hiring practices were another very clear area of concern. The concerns centred on fairness and equity. Hiring and promotion were broadly seen with cynicism. Many concerns expressed a sense of nepotism and lack of transparency or accountability for the process. The comments here were very passionate and it is clear there is a corrosive effect on the sense of community locally and on loyalty across the board. TSU is glad that fair and transparent hiring has been identified in the New Equity policy. We continue to seek a more holistic understanding of leadership development in the many roles available to teachers, including those who are not moving into administration. Members clearly do not trust the process and this undermines leadership development of teachers who are not willing to expose themselves to this or who are denied opportunity to grow. This undermines the base of leaders available for consideration in administration when we all benefit from raising the bar. TSU has suggested that TCDSB student assessment policy offers a model of assessment to be considered. For even a one paragraph assignment a teacher is asked to provide a rubric of criteria and expectations for students and those students receive this feedback so they may improve and grow. Is anything less a fair expectation for professional career decisions?

Summary:

- Fair and transparent hiring builds leadership and avoids cynicism and distrust and is an important area for improvement.
- We are glad the board has included a statement of commitment to fair and transparent hiring in the new Equity Policy. This needs to be a focus for concrete policy and procedure development.

Under this heading a secondary concern was clear. Pseudo administration, where teacher colleagues take on administrative tasks, was seen to undermine communities as well. There were some very distressing comments and clearly this is a divisive area worthy of attention and action. There was a clear difficulty felt by many when teaching colleagues act to promote, enforce, or direct colleagues in administrative ways. This was clearly separated from appropriate curriculum support roles colleagues might play.

Summary:

- There needs to be clearer understanding of roles to reduce unnecessarily stressful and often divisive issues especially around members taking on administrative duties.

**IV. Catholic community and Gospel values**

Catholic community and Gospel Values was one of the top four areas of comment and concern. There were many concerns as well as some positive comments about schools and colleagues. The traits that were most consistently expressed were:

- Respect
- Care
- Integrity
- Compassion
- Community

Members were clear, it is not enough to express these values in words and expect it from students; it is how we must treat each other. This challenge was most strongly expressed as a challenge to the board culture. Local school administration was noted as an important factor in ensuring relationships with these values. The role of administration was identified as directly supporting these relations where it was good, and where it was problematic between colleagues, it was extremely divisive to the staff. Some members made note that they believe it is necessary to displace a preoccupation with rights for students, with a sense of responsibility. Certainly members were clear that it is very important for us all to turn greater attention to achieving communities that reflect these values and relationships. Members experience

priorities that are politically driven or mandated through the ministry, as actively undermining the kind of relations and community that members envision for our board.

It is noted that comments from administrators or even our own colleagues, suggest we can be judgmental of colleagues, without accepting, understanding or accommodating them, in a way that was inconsistent with our own expressed expectations to behave this way for students.

Summary:

- Members were clear that it is very important for us all to turn greater attention to achieving communities that reflect respect, care, integrity, and compassion and that we all work together to support and build relationships.
- We can sometimes be judgmental of colleagues in a way that is inconsistent with our own expectations for understanding or accommodation of students.
- The role of administrators is very important to the kinds of school communities we have.
- Members often experience educational priorities that are politically driven or mandated through the ministry, as actively undermining the kind of relations and community that members envision for our board.

**Part II: Final Anecdotal Summary Comments**

Nurturing relations and community is a significant area where our members feel a need to experience more support.

Human relations are the soft skills of management (of a school community or class). These are among the hardest to develop and are an ongoing challenge to all organizations and communities. Developing interpersonal and human relations skills is one of the most critical factors in improving classroom management as well as school management. A holistic approach to these needs must be a higher priority if we hope to nurture relations and Catholic community. Members do not see this as a TCDSB priority.

We have asked members to express how our school board's strategic planning and budgets show a value for this priority. This priority will work directly towards achieving our obligations under the Respectful Workplace Policy. It will develop a greater sense of solidarity and safety, thereby building community in a very real and meaningful way.

## **Follow up and Timeline**

The report has tried to provide member voice to their concerns around our workplaces and communities. We have tried to identify in the bullets specific items for action. The report is intended to be a analysis for problem solving with the board. It is hoped it will bring focus to these important member issues and we provide the following as a recommended follow up timeline.

1. We will be asking for a response from the board on strategies, supports, and resources for the challenges identified in our communities and for nurturing these communities by strengthening and supporting relations. We will ask for this response by June of this year.
2. We will follow up this survey in June of this year

We will recommend to the 2010-11 executive that:

3. TSU run a special session with staff reps during the annual training in October to explore these issues in dialogue to consider follow up actions to take and resources or supports to provide
4. TSU explore with members how we can get their input in some form of confidential regional sessions, to explore these issues in dialogue to consider follow up actions to take and resources or supports to provide by Christmas of next year.
5. TSU create a long term plan around how to support the development of respectful workplaces