



## BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE SURVEY

April 2005

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### *Objectives and Methodology*

Three Ontario education worker unions—the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)—retained James Matsui Research to conduct a survey to obtain information concerning the bullying of their members. Bullying is defined as persistent or repeated incidents of abuse, threats, insults or humiliation that are intended to hurt physically, emotionally, psychologically or socially other individuals.

The two specific objectives of the research are to:

- Establish the incidence of bullying of the members of the three sponsoring organizations; and,
- Describe bullying incidents from the perspective of their instigation, the nature of the bullying, the reporting of the bullying incidents, actions taken to halt bullying and the outcomes of these actions.

In total, 1,217 members of the three organizations were contacted by telephone and interviewed in March 2005. Each organization contributed equally to the overall sample which subsequently was weighted at the analysis stage. For the representative sample of 1,217 education workers in Ontario, the margin of error is  $\pm 2.8$  percent at the 95 percent confidence interval. The subsamples from the individual sponsoring organizations have a margin of error of  $\pm 4.9$  percent.

#### *Findings: The Incidence of Bullying*

Overall, more than one out of every two members of the three education worker unions has been bullied at some point in their career in education. The 50 percent bullying incidence mark is reached whether a person teaches at the elementary or secondary level, whether the person is female or male, regardless of the region of the province or the size of the community in which a person works, whether the person works full-time or part-time, or the grade-level that a member teaches. It is only among the youngest and least experienced members that the 50 percent threshold for bullying is not reached.



There are, however, particular subgroups of members who are more prone to being bullied. Over six in ten kindergarten teachers, intermediate grade teachers, individuals between 45 and 54 years of age and individuals who have worked between 16 and 20 years have been bullied.

More members have been bullied by a student than any other kind of bullying. Slightly less than four of ten members have been bullied by a student. Bullying by students most often takes the form of repeated disruptions in the classroom or disrespectful behavior, or vandalizing personal belongings or property.

The next highest incidence is bullying by a parent or guardian—about three in ten members have been bullied by a parent or guardian. Parents or guardians are most likely to bully members with threats of reporting them to a school administrator or the local school board, or repeated disruptions or disrespectful behavior.

Slightly less than one-quarter of members has been bullied by someone in a superior position—a principal, vice-principal, supervisor or administrator. Bullying by a person in a superior position most often takes the form of persistent unfair criticism or trivial fault-finding, or pressure to change jobs or workplace.

The least common form of bullying is bullying by a colleague. One in seven members has been bullied by a colleague at some time in her/her working career. The two bullying tactics used most often by colleagues are repeated unfair criticism and trivial fault-finding or attempts to isolate or exclude bullied individuals.

### ***Findings: The Experience of Being Bullied***

Of the four types of bullying, the bullying of members by students or parents/guardians is most often reported formally to school administrators. Alternatively, bullying incidents involving colleagues tend to be mentioned informally to others, while bullying by administrators is more likely to go unreported or unmentioned. In most cases, the reporting of bullying incidents together with the subsequent disciplinary action leads to the termination of the bullying. In a small percentage of instances, the bullying either continues despite the actions taken or restarts after some time has passed.

When a person has been bullied, the research indicates that the impact on the bullied individual is consequential.

- 10 percent of those who have been bullied take time away from work and they are absent, on average, 30 days.
- 56 percent of bullied individuals report that they suffered psychological, health-related or other personal impacts as a result of the bullying—most often



irritability, loss of sleep or loss of self-confidence, but sometimes severe anxiety attacks, loss of appetite, diagnosed depression or increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other substances.

- 29 percent of members who have been bullied have sought professional help in order to recover from a bullying incident.

### *Recap*

The incidence of bullying among the members of OSSTF, ETFO and OECTA reaches the 50 percent mark regardless of where they work, who they teach or how long they have been working (except the least experienced members). Bullying by students or parents/guardians has the highest incidence, but these incidents mostly are reported, actions are taken and the impacts on bullied individuals tend to be less severe. In contrast, bullying by colleagues or administrators, while less common, tends to have fewer formal avenues for handling the problem. At the same time, bullying by colleagues or administrators produces more serious personal consequences to the individual who has been bullied.



## 1.0 Introduction: Study Objectives

Three of Ontario's teacher unions—the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA)—retained James Matsui Research, associated with Lang Research, to conduct a survey among their members. The overall objective of the survey is to document that nature of bullying of OSSTF, ETFO and OECTA members within their workplaces.

One of the main objectives of the survey was to establish the overall incidence of the bullying of teachers across the province. Bullying is defined as “persistent or repeated verbal abuse, threats, insults or humiliation” that has the specific intent of hurting others. From the perspective of the individuals who are the targets of bullying, the bullies potentially are colleagues, administrators, parents or guardians or students.

A second objective of the research is to describe the relevant aspects of the bullying that has occurred in Ontario's elementary and secondary schools by finding answers to the following questions.

- In what way have teachers in Ontario been bullied?
- When did the bullying start and is it still ongoing?
- Who was involved in the bullying?
- Was the bullying reported formally?
- What actions, if any, subsequently were taken?
- What were the personal consequences of being bullied—that is, the emotional, social, psychological and physical impacts of having been a target of bullying?

Of those who had not been bullied personally, the study also found out how many teachers had been exposed to bullying situations by witnessing bullying incidents of others. The two pieces of information together show how many teachers have been exposed to bullying either through being a target of bullying or by witnessing the bullying of others.

Finally, the study examines whether bullying incidents have escalated into incidents involving physical violence or assault. When violent incidents have occurred in schools, the research looks at the nature of the violence and the actions that were taken subsequently.



## 2.0 Methodology

Since quantitative research into bullying of teachers was new for the three teacher unions, we were assisted in the questionnaire design by the extensive background material collected by the member organizations. As well, the drafting of the study questionnaire involved the input of the representatives of the three organizations.

Since one of the main goals of the project was to determine the incidence of bullying of teachers, all respondents were read a definition of bullying prior to being asked any questions about bullying incidents. In this way, all survey participants would start with a common definition of bullying. Respondents were read the following:

*The next questions in this survey have to do with the treatment of staff/employees in your place of work. We specifically are interested in instances where staff/employees have been hurt through persistent or repeated verbal abuse, threats, insults or humiliation. This is commonly referred as bullying and may have been brought on by colleagues, administrators, parents or students.*

The questionnaire was designed specifically to measure the way in which bullying activities had been carried out and who had incited the bullying incidents. In total, we asked respondents whether they had been the target of 17 different types of bullying activities. The respondents were asked to associate each type of bullying with four groups of individuals who might have instigated the bullying.

Subsequently, the questionnaire was pre-tested among the members of the three organizations in order to make sure the questions were both meaningful and understandable. The pre-test also helped to determine the average length of the interview and the potential incidence of bullying among teachers.

The sampling procedure involved obtaining representative and random samples of members from each of the three teacher unions. Although each organization represents a different number of members, the final sample was equally divided among the three.

The telephone interviewing was subcontracted to BBM/ComQUEST. The interviewing took place during the first week of April 2005 from BBM/ComQUEST's computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) facilities in Toronto and Moncton. The telephone interviewing, supervision and verification were conducted according to the standards of the Canadian Association of Marketing Research Organizations (CAMRO). Given the sensitive nature of the research, a contact for each organization was provided to respondents if they wished to verify any aspect of the project.



At the conclusion of the interviewing, the responses for each organization were weighted according to the number of FTEs of each organization in order to produce a representative sample of elementary and secondary teachers in the public and Catholic systems across Ontario. The total sample of 1,156 teachers has a margin of error of  $\pm 2.9$  percent at the 95 percent confidence interval. The subsample of teachers (about 400 interviews) from each of the three organizations was a margin of error of  $\pm 4.9$  percent at the 95 percent confidence interval.

### 3.0 Research Findings Regarding Bullying

#### 3.1 The Incidence of Bullying

Fifty-five percent of the teachers in Ontario's public and Catholic systems have been bullied either by someone in a superior position, by a colleague, by a parent or guardian or by a student. Another 12 percent of teachers have not been bullied themselves but have witnessed bullying of others. In total, two-thirds of Ontario's teachers (66%) have been exposed to the bullying of school staff either by being bullied themselves or by witnessing the bullying of another person.

There are significant differences in the numbers of teachers who have been bullied given who has been responsible for the bullying.

- Thirty-eight percent of all teachers in Ontario have been bullied by a student.
- Thirty percent of teachers have been bullied by a parent or guardian.
- Twenty-four percent of teachers have been bullied by a person in a superior position to them—individuals such as administrators, principals or vice-principals.
- Fifteen percent have been bullied by a colleague.

#### 3.2 Bullying by Students

##### 3.2.1 Identifying Teachers Bullied by Students

Bullying of teachers by students is more prevalent than any other form of bullying. Just under four of every 10 teachers in Ontario (38%) have been bullied by their students. This type of bullying is relatively widespread across the province and different groups of teachers given their demographic characteristics or attributes of their teaching experience.



Despite the widespread prevalence of bullying of teachers by students, there are some teacher groups who are somewhat more likely to have been bullied. Forty-two percent of public elementary teachers have been bullied by students compared to 39 percent of all elementary teachers in the province and 36 percent of secondary teachers. In particular, part-time teachers (44%) are more likely to be bullied by students than full-time teachers (37%).

As well, the incidence of bullying by students is higher among women teachers (39%) than among men teachers (34%). At least 34 percent of teachers in each of the seven regions of province have been bullied by students. It is, however, highest in the Southwestern region of the province (42% of teachers have been bullied by students) followed by teachers working in the City of Toronto (39%) and Eastern Ontario (39%). Teachers who work in rural communities (40%) are somewhat more likely to be bullied by students than teachers working in larger communities across Ontario.

Bullying by students is most likely to have affected teachers of the intermediate grades (grades 7 through 9) in elementary schools. Fifty percent of these teachers report that they have been bullied by students. The next highest incidence of this form of bullying is found among kindergarten (41%) and junior (40%) grade teachers.

As teaching experience increases, the likelihood that a person has been bullied by a student also tends to increase. Bullying by students peaks for teachers with 16 to 20 years experience (44%) then drops slightly for those with more than 20 years experience (42%). Only 22 percent of teachers with five years or less teaching experience have been bullied by their students.

### 3.2.2 Specific Forms of Bullying Used by Students

Of the teachers who have been bullied by students, 82 percent have been subject to repeated class disruptions or repeated disrespectful behaviour. Intermediate grade teachers in elementary schools (85% of those bullied by students) and kindergarten teachers (92%) are most likely to be subject to this particular kind of bullying. As well, teachers working in the Southwestern region (88%), Hamilton-Niagara region (87%) and smaller communities (87%) tend to be the targets of disruptive or disrespectful behaviour.

Forty-one percent of those bullied by students have had their personal belongings or property vandalized and 27 percent have been threatened or physically assaulted on more than one occasion. Intermediate grade teachers in elementary schools are most likely to have their belongings vandalized by students (22% of all intermediate grade teachers, 44% of those bullied).



Other forms of bullying by students include persistent verbal abuse (16% of those bullied by students), repeated racial, sexual or religious slurs (11%) and repeated attempts at intimidation (10%). Less than one percent of those who have been bullied by students have been threatened by abusive email or use of the Internet.

### 3.3 Bullying by Parents or Guardians

#### 3.3.1 Identifying Teachers Bullied by Parents or Guardians

Bullying by the parents or guardians of students is the second most prevalent form of bullying. As we have found with the bullying of teachers by students, bullying of teachers by parents or guardians is widespread but at a lower incidence level.

Bullying by parents and guardians is much more likely to have affected elementary teachers than secondary school teachers. While over one-third of elementary teachers (36%) have been bullied by parents or guardians, the incidence drops to one out of five secondary school teachers (22%).

There is a gender-related gap of five percentage points in the incidence of bullying by parents or guardians. More women (32%) than men (27%) teachers are bullied by parents or guardians.

The incidence of bullying by parents or guardians is relatively uniform across the province. The incidence of this form of bullying, however, is somewhat higher in Central region (35%) and in the GTA outside of Toronto (34%) and somewhat lower in Northern Ontario (26%). The largest difference in bullying by parents or guardians is associated with community size. Thirty-seven percent of teachers who work in schools located in suburban communities have been bullied by parents. This is seven to nine percentage points above the incidence of bullying found in more urban and more rural communities.

Bullying by parents or guardians is most likely to have impacted teachers of the junior grades (39% of grade 4 to 6 teachers), followed by the teachers of the intermediate grades (35% of grade 7 to 9 teachers) in elementary schools. Regardless of the grades taught, secondary school teachers are much less likely to be bullied by parents or guardians (23%).

Just as we found with bullying by students, teachers with 16 to 20 years experience are the most likely to be bullied by parents. Thirty-nine percent of individuals in this teaching experience group have been bullied by parents or guardians—an incidence level that is eight percentage points higher than among teachers with less experience and eight percentage points higher than teachers with more experience.



### 3.3.2 Specific Forms of Bullying Used by Parents or Guardians

Of the teachers who have been bullied by parents or guardians, 77 percent have been threatened by reports to a school administrator or to the local school board. It is an action that is most likely to be used by parents against teachers of the junior grades (80%) and teachers with six to 15 years experience (81%).

Slightly less than one-half of parents who bully teachers (46%) have resorted to the tactic of repeatedly disrupting classes or showing disrespectful behaviour. Kindergarten teachers (73%) are more likely than any others to have encountered this type of bullying.

Thirty percent of teachers who have been bullied by parents have been subject to repeated attempts at intimidation and 20 percent have encountered persistent verbal abuse. Eleven percent have been threatened physically or assaulted on more than one occasion and 11 percent have been subject to repeated malicious lies spread by parents or guardians. Two percent have had personal property vandalized and one percent has been threatened with email or over the Internet.

## 3.4 Bullying by a Person in a Superior Position

### 3.4.1 Identifying Teachers Bullied by a Superior

Approximately one out of every four teachers in Ontario has been bullied by someone in a superior position. For the most part, the different ways of identifying specific subgroups of teachers who have been bullied by those in administrative positions is not especially successful. For example, 24 percent of both elementary and secondary school teachers indicate that they have been bullied by a superior. Furthermore, 24 percent of women teachers and 24 percent of men teachers have been bullied by someone in a superior position.

There are, however, some differences in the incidence of bullying by a superior given the region of the province. This kind of bullying is highest in the Hamilton-Niagara region (27% of teachers have been bullied by superiors), followed by 26 percent of the teachers in the City of Toronto. It is lowest in the Central region of the province (19%).

The incidence of bullying by a person in a superior position appears to vary by the size of the community in which a person teaches. This form of bullying has its highest incidence in the suburban (30%) and rural (28%) areas. Bullying by administrators tends to be lower among teachers working in cities (22%) or towns and villages (22%).

The incidence of bullying by a person in a superior position is in the 22 to 25 percent incidence level from kindergarten teachers to grade 12 teachers. Nevertheless, for teachers who do not have a grade assignment (rotation, librarians, guidance, continuing



education or special education teachers), 29 percent report that they have been bullied by a superior.

As we have seen in relation to other forms of bullying, teachers with 16 to 20 years experience appear to be the most vulnerable to bullying by an administrator. Thirty-percent of the teachers in this experience group, as opposed to only 16 percent with five years of less experience or 29 percent with more than 20 years experience, have been bullied by someone in an administrative position.

### 3.4.2 Specific Forms of Bullying by Administrators

Of the teachers who have been bullied by someone in a superior position to themselves, the most common form of bullying is repeated instances of unfair criticism or trivial fault finding (54% of teachers bullied by a superior). Elementary teachers who have been bullied by administrators (58%) are more likely than secondary school teachers (46%) to be the targets of unfair criticism. Teachers who work in suburban schools (62%), in the City of Toronto (64%), kindergarten teachers (63%), junior grade teachers (63%) and intermediate grade teachers (64%) are likely to have been exposed to repeated unfair criticism.

The next most frequent kind of bullying by administrators is putting continuing pressure on teachers to change schools (46%). This form bullying tends to be more frequently reported by men (55%), those who teach in Northern Ontario (61%), those who teach in rural schools (59%) and those with 16 to 20 years teaching experience (61%).

Thirty-five percent of teachers who have been bullied by an administrator report that they have had to deal with repeated attempts at intimidation and 34 percent indicate that they have had excessive monitoring. Teachers working in Northern Ontario (50%) or Southwestern region (48%), those with the most teaching experience (46%) and kindergarten teachers (52%) are more likely than others to have been targets of intimidation. Men (50%), teachers working in Eastern Ontario (47%) and those with the most teaching experience (39%) cite excessive monitoring of their work.

Less than one out of three teachers who have bullied by administrators reports having to deal with the following forms of bullying: repeatedly and deliberately withholding information (32%), attempts at isolating individuals (26%) or removal from responsibilities without justification (18%). Teachers who have been in the profession for 16 to 20 years are more likely than others to be exposed to these three forms of bullying by administrators.



### 3.5 Bullying by a Colleague

#### Identifying Teachers Bullied by a Colleague

Of the four major ways by which a teacher can be bullied, bullying by a colleague has the lowest reported incidence. Less than one in every seven teachers across Ontario reports being bullied by a co-worker.

Bullying by colleagues or co-workers affects fairly equal percentages of secondary school teachers (17%) as elementary teachers (14%). As well, female and male teachers suffer equally from bullying by colleagues (15% for both female and male teachers).

There is, however, some differences in bullying by colleagues related to where a person teaches. Bullying of this type is highest in the City of Toronto—20 percent of teachers report that they have been bullied by a colleague—followed by the GTA outside of Toronto (17%). Bullying by a colleague drops to one-half the Toronto-level in Eastern (11%) and Northern (7%) Ontario.

Kindergarten teachers are much more likely than others to report that they have been bullied by their colleagues. Almost one in four kindergarten teachers (24%) indicates being bullied by a colleague. Teachers without a grade assignment report the next highest incidence of bullying by a co-worker (18%).

#### 3.5.2 Specific Forms of Bullying by Colleagues

Of those who have been bullied by their colleagues, the four most common forms of bullying are repeated unfair criticism or trivial fault-finding (58%), attempts at isolating the targeted person (42%), repeated attempts at intimidation (37%) and repeatedly and deliberately withholding information (33%).

There is a relatively consistent pattern across the four forms of bullying by colleagues. In each case, secondary school teachers are more likely to have been bullied by colleagues compared to elementary teachers. As well, teachers without a specific grade assignment report higher levels of bullying by colleagues. Kindergarten teachers report a higher incidence of three forms of bullying—bullying by unfair criticism, repeated attempts at intimidation and deliberately withholding information.

There are also specific kinds of co-worker bullying that are more likely to occur among particular groups of teachers. Unfair criticism and trivial fault-finding tend to be reported by men teachers, by those working in the City of Toronto and teachers with the most experience. Teachers working in the GTA outside Toronto are more likely to be bullied through isolation.



Other forms of co-worker bullying include continued malicious lies (24% of teachers bullied by colleagues), pressure to change schools (21%), persistent verbal abuse (21%) and harassment by repeated racial, sexual or religious slurs (19%).

## 4.0 THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING

### 4.1 Introduction

In total, 632 study respondents had been bullied either by students, parents or guardians, administrators or colleagues. In cases where the individual had been subject to more than one incident of bullying, we asked them to refer to the most serious incident in which they were involved.

These respondents were asked a series of questions regarding the nature of the bullying and its eventual resolution. Included in the sequence of questions is a list of psychological, emotional, social and physical impacts to the individual as a result of the bullying. Each teacher who has been a target of bullying is asked to recall how they reacted to the bullying incident.

### 4.2 Nature of the Bullying

When respondents are asked to report on the most serious bullying incident, 32 percent describe an incident involving parents or guardians, 31 percent tell about an incident involving their students, 23 percent provide more information about an incident involving administrators and 11 percent describe an incident involving colleague. The reason that these percentages are different than the incidence levels reported earlier is because respondents who have bullied on more than one occasion are asked to provide greater detail about the most serious case of bullying. The change in position between parents and students in the two lines of questioning suggests that bullying by students may be more frequent, but bullying by parents tends to be more serious.

Teachers who have been bullied are most likely to report that the bullying incident involved verbal abuse (52%). Whether the instigator of the bullying was a parent or guardian (62% of teachers report parents verbally abused them), a student (55%), a colleague (55%) or an administrator (34%), the bullying incident most often involved some form of verbal abuse.

The next most frequent form of bullying involves disruption within the classroom or disrespectful behavior. Thirteen percent of teachers who have been bullied report



disruptive or disrespectful behavior. Teachers who have been bullied by students are most likely to cite this type of bullying (24% of teachers who have been bullied).

No other specific form of bullying is mentioned by more than 10 percent of individuals who have been bullied. Nine percent of teachers who have been bullied report that they have been subject to unfair criticism or trivial fault-finding (mostly by administrators—24%, or colleagues—12%) and nine percent have been threatened physically (mostly by students—23%). Seven percent have been threatened by reporting to school administrators or the local school board (mostly by parents or guardians—19%) and seven percent have been subjects of intimidation (mostly by administrators—15%, some by colleagues—10%). Five percent of teachers who have been bullied indicate that they have had their belongings vandalized (mostly by students—15%).

#### 4.3 Time of Occurrence

The majority of teachers who have been bullied are referring to an incident that has occurred within the past five years (70%), while a much smaller percentage are referring to an incident that happened more than 10 years ago (27%). In fact, 22 percent of teachers who have been bullied report that the incident started between one and two years ago and 15 percent since the beginning of the current school year. Bullying incidents involving parents or guardians (20% of teachers who have been bullied), or students (17%), tend to be recent. As well, teachers working in the City of Toronto (17% of those bullied) and kindergarten teachers (19%) are likely to be bullied recently.

Fifteen percent of those who have been bullied report that the bullying is still ongoing—that is, the situation remains unresolved. Toronto teachers (18%) and teachers from the Central region (18%) are slightly more likely than others to find themselves in an unresolved bullying situation. As well, teachers who have been bullied by their students (20%) or by administrators (16%) indicate that the bullying is ongoing.

#### 4.4 Instigator of Bullying Incident

Women and men are equally responsible for having instigated bullying incidents involving teachers as targets. Forty-nine percent of teachers report that the person who instigated the bullying was female and 44 percent report that the person was female.

Secondary school teachers (58% report that a male was responsible for bullying) and male teachers (56%) are more likely to indicate that the person who was responsible for the bullying incident was male rather than female. Alternatively, more elementary teachers report that the instigator of the bullying was female (51%) rather than male (44%). Female teachers who have been bullied are equally likely to report that the person responsible for the bullying incident was male (47%) as female (47%).



The gender composition of bullies by the grade level of the teachers adds additional detail to the findings by elementary or secondary school. Teachers of the primary and junior grades are more likely to be bullied by women than by men. Teachers of the intermediate elementary grades and secondary school grades (both lower and upper secondary school grades) are more likely to be bullied by men than women.

There is also a gender component to the type of bullying to which teachers are exposed. Teachers who have been bullied by students are much more likely to be bullied by male students (82%) than by female students (10%). The majority of teachers who have been bullied by a parent (65% have been bullied by a mother or female guardian), by an administrator (56% by a female administrator) or by a colleague (56% by a female colleague) has been bullied by someone who is female.

#### 4.5 Reporting the Bullying Incident

Eight out of ten teachers who have been bullied (79%) have reported to someone else the bullying incident in which they were involved. Alternatively, 20 percent have kept the bullying incident to themselves.

While many teachers who have been bullied report the bullying incident, they are more likely to mention it informally (46%) rather than report it formally (38%). Five percent of those who have been bullied both report the incident formally and mention it informally.

Elementary teachers (82%) and women teachers (81%) are somewhat more likely to talk about bullying incidents than secondary school teachers (76%) or men teachers (74%). Nevertheless, elementary teachers and women teachers are no more likely to report bullying formally compared to secondary school teachers and men teachers—they are more likely to mention the bullying informally.

Forty-six percent of teachers who have been bullied by students and 32 percent of those bullied by parents have formally reported the incident. Bullying by colleagues is less likely to be reported formally (18%) and more likely to be mentioned informally (54%). Thirty-six percent of teachers who have been bullied by administrators have not mentioned this to anyone.

Of those who report or mention to others that they have been bullied, almost eight of ten (77%) have talked to administrators including principals, vice principals and school boards. This is consistent across elementary and secondary school teachers and both female and male teachers. An additional four percent of those bullied have talked about the incident to either a department head or to a supervisor.



Twenty-two percent of teachers who have been bullied have reported the incident to their union representative. There is very little difference in the percentage talking to their union representative about a bullying incident whether the person is a member of OSSTF, ETFO or OECTA. Teachers who have been bullied by administrators and are willing to talk about it, usually do so with their union representative (66%).

Less than one in five teachers (18%) who have been bullied has mentioned the incident to colleagues or co-workers. Secondary school teachers (22%) and part-time teachers (29%) are somewhat more likely to talk to their colleagues about bullying incidents in contrast to elementary teachers (16%) or full-time teachers (17%).

Finally, regardless of who was the instigator of the bullying, teachers are most likely to go to their school administrators. Ninety-five percent of those who are bullied by students, 93 percent of those bullied by parents and 65 percent of those who are bullied by colleagues seek the help of school administrators. Even in cases where teachers have been bullied by an administrator, 21 percent still report the incident to an administrator.

#### 4.6 Subsequent Actions

Of those who formally reported or informally mentioned the bullying incident to another person, 63 percent indicate that subsequent action was taken with respect to the bullying. Alternatively, 33 percent report that no action was taken. Four percent are unable to recall what subsequently happened.

While equal percentages of elementary (63%) and secondary school (64%) teachers report that action was taken as a result of the bullying, there are differences given the gender of the teacher. Sixty-five percent of women teachers report that there was subsequent action taken, as opposed to 55 percent of men teachers.

Teachers who have been bullied by students are most likely to report that action was taken (77% of teachers reporting bullying by students). The percentage drops to 62 percent of those bullied by parents and 52 percent bullied by administrators. Only 39 percent of those who reported being bullied by their colleagues indicate that there was any subsequent action taken.

Actions taken as a result of reporting a bullying incident tend largely to exclude formal sanctions. Fourteen percent of those who report the some action was taken indicate that there was a formal reprimand, 18 percent a suspension, three percent legal action and less than one percent for each of a probation, firing or a hearing. Thirteen percent that the bullying led to an informal warning, while 61 percent indicate that some other kind of action was taken. Less than one percent reports that no action was taken.



Roughly the same kinds of consequent actions were taken regardless of the type of bullying that had occurred. The one significant departure from this trend was that 43 percent of teacher reports of bullying by students led to suspensions. As well, 28 percent of individuals who reported bullying by a colleague and indicate that some action had been taken report that this action was an informal reprimand or warning.

In the instances where action was taken against the instigators of the bullying, 73 percent of respondents report that the bullying stopped. Five percent, however, indicate that the bullying restarted later. Twelve percent report that the bullying continued despite the actions taken.

There are two situations where the bullying continued despite actions to stop the problem. Nineteen percent of kindergarten teachers and 17 percent of intermediate grade teachers in elementary schools indicate that the bullying continued despite disciplinary action.

Seven percent of teachers for whom some action was taken report that they left their teaching position because of the bullying. While the percentage differences are small and, therefore, the findings should be interpreted cautiously, 11 percent of men teachers compared to six percent of women teachers changed jobs. Furthermore, teachers who had been bullied by administrators (19%) left their teaching position at four times the rate of others who had been bullied.

## 4.7 Personal Consequences of Bullying

### 4.7.1 Absence from Work

The study explored a number of personal consequences of being bullied—impacts on a person's mental and physical health. While 90 percent of teachers who had been bullied did not take any time off from work, the remaining 10 percent did take time off from their teaching duties. As we have found in other analyses, individuals with 16 to 20 years teaching experience appear to be particularly vulnerable to bullying. In this case, 17 percent of the members of this experience group took time off work because of a bullying incident.

The loss of staff time because of bullying incidents is somewhat higher when the bullying involves administrators. Fifteen percent of those who have been bullied by administrators have taken time off from working.

Among the 10 percent of teachers who were bullied and consequently took time off work, the average absence from work is 29.6 days. While the number of individuals is small and, therefore, the findings should be interpreted very cautiously, women teachers (N=42) averaged 33.4 days off work, while men teachers (N=16) averaged 18.6 days. As



well, teachers with 16 to 20 years experience (N=17) who have taken time off work because of bullying averaged 70 days.

#### 4.7.2 Emotional and Stress-Related Consequences

Although only one in ten teachers who have been bullied is absent from work, mental, emotional, social or physical impacts are not uncommon. The majority of teachers who have been bullied (56%) reports that they have suffered other stress-related symptoms as a result of bullying.

The majority of teachers, regardless of their demographic characteristics, reports that they have shown stress-related symptoms because of the bullying. For example, 56 percent of both elementary and secondary school teachers have suffered some form of emotional or physical consequences. There are several groups of teachers who have had higher than average incidences of stress-related symptoms.

- 59 percent of women teachers compared with 48 percent of men teachers have had stress-related impacts from bullying.
- 62 percent of teachers working in the GTA outside of Toronto have had emotional, mental, social or physical consequences because of bullying.
- 65 percent of individuals with 16 to 20 years teaching experience have had stress-related symptoms after being bullied.
- Teachers who have been bullied by either colleagues (57%) or administrators (71%) are more likely to have suffered deleterious effects.

#### 4.8 Reactions to Bullying

##### 4.8.1 Introduction

Teachers who have been bullied and who admit that the bullying had an emotional, mental social or physical impact on them are asked a series of 12 additional questions to identify the nature of the reaction. The 12 reactions to bullying divide into three groups based on their incidence. Reactions that have a higher incidence would be interpreted as less severe than reactions that have a lower incidence. Finally, we asked individuals who were bullied if they had used the help of a physician, their Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or counseling professional to deal with the bullying incident.



#### 4.8.2 The Top Four Reactions to Bullying

Among those who have exhibited some form of personal reaction to being bullied, there are consequences or symptoms that at least 50 percent of teachers exhibit. The two most common reactions to being bullied are irritability or feeling edgy and loss of sleep. Seventy-three percent of those who have been bullied become irritable and 72 percent suffer from sleep loss. Irritability, edginess and sleep loss result from any form or bullying whether it has been instigated by administrators, colleagues, parents or students. Teachers who are 55 years or older are the most likely to suffer from sleep loss (86% of those bullied).

Sixty percent of teachers who have been bullied report that they have suffered from a loss of self-confidence. In particular, individuals who have been bullied by an administrator are the most likely to report a loss of self-confidence. Seventy-seven percent of teachers who have been bullied by someone in a superior position state that they have lost their self-confidence as a result of being bullied.

The fourth most frequent reaction to bullying is stress-related headaches. Fifty-five percent of teachers who have been bullied report that they have subsequently suffered from headaches. Sixty-nine percent of the oldest group of teachers state that they have had stress-related headaches as a result of being bullied.

#### 4.8.3 The Next Four Reactions to Bullying

Between 30 and 50 percent of teachers who have been bullied report that they have had the next four reactions to being bullied. Thirty-eight percent of teachers state that they have reacted with extreme anger following the bullying incident. It is a reaction that is much more likely to be associated with men (46%) than with women (36%). Also, teachers 55 years or older are more likely to react to bullying with extreme anger (56%). Extreme anger as a reaction is more likely to follow bullying by administrators (58% of those bullied reacted with extreme anger) or colleagues (49%) than bullying by students (24%) or parents (25%).

Thirty-seven percent of teachers who have been bullied indicate that the bullying incident led to disruption in their family or social life. This is particularly the case for those who have been bullied by administrators (58%).

Thirty-one percent of teachers state that bullying resulted in their withdrawal from or avoidance of their colleagues at work. This reaction to bullying is much more likely to occur among men (40%) than women (28%). Needless to say, withdrawal from or avoidance of colleagues is generally a reaction to bullying instigated by a colleague (73%).



The fourth and last reaction to bullying comprising the second tier is memory loss or loss of concentration (30% of those bullied). As a stress-related consequence to bullying, memory or concentration loss tends to be increase with each older age group of teachers (17% of those less than 35 years, 28% of 35-44 age group, 35% of 45-54, 36% of 55 or older). It is also a reaction that is highest for those who have been bullied by an administrator.

#### 4.8.4 The Third Tier of Reactions

The third tier is composed of reactions to bullying that would be regarded as the least common but the most severe. One-quarter or less of those who had been bullied and had some personal reaction to the bullying mentions each of the remaining four consequences.

Twenty-five percent of teachers who were bullied and have had some reaction to the bullying have had severe anxiety or panic attacks. Although the percentage differences are not especially large, secondary school teachers (28%) and men (31%) are somewhat more likely to have suffered severe anxiety in contrast to elementary teachers (23%) and women (23%). The incidence of severe anxiety also increases with the age of the teacher and with the amount of teaching experience. Severe anxiety attacks are most likely to be suffered by teachers who have been bullied by administrators (31%).

Twenty-two percent of those bullied report loss of their appetites because of the bullying. Loss of appetite is most likely to occur among the oldest (37%) and most experienced (32%) teachers. Individuals who have been bullied by administrators (28%) are most likely to have lost their appetites due to the bullying.

Thirteen percent report that they suffered from depression that had been diagnosed as a result of being bullied. There is a slightly higher tendency for secondary school teachers (15%) and men (17%) than elementary teachers (12%) and women (12%) to have become depressed as a result of being bullied. Depression is more likely to accompany bullying by an administrator (25%) or a student (14%) than bullying by a colleague (6%) or a parent (5%).

Less than one in ten teachers (8%) who has been bullied and had a reaction to the bullying increased their alcohol or tobacco consumption. There is a slightly greater tendency for men (13%) and those 45 years of age or older (11%) to have reacted in this way. Teachers who have been bullied by administrators (11%) or colleagues (10%) are more likely to have increased their alcohol or tobacco consumption compared with those who have been bullied by students (4%) or parents (5%).



#### 4.8.5 Seeking Help

Of all the teachers who indicate that a bullying incident had an effect on them, 29 percent have sought the help of a physician, Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or counseling professional. This also means that 71 percent of those who were involved in a bullying incident that had an associated negative reaction did not seek any professional help.

Compared to other teachers, men (34%), older teachers (36% 45 years or older) and more experienced teachers (35% teaching 16 or more years) are more likely to seek the help of a professional to deal with bullying. Individuals who had been bullied by an administrator (42% sought professional help) are much more likely than others to have sought the help of a physician, counseling professional or EAP.

#### 4.8.6 Summary of Reactions to Bullying

The findings from this study show that people react to the stresses of bullying in many different ways. The different ways that people react, when they are arranged according to incidence, contribute to an explanation how the different kinds of bullying impacts individuals. In some sense, the incidence of the reaction to bullying is a gauge of the severity of bullying incident. For example, irritability and loss of sleep are relatively common reactions to bullying incidents, while anxiety attacks, loss of appetite and diagnosed depression are much less widespread. Irritability and loss of sleep would be considered less severe reactions to bullying than anxiety attacks, loss of appetite or diagnosed depression.

Put another way, all forms of bullying, when there is some reaction to the bullying, involve irritability, loss of sleep, loss of self-confidence and stress-related headaches. These reactions might be considered the normal response to a bullying situation whether the instigator is an administrator, a colleague, a student or a parent. Nevertheless, when we look at less frequent responses such as anxiety attacks, loss of appetite and diagnosed depression, we find that teachers who have been bullied by administrators are much more likely to exhibit these reactions. We, therefore, can conclude that since bullying by administrators produces the most severe consequences, it is also the most serious form of bullying.

By linking the severity of response to different types of teachers who have been bullied, we also locate the teachers who are most vulnerable to the stress of being bullied. We find that men, older teachers and more experienced teachers tend to exhibit more severe reactions to bullying.



## 4.9 Witness to Bullying

### 4.9.1 Exposure to Bullying

Respondents who themselves had not been bullied are asked whether they had witnessed another person being bullied at their current workplace. Respondents were asked to exclude any incidents involving students bullying other students. Of the 45 percent of the teachers who had not been bullied, 25 percent had witnessed at least one bullying incident. Based on the entire sample, 12 percent of teachers have witnessed a bullying incident involving an administrator, colleague, parent or student. When the two percentages are added together, 66 percent of Ontario's elementary and secondary school teachers have been exposed to bullying. Alternatively, 34 percent of all teachers have not been exposed to any form of bullying.

### 4.9.2 Demographic Characteristics

Typically, younger teachers are more likely than others to have witnessed bullying but have not been bullied themselves (15% of teachers less than 35 years old). Also, teachers in the Southwestern region (15%), Eastern Ontario (14%) or who are teaching the junior grades (14%) are more likely to be witnesses to bullying.

Teachers who have been exposed to bullying tend to teach in elementary (70%) rather than secondary (61%) schools. As well, a slightly higher percentage of women (67%) than men (64%) teachers have been exposed to bullying.

As one would expect, the longer a person has been teaching, he or she has had greater opportunity to experience bullying. While 55 percent of teachers with five years or less experience have been exposed to a bullying incident, the percentage increases to 69 percent of those who have been teaching for more than 20 years.

Kindergarten teachers (76%) and intermediate grade teachers (75%) have the highest exposure to bullying. In contrast, primary grade teachers (66%) and teachers of the senior grades (61%) have the lowest exposure.

### 4.9.3 Types of Bullying

In almost all cases, witnesses to bullying have seen another teacher being bullied (90%). The instigator of the bullying was most often a parent or guardian (38%), followed by a student (25%), an administrator (22%) and a colleague (15%). Compared to the incidence of bullying reported by those who have been the objects of bullying, witnesses to bullying are more likely to see parental rather than student instigators. This may be



explained by the fact that bullying by parents tends to be more visible than bullying by students.

#### 4.9.4 Other Aspects of Witnessing Bullying

Twenty-six percent of those who have witnessed bullying report that the bullying incident took place since the beginning of the current school year. Another 41 percent indicate that the incident took place within the past two years. Twenty-two percent state the bullying is still ongoing. Since bullying witnesses tend to be younger and have spent less time in the teaching profession, it is reasonable that they would be witnessing more recent bullying incidents.

Witnesses to bullying are much more likely to have noticed verbal abuse (68%) than any other type of bullying. Other forms of bullying are reported by relatively small percentages of teachers. Compared to the responses given by those who have themselves been bullied, witnesses to bullying are more likely to have heard verbal abuse. The lower incidence of other kinds of bullying reported by witnesses to bullying, especially classroom disruption and disrespectful behaviour, can be explained by the fact that some types of bullying occur behind closed doors.

Teachers who observe incidents of bullying are less likely than those who are bullying targets to report these incidents to others. Forty-five percent of bullying incident witnesses have either formally reported (16%) or informally mentioned (32%) the bullying to others. Of those who reported the bullying incident, 69 percent have talked to an administrator and 28 percent have told colleagues. Only five percent have reported the incident to a union representative. Fifty-three percent of bullying witnesses have not mentioned the incident to anyone else.

Once the bullying incident has been reported or mentioned, 76 percent of witnesses indicate that action was taken. This is a better outcome than the situation when a target of bullying reports the incident. When a bullying target reports the incident, 63 percent indicate that action was taken and this action is typically warnings or a suspension. Bullying witnesses indicate that suspensions and warnings are the most likely consequences of reporting bullying incidents.

#### 4.10 Violence in Schools

##### 4.10.1 Incidence of Violence

The survey contains a line of questioning about physical violence or assault in Ontario's elementary and secondary schools. When asked whether a respondent has been a target of physical violence or assault at their school, seven percent answer in the affirmative.



Ninety-two percent report that they have not been a target of physical violence and one percent is uncertain.

Using the seven percent as a provincial standard, we find that the incidence of physical violence is slightly higher for elementary teachers (9%) and slightly lower for secondary school teachers (5%). Within elementary schools, 10 percent of kindergarten and primary grade teachers have been targets of physical violence. The incidence of violence drops to nine percent among intermediate grade teachers and seven percent for the teachers of junior grades. Among secondary school teachers, five percent of grade 11 and 12 teachers have been targets of violence—four percent of grade 9 and 10 teachers.

Across the seven regions of the province, the incidence of physical violence reaches a high of 12 percent in Northern Ontario. This region is followed by Hamilton-Niagara region at 10 percent and Eastern Ontario also at 10 percent. Southwestern region registers a violence incidence of eight percent, Toronto seven percent, the GTA outside of Toronto five percent and the Central region only four percent. It is interesting to note that the incidence of violence in rural communities (10%) is higher than in all other larger communities.

As a teacher gains more experience teaching, he/she also gains greater exposure to the threat of physical violence. While three percent of teachers with five years or less experience have been a target of physical violence, the percentage grows to seven percent of teachers with six to 15 years experience and nine percent of those with 16 to 20 years experience. Teachers with the most experience—more than 20 years of teaching—are the most likely to have been targets for physical violence (11%).

The data analyses suggest that teachers who have been bullied also are more likely to be targets of physical violence. Fourteen percent of teachers who have been bullied by students also have been targets of physical violence—13 percent of teachers who have been bullied by parents have been violence targets.

#### 4.10.2 Nature of the Violence against Teachers

Seven percent of Ontario's teachers or 76 actual respondents in this study have been targets of violence. Given the small sample size with which we are starting, the following findings that are used to describe the violence must be interpreted cautiously. Breaking down the findings even further by demographic characteristics is not advisable due to the small sample sizes.

Teachers who have been the targets of violence usually have been the targets of many acts of violence. Although 41 percent of those who have been targets have been a target but one time, 29 percent have been targets at least five times. On average, teachers who have been a target of violence have been targeted 5.5 times.



One in five teachers who have been targets of violence (22%) has been a target since the beginning of the current school year. Although the samples are small and the findings should be interpreted very cautiously, 27 percent of women teachers and six percent of men teachers have been a target of violence since September of 2004.

#### 4.10.3 Exposure to Violence

All teachers participating in the survey are asked whether they have witnessed any acts of violence or assault at the school they are teaching. Almost one-half of Ontario teachers (48%) reports that physical violence has occurred where they have been teaching. Exposure to physical violence is higher among secondary school teachers (57%) than elementary teachers (43%). Among elementary teachers, exposure to violence is highest for intermediate (49%) and kindergarten (47%) teachers.

While being a target of violence is more likely to occur in rural communities, exposure to a violent environment is more likely to occur in larger communities. Fifty percent of individuals who work in cities have witnessed violence in their schools. The incidence of exposure to violence is highest in Northern Ontario (59%) and the Hamilton-Niagara regions (56%).

When the 48 percent of teachers who have witnessed violent acts where they teach are asked about the number of incidents they have witnessed, the average is 8.6 incidents. Not only have a high percentage of teachers in Hamilton-Niagara region been exposed to violence, but also, they have seen more violence than teachers elsewhere in the province. Teachers in Hamilton-Niagara region who have been exposed to violence in their schools have witnessed, on average, 13 violent incidents.

#### 4.10.4 Nature of Violence that Has Been Witnessed

When teachers who have witnessed at least one violent incident in their schools are asked when the most recent incident occurred, 53 percent indicate that it happened since the beginning of the current school year. Elementary teachers who have been exposed to violence (58% since September 2004) are somewhat more likely to have been exposed to violence more recently than secondary school teachers (48%).

Regions that have higher incidences of violence also have had more recent incidences. For example, 69 percent of Hamilton-Niagara teachers have witnessed at least one violent act since the beginning of the current school year. Sixty-one percent of Northern Ontario teachers have witnessed a violent act since September 2004.



Overwhelmingly, violence in school involves students as the perpetrators. Ninety-seven percent of teachers who have witnessed school violence report that students were responsible. Teachers or staff (3%) or parents (2%) rarely are seen as the instigators of violence in schools.

About one out of every two teachers (46%) who has been exposed to violence in their school reports that the violence resulted in injury. Although the percentage differences are not very large, 49 percent of secondary school teachers report that the violence led to injury compared to 44 percent of elementary teachers. As well, teachers working in cities are more likely to say (51%) that the violence led to injury compared to teachers working in smaller communities (49% working in suburbs, 44% in town or villages, 23% in rural areas).

Of the 76 respondents who had indicated that they were targets of violence, 41 percent state that they had been injured because of the incident.

When injuries result from school violence, students are most likely to be injured. Eighty percent of teachers reporting injuries from violent incidents indicate that one or more students were injured. Seventeen percent report teachers or staff injuries and two percent indicate administrators were injured. Elementary teachers have much higher rates of injury (27%) from violence than secondary school teachers (5%). In particular, kindergarten teachers and junior grade teachers are more likely to sustain injuries (sample sizes, however, are very small).

Teachers who have witnessed violence in their schools indicate that property damage is relatively infrequent. Fourteen percent of those who have witnessed violence report that property damage occurred—84 percent indicate seeing no property damage. Property damage is more likely to be reported by teachers in Eastern Ontario (24%) and by kindergarten teachers (26%).

Of the teachers who witnessed violence, 43 percent indicate that the police intervened, while 49 percent report that the police were not called. Secondary school teachers (57%) are much more likely than elementary teachers (31%) to recall that the police were asked to respond.

Fourteen percent of the teachers who have witnessed violence in their school report that weapons were involved. Secondary school teachers (19%) are more likely than elementary teachers (9%) to recall the use of weapons. The percentage of teachers recalling the use of weapons in violent school incidents is higher in Toronto (19%) and the GTA outside Toronto (17%) than anywhere else in the province.



## 5.0 Board and Workplace Bullying Policies

### 5.1 Awareness of Bullying Policies

A slim majority of Ontario's teachers (53%) is aware that their school board has a policy regarding the bullying of staff. Forty-two percent of teachers are unaware of a bullying policy and five percent do not know whether their board has a policy.

More elementary (55%) than secondary school (49%) teachers are aware of board policies concerning bullying. In particular, kindergarten teachers are especially aware of board bullying policies (66%). Awareness is especially high among teachers working in Eastern Ontario (60%) and Southwestern region (60%).

As one might expect, awareness of bullying policies increases with the age of the teacher and the number of years of teaching experience. While 44 percent of teachers who are less than 35 years old and 42 percent of those with five years or less teaching experience are aware of bullying policies, the percentage increases to 62 percent of teachers who are 55 or older and 61 percent of those who have been teaching for more than 20 years.

Teachers who have been personally been targets of bullying do not have an appreciably higher awareness of the board bullying policies than teachers at-large. Fifty-five percent of teachers who have been bullied are aware of bullying policies. The highest awareness of bullying policies occurs among those who have been bullied by students (57%). Teachers who have not been bullied but have witnessed bullying incidents, however, have the highest awareness of bullying policies (59%).

### 5.2 Anti-Bullying Section in the Code of Conduct

Eight in ten teachers in Ontario (80%) are aware that their local school board Code of Conduct includes a section on anti-bullying. The 80 percent level of awareness is achieved in five of the seven regions of the province. Seventy-seven percent of teachers in the Southwestern region are aware of anti-bullying sections in the Code of Conduct. Awareness drops to 67 percent among teachers in the Hamilton-Niagara region. Teachers who have themselves been targets of bullying are no more, or no less, aware of anti-bullying provisions in their board's Code of Conduct.

When those who are aware of their Code of Conduct are asked to whom the Code applies—staff, students or both staff and students, three-quarters of those aware (74%) indicate that it applies to both staff and students. Seventeen percent of those aware believe that the Code of Conduct applies to students only and one percent thinks that it applies only to staff. Nine percent cannot provide a response.



At least seven in ten teachers who are aware of their board's Code of Conduct, whether they teach in an elementary or secondary school or whether they teach in a large or small community, are aware that the Code of Conduct applies to both staff and students. It is only in Toronto where a significant percentage (28%) believes that the Code of Conduct applies to students only.

Individuals who have been targets of bullying are no different than teachers in general regarding awareness of who the anti-bullying section of the Code of Conduct applies. Seventy-three of teachers who have been bullied are under the impression the Code of Conduct applies to both staff and students.