



## CHAPTER 8: THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LIFE SURVEY

In the spring of 2010, the Quality of School Life (QSL) survey was administered to Grade 9 and Level III students across the province. The survey was composed of 49 statements where respondents stated how much they agreed or disagreed with each item on a four point scale.

This survey gathered information across eight dimensions:

- (1) **Student Satisfaction** (or Positive Affect) reflects the favourable feelings students may have about school. A typical survey item is "School is a place where I really like to go each day".
- (2) **Student Dissatisfaction** (or Negative Affect) refers to negative feelings students may have about school in general. An example of item on the survey is "School is a place where I feel lonely".
- (3) **Opportunity to Learn** refers to the sense of confidence in ones ability to be successful in school work. A typical item is "School is a place where I am happy with how well I do".
- (4) **Extent to Which School is Useful** assesses how relevant students feel their schooling is to them. A typical item is "School is a place where I learn the things I need to know".
- (5) **Extent Students Identify with the School** assesses how well students are learning about other people and getting along with a diverse range of people. A sample item is "School is a place where I learn to get along with other people".
- (6) **Student Perception of their own Status within the School** refers to the relative degree of prestige accorded to the individual by others within the school. A typical item is "School is a place where I feel important."
- (7) **Student Perception of Teachers** refers to how students feel about their teachers. "School is place teachers treat me fairly in class" is a sample item.
- (8) **Safety and Security** assesses the degree students feel safe in their school environment. A sample item from the survey is "School is a place where I'm afraid I might get hurt".





## Respondent Information

A total of 7,780 Grade 9 and Level III students from 160 schools across the province completed the QSL survey. With the exception of the Labrador School District, approximately half the students were in Grade 9 and the remaining in Level III. In the Labrador School District, 71.8% of the respondents were in Grade 9 and the remaining 28.2% in Level III.

Along gender lines, the overall group was composed of a similar percentage of males and females (47.9% and 50.4% respectively). This information was not available for the remaining 1.6% of the students.

The rest of this chapter will explore each of these eight dimensions. The average percentage in agreement is used to summarize the responses for each dimension. For example, there were seven statements that assessed student satisfaction. If the percentage of students agreeing with each of these seven statements was 80.8, 75.4, 90.5, 78.5, 68.7, 87.4 and 95.6, the average percentage in agreement would be 82.4%  $([80.8+75.4+90.5+78.5+68.7+87.4+95.6]/7)$ . In other words, on average, 82.4% of students felt satisfied with their school

## Total Responses

In the following four dimensions, the average percentage of agreement was at least 70% (see figure 8.1). These include:

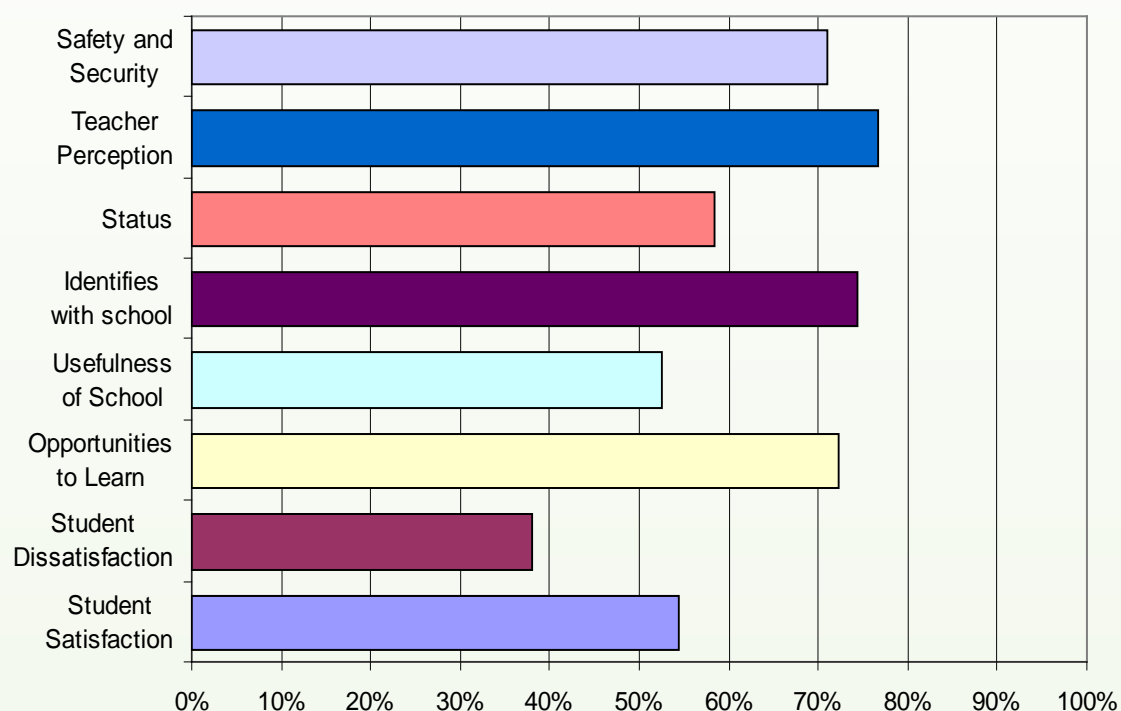
- 76.7% held a favourable perception of their teachers,
- 74.3% identified with their school,
- 72.3% felt they had sufficient opportunities to learn, and
- 71.1% felt safe and secure at school

At least half of the students were satisfied with their school, believed school was useful, and had a positive view of their status within their school.





**Figure 8.1: Percentage of students in agreement across the eight dimensions**



(Source: Table 8.1)

### Significant Differences

An independent t-test and one way ANOVA was used to identify significant differences among the various groups. The following figures highlight these differences. As shown in figure 8.2a, there were four categories where significant differences were present at the district level. In general,

- The Labrador School District had the highest percentage of students who were satisfied with school and had a positive perception of their teachers.
- The Western School District had the highest percentage of students dissatisfied with school and the lowest percentage who felt safe and secure at school.
- The Eastern School District had the lowest percentage of students with a positive status at school.

There were two categories where a significant difference was present between the average percentage in agreement of Grade 9 and Level III students. As shown in figure 8.2b, Level III students typically held a more positive perception of their teachers and felt safe and secure while at school as compared to the Grade 9 students.

In terms of gender differences, girls were typically more satisfied with school, felt they had more opportunities to learn and had a more positive perception of their teachers as compared to boys. Boys on the other hand, tended to be more dissatisfied with school than girls (see figure 8.2c).

Figure 8.2: Significant differences in average percent in agreement



(Source: Table 8.2)





## Focusing on Safety and Security

While 71.1% of students felt safe and secure at school, close to one third (28.9%) of students did not. To further explore this dimension, responses to each of the four statements will be examined. Students were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the following:

School is a place where:

- I feel safe from personal harm
- I'm afraid I might be hurt
- Students seem to hurt each other a lot
- Students pick on each other all the time

While the majority of students feel safe from personal harm at school, there is a high percentage who feel students either frequently hurt or pick on other students.

At the district level, significant differences were present in the responses to each of the three statements. In the Western School District, a lower percentage of students reported feeling safe as compared to the other districts. This district also had a higher percentage who agreed with 'students seem to hurt each other a lot' and 'Students pick on each other all the time' (see figure 8.3a).

Significant differences existed between the percentage of Grade 9 and Level III students in agreement with each of these statements. Grade 9 students appear to feel more at risk of harm and more exposed to situations where their peers frequently pick on or hurt one another (see figure 8.3b). Along gender lines, a significantly higher percentage of females reported feeling safe in school compared to males (80.7% vs. 76.0%,  $p=0.000$ ). There were no other significant gender differences present (see figure 8.3c).



Figure 8.3: Percentage of students in agreement with the following safety statements



(Source: Table 8.3)