

VIOLENT AND AGGRESSIVE STUDENTS

IN

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

by

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ABSTRACT

Youth violence is a very real problem in North American schools. Understanding youth violence and aggression is key to developing effective school programs to reduce the number of violent acts in schools. This was a descriptive study that focused on the small population of students who are considered to be highly aggressive to the point where they can no longer be managed in the schools. Representatives from 8 of the 10 school boards in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador were questioned to learn more about the background characteristics of this population of students, to find out what programs were currently in place to deal with violent and aggressive behaviour, and to determine what programs should be implemented to reduce the number of students considered unmanageable due to violent behaviour. The major findings were the majority of severely aggressive students were males, who had low levels of reading and required the assistance of a special education teacher, and had displayed acts of aggression for more than two years. School boards offered a range of programs for students with violent and aggressive behaviours, however, these programs were not consistent across school boards and programs were not equally accessible to rural and urban schools. Participants agreed that more programs were needed, and offered suggestions of what they would like to see in place, especially alternative schools. The findings are discussed with a focus on the need for additional research that could guide policy and development and school-based services for violent students.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This introduction is organized into the following sections: First, the literature on school-based youth violence and general school responses to violence is summarized. Second, research and policy on school violence in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador is discussed. Finally, a description of the current study is presented.

School-based Youth Violence

Aggressive and sometimes violent behaviour by school students is a serious and very real concern that affects the everyday operation of the classroom, and the safety of our nation's schools from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Acts of aggression occur on playgrounds, in cafeterias, in classrooms, in locker rooms, in parking lots and in hallways daily (Astor, Meyer, & Behre, 1999; Pietrzak, Petersen, & Speaker, 1998). Media attention to recent school shootings, such as those in Columbine, Colorado and Taber, Alberta in 1999, has caused quite a stir in the public. As a result, parents, educators and policy makers are calling for quick fix solutions and get tough measures, such as the use of police patrols and "zero tolerance" policies (where violent behaviour, whether minor or severe, is addressed with equal severity) in an effort to make schools safer (Weinhold, 2000).

The full extent of aggression and violence in Canadian schools is not known, and the magnitude of aggression and violence among Canadian youth in general, has not been clearly documented. However, there seems to be some consensus that violent acts are increasing in all social, economic, and cultural groups; that perpetrators are getting younger, with acts of aggression occurring even at the primary school level; that young girls are increasingly acting

alone or in groups as aggressors; that violent acts are becoming more intense and random; and that the possession of weapons, especially knives, is increasing (Bala, Weiler, Copple, Smith, Hornick, & Paetsch, 1994). Criminal reports provide evidence that criminal activity is increasing among youth. For example, the number of charges laid against youth aged 12-17 more than doubled between 1986 and 1991, when 18,800 youths received violent offense charges (MacDougall, 1993).

Beyond the statistics documenting criminal reports and incidents, relatively little is known about the frequency of violent acts by youth in our nation's schools (Bala et al., 1994; MacDougall, 1993). In fact, it is estimated that only 4 percent of school-based violent incidents receive adult intervention (Law & El Hakim, 1997). It is not surprising then, that students report seeing and fearing violence more so than teachers and that only fifty percent of students report that they feel safe in school. Teachers may not be clear on the frequency of violence in their schools, but they are clear on the types of violence that they consider to be problematic. Physical fights, verbal threats and possession of weapons on school property are among the most common concerns of educators (Metropolitan Life Survey, 1993).

The extent of school-based youth violence is better established in the United States than in Canada. In a survey of 50,000 American teachers by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education, violence in American schools was examined. It was found that between 1987 and 1994 there was an increase in the percentage of teachers who felt that violent acts such as physical conflicts among students, verbal abuse of teachers, and student possession of weapons were serious or moderately serious problems in the schools (Shen, 1997). In 1998, American students were the victims of over 250,000 serious violent crimes at school, including rape, sexual assault, robbery and aggravated assault. Although there was a

decrease from 1991 to 1997 in many types of crime that occurred in American schools, the percentage of students threatened or injured with a weapon, or who were reported as being involved in a physical fight in school did not change (U.S. Department of Education; U.S. Department of Justice, 2000).

School Responses to Violence and Aggression

School responses to student aggression are often limited to security measures such as detention, suspension and expulsion (Astor et al., 1999). In recent years, video monitors, security personnel and metal detectors have been introduced to some schools in the effort to make them safer and to deter aggressive behaviour (Gable & Acker, 2000). These are quick fix solutions that are intended to remove the student and prevent harm to others. They are not designed or intended to remediate the student's problem behaviour. Some schools are attempting to take a more proactive approach to school violence and have implemented various prevention and intervention programs. These programs can be separated into three levels of intervention for student behaviour. First, primary prevention strategies are implemented to stop behaviour problems from emerging in the first place, and may include programs such as anger management and conflict resolution. These programs are aimed at all students, starting in Kindergarten. Secondary prevention measures are specific interventions for students who demonstrate certain risk factors upon school entry (e.g., inability to cope with school and social demands, displaying aggressive and disruptive behaviours) and may include counselling and one-to-one behaviour management programs. Finally, tertiary preventions are intense approaches used with youth who have demonstrated serious aggressive behaviours and for whom other levels of prevention have failed. Students who require this level of intervention may have a caseworker to coordinate services between home, school and the community (Walker & Golly, 1999).

Students who engage in violent and aggressive behaviour usually experience a number of risk factors, such as single parent families, high family conflict, inconsistent discipline, and low socioeconomic status. Also, they typically display a number of characteristics such as low achievement in reading, low self-esteem and limited coping skills that interfere with academic success. All of these factors contribute to their behaviour difficulties (Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999; Walker & Sprague, 1999). The most violent students have also been reported by teachers, parents and themselves as having been rejected by their peers, and as having strong feelings of unhappiness (Sprott & Doob, 1998). Consequently, schools may offer a variety of programs that attempt to deal directly with these risk factors and associated difficulties (e.g., special education services to assist with reading). Although school administrators have many options available from the countless programs described in the literature, it is not clear what programs are in place in schools for students who are aggressive. Further, as most programs have not been formally evaluated, it is not clear what efforts are likely to succeed (Linfoot, Martin, & Stephenson, 1999).

In summary, the exact numbers of aggressive youth in Canadian schools is unknown, as is the type and extent of their violent acts. It is also unclear what interventions are being used by the schools in an effort to deal with youth violence, what degree of satisfaction educators have with these current options, and what additional options should be developed. In order to address effectively the issues and concerns surrounding school-based youth violence, it is important to answer these questions. The purpose in this study is to begin to answer those questions.

This study is focused on school-based violence in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Newfoundland is a reasonable choice for a number of reasons. First of all, the school system is almost exclusively public, with only 0.6% of students attending private institutions.

The province has only ten school boards, and has clearly defined special education policies, including several relevant to violence and aggression. Also, being an island province, with the geographic location of Labrador isolated from the rest of the Province, Newfoundland is a contained area, and has a relatively stable general and school population. Consequently, it is a good starting point for collecting baseline data on school-based violence in Canada.

The Newfoundland and Labrador School System

There are approximately 90,000 students in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 system in Newfoundland and Labrador, attending 337 public schools throughout the province. School is compulsory for students from ages 6 to 16 in Newfoundland, with provincial policy stating that all children have to be accommodated in school. The ten Anglophone school boards and one Francophone board work in partnership with the provincial Department of Education. There are three private schools in Newfoundland, and one federally run school located in the central region of the island. Prior to 1998, 26 denominational school boards administered the schools. However after the Williams Royal Commission in 1992, it was determined that the denominational school system needed to be substantially reformed, and after two provincial referendums, the first non-denominational schools were opened in September of 1998 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2000).

The 10 Anglophone schools boards in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are spread out over large geographical areas (See Appendix A for map). Five of the school boards are comprised of both urban and rural schools, and five of the school boards are entirely rural (where urban is defined by O'Sullivan & Howe, (1999) as a community with a population of greater than 7,000, and rural as a community with a population of less than 7,000). Of the 90,000 students enrolled in the public schools in Newfoundland, approximately 45,750 (51%)

attend schools in urban areas, and 44,250 (49%) attend schools in rural areas.

Special Education Review, 1996

Canning conducted a major review of special education policy and practice in Newfoundland and Labrador in 1996. Although Canning (1996) did not report specifically on students engaged in violence and aggression, she did examine students with “behaviour disorders” in the schools, a category that includes but is not limited to students who are violent and aggressive. In that review, school counsellors indicated that in the previous five years (1991-1995), they had witnessed an increase in the incidence of behaviour disorders, “especially general behavioural/emotional problems, substance abuse, disruptive acting-out behaviours, extreme aggressive behaviour, and the presence of young offenders in the schools” (p. 180). An increase in risk factors, such as hunger and child abuse, which can be associated with the presence of a behaviour disorder, was also reported. An estimated 2% of all students were considered to have behaviour disorders, which equals about 2,280 students in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (Canning, 1996). Fewer than half of those students, or less than 1% of the entire school population are likely to be seriously violent or aggressive (Walker & Sprague, 1999).

Canning (1996) reported that school-based services for students with behaviour disorders were limited, especially in rural areas, and often only included regular class and special education support. Often, even students with the most severe problems were maintained in the regular classroom with inadequate support. At that time there were few placement options available throughout the province. Canning suggested that there was a need for a broader range of services, from additional teacher assistance to alternative school placements. She also emphasized how little was being done to work with young children and argued for an increasing

emphasis on violence prevention and early intervention programs in the school.

Special Education Policy in Newfoundland

The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education (1998) states in the *Transitional Policy and Guidelines document for Student Support Services*, that it shall maintain a division of Student Support Services, whose purpose is to ensure that the needs of exceptional students are met throughout the province, through a variety of special education services. It is the policy of the Department of Education (1998) that school districts provide a wide range of services to students who have exceptionalities, including those students who are violent and aggressive. These services are offered through a Cascade of Services Model as derived from Deno (1970) (see Appendix B), whereby students are educated wherever possible in the “least restricted environment”. In Newfoundland, the least restrictive environment is considered to be the regular classroom environment with peers. According to the policy, the student is to receive support when necessary, within the classroom setting, or is placed in a special education class or a separate educational environment. As soon as possible the student is to be returned to the regular classroom setting, or the least restrictive of these settings. It is up to the discretion of each school board what services it provides within the cascade model.

In order to receive such services, students must undergo assessment to verify that they fall within the categories and definitions of exceptionality that are clearly defined in the policy document. The categories of need include behavioural, communicative, intellectual, physical and multiple exceptionalities. Students who are violent and aggressive would qualify for services under the “behavioural” category. Ongoing evaluation of individual supports must also occur to ensure effective delivery of services to students. School boards are responsible for implementing the processes of student identification, assessment and program planning, and to

do this they are encouraged to refer to the *Special Education Policy Manual* in an effort to create a “uniform” delivery of services throughout the province.

Addressing the Needs of Violent and Aggressive Students

There are numerous documents published by the Department of Education to assist school boards in the planning of services for violent and aggressive students. Relevant policy and resource documents include: 1) *Resource Guide on Discipline, Violence, and Safe School Teams* (1996); 2) *Programming for Individual Needs: Behaviour Challenges* (1996); and 3) *Coordination of Services to Children and Youth* (1997). The first document is a resource guide relevant to planning a school wide approach to discipline and violence, the second is a policy document that relates to program planning for students identified as violent, while the third is a policy document for violent students who are involved with multiple agencies.

In the *Resource Guide on Discipline, Violence and Safe School Teams* (1996), guidelines are offered to assist school boards and schools in the development of school policy for discipline and school violence, the development of safe school teams, expectations for student behaviour and consequences, as well as violence prevention strategies and resources. Each school and school board are required to develop and implement their own discipline policies, and this document acts as a resource guide to assist in such development.

Behaviour Challenges (1996) is a resource guide that outlines a shared approach by the whole school community to school discipline and programming for students who exhibit aggressive behaviour. Four levels of support are identified beginning with a school-wide discipline policy aimed at the entire school community, and ending with individual program planning for students who have been identified with Emotional/Behavioural Disorders.

The information and resources available in the above resource documents (*Behaviour*

Challenges; Resource Guide on Discipline, Violence and Safe School Teams), promotes positive, rather than punitive discipline measures, and details a number of violence prevention strategies and techniques for effective classroom management. However, there is no guarantee that teachers even see these documents, let alone follow any of the suggestions. There is also considerable room for interpretation, and therefore it is likely that discipline and violence prevention are not implemented consistently throughout the Province.

The third policy document relevant to individual programs for students is, *Coordination of Services to Children and Youth in Newfoundland and Labrador* (1997). It is used with youth who are involved with multiple agencies (i.e., social assistance, youth justice). In this document, four levels of supports are outlined for those children/youth who are violent and/or aggressive and who are involved with multiple agencies. Students may require anywhere between 1 to 19 hours of support per week, and the necessary interventions are recorded in the Individual Support Services Plan (ISSP). The most severe students may require Pervasive (Level 4) support, with 19 or more hours of service per week. ISSPs for such students reflect intense intervention, and programs for these children/youth may entail:

- 1) Assignment of a support worker/student assistant (not necessarily 1:1)
- 2) 24-hour support services plan designed and implemented between agencies
- 3) Instruction in alternate settings for varying time intervals
- 4) social skills training designed to meet individual needs
- 5) Strong emphasis on control or regulation of overt behaviour patterns prior to addressing other aspects of behavioural system
- 6) A planned response system for violent/assaultive behaviours that is designed to promote the maximum protection for the child/youth, the adult caregiver and the

child/youth's peers (pp. 29-30).

A team representing people from all of the involved agencies dealing with a particular student, determine which particular level of support is appropriate for an individual student. However, students do not qualify for a student assistant, or an alternative placement, until level 4, when they could perhaps benefit from these services before their behaviour has reached a more severe level. The types of interventions that can be used are only listed as options, not as strategies that must be adopted by school boards. This increases the chance that these services will not be implemented uniformly throughout the Province.

The document described above (*Coordination of Services to Children and Youth*) outlines curriculum changes and support services that can be used by educators involved in the program planning for individual students who are violent and aggressive. Although a wide range of suggestions are available, there is no guarantee that all violent students have equal access to the various program opportunities, especially students in rural schools (Canning, 1996). Also, there may be aggressive students who do not have an official diagnosis of behaviour disorder and therefore do not qualify for services, but who may benefit from the programs and services available. This is especially likely in rural areas where the psychiatrists and psychologists necessary for conducting student assessment and diagnosis are rarely available (Canning, 1996).

As already mentioned, there are many policies and guidelines in place to assist school boards in developing options and services for students who are violent and aggressive. However, there is no guarantee that programs will be offered uniformly throughout the province, or to all students. With 49% of students attending schools in rural areas, it is important that services be equitably distributed, however, as Canning (1996) points out, rural schools do not have access to the same services as urban schools, and have difficulty in accessing specially trained teachers.

These are all issues that need to be addressed.

The Present Study

It is clear from the literature reviewed up to this point that little is known about the actual number of students who pose a threat to the school community, or about the school responses to student aggression in Canada generally, and in Newfoundland specifically. From reviewing policy documents from the Province of Newfoundland, it is clear that a number of services are supposed to be available for violent and aggressive youth. However, it is unknown exactly what services are utilized in the schools, how they are implemented, or if additional services are needed. Research on these issues is critical and will have important implications at both the government and school board levels for developing effective policy for aggressive and violent students. For these reasons the following sets of questions were addressed in this descriptive study:

1. How many students in Newfoundland's schools are considered to display severe aggressive behaviours to the point where school administrators have exhausted all available school resources in the management of these students, what are the students' background characteristics (e.g., age, sex, academic achievement), and what types of violent behaviours do these students demonstrate in school?
2. What resources or programs are currently available in Newfoundland schools for these students, are programs equally accessible to urban and rural students, and how satisfied are educators in Newfoundland with the range of services and options available in the schools?
3. What options are available to school administrators working with students who have reached the point where they can no longer be managed in Newfoundland schools, and

what additional options are seen as necessary by Newfoundland educators for these students?

Expectations

A review of the literature led to a number of expectations for this research:

1. It was expected that in Newfoundland less than 1% of students would be considered to be aggressive to the point where they posed a threat to the safe operation of the school (i.e., students who are known to frequently bring physical harm to others) (Canning, 1996).
2. It was predicted that although school boards would offer programs in accordance to policy documents, most of the programs would be reactive in nature, and focused on security rather than interventions designed to remediate problem behaviour (Gable & Acker, 2000). Further, most of the available programs were expected to be found largely in urban schools, with rural schools having far greater restrictions in terms of what programs they could offer their students. It was also expected that educators' degree of satisfaction with the range of these options would be low (Canning, 1996).
3. Finally, it was expected that options available to administrators would also be reactive, where they would rely on suspensions, detentions, and loss of privileges (such as unsupervised lunch), when dealing with violent students, and that additional options for working with these students should include easier methods of removing violent students from the school setting (Gable & Acker, 2000; Weinhold, 2000).

CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

Overview

In this section information on the participants in this study, the questionnaire that was utilized, and the research procedures followed will be detailed.

Participants

The participants in this study were 9 Program Specialists of Student Support Services currently employed in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. These individuals are the educators responsible for program coordination to students with special needs, including those students who are considered to be violent and aggressive to the point where they are unmanageable in the schools. Currently, there are eleven Program Specialists in Student Support Services employed by the ten Anglophone school boards (the Francophone school board was omitted for reasons of simplicity). Nine of the ten school boards employ one Program Specialist each, and the tenth board employs two. The participants in this study represent eight of the province's ten school boards. (Ninety percent, or 80,700 of Newfoundland students are enrolled in these eight boards). Five of the participants were male, and four were female. The average number of years that these individuals had worked in their current position was 3.6 years, with a range of 1 year to 11 years. All the participants had a Master's degree in Education in areas including Special Education, Guidance and Counselling, Educational Psychology and Curriculum.

Instrument

A questionnaire designed specifically for this study was used to interview all participants (See Appendix C). A total of 17 questions were asked, and the types of responses that

participants were required to give included open-ended, Likert scale and checklist. The questions were organized into the following sections:

1. *The students*, questions were focused on the number of students in the schools who displayed severe aggressive behaviours, and the characteristics of those students (e.g., academic background, family background etc.).
2. *The behaviours*, questions were designed to measure aggressive acts in which these youths were engaged, how often these acts occurred, and at whom they were usually directed.
3. *Programs available to violent students*, questions were designed to elicit information on school-based programs and services available to students who display aggressive behaviour, and the degree of participant satisfaction with these options, and;
4. *The final option*, questions were focused on the course of action taken when students have reached the point where school administrators have run out of options working with them, and on what additional options should be made available for these students.

A pilot test of the questionnaire was completed with 10 students in the graduate program at the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University. The purpose of the pilot was to ensure question clarity, and resulted in some changes to the wording of the questions.

Procedure

Packages were sent to the Director of Education at each of the ten school boards in Newfoundland and Labrador. The packages contained a letter explaining the research and requesting permission to contact the Program Specialist of Student Support Services at their school board (See Appendix D), a copy of the letter that would be sent to that Program Specialist, and the questionnaire. Within two weeks, the Directors were contacted by telephone

for the purpose of obtaining their approval. The Directors were not asked to contact the Program Specialist, or to pass on the questionnaire to them, however several of them opted to do so.

All of the Directors gave permission to contact their Program Specialists, and packages were sent to each Program Specialist of Student Support Services. These packages included a letter explaining the research and requesting participation in the study (See Appendix E), a consent form, a self-addressed stamped envelope, and the questionnaire. Two weeks after mailing these packages the Program Specialists were contacted by telephone. Messages were left with many asking if they did in fact receive the information, and asking if they could please mail in their consent form.

All 11 Program Specialists expressed verbal interest in participating in the study. Nine participating Program Specialists returned their signed consent forms. Once the participants returned the forms, another phone call was placed for the purpose of setting up an interview date.

The interviews were conducted via telephone. The researcher asked each question and wrote down the participant's response. In some instances, the participants were asked further questions for clarification purposes. In two instances, participants were contacted for follow up, again for clarification. The average interview time was 41 minutes, with a range of 30 minutes to one hour and 15 minutes. The participants were informed that they would receive a copy of the typed transcript to check for errors. They were told that if the transcripts were not returned to the researcher after three weeks, it would be assumed that there were no errors found. No participant indicated the presence of errors. One participant returned the transcript with some additional information.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

Overview

The findings are presented in the following order. First, the findings concerning the participating school boards (e.g., number of urban and rural schools) will be presented. Second, the findings concerning those students considered to be severely aggressive in Newfoundland (e.g., characteristics and behaviours) will be detailed. Third, findings about programs and services available for students and teachers, and the degree of Program Specialists' satisfaction with these options will be presented. And last, findings concerning what schools do when students have become a serious threat to the school, and what options Program Specialists would like to have available will be discussed.

Participating School Boards

Program Specialists from 8 of the 10 Anglophone school boards in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador participated in this study. These 8 school boards enrolled 80 700 or 90% of all Anglophone students enrolled in the public schools in Newfoundland. The average number of schools per school board is 36 (S.D. = ± 16), with a range of 18 to 69 schools. Twenty-one percent of schools are located in urban areas, and 79% are located in rural areas.

The average number of students per school board is 10,100 (S.D. = $\pm 9, 194$), with a range of 3,400 to 32,000 students. Thirty eight thousand, five hundred and fifty, or 48% of these students attend rural schools, and 42,150 or 52% attend urban schools.

Number of Severely Aggressive Students in Newfoundland

Program Specialists were asked how many students at their school board displayed severe aggressive behaviours, to the point where school administrators had exhausted all options in

working with these students, making them unmanageable in the school (options included discipline measures such as detention, suspension, and notification of parents to deter aggressive behaviour). Of the 80,700 students enrolled at these school boards, participants reported that 351, or 0.44% of their students were violent. The percentage of students per school board who fit this description ranged from 0.13% to 2.2%, with an average percentage of 0.66% (S. D. = ± 0.7) per board. These statistics include 97 students whose first language is Inuktitut. According to the participants, identification and assessment services are not available in Inuktitut; consequently they had no additional information about these 97 students. For that reason, these students were not included in subsequent analyses. This reduced the total number of violent students identified to 254 or 0.31% of the students enrolled in the participating school boards, with the percentage of violent students per board ranging from 0.12% to 0.97% (average = 0.40% per board).

Student Characteristics

The participants were given a list of demographic, educational, behavioural and medical characteristics and were asked to identify the number of violent students for whom each characteristic applied (See Table 1 and 2). There was a considerable difference among participants in terms of their ability to identify student numbers. For example, only 38% of participants responded to all of the questions. An additional 25% of participants responded to all but two questions (the exceptions were family income and single parent homes). The remaining 37% of participants responded to less than 6 questions, telling the researcher that they did not have access to such information about the students.

Table 1: Percentage of violent students (mean, standard deviation and range) demonstrating particular demographic, and educational characteristics.

Categories	Characteristics	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	No. Boards Reporting
Demographics	Male	84%	8.3%	78-100%	6
	Female	16%	8.3%	0-22%	6
	Under 12 years	40%	25.6%	0-58%	6
	Over 12 years	60%	25.6%	30-100%	6
	Attend urban school	32%	37.2%	0-88%	6
	Attend rural school	68%	37.1%	12-100%	6
	Low income family	----	----	40-100%	3
	Lone parent family	----	----	15-50%	3
Educational	Repeated 1 grade	43%	31.9%	5-100%	6
	Repeated >1 grade	16%	23%	5-60%	6
Background	Failing 1-2 subjects	----	----	0-60%	4
	Failing >2 subjects	----	----	0-60%	4
	Receiving special education assistance	91%	15.7%	3-100%	6
	Low level of reading	66%	27.8%	40-100%	6

Note. A total of 8 school boards were involved in the study.

Dashes indicate insufficient data available.

It is clear from Table 1 that most of the violent students are male (84%) and at least 40% of students are under the age of 12. Fifty-nine percent of the students considered to be violent attend school in a rural area. They represent 0.34% of the entire population of rural students in the study. Forty-one percent of the violent students attend school in an urban area, representing

0.14% of all urban students in this study. A Chi Square test (Siegel & Castellan, 1988) comparing the observed frequency of violent students in urban versus rural schools, with the expected frequency based on the proportion of urban versus rural students in the participating boards, was computed. $\chi^2(1) = 4.6$, $p < .05$ indicates that the distribution of violent students is significantly different from the expected frequencies, with more violent students in rural and fewer in urban schools than expected. Only 38% of participants knew whether or not a violent student came from a low income or single parent family. They reported that from 40% to 100% of violent students came from low-income families, and that 15% to 50% came from single parent homes.

There is a great variation across the school boards in terms of the number of violent students reported to have failed one or more grade. Some of the participants explained their lower numbers by the fact that their school board has a policy of social promotion, whereby students are promoted with their age group. In spite of that, over 40% of students had repeated one grade, 91% were receiving assistance from a special education teacher, and 66% had low levels of reading achievement.

As shown in Table 2, most violent students (81%) reportedly had a history of aggressive behaviour in the school, extending for more than 2 years. Thirty-one percent of them had a criminal conviction, and 15% had been incarcerated. Fifty percent of the violent students had been diagnosed with a mental illness (examples given by participants included, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Emotional/Behavioural Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), and less than 2% were currently hospitalized for reasons of aggression.

Table 2: Percentage of violent students (mean, standard deviation and range) demonstrating particular behavioural and medical characteristics.

Categories	Characteristics	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	No. Boards Reporting
	Aggressive in school > 2 yrs	81%	19.3%	50-100%	6
Behaviour/	Aggressive in school < 2 yrs	19%	19.3%	0-30%	6
Criminal	Has a criminal charge	27%	19.6%	10-60%	5
Activity	Has a criminal conviction	31%	19%	10-60%	5
	Has ever been incarcerated	15%	9.8%	0-25%	5
	Is now incarcerated	8%	10.4%	0-25%	5
	Mental illness diagnosis	50%	27.8%	12-70%	5
Medical	Under care of psychiatrist	15%	13.1%	0-35%	5
History	Hospitalized for mental illness	1.6%	2.3%	0-5%	5
	Attend hospital school (for behaviour reasons)	0%	0%	0-0%	7

Note. A total of 8 school boards were involved in the study.

Dashes indicate insufficient data available.

Violent and Aggressive Behaviours in School

Questions were posed to participants to determine: (1) the types of behaviours displayed by violent students in the schools that make them unmanageable; (2) the targets of the students' violent behaviours; and (3) the frequency of these behaviours. On an open-ended question, participants identified 11 different types of behaviours (each participant described between 2 to 6 behaviours) that render students unmanageable. All participants indicated that acts of physical aggression (ranging from minor fights to serious assaults) are a problem with these students, 50% mentioned non-compliance, 38% reported verbal abuse and damage to property, 25% mentioned out of school violence, such as, threatening others, drugs and alcohol related

situations, and self-inflicted violence, while 13% included absenteeism, tantrums, and use of a weapon.

When asked, at whom the students' violent and aggressive behaviours were usually directed (students, teachers or other), all participants indicated that teachers, and 88% indicated that students were the targets of aggression. Under the category of other, 25% mentioned student assistants, and 13% mentioned parents (when they are at school). When asked how often the behaviours were typically displayed (daily, weekly, monthly and other), 63% of participants indicated that these behaviours were displayed daily, and 37% indicated that they were displayed weekly. One participant explained that many of the violent students display many different types of behaviours, including physical violence, refusal to participate in class, and absenteeism, and they that these violent acts occur on almost a daily basis. These two factors combined make them unmanageable in school.

School Responses to Violence

Participants were asked: 1) how schools respond to explosive violent incidents; and 2) what supports are available to teachers who work with violent and aggressive students. Participants were asked (on an open-ended question) how their schools react to explosive violent incidents. They responded with a total 8 plans that various schools have for such incidents (each participant offered from 1 to 4 plans). The use of a crisis intervention/ response team, suspension, and the calling of a violent student's parents was mentioned by 50% of participants; 25% indicated that schools followed protocol stated in behaviour management plans for individual students; and 25% indicated that schools responded by calling the police. The use of a safe or quiet room, a tragic events team, and support from a guidance counsellor or student assistant was mentioned by 13%.

Finally, participants were asked about supports available at the school board level for teachers who worked with violent students. Each participant described 2-4 supports. Seventy-five percent of participants indicated that the school boards offered in-service sessions in: behaviour management, anger management, effective communication, safe schools, and positive learning environments, 63% indicated that teachers could receive assistance from the guidance counsellor or educational psychologist, for the purpose of developing behaviour modification plans, or to obtain instructional ideas, and 25% of participants indicated that they would like to learn more about the types of in-service and training that could be done with teachers. The use of bullying programs, non-violent intervention programs, and programs offered by outside agencies were options indicated by 13% of participants. Most of the supports offered were designed to help teachers work more effectively with violent and aggressive students. No school board offered support (e.g., counselling) for teachers under stress, however, 25% of participants indicated that the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association offered an employee assistance program to teachers who may need counselling due to an encounter with a violent student.

Preventative and Remediation Measures

Participants were questioned to determine: 1) what resources were available at each school board for preventing or remediating aggressive behaviour, and reducing the number of students who become unmanageable; 2) the degree of satisfaction participants had with these resources; and 3) whether or not they felt additional resources would help to reduce further the number of students who eventually become unmanageable in the schools.

Table 3: Availability of services across boards in urban versus rural areas.

Type of service	No. of boards where service is available (out of 8)	No. of boards where service is available in urban schools (out of 5)	No. of boards where service is available in rural schools (out of 8)
Early Identification	5 (63%)	3 (60%)	5 (63%)
Prevention of Aggression	4 (50%)	3 (60%)	4 (50%)
Modified Instruction	8 (100%)	5 (100%)	8 (100%)
Modified Curriculum	8(100%)	5 (100%)	8 (100%)
Placement in special class (academic)	5 (63%)	2 (40%)	5 (63%)
Placement in special class (behaviour)	5 (63%)	2 (40%)	5 (63%)
Student Assistant	8 (100%)	5 (100%)	8 (100%)
Alternate school	7 (88%)	4 (80%)	3 (38%)
Guidance Counsellor	8 (100%)	5 (100%)	8 (100%)
Educational Psychologist	8 (100%)	5 (100%)	8 (100%)
Other	4 (50%)	4 (80%)	2 (25%)

Participants were given a list of programs and services relevant to violence and aggression that are referred to in the Department of Education policy documents (*Programming for Individual Needs: Behaviour Challenges*, 1996; *Coordination of Services to Children and Youth*, 1997; *Pathways to Programming and Graduation*, 1998) and were asked to indicate whether these services were available in their urban and rural schools (See Table 3). As is clear from Table 3, modified instruction, modified curriculum, as well as the services of a student assistant, guidance counsellor and educational psychologist, were found in all school boards, in both rural and urban areas. These are the programs and services that are standard in the Department of Education policy documents. Placement in an alternative school was available for

students in 80% of urban area schools, and in 38% of rural area schools. Fifty percent of school boards indicated that other programs such as access to a Behaviour Management Specialist, Itinerant teacher for behaviour, and programs for young parents are available in 80% of urban areas. However, only 25% of rural areas had these services available (See Appendix F for description of programs and services). A series of Chi Square tests comparing the observed frequency of each type of service in urban versus rural schools with the expected frequency based on the proportion of participating boards where each service was available was conducted. Results indicated that placement in a special class for academic ($\chi^2 (1), = 8.3, p < .01$) or for behavioural ($\chi^2 (1), = 8.3, p < .01$) interventions was different than expected with these options more often available in rural and less often in urban schools. The availability of alternate schools, $\chi^2 (1), = 28.6, p < .001$, and other services (e.g., parenting programs), $\chi^2 (1), = 30.5, p < .01$ was also different from expected frequencies with both options more frequent in urban and less frequent in rural settings. None of the other differences was statistically significant with probability $< .05$.

Participants indicated their degree of satisfaction (very satisfied, satisfied, not sure, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied) that the programs and services available at their school board were reducing the numbers of students who are considered to be unmanageable. Thirteen percent of participants indicated that they were very satisfied, 25% were satisfied, and 25% were dissatisfied. Finally, an additional 33% indicated they were satisfied, that although the programs were not reducing the number of students, they were meeting their needs.

When asked if additional programs and services would help to reduce further the number of students considered unmanageable, 87% of participants felt that additional programs and services were needed, while 13% did not know. Participants each offered from 1-5 new

programs that they would like to see implemented in their school board. Family intervention and parenting programs were suggested by 50%, and one to one instruction was indicated by 38%. The creation of a behaviour checklist to assist in early identification of violent students was suggested by 38%, while 25% indicated that prevention programs were also needed. Additional suggestions (offered by one participant) included, hiring teachers trained in areas of behaviour management, helping students become involved in out of school activities, addictions programs, the creation of an alternative school, and hiring someone to begin a safe schools initiative (similar to a program in Alberta).

In summary, differences were found in terms of the types of services available in urban and rural areas, with rural areas having more placements in special classes for academic and behavioural reasons, and fewer program options (e.g. alternative schools) than urban areas. Less than 50% of participants were satisfied that the programs and services available were reducing the number of students considered to be violent in the schools. Eighty seven percent felt that additional programs were necessary and offered suggestions of programs they would like to see implemented.

The Final Option

Participants were questioned regarding: 1) the options available to them for removing students from the school; 2) their degree of satisfaction with those options; 3) the number of violent students removed from school in the past two years; and 4) other options that should be available to students and educators besides removal from the school.

Table 4 outlines school removal options, the use of each option throughout the 8 participating boards, and the degree of participant satisfaction with each option. It is clear from the table that repeated suspension is used more frequently than expulsion, and participants are

dissatisfied with both options. All participants were satisfied or very satisfied with other measures utilized in their board for removing students. These other measures included: placement in an alternate school (38%), partial programming/days (25%), home tutoring/schooling (13%), itinerant teacher (13%), and the use of a cool down period at home to give the school time for planning an appropriate program (13%).

Table 4: Administrative options used to remove violent students from school, frequency of use and respondents' satisfaction with these options (in percentages).

Options available	Boards who use	Percentage Satisfied
Repeated suspensions	88%	0%
Expulsion	50%	0%
Other	100%	100%

In Table 5, the number of violent students actually removed from the school in the previous two years and the age range of these students are presented. Not all participants were able to respond in this section, and the percentage of boards that responded to this question is included in the table. Clearly, expulsions are not widely used as a method of removing a violent or aggressive student from the school. There have been only four expulsions in the past two years in all eight school boards, with only one occurring in the most recent school year. Suspension was used more than other options and a single suspension was the only option reported for students under age nine.

Table 5: Number of students who have been removed from or who have left school in the past two years, their age, and the percentage of school boards responding.

Action	No. of students	Age range	Percentage of boards Responding
Expulsions	4	14-16	100%
One suspension	146	5-17	63%
Repeated suspension	80	9-18	63%
Indefinite suspension	10	10-15	87%
Drop outs	3	16+	25%
Left district	7*	---	63%

Note. Dashes indicate the absence of data where participants were unable to respond to a particular question.

* One of these students moved with his/her family for the purpose of attending an alternative school in another province, as one was not available locally. Six of these students moved with their families, who felt another province might have better programs and services, but later returned, feeling the services in their previous place of residence were more adequate.

All participants indicated that there should be other options available besides removal from the school, with four options suggested, and each participant describing between 1-2 additional options. The implementation and/or expansion of alternate schools was suggested by 100% of participants, with 13% offering other suggestions such as the hiring of teachers trained in behaviour management, and the use of home interventions. Thirteen percent were not sure what other options should be available.

Finally, participants indicated that for 14% of violent students, long-term removal from school was not a viable option mainly because most of them are under 12 years of age. Fifty percent suggested prevention and intervention programs, and the teaching of social skills, 38% suggested the implementation and expansion of alternate schools, and findings ways of placing

rural students in alternate settings, 25% suggested home interventions and home schooling, and 25% suggested additional professional development sessions for teachers. Thirteen percent of participants suggested options such as, the use of behaviour plans, involvement of students in social activities, the use of partial school days, and optional ways of delivering the curriculum, while 13% of respondents were not sure what other options should be available.

In summary, the most frequent method used to remove students from school was repeated suspension. For children under the age of 9, a single suspension was reported, as well as the use of other options (home schooling, partial days). Participants were unanimous that additional options were needed besides removal from the school, with alternative school placements being suggested by all.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

Overview

In this section the findings from this study will be discussed in the following order. First, the frequency and characteristics of violent students in Newfoundland schools will be addressed. Second, the availability of resources and programs for violent/aggressive students including differences in availability in urban and rural schools will be discussed. Third, the options available to school administrators working with violent/aggressive students and administrators' satisfaction with these options will be examined, and fourth, additional options seen as necessary by educators working with violent/aggressive students will be addressed. The findings will be discussed in relation to the literature on violent and aggressive students. Special attention will be given to the educational implications of these findings, and the limitations of this study will be addressed.

Violent and Aggressive Students in Newfoundland and Labrador Schools

As expected, less than 1% of students in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are considered to be severely aggressive to the point where school administrators have exhausted all available school resources in working with these students (Canning, 1996). However, this small percentage of students (0.44%) who fit this description have the ability to cause great damage in the schools and need to receive the appropriate interventions. To ensure that students receive effective services and that their needs are being adequately met, it is essential that educators know and understand the characteristics of violent students (Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999).

Findings in this study confirm other findings with regard to the characteristics of severely violent and aggressive students. Importantly, the characteristics of violent youth in school

identified in this study match the characteristics of violent youth in general. Most severely aggressive students are male, have a long history of aggression in school, have experienced academic failure, have low levels of reading, and require the assistance of a special education teacher (Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999; Walker & Sprague, 1999). Also, many students are displaying acts of severe aggression at a young age (Bala, Weiler, Copple, Smith, Hornick, & Paetsch 1994), with 40% of the violent students in this study under the age of 12. Studies have shown that youths who are aggressive for greater than two years, have a history of school failure, and who display serious acts of aggression before the age of 12, have an increased chance of committing criminal and violent acts and of being diagnosed with conduct disorder or antisocial personality disorder throughout their teens and adulthood (Kazdin, 1993; Shamsie, 1995; Walker & Sprague, 1999). It is also known that aggressive behaviour is the most stable and persistent personality trait, next to intelligence, and is not something one will “grow out of” (Frick & Loney, 1999). Knowing this, it becomes increasingly important that schools have effective prevention and early intervention programs available to their students.

An important finding in this study is that the frequency of violent students is higher in rural compared with urban schools in Newfoundland, which is contrary to typical findings in the literature, where youth violence is found to be more prevalent in urban areas (Walker & Golly, 1999; Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999). Possible reasons for this finding include the fact that poverty is more prevalent in rural versus urban areas of Newfoundland (O’Sullivan & Howe, 1999), and that students may be more likely to be identified in rural (usually smaller) than urban classes. Another explanation could be the lack of after school activities for youths in rural areas, as was noted by a number of participants. Poverty and lack of activities are among some of the risk factors that can lead to youth violence, (Walker & Golly, 1999; Warner, Weist, & Krulak,

1999), however, additional research is necessary to fully understand why youth violence was found to be more prevalent in the rural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is important to note that the characteristics of violent students (e.g. single parent families, socioeconomic status) were not well known by educators in this study. It is also important to note that there were some 99 aboriginal students for whom no information or services were available. Those school boards with a student to program specialist ratio of greater than 4500:1 were able to provide the least amount of information about their violent students. School boards who have more information about their student population are in a better position to understand the need for and design responsive programs. Thus, it is essential that steps be taken to ensure that the characteristics of violent students are well known. This is especially important as programs developed for violent and aggressive students should address all aspects of their lives, academic and personal, in order to begin to change their violent behaviour (Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999; Walker & Golly, 1999; Walker & Sprague, 1999).

These findings have clear implications for data collection and record keeping for violent students. Active steps should be taken to ensure that every school board has a full profile on each student considered to be severely aggressive and unmanageable in the schools. These profiles could be used to identify areas of concern (e.g., low reading levels, lack of family involvement) that could be targeted for intervention. Of particular concern, is the absence of and need to collect information on Aboriginal students whose first language is Inuktitut. Having a better understanding of students will enable educators to develop and implement programs that will effectively meet the specific needs of each group of students.

Implications for Programs and Services Currently Available in the Schools of Newfoundland and Labrador

It is clear from this study that there are inequities between school boards in terms of the services that are available to students with severe aggressive behaviours. There are significant differences in services available between urban and rural schools. Rural schools do not have access to many of the same services as urban schools. That is, students requiring modified instruction or modified curriculum as prescribed in the *Pathways to Programming and Graduation* (1996) policy document reportedly have these needs met regardless of where they attend school. For those students whose violent behaviour requires the services of a student assistant (who can assist a student maintain focus in the classroom, or remove a student from a frustrating situation), an application is made to the Department of Education and one is provided. The services of an Educational Psychologist and Guidance Counsellor are also available throughout all school districts, again as prescribed by the Department of Education. However, in many rural areas there are instances where student assistants must be shared with other students in the district, often requiring the individual to travel between schools. Similarly, educational psychologists and counsellors are also required to travel extensively within the school district in order to service all the rural schools, and are not available to these schools on a full time basis (Canning, 1996).

As noted in the results, only 38% of school boards have alternate school placements for violent students in rural areas compared with 80% in urban areas (for a total of three alternative schools located in rural areas). The alternative schools can accommodate students from within a certain distance from the school, but many students in the school district who would also benefit from such a placement are unable to access this service, as they live too far away. Only 25% of

school boards have additional programs and services, available to violent students in rural areas (Itinerant teacher for behaviour, a Behaviour Management Specialist, programs for young parents).

Significant differences in services for urban and rural students exist in the provision of services such as alternate school placements, which are readily available in urban areas and placement in special classes, which are more common in rural areas. This is especially significant as 67% of violent students attend schools in rural areas. It is most likely that with rural students being spread out over such a large geographical area that it is difficult to coordinate programs for violent students, and it is not feasible to offer these programs in rural communities. Consequently, rural students are more likely to be placed in special classes. More research is needed to determine the effectiveness of programs and services for violent students, and how such programs can be effectively implemented in rural areas. Finally, with 67% of violent students attending schools in rural areas, one has to wonder if it is a lack of specialized services that accounts for this higher percentage. At any rate, there is an immense need to expand programs and services for violent students in rural areas, a need that was acknowledged by all participants and was also stressed by Canning (1996).

School boards reported having prevention and early intervention programs as a method of reducing the number of violent students in the schools, however the emphasis in Newfoundland seems to be on addressing violent behaviour once it is already established. Despite the fact that prevention programs may be less costly and more effective, many educators are inclined to wait for a serious problem to emerge and then try to "fix it" (Weinhold, 2000). School boards need to recognize the need for primary and secondary interventions, as indicated by Walker and Golly (1999). Primary prevention strategies are the most important, as these are aimed at preventing

all violent behaviours in children, beginning in Kindergarten, and can be beneficial to all students. Such strategies could include lessons in anger management, and peer mediation that could easily be integrated into the general school curriculum. For those students who display certain risk factors for aggressive behaviours upon school entry (e.g., lack of ability to cope with school demands, displaying disruptive behaviours, frustration, identified with a Learning Disability and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, etc.), secondary programs must be available to assist these children both to be successful in school and to manage their behaviours before they escalate and become unmanageable. To ensure that the delivery of early intervention and prevention programs are consistent throughout the Province (both in urban and rural areas), the Department of Education should address these program options fully in their policy documents. This would include encouraging the development of such programs, and offering detailed descriptions of how these programs can be implemented effectively. It is important that quality services be available on an equitable basis to rural students and urban students, and the Department of Education should work with school boards to ensure equitable services. This includes provision in English, French, and Inuktitut.

Other Options Educators want to have Available

It was predicted that schools would rely on extreme measures such as suspensions and expulsions when working with violent students whose behaviour has reached the point where it is considered unmanageable in the school. Although 88% of participants indicated that repeated suspensions were used in working with violent students, in the past two years there were only four expulsions in the Province. This does not necessarily mean that educators are becoming less acceptant of permanent removal from the school environment. It may mean that the expulsion process is more difficult than repeated or indefinite suspensions (decision to expel is made by the

Director of Education, rather than the school principal). The use of repeated and indefinite suspensions was not practiced with very young children.

Educators were not largely satisfied that the programs available at their school boards were reducing the number of violent students, and there was a strong agreement that additional programs and services are needed, as are additional options besides removal from the school. Program Specialists in Newfoundland have many ideas about the types of programs and services that are necessary to help reduce the numbers of severely aggressive students they encounter in the schools (e.g., family interventions, one to one instruction, prevention programs, teachers trained in behaviour management).

Family intervention and parenting programs encourage and assist parents to become more involved in the lives of their children, and can help to reduce aggressive behaviours (Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999; Walker & Sprague, 1999). Family intervention programs should aim at improving the self esteem of parents, and assist parents in the development of positive interaction strategies (Linfoot, Martin, & Stephenson, 1999). Many children come to school with fewer skills than other children their age, and individual attention may reduce the chances of early school failure and consequently aggressive behaviour (Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999; Walker & Sprague, 1999). Finally, prevention programs are thought to be the least costly and most effective methods of curbing aggressive behaviour in children (Weinhold, 2000). Some well known prevention programs include: The Partnership Way, Peacemakers, and Anti-bullying campaigns. These types of programs are intended to help students build their self-esteem, develop their problem solving skills, teach them alternatives to physical conflicts, and encourage students to stand up to and report school yard bullying (Fine, Lacey, Baer, & Rother, 1992; Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Law & El-Hakim, 1997; Weinhold & Weinhold, 1998). While all of

these programs may have positive attributes, many programs have not been formally evaluated (Linfoot, Martin & Stephenson, 1999) and no evidence was found in this study to show that they do indeed reduce the numbers of violent students in the schools. Therefore extensive school-based research is required to determine what works.

All educators in this study agreed that alternative schools should be implemented and/or expanded in all school districts in the Province. Alternative schools are thought to be effective with violent students as they often offer individualized instruction in a setting removed from the general school environment. The most effective alternative schools offer students a caring environment where they are respected as individuals and have the opportunity to explore areas of interest in addition to the regular school curriculum (Knutson, 1998). They also recognize the fact that not all students are able to cope in the traditional educational setting, and their aim is to “fix the educational environment” to meet the student’s needs, rather than focusing on punitive measures aimed at “fixing the child” (Gregg, 1999). Currently there are seven school boards in Newfoundland and Labrador where alternative school placements are available to violent students. However, there are still students within these school districts who are unable to access these schools, either due to the distance from the school, or due to lack of space available. Many of the alternative schools in Newfoundland have a maximum enrollment of 12-14 students. Currently all schools have the maximum number of students enrolled. This means that other violent students who may benefit from such a placement are unable to do so. In terms of having to travel long distances to school, a couple of school boards have examined other options in order to accommodate students who otherwise would have to do without. For example, it was mentioned in a couple of instances that students were found boarding homes in the community where an alternative school was located. This is an option that could perhaps be explored by

other schools boards as well.

Educators have a number of ideas as to what types of programs would help reduce the number of violent students in the schools. All participants favoured the implementation of alternative schools, as these schools are thought to be effective in reducing aggressive behaviours, and because they remove the student from the school, creating a safer environment for other students. However, there is little evidence to suggest that these ideas are effective, and many educators are unaware that many of these options have never been formally evaluated. As educators see alternative schools as a necessary option, a study of best practices should be explored before money is spent in this area. Also, the practice of using alternative schools as a preventative measure, rather than as a “final option” used solely to remove students from the regular school setting, should also be examined.

Limitations

Readers must take caution when interpreting the data, as there are a number of limitations that may affect reliability. First of all, there were only 8 participants in this study. These individuals were employed at the school board level and may not have had as much information about students as perhaps school principals who are in contact with aggressive students on a daily basis. Secondly, interviews were conducted via telephone as opposed to in person. Using this format may have limited the depth of the feedback given by participants. Finally, participants knew very little, or were reluctant to answer some of the items regarding student information. All of these factors can affect reliability. Further study with more participants and many different levels within the school system is recommended.

Summary

Additional research is necessary to understand better the background characteristics of

violent students in Newfoundland and Labrador (e.g., family life, socioeconomic status). It is especially important to understand why the number of violent students is greater in rural versus urban areas. While school boards offer a wide range of programs and services to violent students, there is an obvious lack of certain services available in rural areas. Since the majority of violent students attend rural schools there is a need for educators to work together to ensure the equitable delivery of services to all students. Finally, before further programs (e.g., alternative schools, prevention programs) are introduced, research is needed to determine what programs are the most effective for working with and reducing the number of violent students in the schools. The lack of information presented by some participants, and the limited number of participants in this study contributes to the limitations of this study. Further research is necessary in this area, and future studies might involve school principals who interact more frequently with violent students. This research needs to be relevant for the different cultural and linguistic groups (English, French, and Inuit) who live in the Province.

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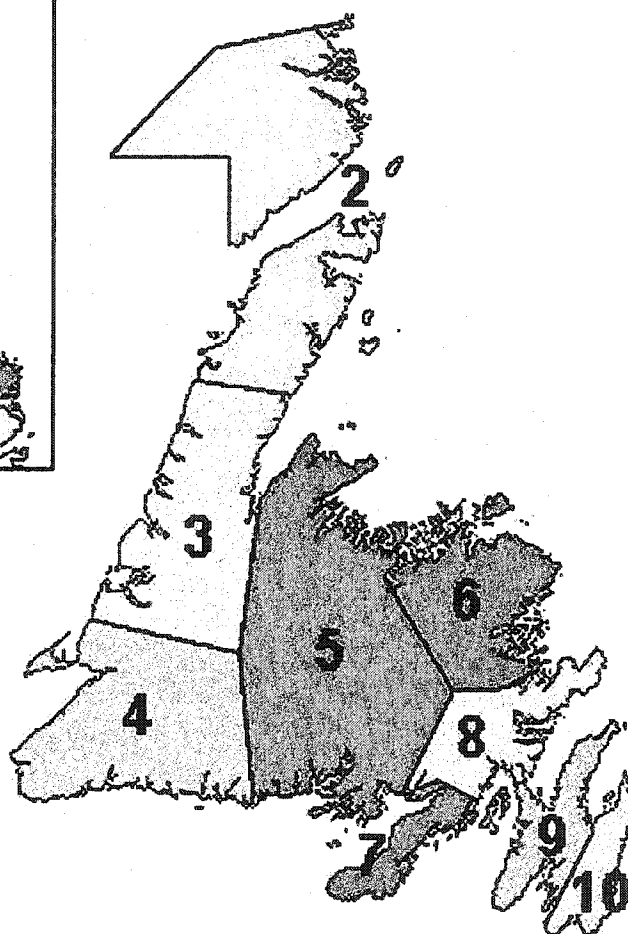
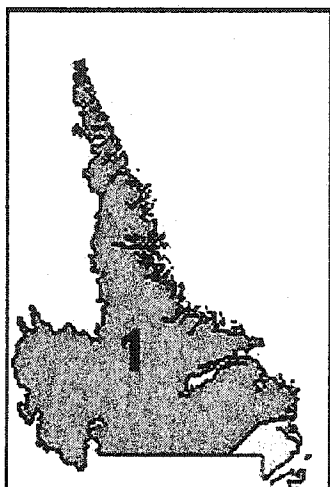
APPENDIX A

Map of Newfoundland - School Board Divisions

Map of Newfoundland

2001 - 2002 School Districts

K-12 School System

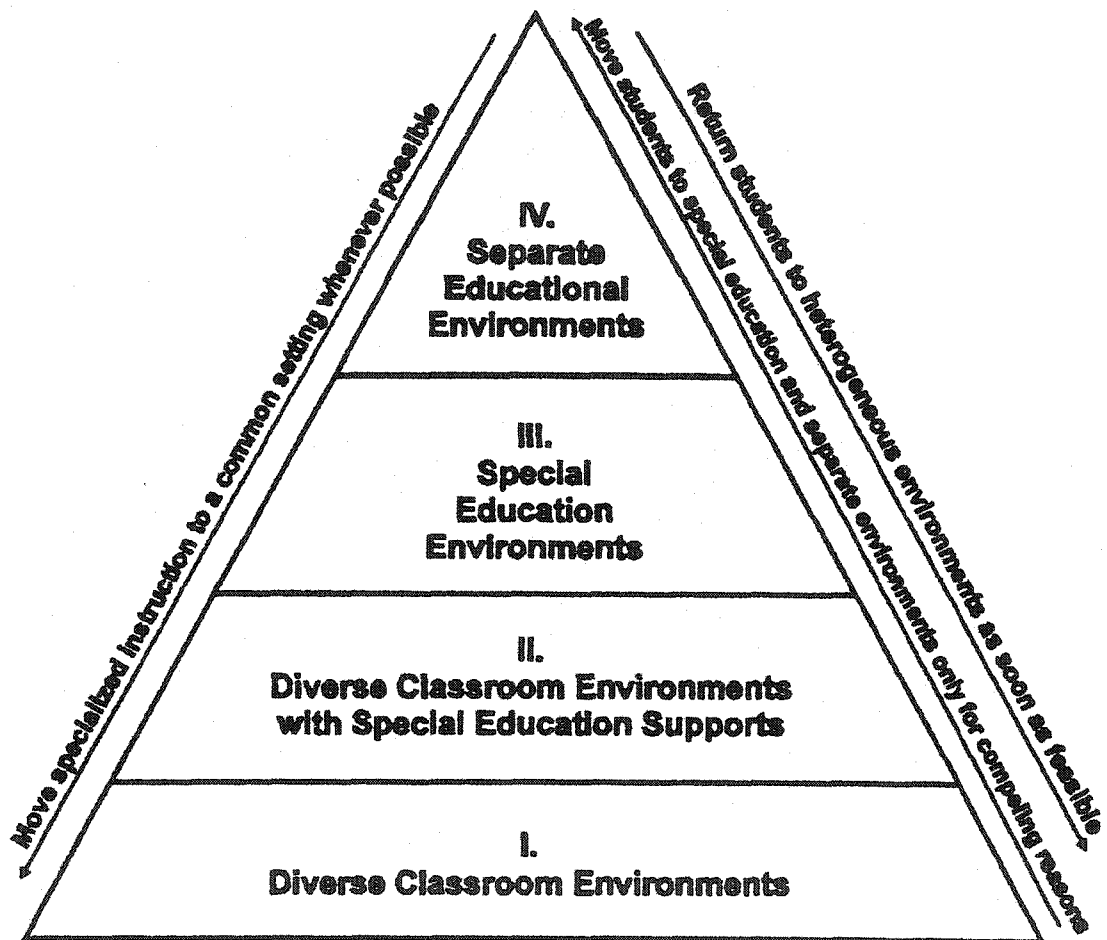


- District 1 - Labrador
- District 2 - Northern Peninsula/ Labrador South
- District 3 - Deer Lake/ Cornor Brook/ St. Barbe
- District 4 - Cormack Trail
- District 5 - Baie Verte/ Central/ Connaigre
- District 6 - Lewisporte/ Gander
- District 7 - Burin Peninsula
- District 8 - Vista
- District 9 - Avalon West
- District 10 - Avalon East
- District 11 - Conseil Scolaire Francophone (Entire Province)

APPENDIX B

Cascade Model of Special Education Services

Cascade Model of Services
Deno (1970) in Canning (1996)



APPENDIX C

Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

The End of the Line: Violent and Aggressive Students in the Schools

Dawn M. Oldford Dr. Julia O'Sullivan

Date Administered: _____

Date Transcribed: _____

Date Transcript Returned: _____

A) Demographic Information for Vista School District

Name of Individual _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Fax _____ Email _____

Years/Months in Current Position _____

Educational Background BEd _____ Other (specify) _____

Total number of students enrolled in district _____ Urban students _____ Rural students _____

Total number of aboriginal students _____ Urban _____ Rural _____

Please confirm the following:

Number of schools in district: 18

Number of Schools in Urban areas (Pop. >7000) 0 Rural Areas (Pop. <7000) 18

Number of schools:	K-3	4-6
	K-4	5-12
	K-5	7-9
	K-7 <u>1</u>	7-12
	K-9 <u>1</u>	10-12
	K-12 <u>4</u>	

Note: All of the questions in this study focus on students who display severe aggressive behaviours, to the point where school administrators have exhausted all available school resources and options in working with these students.

B. The Students

1. How many students in your school district display severe aggressive behaviours, to the point where school administrators have exhausted all available school resources and options in working with these students? _____
2. The following questions are about the numbers of students to which specific background characteristics may apply. Please note that:
M=male, F=female, D/K=don't know?
(a) How many students are age 5-8: M _____ F _____ D/K _____

- (b) How many are age 9-12: M___ F___ D/K___
- (c) How many are age 13-16: M___ F___ D/K___
- (d) How many are age 16+: M___ F___ D/K___
- (e) How many attend school in an urban area (pop. > 7000): _____
- (f) How many attend school in a rural area (pop. <7000): _____
- (g) How many have repeated one grade only: _____
- (h) How many have repeated more than one grade: _____
- (i) How many are failing one or two subjects this year: _____
- (j) How many are failing more than two subjects this year: _____
- (k) How many are receiving help from the special education teacher this year: _____
- (l) How many read at a level significantly below their actual grade placement: _____
- (m) How was reading level determined? _____
- (n) How many are from a low income family: (earnings of <\$18,000/yr in rural area; <22,000/yr in urban area): _____
- (o) How many are from a single parent family: _____
- (p) How many have exhibited aggressive behaviours in school for more than 2 years: _____
- (q) How many have exhibited aggressive behaviours in school for less than 2 years: _____
- (r) How many have been diagnosed with a mental illness: _____
- (s) How many are under psychiatric care: _____
- (t) How many are hospitalized for mental illness or factors related to aggression: _____
- (u) How many are attending a hospital-based school (on an in- or out-patient basis): _____
- (v) How many have been charged with a criminal offense in their lifetime: _____
- (w) How many have been convicted of a criminal offense in their lifetime: _____
- (x) How many have been incarcerated in their lifetime: _____
- (y) How many are incarcerated right now: _____

C. The Behaviours?

3. What aggressive behaviours are displayed by these students that make them unmanageable in the school?

4. At whom are these behaviours usually directed?
Students _____ Teachers _____ Both _____ Other (specify) _____
5. How often do students display these aggressive behaviours:
Daily _____ Weekly _____ Monthly _____ Other _____ Not Sure _____
6. How do the schools usually respond to an explosive (unanticipated) violent incident?
7. What services or programs are available for teachers working with students who can no longer be managed in the school.

D. Preventative Measures

Before aggressive students have reached the point where it is felt they can no longer be managed in the school, there are a number of resources that can be used to prevent or remediate problem behaviour.

8. What programs and services are currently available in your school board for aggressive students? Please indicate where these services are generally available, in urban (U) and/or in rural (R) areas. Check all that apply.

Early Identification Programs for aggression:	U _____ R _____
Programs designed to prevent aggression:	U _____ R _____
Modified Instruction:	U _____ R _____
Modified Curriculum:	U _____ R _____
Placement in a special class for academic reasons:	U _____ R _____
Placement in special class for behaviour reasons:	U _____ R _____
Services of a student assistant:	U _____ R _____
Placement in an Alternative School:	U _____ R _____
Services of a Guidance Counsellor:	U _____ R _____
Services of an Educational Psychologist:	U _____ R _____
Other programs and services(s): (Please specify and describe) _____	

9. Which of the above programs have been evaluated for effectiveness?
10. How satisfied are you that the services available in your school board are reducing the number of students who are considered to be unmanageable?
Very Satisfied _____ Satisfied _____ Not Sure _____ Dissatisfied _____
Very Dissatisfied _____
11. Do you believe that additional programs and services would reduce further the number of students who can no longer be managed in the school?
Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know _____
If yes, what types of programs and services would you like to see?

E. The Final Option

12. When a student has reached a point where he or she has exhausted all available resources, the goal of the school is often to remove the student from the school. What options are available to do this:
 Repeated Suspensions _____ Expulsion _____ Other _____
13. How satisfied are you with the efficiency of these options as long term solutions?
 Suspension:
 Very Satisfied _____ Satisfied _____ Not Sure _____ Dissatisfied _____
 Very Dissatisfied _____
 Please Explain _____
- Expulsion:
 Very Satisfied _____ Satisfied _____ Not Sure _____ Dissatisfied _____
 Very Dissatisfied _____
 Please Explain _____
- Other:
 Very Satisfied _____ Satisfied _____ Not Sure _____ Dissatisfied _____
 Very Dissatisfied _____
 Please Explain _____
14. In the past two years:
 (a) How many students have been expelled in your school district for aggression? _____
 What is the age range of those students? _____
- (b) How many students have been suspended once for aggression? _____
 What is the age range of those students? _____
- (c) How many students have been suspended repeatedly for aggression? _____
 What is the age range of those students? _____
- (d) How many students have been suspended indefinitely for aggression, based on a psychiatrist's recommendation? _____
 What is the age range of those students? _____
- (e) How many aggressive students have dropped out? _____
- (f) How many aggressive students left to attend school outside of you school district? _____
15. For students who can no longer be maintained in the general school environment, should there be another long term option besides removal from school?

Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know _____

If yes, what should this option be, and why? _____

16. For some students, especially young children, removal from the school may not be a viable long term solution. How many students in your school district fit into this category? _____

What is the age range of these students? _____

17. Should there be another option available when removal from the school is not a viable long term solution?

Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know _____

If yes, what should this option be, and why? _____

APPENDIX D

Letter to Director

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**The End of the Line: Violent and Aggressive Students in the Schools**

December 18, 2000

Dr. Bruce Sheppard
Director of Education
Avalon West School Board
P.O. Box 500
BAY ROBERTS, NF A0A 1G0

Dear Dr. Sheppard:

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I would like to request your permission to approach the Program Specialist of Student Support Services at your school board to participate in my thesis research. I am conducting a Newfoundland-wide research project on students who are aggressive or violent. This research involves interviewing the Program Specialist of Student Support Services at each school board in Newfoundland. The purpose of this study is to determine how many students in Newfoundland are considered to be highly aggressive, disruptive, and a threat to the safety of the schools; their background characteristics; the nature of their violent behaviour what options have been available to administrators in regards to the education and/or management of these students; what options are available to administrators once they reach a point where continuing to accommodate such a student in their school is no longer felt to be an option; the degree of satisfaction the program specialist has with all of these options, and the options that they would like to see developed (see enclosed questionnaire for further information). It is expected that the results of this study will have implications for educational policy.

The Program Specialists participation will involve a telephone interview followed by checking the interview transcripts for mistakes. I have enclosed the letter of consent that I will mail to that individual, as well as the questionnaire for your information. Please note that the participant will be able to discontinue the interview at any time, and that the information provided will be kept in the strictest confidence. In all reports of the study, written or otherwise, the data will not be reported by school board, rather the results will be presented in summary form, in terms of the province as a whole. This project meets the ethical guidelines of Lakehead University, and has been approved by the ethics committee.

I will contact your office two weeks after mailing this letter. At that time you can let me know if I may contact your Program Specialist. If you have any further questions please feel free to contact myself or my research supervisor, Dr. Julia O'Sullivan, Dean of Education.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Sincerely,

Dawn M. Oldford
(807) 343-8701
doldford@sky.lakeheadu.ca

Dr. Julia O'Sullivan
(807) 343-8199
juliao@mercury.lakeheadu.ca

APPENDIX E

Letter to Program Specialist

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT**The End of the Line: Violent and Aggressive Students in the Schools**

January 2, 2001

Paula Gillis
Program Specialist-Student Support Services
Cormack Trail School Board
P.O. Box 5600
STEPHENVILLE, NF
A2N 3B5

Dear Ms. Gillis:

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and would like to request your participation in my thesis research. I am conducting a Newfoundland-wide research project on students who are aggressive or violent. This research involves interviewing the Program Specialist of Student Support Services at each school board in Newfoundland. The purpose of this study is to determine how many students in Newfoundland are considered to be highly aggressive, disruptive, and a threat to the safety of the schools; their background characteristics; the nature of the violent behaviour; what options have been available to administrators in regards to the education and/or management of these students; what options are available to administrators once they reach a point where continuing to accommodate such a student in their school is no longer felt to be an option; and the degree of satisfaction the program specialist has with all of these options, and the options that they would like to see developed (see enclosed questionnaire for further information). It is expected that the results of this study will have implications for educational policy.

Your participation in this research is straightforward. You will be asked to complete a questionnaire by telephone. I will contact you to set up a telephone conference two weeks after mailing you the questionnaire, or you may contact me (see below). I will transcribe the phone interviews, and send you a copy of the transcript so that you can have the opportunity to verify that what you have said and what I have written are the same. If, after three weeks of mailing the transcript it is not returned, I will assume that you concur with what you have read, and will proceed with reporting the data. The transcripts will be seen only by myself and my research supervisor, and will be safely stored at the university for a period of 7 years, as is required. Please note that you will be free to discontinue the interview at any time.

In all reports of the study, written or otherwise, all individual information will be kept in strictest confidence. The identities of all participants will be safeguarded. The data will not be reported by school board, rather results will be presented in summary form, in terms of the province as a whole. A summary of the report will be made available to each school board in the Spring of 2001. Please note that this project meets the ethical guidelines of Lakehead University, and has been passed by the ethics committee. I have also obtained approval from the Director of Education at your school board to approach you.

Your participation in this project is greatly appreciated. If you have any further questions please feel free to contact myself or my research supervisor, Dr. Julia O'Sullivan, Dean of Education.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Dawn M. Oldford
(807) 343-8701
doldford@sky.lakeheadu.ca

Dr. Julia O'Sullivan
(807) 343-8199
juliao@mercury.lakeheadu.ca

The End of the Line: Violent and Aggressive Students in the Schools

January 2001

A Research Study by Dawn Oldford, Supervised by Dr. Julia O'Sullivan

Name: _____

Position: _____

School Board: _____

Date: _____

I agree to participate _____

Signature

I do not agree to participate _____

Signature

Please return the original to:

Dawn Oldford
Faculty of Education
Lakehead University
955 Oliver Road
THUNDER BAY, ON
P7B 5E1

APPENDIX F

Description of Programs and Services

Available in Newfoundland and Labrador

Description of Programs and Services

<i>Early Identification Programs</i>	Programs designed to identify students who are at risk of violent/aggressive behaviours at an early age (e.g., pre-school, Kindergarten).
<i>Prevention Programs</i>	Programs designed to prevent aggressive behaviours in all students, especially those at risk for aggression (e.g., bullying prevention, effective school-wide discipline policies).
<i>Modified Instruction</i>	Modification to course content based on student needs as prescribed in Pathway 2 and Pathway 3. This may include changes to: instructional procedures (e.g., shortened directions, peer note takers); learning environments (e.g., use of a study carrel); learning resources (e.g., carbon paper); evaluation procedures (e.g., time extensions, oral evaluation), and motivational strategies (e.g., use of a buddy system). Modification may also occur through deleting, modifying or enhancing learning objectives.
<i>Modified Curriculum</i>	Modification to the student's curriculum may occur to include courses that are relevant to the student's needs. Examples include courses in: self-care, social relationships, anger management, behaviour control, positive self-talk/self-monitoring, or a course in any academic area that is not based on the provincial curriculum.

Placement in a special class

(For academic reasons)

Students are removed from the regular classroom for a part of the day to receive assistance from the non-categorical special education teacher in academic areas that pose difficulty for the student (e.g., reading, mathematics).

Placement in a special class

(For behavioural reasons)

Students are removed from the regular classroom for a part of the day for behavioural reasons. They may then receive instruction in areas such as anger management.