

Creating a Culture of Safety Mindedness

On February 9, 2017, boards received the first of two updates on work underway as part of the Student Injury Prevention Initiative (SIPI) Phase Three Project. This first of two updates outlined information reported in completed board surveys and was intended to assist boards in the development of their three- to five-year SIPI Phase Three system plans.

*Now available, this **second** update provides feedback on school board three- to five-year SIPI Phase Three system plans which were submitted to CODE in May 2017.*

Background

In 2013, the Ministry of Education (Ministry) introduced the Student Injury Prevention Initiative (SIPI). To date, two phases of SIPI have been completed; Phase Three is currently underway.

For district school boards, one of the key components of Phase Three (and the focus of this update) is to develop system-wide plans that address student injury prevention in a sustained and proactive manner.

Student Injury Prevention Initiative: Phase Three Multi-Year Plans

Boards were asked to review their SIPI survey submissions, the provincial findings of the surveys, and planning considerations provided by CODE in February 2017. CODE also provided boards with access to regional SIPI leads (listed at end of document) to assist in developing their three- to five-year student injury prevention plans. The resources

and support provided by CODE was not intended to be directive or prescriptive in nature; rather, to be considered as helpful information. (Boards have both the responsibility and authority to develop plans as per their own internal development and approval processes.) Board plans were to be received by CODE by April 30, 2017, and include processes to develop or update:

- Board-wide policies and procedures related to student injury prevention; and
- Policies and procedures common to curriculum areas that potentially pose a higher risk for student injury, including specific considerations for The Arts, Science and Technology, Science, Technological Education, and Health and Physical Education

Multi-Year Board General Plans: Findings

A review of the submitted board multi-year SIPI plans revealed a wide range in the breadth and depth in the information provided. Some plans were comprised of one or two pages of general directions for the board, with little detail in the action plans. Others were comprehensive plans which included such things as detailed timelines, individuals responsible, budgets, working groups, and specific monitoring strategies for both the board general and subject-specific considerations.

The twelve French Language Boards collaborated on the development of a common template for their multi-year SIPI plans. The outcome was a comprehensive document which addressed most of the considerations for plan development shared with boards by CODE in February 2017. In addition to adopting the generic plans, some boards also incorporated board-specific objectives to complement the generic plan. It is expected that all twelve French Language Boards will do this.

Over 90 percent of the boards submitting plans provided actionable items, general timelines for completion, and the identification of the department or person(s) responsible—but *only 60 percent of the boards had a significant breadth of action items at the board-wide level. This limited the scope of many board system-wide plans to generic goals lacking in detail.* However, boards may have additional internal processes or documentation that will guide the implementation of their plans.

Some key findings in the system-wide plans included:

- **33 percent** of boards identified a process to engage community partners (e.g., local emergency services organizations, local health unit, Public Service Health and Safety Association, Workplace Safety Prevention Services, etc.) in SIPI initiatives;
- **39 percent** of boards have a process to review Ministry of Labour orders, take follow up action and report findings to schools;
- **57 percent** of boards identified a process for school leaders to report all student injuries (serious and non-serious) to the board;
- **41 to 53 percent** of boards provide SIPI-related training for the Joint Health and Safety committee members, principals, facilities and maintenance staff;
- **67 percent** of boards provide SIPI-related training to teachers of higher-risk subject areas. However, only **41 percent** provide training to occasional teachers.

The following table summarizes the frequency at which considerations (shared in the February SIPI Update) were present in the submitted school board SIPI plans.

Legend:

VO – very often (>80%),

S – Sometimes (41% – 60%),

VR – Very Rarely (<20%),

O – Often (61% – 80%),

R – Rarely (20% – 40%),

N/A, not applicable

Plan Overall Characteristics of SIPI Plan Consideration	Frequency
Breadth of action items identified in the “considerations” sent to all boards to be used in developing their SIPI Plan	S
Action items are articulated	VO
Timelines for action items are included	VO
Department(s) or person(s) responsible for action items	VO
Process to update and revise board SIPI plan	O
General Board Elements in SIPI Plan Consideration	Frequency
Process to engage community partners	R
Process to review Ministry of Labour orders, take follow up action and report finding to schools	R
Process to provide first aid training	S
Process to communicate SIPI-related initiatives to all school leaders and all staff	O
Process for school leaders to report all student injuries (serious and non-serious) to board	S
SIPI-related training for the Joint Health and Safety Committee Members	R
SIPI-related training for Principals/VPs	S
SIPI-related training for Facilities/Maintenance Staff responsible for instructional areas and equipment	S
SIPI-related training for Teachers	O
SIPI-related training for Occasional Teachers	S

Multi-Year Board Plans: Subject-Specific Summary

As per the board general plans, there was a wide range in the breadth and depth of information provided for each of the higher-risk subject areas (The Arts, Science and Technology, Science, Technological Education and Health and Physical Education).

The following table summarizes the frequency at which considerations (shared in the February SIPI Update) appeared in the submitted school board SIPI plans.

Legend:

VO – very often (>80%),

O – Often (61% – 80%),

S – Sometimes (41% – 60%),

R – Rarely (20% – 40%),

VR – Very Rarely (<20%),

N/A, not applicable

Subject-Specific Considerations in SIPI Plan	The Arts	Health and Physical Education	Science Gr. 9-12	Science and Technology Gr. 1-8	Technological Education
Maintenance and inspection of safety equipment and facilities	S	VO	S	S	O
Maintenance and inspection of all instructional equipment	S	O	S	S	S
Emergency medical response plans for student injuries	R	O	R	R	R
Storage and use of equipment and materials	S	S	S	S	R
Working at heights training provided for students as required	S	VR	N/A	N/A	VR
Personal protective equipment (PPE) available to students as required	S	O	S	S	S

Subject-Specific Considerations in SIPI Plan	The Arts	Health and Physical Education	Science Gr. 9-12	Science and Technology Gr. 1-8	Technological Education
Clothing restrictions in place as required	S	S	VR	VR	R
Management process in place for all hazardous materials	S	R	S	S	R
Training provided and documented on all hazardous equipment	S	R	S	S	R
Appropriate material storage processes	R	R	S	S	R
Process to manage all donated hazardous equipment and materials	R	VR	VR	VR	R
Appropriate disposal of hazardous materials	S	VR	S	R	R
Approval process for all higher-risk student learning activities	O	O	O	S	S
Controls in place to limit spread of diseases in instructional areas	VR	R	VR	VR	R
SIPI-related safety training for subject-specific teachers and occasional teachers	S	O	O	S	O
SIPI-related safety training for subject-specific coaches and co-curricular staff	VR	S	N/A	N/A	N/A

Multi-Year Board Plans: Subject-Specific Overviews

(a) The Arts Overview

As school boards plan for student safety in The Arts, it must be recognized there are four distinct subjects: Dance, Drama, Music and Media/Visual Arts, all of which have unique and separate safety concerns. Traditionally, only Music and Visual Arts were taught in most school boards, with Theatre Arts added in the 1970's, Drama replacing it in the 1980's, and Dance added in 1999. Boards need to plan for this curricular complexity in their student injury prevention and safety practices.

Currently, a single compulsory arts credit exists at the secondary level, while all four of the arts subjects are compulsory in grades 1-8. To prioritize student safety in The Arts, it should be recognized that risks to injury are highest in Visual Arts and Drama, with Dance next, and Music posing the least perceived risk for students. Music safety priorities are identified as hearing loss and hygiene.

Considerations for The Arts varied considerably in the SIPI board plans. Submitted plans can be divided into four groups:

- A few boards have comprehensive plans that address all four arts subjects;
- Some boards recognize that they have not examined the safety risks adequately for The Arts, are at the research and gap analysis stage, and intend to develop guidelines/manuals/procedures in their SIPI plans;
- Many boards only barely identify The Arts as an area of risk for student injury or address necessary facility and/or equipment safety management;
- A few boards made no subject specific references in their plan.

Observations from the SIPI Plans

- Many boards did not use the correct curriculum terminology for the separate Arts subjects when addressing student injury prevention and safety monitoring;
- Of the boards that more clearly developed plans, these mainly focus on Visual Arts and Drama. A void existed in board plans around the specific safety focus for the auditorium and cafeteria, beyond their use as potential arts classrooms or performance spaces. These facilities are used for many types of whole school events— assemblies, guest performances, meeting spaces and more— whether or not any of the performing arts (drama/dance/music) are offered for study or credit in a school;

- Many board plans included a specific focus on 3D printer training, often with the omission of other common higher-risk activities;
- Of the boards which attempted to develop a more comprehensive SIPI plan for The Arts, most were restricted to only mentioning the provided SIPI consideration;
- Based upon a detailed analysis of the submitted plans, it is evident much is needed to improve student safety practices in The Arts. The new Ontario Student Injury Prevention resource sharing site (launching this September) will help boards to share best practices in managing student safety in Arts classes.

Considerations Unique to The Arts (CODE, February 2017)	Findings based on a review of board plans
Safety training for students working in a school theatre or auditorium, including working at heights.	If a board referred to Drama safety, working at heights was mentioned. Some boards identified having user protocols and mandated training in place for scaffolding and ladders.
Selection of appropriate footwear for technical crews and dancers.	This was referenced in a cursory way by those boards that attempted to include each in the subject-specific Arts criteria.
Auditorium safety and related training (e.g., students moving and securing risers).	Little was mentioned about proper training regarding riser assembly, lighting installation, and safety protocols related to set construction and assembly, except in the approximately seven boards with comprehensive safety plans for The Arts.
Dance and Drama studio safety (e.g., flooring, mirrors, drapery, lights, ventilation, safety chains on lights).	Dance was rarely specified. Drama safety in a studio was referenced almost exclusively by those boards with more fully developed safety plans.
Performance production protocols (e.g., use of fog machines, stage fighting, masks, and makeup).	This was referenced in a minimal way by boards that attempted to include each of the subject-specific Arts criteria. Boards with comprehensive plans did include this, usually with reference to Drama, but not Dance.
Managing weapon facsimiles (e.g., imitation swords used in Dance or Drama).	This was referenced in a cursory way by those boards that attempted to include each of the subject-specific Arts criteria. Boards with comprehensive plans did include this, usually with reference to Drama, but not Dance.

Considerations Unique to The Arts (CODE, February 2017)	Findings based on a review of board plans
Reasonable measures to protect students and teachers from eight-hour time-weighted average exposure to hazardous sound levels that result in the exposure limit of 85 dB being exceeded in music (e.g., loud musical instruments or audio devices).	Most references to hearing protection in Music and any of the other arts was related to teacher safety (Occupational Health and Safety), rather than student safety. Plans referred to using hearing protection devices for staff, not about excessive sound levels in classrooms, to which students may be exposed.
Appropriate placement of fixed equipment in Visual Arts and Media Arts facilities (e.g., paper cutter, printmaking press, drying racks, laser printer, editing suite).	A reference to “maintenance and inspection of instructional equipment” was noted among 20% – 40% of responding boards, and this could fall under that broader description. However, the safe placement of generally larger and mechanically sophisticated equipment (e.g., printmaking press or kiln) should figure prominently in the design of classroom spaces and configuration of furnishings and fittings (e.g., sinks). For example, while guards on paper cutters make them safer, placing them on a counter or table top that is either too small or unstable still makes them dangerous.

(b) Health and Physical Education Overview

Most boards have submitted plans leading to continued or improved safety mindedness in Health and Physical Education. As part of their plans, most boards have included a reference to the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines, managed by Ophea. These guidelines represent the minimum standards for risk management practice for Health and Physical Education in school boards. Ophea guidelines focus the attention of teachers, intramural supervisors and coaches on safe practices for students, in every activity, in order to minimize the risk of injury. The guidelines include concussion protocols to help prevent and identify suspected concussions and manage a student’s safe return to learning and physical activity. Higher-risk activities are clearly outlined along with corresponding protocols to manage this risk. Also included are appendices with sample emergency action plans, checklists for facility inspections, and protocols for donated equipment.

Many boards, within their adherence to the Ontario Physical Education Guidelines, have these specific safety protocols in place for curriculum, intramural and inter-school activities. This includes specific supervision requirements. Also mentioned was training

of Co-Curricular Chairs and determination of current certifications. In addition, many boards follow safe practices regarding physical education equipment, including safe transfer. Inspection of football helmets was included in many school boards plans as part of their safe management of equipment.

Adhering to this guideline will assure school boards have a comprehensive approach to safety in this subject discipline. Most boards included in their plans training for teachers specifically on this guideline.

Nonetheless, some school boards did not include the Ophea guideline as part of their plan. It is not known from the submissions if perhaps the guideline is in use but not included in their planning going forward.

Observations included:

- Most plans included training for teachers, but very few plans specifically mention training for occasional teachers. School boards should consider offering SIPI-related training for their occasional teachers.
- Some boards cited a need to “create” or “develop” safety guidelines for Health and Physical Education. In these plans, a great deal of time and resources were dedicated to this endeavor. These school boards will be made aware of the Ophea guidelines already in existence to support subject specific safety through the upcoming Ontario Student Injury Prevention resource sharing site.
- Most boards indicated that they have first aid requirements in place for coaches of higher-risk activities. However, some included a review of first aid kit requirements for higher-risk activities.
- Some boards identified a need to put a process in place to identify, train and track supervisors and coaches of higher-risk activities as needed.

(c) Science Gr. 9-12

School board plans varied significantly in both breadth and depth regarding safety planning for science. Some were very comprehensive, offering great detail about how science safety considerations would be addressed. Others were excellent, with system-wide overviews in which the science considerations were implied but not specifically stated. Some plans were scant overviews with only vague references to science. Consequently, it was sometimes difficult to assess whether a given consideration was present in the plan. For example, few school boards specifically said they have “controls in place to limit spread of diseases in instructional areas.” And yet, recent SIPI board

surveys indicate that most boards have a policy to deal with this consideration. Similarly, few boards specifically mentioned “disposal of hazardous materials” or “management process in place for all hazardous materials.” Presumably, these considerations are already in place since they overlap with legislated requirements like WHMIS 2015.

Several board plans discussed updating science safety manuals. Centralized sharing of these documents should reduce the duplication of effort and benefit small boards that do not have the resources to develop their own.

A few boards also included safety skills training for students and a suggested tracking mechanism, such as a student safety passport. This practice, together with an approval process for all higher-risk student learning activities, is recommended.

Observations included:

- Most board plans mentioned teacher training. However, the breadth and frequency of training was sometimes unclear. It is recommended that boards consider the online “Science Safety Mindedness” program developed by the Science Teachers’ Association of Ontario (STAO) as part of their training. This resource is available, free of charge, to all school boards.
- Only a few board plans included occasional teacher training. Occasional teachers typically do not conduct hands-on activities. However, the science classrooms they supervise often contain stored equipment and materials which can become hazards if mishandled. Hence, basic safety training for occasional teachers is recommended through the use of STAO training resources.

(d) Science and Technology Gr. 1-8

Most of the comments made above in Science Gr. 9-12 apply as well. In addition, some boards appeared to group Science and Technology Gr. 1-8 with either Science or Technological Education, making it difficult to assess whether safety considerations unique to the elementary panel were being considered.

Observations included:

- Limited reference to personal protective equipment (PPE) is a particular concern. Boards are encouraged to ensure that the PPE they provide (e.g., safety goggles) are sized appropriately for younger students.
- Limited reference for managing hazardous materials, especially given that some may be purchased by the teacher and brought to school.

- Limited teacher training. The number of boards with safety training for elementary teachers is about half that of secondary science teachers. This is a significant concern given the importance of hands-on activities, the focus on inquiry in the curriculum, and the limited comfort level of many elementary teachers in conducting these activities. It is also a concern since hand tools are frequently used in activities to fulfill the technological problem-solving component of the curriculum. Furthermore, some boards permit the use of power tools. Again, it is recommended that boards consider the online “Science Safety Mindedness” program developed by the Science Teachers’ Association of Ontario (STAO) as part of their training. This resource is available, free of charge, to all school boards.

(e) Technological Education

As with other higher-risk subject areas, school board plans varied significantly in both breadth and depth. It was apparent some boards have most of the required student injury prevention policies and procedures for Technological Education in place, with only monitoring and on-going maintenance required. However, many submitted plans only contained a general overview of plans with a number of key elements not addressed.

Observations included:

- Limited reference to personal safety considerations such as clothing restrictions, personal protective equipment, and emergency medical response plans;
- Only 25 percent of board plans included an approval process for higher-risk student learning activities. This low number is disconcerting given the serious accidents that have occurred in Technological Education programs.
- Fifty percent plan to provide teacher training. On-going teacher training is critical to both student safety and the longevity of programs. Boards are encouraged to incorporate safety resources developed by the Ontario Council for Technological Education (OCTE) into their technology teacher training programs.
- Facilities and process considerations were also frequently missing, including procedures dealing with materials storage use and disposal of hazardous materials. Given WHMIS 2015, boards require policies for managing hazardous materials but many did not report them in their plans. However, boards may have these procedures in place and not included them in their plans.
- Sixty-six percent of boards included the maintenance and inspections of facilities in their plans.

Next Steps by Boards

Boards should continue with their proactive and sustainable multi-year student injury prevention plans, as they are the critical foundation in promoting a culture of safety mindedness for staff and students in school boards. Some key considerations for boards when implementing their SIP plans are:

- Revisit the general and subject-specific considerations in the CODE “*Creating a Culture of Safety Mindedness*” document to ensure these considerations are adequately addressed in the board plan. For example, in this document under Technological Education it is identified that boards require policies/procedures for:
 - Safe hot work practices (e.g., hot work should never occur on closed containers).
 - Inspection, maintenance and cleaning of tools and equipment.
 - Placement of fixed equipment in instructional areas (e.g., table saws, hoists, tire changers, pipe benders).
 - Equipment lockout and tagout training for Technological Education teachers.
- Maintain a Student Injury Prevention (SIP) designated lead(s) to oversee the implementation of the board SIP plan and to coordinate the plan with on-going staff safety initiatives.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the plan on a regular basis and make any necessary adjustments to the SIP plan to ensure success.
- Prioritize the allocation of the required resources (e.g., staff time) to support the implementation of the plan.
- Engage partners in safety, such as Science Teachers Association of Ontario (STAO), Ontario Council of Technology Educators (OCTE), Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (Ophea), Council of Ontario Drama Educators (CODE), Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA), local emergency service providers, Ministry of Labour, etc. for the support of student injury prevention.
- Actively use the Ontario Student Injury Prevention (OSIP) online interactive resource (launching in September 2017) to access support of SIPI related initiatives such as draft policies and procedures.
- Work collaboratively and openly with students, Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSC), board managers, school administrators, staff, and parents to ensure a culture of safety mindedness is maintained across the board.
- Ensure all required SIP-related training is provided to teachers and occasional teachers.

Other Areas for Future Consideration

- Continue to support school boards to ensure that safety mindedness is a system and school priority.
- Include higher-risk subject areas as a priority in new teacher induction programs (NTIP) including occasional teachers.
- Encourage faculties of education to increase their focus on safety mindedness in higher-risk subject areas during teacher training.
- Maintenance, moderation, and expansion of the new OSIP on-line interactive resource which will help boards (especially medium- to small-sized boards) to access and adopt SIP policies and procedures. In addition, OSIP should reduce the costly duplication of effort by boards across Ontario who are developing similar materials.
- Development of specific safety resources, particularly in subject areas where existing resources are limited.
- Further development of training materials and school safety assessment strategies for school administrators.
- Dialogue with other Ministries (e.g., the Ministry of Labour) to facilitate SIP initiatives and communication among Ministries and school boards.

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