Zero Tolerance and Other Plays
Disrupting Xenophobia, Racism and Homophobia in School
Tara Goldstein
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada

In May 2007, 15-year old Jordan Manners was shot and killed in the hallway of his Toronto school. One month later, an investigation resulted in a 595-page report entitled The Road to Health. A few months later, in an attempt to provoke discussion about the report among teachers in Toronto, Tara Goldstein adapted the report into a dramatic script called Zero Tolerance. The play was performed for the first time in September 2008 for 500 new teachers at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education’s annual Safe Schools Conference.

Now for the first time, Zero Tolerance and two other play scripts, Lost Daughter and Ana’s Shadow are available as an anthology. The plays based on the themes of racism, xenophobia and homophobia provoke reflection and discussion about the experiences of marginalized families in North America and can be used by educators who work with teachers and youth in schools as well as university instructors who are teaching courses in Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Diaspora Studies, Equity Studies, Immigration Studies, Sexual Diversity Studies, Sociology, and Women’s Studies.

Tara Goldstein is a professor and playwright in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto. She is also the Founding Director of Gailey Road Productions, a theatre company that produces research-informed theatre on social and political issues that affect us all.Tara graduated from the MFA Playwriting Program at Spalding University, Louisville, Kentucky, in November 2006. Tara’s historical drama Lost Daughter won the 2005 Canadian Jewish Playwriting Contest and was produced by Gailey Road at the 2008 Toronto Fringe Festival. Harriet’s House, a contemporary drama about international adoption in a same-sex family, was produced at Hart House Theatre in July 2010, and has been published as part of Tara’s book Staging Harriet’s House: Writing and Producing Research-Informed Theatre (Peter Lang 2012). Ana’s Shadow, the sequel to Harriet’s House, was recently published in Canadian Theatre Review (Issue 151, Summer 2012). Both Harriet’s House and Ana’s Shadow have been professional digitally recorded and will be available for downloading along with discussion guides for the plays in June 2013 at www.gaileyroad.com.

In addition to her work for the stage, Tara has written seven research-based plays on the schooling of minority high school and university students, which have been used in university and high school classrooms across Canada, the United States and Australia.Tara is a member of the Playwrights Guild of Canada (PGC), was the Chair of PGC’s Women Caucus from 2010-2012, and participated in the 2012 Women Playwrights International Conference in Stockholm, Sweden. Tara also organized Women Writing Letters, a fundraising literary event for Gailey Road that takes place four times a year. Women Writing Letters is in its third season.
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Zero Tolerance and Other Plays

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in School

By

Tara Goldstein
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada
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INTRODUCTION

This book presents three research-based plays on the themes of racism, xenophobia and homophobia that can be used by teachers, teacher educators and others who work with youth in schools. The plays will also interest university instructors who are teaching courses in anthropology, cultural studies, diaspora studies, equity studies, immigration studies, sexual diversity studies, sociology, and women’s studies as a resource to provoke reflection and discussion about the experiences of marginalized families in North America. In creating the plays, I worked with the approaches of performed ethnography and research-informed theatre, which has allowed for rich readings, performances and discussions of all three plays.

The world of performed ethnography and research-informed theatre attracts a variety of people from different backgrounds. This includes playwrights who are looking for ways to investigate a particular aspect of the human condition or a particular moment of human history that can be dramatized and performed for an audience. This also includes academic researchers working in a range of fields – including anthropology, sociology, psychology, education, health care, women’s studies, justice studies, ethnic studies, cultural studies, political science, journalism, human communication and performance studies – seeking an effective way of sharing their research findings with audiences both within and outside of the academy.¹ I am both: a playwright and an academic.

I wrote my first research-informed play, Hong Kong, Canada,² in the late 1990s as an early-mid-career academic who had been formally trained in an anthropological research method known as critical ethnography. While the work of ethnography is to describe a culture or a way of life from the point of view of those who are living it, critical ethnography attempts to get beyond people’s daily assimilated experiences to expose the ways in which institutional power impacts on everyday life.

For the first twelve years of my academic life, I engaged in traditional critical ethnographic research in the field of education. I undertook two critical ethnographic studies on the subject of teaching
and learning in multilingual, multicultural, and multiracial classrooms.\(^3\) However, by the late nineties, I began to experiment with transforming the findings of my ethnographic research into play scripts that could be read aloud by a group of participants or performed before audiences. I called my work ‘performed ethnography’, and soon learned that what I was writing was also known as ‘performance ethnography’ and ‘ethnodrama’.

The term ‘performance ethnography’ has been used by American sociologist, Norman Denzin (2003) to refer to performances that ethnographers stage from their interviews and observation field notes. The term ‘ethnodrama’ has been used by American researcher and theatre artist, Johnny Saldaña. He describes ethnodrama as a dramatic script that consists of significant selections of narrative that have been collected through interviews, observation field notes, journal entries, diaries, media articles and court proceedings (Saldaña, 2005). For Saldaña, ethnodrama is different from ethnotheatre, which uses the traditional craft and artistic techniques of theatre production to mount a live performance event of research participants’ experiences and/or a researcher’s interpretation of data. In ethnotheatre, the fieldwork conducted by a researcher is preparation for a theatrical production.

Although the terms ‘performance ethnography’, ‘ethnodrama’ and ‘ethnotheatre’ are widely used in social science arts-based research conversations, I still prefer my own term performed ethnography because it suggests that I have deliberately written my ethnographies in the form of a play script so that they can be read out collectively, performed and discussed by others.

THE PLAYS

**Zero Tolerance (2008)**

In May 2007, 15 year-old high school student, Jordan Manners was shot and killed in the hallway of his Toronto school. One month later, the Toronto District School Board commissioned an investigation into school safety, which resulted in a four-volume 595-page report entitled The Road to Health. The report was released to the public on
January 10, 2008, at a press conference convened by the Director of the Toronto District School Board.

One month after that, in February 2008, I adapted *The Road to Health* into a 30-minute performance script to provoke discussion about the investigative report among teacher candidates and teacher educators in Toronto. The script, directed by MA student and theatre artist, Jocelyn Wickett, was performed in September 2008, for 500 teacher candidates at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)’s annual Safe Schools Conference.

Adapting the four-volume report into a 30-minute performance piece for teacher candidates was challenging. When I began writing the script, the report had already begun to be discussed in the local media and in neighbourhood community forums. One of my first adaptation decisions was to include public responses to the report, as well as excerpts from the report itself, in the performance script.

A second early adaptation decision was imagining the audience that would be engaging with the performance script. OISE’s annual Safe Schools Conference for initial teacher education students was an ideal venue for a performance of *The Road to Health*, so I decided to write the script for an audience of teacher candidates and their teacher educators, who were my colleagues at OISE. These two early decisions provided me with several characters for the script: a media reporter and a group of five new teachers.

A third early decision was to write myself into the script, by giving myself the role of narrator. I made this decision because I felt it was important to remind the audience that the performance they were about to see was an *interpretation* of the report, only one of many that had been made by a number of educators, community leaders, government officials and the media since the report had been released. As contemporary researchers have been writing for decades now, writing up research data is an interpretative, subjective, value-laden project (see for example, Behar, 1995; Clifford, 1983; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Goldstein, 2008). I wanted my audience to remember that the performance was inventing truths about the meaning of the report at the same time as it was attempting to represent truths contained in the report. I used the notion of ‘story’ to
do this. The opening monologue sets up the performance as a story that Tara Goldstein, a playwright and teacher educator from OISE, has written based on her reading and understanding of *The Road to Health*.

One of the most difficult tasks of adapting the report for the stage was deciding which aspects of the report to share in the performance. As can be seen from the title of the play, I decided to tell a story about an approach to school safety known as ‘zero tolerance’. The story of zero tolerance is only one of the stories told in the report however, I felt the story of zero tolerance was important because it provided my audience with an understanding of a particular approach to school violence that has not made schools any safer or healthier.

The executive summary of *The Road to Health* begins with a somber reminder of why an investigation into school safety within Toronto schools is necessary.

It is all too easy to forget why we are here: Jordan Manners was five days beyond his fifteenth birthday when he died on May 23, 2007 in the hallway of C.W. Jefferys C.I. Secondary School (“C.W. Jefferys”) as a result of a bullet wound to the chest. … [we have] carefully laid out the last moments of Jordan’s life as he lay dying in the hallway of C.W. Jefferys to ensure that it is all very real. It is certainly real for those who personally experienced Jordan’s loss and it now should be real for all who claim an interest in the subject matter of this Report: the safety of youth. (p. 1)

In adapting the report for the stage, I agreed with the authors that Jordan Manners’ death needed to be made real for new teachers whose work will involve working towards safer and healthier schools in Toronto. So, like the authors, I also decided to tell the story of the last moments of Jordan’s life after being shot in the hallway of his school. I then decided to have the new teacher characters recount the story of how Jordan was shot and added their responses to the telling of the horrific story. I also added the imagined responses of the high school students who went to school with Jordan. Both the performers
and audience members reported that the story of the shooting of Jordan Manners was the most emotionally powerful part of the performance.

To end the play, I gave a final monologue to the narrator Tara Goldstein. The monologue closed with the question, “How can we do our part at OISE to work against another shooting at a Toronto school?” Each of the five new teachers repeats the same question asking, “How can we do our part?” The call to action for new teachers and teacher educators at OISE to do their part was intended to inspire the audience to take full advantage of the opportunities to learn more about safe school issues and safe school practices at the workshops that immediately followed the performance. Such a call is typical of performed ethnography, which strives to promote dialogue and cultivate new understandings around important social issues (Denzin, 2003; Leavy, 2009).

Lost Daughter (2008)

Lost Daughter is a historical drama that is based on interviews, photos and written documentation about racial/ethnic tensions between Jews and non-Jews in Toronto, Canada, during the summer 1933. It was a summer of intense heat and widespread unemployment. It was also a summer when Gentile youth wore swastika badges to keep the city’s Jews out of Toronto’s public parks and off its beaches.

Imagined as a kind of a sequel to Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice, a play that is taught in English-speaking secondary schools worldwide, Lost Daughter explores what happens to Shylock’s daughter, Jessica after Shakespeare’s play has ended. I had wanted to write Lost Daughter ever since I was a high school student myself, in another Canadian city, the city of Montreal. The Merchant of Venice was required reading in our grade nine English class and I was chosen to read aloud the part of Shylock. The year was 1971, and the majority of the students in the English class, like me, were of Jewish background. Yet, the binary of Christian forgiveness (most explicitly expressed by Portia’s “quality of mercy” speech) and Jewish revenge (most explicitly symbolized by Shylock’s desire for a pound of flesh) in the play was never
discussed. At the end of our play reading, the Jewish students in the 
class were left with the uncomfortable suggestion that Christians 
were merciful, and Jews, who were vengeful, needed to be punished. 

This message contradicted everything I had learned about the 
deep, rich tradition of Jewish forgiveness, good deeds, and 
repentance. It also reproduced the kind of anti-Semitism that had 
been used to justify the extermination of six million Jews in Europe 
during the Second World War. In our grade nine English class, there 
were children of Holocaust survivors. What we all needed to learn 
was how to critique Shakespeare’s binary of Christian mercy and 
Jewish revenge, and how to respond to the xenophobic and anti-
Semitic ideas and anti-Semitic talk in The Merchant of Venice. 

Almost 30 years later, I began writing Lost Daughter, which 
not only engages with the themes of Canadian xenophobia and anti-
Semitism in the summer of 1933, but also portrays the rich tradition 
of forgiveness in Jewish thought and culture. In the summer of 2008, 
on the 75th anniversary of the Christie Pits riot, the play was 
performed part of the Toronto Fringe Festival.

Ana’s Shadow (2012)

The last play in the anthology, Ana’s Shadow, is a contemporary 
drama that is a sequel to Harriet’s House, a play written and 
performed in 2010. Both Harriet’s House and Ana’s Shadow 
examine the everyday experiences of transnational/transracial 
adoptive same-sex families. These are experiences that have not yet 
been widely documented or shared in educational research, nor 
widely discussed in teacher education classrooms. The research that 
has informed the plays comes from a set of interviews I conducted 
with people living in transnational/transracial adoptive same-sex 
families, as well as from a variety of personal narratives and 
documentary films about growing up and living in these families.

Harriet’s House tells the story of Harriet’s daughter Luisa, 
and her return to Bogotá to find her birth mother and connect with 
her Colombian linguistic and cultural heritage. Ana’s Shadow picks 
up the story of Harriet’s family three years later, and features the 
story of Luisa’s sister, Ana, a singer-songwriter who has no interest 
in speaking Spanish with her sister or in returning to her birth
In choosing to research, write and teach about the lives of people living in transnational adoptive families, I hope not only to inform the work teachers do with these particular kinds of families, but also to inform the work teachers do with many other kinds of families, including: immigrant/newcomer families, mixed-race families, families learning English as a second or additional language, blended families, and families led by grandparents or other family members. In writing and teaching two plays, featuring the different experiences of two adopted daughters, I have tried to work against presenting a singular, dominant narrative of the experiences of transnationally adopted same-sex families.

In the last two years, I have begun to document the kinds of conversations and ideas that are provoked when my students read, perform and discuss the scripts. My documentation comes from notes on our class discussions, interviews with my students about the class discussions, and student journal entries and written assignments about their readings of the plays. To date, I have documented my work with the plays with six different classes. All together, 180 students have discussed and written about their work with the plays, and a small group of eight students (from the larger group of 180 students) has been interviewed about their experience of engaging with the play.

The most compelling finding of my research is that the work that the plays do is unpredictable. While my work with the plays sometimes provokes thoughtful reflection from my students about families that are different than their own, it does not always disrupt the prior, sometimes harmful, assumptions my students bring with them to teaching. Yet, within our class discussions, and in response to the journal entries and assignments my students write following our play readings and discussions, I am able to ask questions about
the ways in which my students are engaging with the plays and the ways in which they are engaging in the project of learning about “Other people’s families”. Sometimes, I am able to raise a new idea, point out a generalization, and disrupt the compelling power of personal experience. In doing so, I am engaging in what educational researcher, Kevin Kumashiro describes as the “ongoing labour of stopping the repetition of harmful ‘knowledges’” in my classroom (2000, p. 43). As well, having my students write journal entries and assignments about their work with the play immediately after our readings and conversations allows me some access to what was not said aloud in our class discussions. This, at times, can deepen my labour.

I hope that you enjoy reading all three plays and that you will want to use them in your own classrooms. If you do and want to share your experiences of working with the plays with me, I would love to hear from you.

All the best,
Tara Goldstein
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
September 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for their funding of Ana’s Shadow. I would also like to thank Irena Kohn for her expert editing and formatting of this book, Margot Huycke for her cover photo and Lisa Rupchand for the cover image.

NOTES

1 See Saldaña (2005, pp. 10–14), for examples of work in many of these areas.
2 Hong Kong, Canada, a play about immigration and multilingualism in a Canadian high school.
3 The first critical ethnography focused on teaching English as a Second Language to women working in a bilingual Portuguese and English toy factory and was called Two Languages at Work: Bilingual Life on the Production Floor (Goldstein 1997). The second focused on teaching and learning in a bilingual Cantonese and English high school, and was called Teaching and Learning in Multilingual School: Choices, Risks and Dilemmas (Goldstein 2003) and includes the performed ethnography Hong Kong, Canada.
CHAPTER 1

ZERO TOLERANCE

A Performance on the Pursuit of Safe Schools
Responding to the report *The Road to Health* (2008)
By The School Community Safety Advisory Panel that was commissioned by The
Toronto District School Board

PRODUCTION HISTORY

*Zero Tolerance* was first performed as a staged reading at the Safe
Schools Conference at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
(OISE), University of Toronto on September 27, 2008. The reading
was directed by Jocelyn Wickett and the staging that appears in the
stage directions in this draft of the script was designed by Ms.
Wickett for this inaugural performance. The PowerPoint slide show
was designed by Dominique Rivère.

The performance was followed by a set of prepared responses
from a panel that featured vice-principal and PhD candidate Dean
Barnes from the Halton District School Board, one of OISE’s partner
school boards; Bev Caswell, an OISE teacher educator; Jeff Kugler,
the executive director of OISE’s Centre for Urban Schooling, and
Charis Lo, a teacher candidate who had participated in the reading. A
further two-hour discussion for audience members who wanted to
discuss the report in some detail followed the performance. About 30
Bachelor of Education students, also known as teacher candidates,
attended this discussion. Other teacher candidates at the Safe Schools
Conference attended workshops on peace building, conflict
resolution, and peer mediation that provided opportunities to discuss
practical strategies for dealing with some of the issues raised by the
performance. The OISE cast who performed the stage reading
included:

Tara Goldstein  Teacher Educator
## DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

The first draft of *Zero Tolerance* was completed in March 2008, shortly after the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) released *The Road to Health*, the report on school safety it commissioned from the School Community Safety Advisory Panel. TDSB high school teacher, Margot Huycke and a group of Bachelor of Education students enrolled in the Schooling and Sexualities course at the Ontario Institute of Studies Education (OISE), University of Toronto read the first draft of the script in March 2008. I revised the script and asked a second group of Bachelor of Education students and their teacher educators at OISE to do a reading of the second draft of the script. The next draft of the script was read with members of OISE’s Centre of Urban Schooling and was also revised. The fourth
draft of the script was rehearsed by a group of teacher educators and Bachelor of Education students who had volunteered to perform the script at the OISE Safe Schools Conference on September 27, 2008. After the fifth version of the script was performed at the conference, it was revised once more in response to the feedback I received from the staged reading.

A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

In May 2007, 15-year-old high school student, Jordan Manners was shot and killed in the hallway of his Toronto school. In June 2007, the Toronto District School Board commissioned an investigation into school safety, which resulted in a four-volume 595-page report, entitled *The Road to Health*. The report was released to the public on January 10, 2008, at a press conference convened by the Director of the Toronto District School Board.

One month later, in an attempt to provoke discussion about the investigative report among Bachelor of Education students and teacher educators in Toronto, I began to adapt *The Road to Health* into a performance script. The script, directed by MA student and theatre artist, Jocelyn Wickett, was performed in September 2008 for 500 teacher candidates at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)’s annual Safe Schools Conference.

When I began writing the script a month after *The Road to Health* had been released, the report had already begun to be discussed in the local media and in neighbourhood community forums. One of my first adaptation decisions was to include public responses to the report, as well as excerpts from the report itself in the performance script.

A second decision was imagining the audience that would be engaging with the performance script. OISE’s annual Safe Schools Conference for initial teacher education students was an ideal venue for a performance of *The Road to Health*, so I decided to write the script for an audience of teacher candidates and their teacher educators, who were also my colleagues at OISE. These two early decisions provided me with several characters for the script: a media reporter and a group of five new teachers.
A third decision was to write myself into the script by giving myself the role of narrator. I made this decision because I felt it was important to remind the audience that the performance they were about to see was an interpretation of the report, only one of many that had been made by a number of educators, community leaders, government officials and the media since the report had been released. As educational researchers have been writing for decades now, writing up research data is an interpretative, subjective, value-laden project. I wanted my audience to remember that the performance they were seeing was constructed from my own ideas about the meaning the report had for my community at OISE.

My fourth decision was to project images on a screen behind the actors during the performance. The images I selected include photographs of the three members of the School Community Safety Advisory Panel who wrote the report: human rights lawyer, Julian Falconer; retired teacher, school administrator and superintendent of education, Linda MacKinnon, and community development worker and administrator, Peggy Edwards. The photographs are a visual reminder that the report itself, along with the recommendations it suggests for creating safer, healthier schools is a document that has been created by three particular individuals. It is also a reminder that the characters in the play are not the individuals portrayed on the screen. They have been created by a playwright who has taken excerpts from the report to suit the purposes of the story she wants to tell about what the shooting of Jordan Manners in the hallway of his school means for teachers.

CHARACTERS

TARA GOLDSTEIN: playwright, teacher educator, white, middle-aged.

THE PANEL

JULIAN FALCONER: human rights lawyer, biracial, middle-aged.
Peggy Edwards: social worker, black, middle-aged.
Linda MacKinnon: retired school teacher, white, middle-aged.

PRESERVICE TEACHERS: A racially, ethnically mixed group.
At rise: There is a screen upstage centre. On the screen, there is a slide with the following: *Zero Tolerance* by Tara Goldstein. A Research Performance on the Pursuit of Safe Schools based on the Report *The Road to Health* by the School Community Safety Advisory Panel (2008). The actors enter. Most of the actors form two groups centre stage. One group, sitting stage left, is made up of THE PANEL and the PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS. The second group, sitting stage right, is made up of THE PARENTS, THE PRINCIPAL and the HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS. The PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS are wearing baseball caps with the logo “OISE/UT” on them. TARA GOLDSTEIN stands downstage left. The media reporter sits in the audience and during the performance moves around the stage taking photographs as first, THE PANEL, then, the
CHAPTER 1

PARENTS and finally, the THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS speak.

Scene 1 Zero Tolerance

TARA GOLDSTEIN
(To the audience) What do you think of when you hear the words “zero tolerance”? What comes to mind? When I asked a group of my students that question, this is what they said:

Bullying.

TEACHER 1

Fighting.

TEACHER 2

Weapons.

TEACHER 3

Suspension.

TEACHER 4

Expulsion.

TEACHER 5

No second chances.

TEACHER 2

Discipline.

TEACHER 4

Safety.

TEACHER 5

TARA GOLDSTEIN
(To audience, walking from downstage left, to downstage centre, to downstage right) Is that what you were thinking? Today, I am going
to tell you a story about zero tolerance for bad behaviour in schools. And how a zero tolerance approach to discipline has not protected students from violence in their schools. My story includes the story of a fifteen-year-old boy named Jordan Manners who was shot in his school during the school day in May 2007. My story also includes excerpts of a report on school safety commissioned by the Director of the Toronto District School Board after the shooting of Jordan Manners. As part of my story, you will hear how some parents, members of the community and the media reacted to the report. You will also hear how some teachers and principals responded. Finally, you’ll hear what I think some of all this may mean for teachers and teacher educators at OISE/UT. (Walking back to downstage left) I will begin my story by introducing you to the three people who wrote the report _The Road to Health_.

Julian Falconer, human rights lawyer.

(_FALCONER stands. On the screen is a photo of the real Julian Falconer._)

Peggy Edwards, social worker.

(_EDWARDS stands. On the screen is a photo of the real Peggy Edwards._)

Linda McKinnon, retired school teacher.

(_MCKINNON stands. On the screen is a photo of the real Linda McKinnon._)

And now, I will introduce you to the people who have something to say about the report: a group of pre-service teachers from OISE.

(The TEACHERS stand.)

A principal at the Toronto District School Board.

(The PRINCIPAL stands.)

A group of parents.

(The PARENTS stand.)

A media reporter.

(The REPORTER stands up in the audience, waves and comes downstage left behind TARA GOLDSTEIN.)
And last, but certainly not least, a group of high school students at the Toronto District School Board.

(The STUDENTS stand.)

Now that you’ve met all the characters, let’s get on with the story.

(Everyone but the panel sits. THE PANEL steps forward to downstage left.)

**Scene 2 One Bullet Wounds Many**

*(On the screen, a picture of Jordan Manners, from the cover of the report Road to Health and the following appears: One Bullet Wounds Many.)*

TARA GOLDSTEIN

One Bullet Wounds Many.

FALCONER

Jordan Manners was five days beyond his fifteenth birthday when he died on May 23, 2007, in the hallway of C.W. Jeffreys Secondary School as a result of a bullet wound to the chest.

EDWARDS

The students of C.W. Jeffreys honour his memory with a tribute that remains in the main hall of the school entitled “One Bullet Wounds Many”.

MCKINNON

The death of Jordan Manners must serve as a wake-up call on the vulnerability of our youth to the dangers and tragedy of violence inside as well as outside our schools.

EDWARDS

We are the members of The School Community Safety Advisory Panel.
FALCONER
And after the shooting of Jordan Manners at C. W. Jeffreys, we were asked by the director of Toronto District School Board to investigate issues of violence and safety in its schools.

MCKINNON
The Board was interested in what was needed to maintain student order and discipline. It also wanted to know how to improve practices around school supervision, discipline and security so that its students can come to school and find a positive, safe and welcoming environment.

THE PANEL
There are 126 recommendations in our report.

FALCONER
The report includes discussions on guns and disciplinary measures in schools …

EDWARDS
Missing supports for marginalized and complex needs students …

MEDIA REPORTER
(Incredulous) Complex needs?!

MCKINNON
(Ignores Media Reporter) Violence against girls …

EDWARDS
… and the breakdown in the relationship between students and teachers.

FALCONER
Our report was commissioned in response to the shooting of Jordan Manners. Let’s begin with guns.
(THE PARENTS, THE TEACHERS and THE PRINCIPAL stand up and step forward to downstage left.)

Scene 3 Guns

(On the screen, the following appears: Guns)

TARA GOLDSTEIN

Guns.

FALCONER

Schools mirror the communities they serve. The ills that our communities face outside schools make their way into the schools.

PARENT 1

Schools mirror the society they serve. The ills that our society faces outside schools make their way into the schools.

MCKINNON

There is a community-wide crisis of confidence in the ability of schools to ensure violence-free and weapons-free environments.

MEDIA REPORTER

There aren’t any guns in my kid’s school.

THE PANEL

(Ignores Media Reporter) The Panel shares this concern.

FALCONER

There are guns in select schools across Toronto in serious numbers.

EDWARDS

The question you want to ask, of course, is “Who’s carrying the guns?” “Who represents the greatest safety concern?”
Our answer is this: Students who are disengaged with school. Students who aren’t succeeding academically.

And who are they?

Students from our marginalized communities. In the report, we call them “marginalized youth”.

And students with complex socio-psychological health needs. In the report, we call them “complex-needs youth”.

We deliberately use the terms marginalized youth and complex-needs youth instead of “high-risk” youth or youth “at risk”.

High-risk or at risk means the students are about to step in “do-do”. Reality tells us that the students we’re talking about are beyond the stage of risk. They’ve already stepped in “do-do”. Some of them are knee-high in it.

So we’re talking about students who are in trouble.

When we talk about “marginalized youth” in the report, we do so to highlight the class, racial and achievement gaps these youth face.
MCKINNON
And when we talk about “complex-needs youth” we are talking about a larger class of youth, who experience disengagement and alienation due to other unique challenges that marginalized youth don’t typically face.

TEACHER 4
Students who are behavioural. In special education.

FALCONER
So, how have schools dealt with youth who are disengaged?

THE PANEL
With zero tolerance.

EDWARDS
In 2002, The Tory Government amended the Safe Schools Act. Suspensions and expulsion were made mandatory for many forms of student misconduct.

MCKINNON
This ushered in an era of “zero tolerance”.

(On the screen, the following list of grounds for suspension appears in green font: (1) threatening to inflict serious bodily harm on another person; possessing alcohol or illegal drugs; (2) being under the influence of alcohol; swearing at a teacher or another person in a position of authority; (3) vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property or to another person’s property at school; (4) engaging in an activity that is not permitted under the school board’s code of conduct.)

FALCONER
Students were to be suspended for (1) threatening to inflict serious bodily harm on another person; possessing alcohol or illegal drugs; (2) being under the influence of alcohol; swearing at a teacher or another person in a position of authority; (3) vandalism that causes
extensive damage to school property or to another person’s property at school or (4) engaging in an activity that is not permitted under the school board’s code of conduct.

(On the screen, the following list of grounds for expulsion appears in red font: (1) possessing a weapon, including a knife or a gun; (2) using a weapon to cause, or threaten to cause, bodily harm to another person; physical assault that causes bodily harm requiring medical treatment; (3) sexual assault; trafficking in weapons or illegal drugs; robbery; giving alcohol to a minor; (4) engaging in an activity that is not permitted under the school board’s code of conduct.)

EDWARDS
And they were to be expelled for (1) possessing a weapon, including a knife or a gun; (2) using a weapon to cause, or threaten to cause, bodily harm to another person; physical assault that causes bodily harm requiring medical treatment; (3) sexual assault; trafficking in weapons or illegal drugs; robbery; giving alcohol to a minor or (4) engaging in an activity that is not permitted under the school board’s code of conduct.

TEACHER 4
As they should be.

FALCONER
But there was a problem in implementation.

MCKINNON
Youth were suspended and expelled in droves.

PARENT 1
(Calls out) Forty-thousand learners were denied an education.¹

FALCONER
That was one of the parents we heard from after the report came out.
Before the Safe Schools Act amendments, principals were only allowed to suspend students, not expel them. Only the school board could expel students.

And before the Safe Schools Act amendments, the principal and the school boards were given discretion to determine whether or not suspension or expulsion was actually necessary. Students could only be expelled if their conduct was so “refractory” that their presence was “injurious to other pupils or persons”.

What does “refractory” mean?

Disobedient.

Right.

The Safe Schools Act amendments changed the way discipline was enforced in Ontario schools.

People told us that the amendments created a zero tolerance regime in Ontario. Despite the fact that there were provisions for mitigating factors.

(On the screen, the following list of mitigating factors appears in blue font: (1) a student did not have the ability to control his or her behaviour; (2) a student did not have the ability to understand the foreseeable consequences of his or her behaviour and (3) a student’s continuing presence in the school did not create an unacceptable risk to the safety of any person.)
EDWARDS
Suspension or expulsion was *not* mandatory if (1) a student did not have the ability to control his or her behaviour,

MCKINNON
(2) a student did not have the ability to understand the foreseeable consequences of his or her behaviour,

FALCONER
Or (3) a student’s continuing presence in the school did not create an unacceptable risk to the safety of any person.

EDWARDS
People told us that students were suspended and expelled without any consideration of these mitigating factors.

TEACHER 3
No consideration of mitigating factors?

EDWARDS
And people told us that suspensions and expulsions were applied in a discriminatory manner. Against students of colour and students with disabilities.

MCKINNON
After reviewing suspension and expulsion data collected from the Board …

THE PANEL
We agree.

MEDIA REPORTER
Aren’t you glossing over the fact that schools in black areas are more dangerous than schools in other areas? To be politically correct?
CHAPTER 1

PRINCIPAL
Not everyone suspended and expelled students without looking at mitigating factors. The policy was there, but some principals did look at mitigating factors.

TARA GOLDSTEIN
That was one of the school principals I talked to after the report came out.

FALCONER
We call this new culture of suspension and expulsion the “Safe Schools Culture”, and we believe that it has hurt Toronto’s

THE PANEL
Most disenfranchised.

PARENT 2
The Conservative government misdiagnosed the situation.

FALCONER
That is another parent we heard from after the report came out.

PARENT 2
Schools are unsafe because a number of our communities are in crisis. We need to address the issues that put our communities in crisis. At the same time that it passed the Safe Schools Act, the Conservative government also drastically cut the education budget. Out went the youth workers. In came the police.

PARENT 1
(Calls out) Forty-thousand learners were denied an education.

PARENT 2
As a society, we have failed our children.
EDWARDS
The Safe Schools Culture preaches a theory that complex-needs youth should be “treated the same” as all other youth.

MEDIA REPORTER
But these kids are violent.

MCKINNON
Students are then pushed out of the schools and onto the streets.

EDWARDS
Without supports.

FALCONER
And did the Safe School Culture succeed in making schools violence-free and weapons-free?

THE PANEL
No.

EDWARDS
The death of Jordan Manners speaks for itself.

(Everyone returns to their seats and sits down except THE STUDENTS, who remain standing and THE TEACHERS, who remain standing and walk to upstage centre.)

(On the screen, a picture of Jordan Manners from the cover of the report The Road to Health and the following appears: One Bullet Wounds Many.)

TEACHER 1
On May 23, 2007, Jordan Manners was scheduled to attend four classes.

TEACHER 2
Period One – Applied Geography.
CHAPTER 1

TEACHER 3
Period Two – Learning Strategies.

TEACHER 4
Period Four – Visual Arts.

TEACHER 5
Period Five – Introduction to Information Technology in Business.

TEACHER 1
Period three is lunch.

TEACHER 2
The attendance counselor at C.W Jeffreys says she met with Jordan Manners at approximately 1:10 pm to give him an admit slip to class and to update his file with contact numbers for his family.

TEACHER 3
This conversation shows that Jordan Manners was in the school building and on his way – late – to his period four class, Visual Arts.

TEACHER 1
I teach Visual Arts. Jordan Manners could have been my student.

TEACHER 4
The admit slip provided by the attendance counselor was required for him to gain admission to his period four class. His teacher marked him as present.

TEACHER 1
Visual Arts was Jordan Manners’ last class.

TEACHER 5
Ordinarily, Jordan would have been dismissed from class at 1:50, and would have had five minutes to get to his period five class at 1:55.
TEACHER 2
Period five was Introduction to Information and Technology in Business and the classroom, Room 107, is located on the main floor of the school, but in a wing that is below ground level.

TEACHER 3
What happened next isn’t clear.

TEACHER 4
One student in the period five class said that Jordan was initially present, but that he asked to be excused to use the washroom.

TEACHER 5
But Jordan was recorded as being absent from the period five class.

TEACHER 2
The same student also said that Jordan didn’t return to class, and that the next time he saw him, he was lying in the hallway, one level up, on the main floor.

TEACHER 3
The Panel is not able to trace Jordan Manners’ precise movements from the time he left his period five class to the time that he was found in “medical distress” by a teacher at approximately 2:15 or 2:20.

TEACHER 4
The teacher was returning to his own class in Room 106, after delivering his attendance sheet to the main office.

TEACHER 1
It could have been me.

TEACHER 5
Jordan Manners was lying on his stomach.
CHAPTER 1

TEACHER 2
The teacher saw three girls in the immediate vicinity. His first impression was that they were wrestling with an unknown boy on the floor.

TEACHER 3
But as he got closer, he saw that it was Jordan Manners and he was moving in a jerky convulsive way.

TEACHER 4
The teacher sensed that the three girls didn’t understand what was happening.

TEACHER 5
Then he realized the boy was in distress, and within seconds, recognized him as Jordan Manners.

TEACHER 2
He asked the girls what happened, but they seemed confused and didn’t respond.

TEACHER 3
The teacher attempted to get a response from Jordan, but was unsuccessful.

TEACHER 4
The teacher’s classroom was closer than the office, so he went back to his room to contact the main office by intercom.

TEACHER 5
He tried twice to get a response from the main office, but was unsuccessful.

TEACHER 2
Can you imagine how he felt?
TEACHER 1
It could have been me.

TEACHER 3
The teacher went back into the hallway and saw one of the hall monitors.

TEACHER 4
He told the hall monitor what had happened and the hall monitor contacted the office on his handheld radio.

TEACHER 5
One of the secretaries received the radio call.

TEACHER 2
She immediately told another secretary to call 911 and then tried to retrieve the first aid kit.

TEACHER 3
She couldn’t get it out of the drawer. Why couldn’t she get it out of the drawer?

TEACHER 4
So she left it there, and ran towards the location where Jordan Manners was lying.

TEACHER 5
When she got there, she checked for a pulse.

TEACHER 2
She noted that he was still breathing and seemed to be gasping for breath.

TEACHER 3
She thought that he was looking at her and was still conscious.
TEACHER 4
But he couldn’t speak.

TEACHER 5
Seconds later, the secretary was joined by one of the special needs assistants and the head secretary.

TEACHER 2
The head secretary had retrieved the first aid kit.

TEACHER 3
The three staff members turned Jordan Manners on his side.

TEACHER 4
And then on his back.

TEACHER 5
But his breathing became more difficult when he was on his back, so they turned him back onto his side.

TEACHER 2
At this time, no one saw any trauma.

TEACHER 3
No one saw any blood.

TEACHER 4
He was still having trouble breathing so they tried to take off his jacket and shirt with some scissors from the first aid kit.

TEACHER 5
The hall monitor noticed a hole in Jordan’s jacket as it was being removed, but didn’t realize that he had been shot.
After his shirt was removed, the secretary noticed a “dot” in the middle of Jordan’s chest.

But it didn’t appear to be a recent injury.

Jordan was still breathing at this stage. His eyes were blinking and he appeared to be attempting to lift his arm.

It was about five minutes after the radio call to the office.

The staff tried to keep him comfortable.

They fanned his face with a sheet of cardboard.

And put an icepack behind his neck.

It could have been me.

Before the ambulance arrived, the secretary saw another student from C.W. Jeffreys in the hallway adjacent to Jordan Manners.

He was speaking on a cell phone.

The secretary thought he was trying to contact Jordan Manners’ family.
Later, this student would be one of the youths charged in relation to Jordan Manners’ death.

The ambulance arrived about ten minutes after 911 was called.

(Outraged) Why did it take ten minutes for the ambulance to arrive?

That was one of the students at C.W. Jeffreys.

Two EMS personnel took care of Jordan.

The secretary alerted them to the mark on his chest.

She thought a firecracker might have caused it.

There had been several serious incidents the day before, which was the day after Victoria Day, with firecrackers being set off in the hallways.

But one of the EMS personnel said he thought the mark was a gunshot wound.

They worked on Jordan for about ten to fifteen minutes at the school.

They started CPR.
TEACHER 5
When more EMS personnel arrived, they took Jordan out of the school on an ambulance gurney.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT 1
Why did they have to wait?

TEACHER 2
The police arrived just before the ambulance left.

TEACHER 3
The police officers told the staff to close off the hallway in which Jordan had been located.

TEACHER 4
And then the school went into lockdown.

TEACHER 5
Until about 6:00 pm.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT 1
No one left their classroom.

TEACHER 2
The secretary went back to the main office.

TEACHER 3
And she saw the student who had been on the cell phone in a conference room in the main office area.

TEACHER 4
She said he was in a state of panic.

TEACHER 5
Making numerous calls on his cell.
TEACHER 2
At one stage, she saw him crying.

TEACHER 3
Four days later, on May 28, 2007, that student, along with another 17-year old youth, was arrested in connection with Jordan Manners’ death.

(Pause. THE PANEL stands up and walks downstage right. THE PARENTS and THE PRINCIPAL stand up and walk downstage left.)

FALCONER
While you will insist, of course, that “one is too many”, the question you also want to ask is: “But how often does such a thing happen? How prevalent is gun-related violence in our schools?”

EDWARDS
There are guns in select schools across Toronto in serious numbers.

TEACHER 4
How do you know this?

MCKINNON
We know this from the information we collected from the Board’s Weekly Incident Report and Crisis Reports. The Incident and Crisis Reports tell us that gun violence is a problem at a number of schools across the Board. C.W Jeffreys and its neighbour, Westview Centennial Secondary School, the two schools that we studied in depth, should not be singled out. The gun problem is not limited to one community.

PARENT 2
A number of communities are in crisis.

PARENT 3
Not my community. There are no guns in my kid’s school.
FALCONER

_Ignores Parent 3_ So what do we do about the guns? Metal detectors, a tempting response to guns, are not going to transform unsafe schools into safe schools.

EDWARDS

It's a very complex problem. A multi-faceted approach is needed.

MCKINNON

We believe that school safety depends on school health.

THE PANEL

If schools are healthy then schools will be safe.

EDWARDS

Working with youth who are carrying the guns is the way forward.

MEDIA REPORTER

Locking them up in jail is the way forward.

MCKINNON

_Ignores Media Reporter_ A new vision, a new approach is needed. It should include discipline, such as suspension and expulsion, but …

EDWARDS

… It should also be capable of operating beyond straight enforcement.

FALCONER

The fundamental challenge for schools is to identify and implement key strategies to re-engage youth.

EDWARDS

This means understanding students’ unique circumstances.

PARENT 2

A number of our communities are in crisis.
PARENT 3
Not my community. There are no guns in my kid’s school.

MCKINNON
(Ignores Parent 3) Youth who come to school unable to learn because of their challenging lives outside of school have needs that must be addressed through social services and inclusive curriculum aimed at their realities.

THE PANEL
This isn’t just a school problem.

EDWARDS
We must deal with matters beyond academics and school discipline.

FALCONER
And this requires a coordinated effort by all relevant arms of government and community agencies.

MCKINNON
Many of our 126 recommendations outline what needs to happen to make this kind of coordinated effort a reality.

EDWARDS
But there are no “quick fix” solutions.

MCKINNON
Years of neglect of marginalized communities have brought us to where we are today. Reversing the trends will not be accomplished overnight. But one thing is clear.

THE PANEL
Marginalized youth cannot be punished into being engaged.

FALCONER
Mass suspensions and conventional discipline for youth won’t work.
EDWARDS
What will work are programs and initiatives that create prospects for youth who are currently on the outside looking in.

(On the screen, the following appears: “It’s easier to get a gun than to get a job”.)

MCKINNON
Youth tell us, “It’s easier to get a gun than to get a job”.

(On the screen, the following appears: “Let’s make it easier to get the job”.)

FALCONER
“Let’s make it easier to get the job.”

THE PANEL
Dismantling the Safe Schools Culture is imperative.

EDWARDS
But this is difficult to do.

MCKINNON
The legacy of zero tolerance policies continues to hang over the Board’s Safe Schools Department. The Department is now called the Safe and Caring Schools Department, but the vestiges of its Safe Schools Culture are still present.

FALCONER
So, what can be done? The Panel recommends a new approach that infuses equity into youth management, through a new Department called the “Well-Being and Equity Department.”

EDWARDS
This will ensure that that there will be no discipline without equity.

PARENT 3
Or no discipline at all.
MCKINNON

(Ignores Parent 3) The job of the Well-Being and Equity Department will be to work to end the Safe Schools Culture at the Board.

PARENT 1

Forty-thousand learners were denied an education.

(Pause.)

TARA GOLDSTEIN

Now let’s talk about the girls.

(Everyone stays standing.)

Scene 4 Violence Against Girls

(On the screen, the following appears: Violence Against Girls.)

TARA GOLDSTEIN

Violence against girls.

FALCONER

Soon after the Panel began its work, we uncovered an undisclosed sexual assault at C.W. Jeffreys.

TARA GOLDSTEIN

The specifics of the alleged assault are still under investigation, so the story that the Panel tells here should not be understood as a closed case.

EDWARDS

In 2006, before the shooting of Jordan Manners, several students reported the sexual assault of a young, female student of colour in the school.
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT 2
We came forward because the boys were picking on girls who weren’t popular and had no friends.

MCKINNON
The current policy requires that sexual assaults be reported to police and that principals and vice-principals take direction from police concerning the informing of parents.

EDWARDS
But because of the young woman’s ethnic and religious background, the principal and vice-principals did not notify the police or the student’s parents about the incident. They were worried that she’d be further abused by her parents if they found out.

FALCONER
As news about the incident began to circulate in the school, the student became the subject of intense sexual harassment and ridicule by other students. Although the principal and vice-principal took steps to curb this abusive behaviour, the bullying continued.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT 3
The teachers and principals couldn’t protect her.

MCKINNON
Eventually, at her own request, the young woman transferred to another school.

TEACHER 1
This happens more frequently than I thought.

EDWARDS
Because the sexual assault was not reported to the police or to parents, no steps were taken to remove the alleged perpetrators from the school.
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT 2
Nothing was done until these people heard about it and told someone.

FALCONER
After finding out about the incident, the Director of the Board reported it to the police and an investigation was initiated. Then, the Director of the Board requested that the Panel add to its more general investigation on school violence and school safety, a particular examination of violence against girls at school.

MCKINNON
There are several very troubling dimensions to the sexual assault incident at C.W. Jeffreys.

FALCONER
First, a female student was victimized at school, not only by other students, but also by the delayed and inadequate response from the school system that was supposed to protect her.

HIGH SCHOOL GIRL 3
The teachers and principals couldn’t protect her.

EDWARDS
Second, no steps were taken to deal with the male students who were allegedly involved, so other female students may have been placed at risk.

MCKINNON
Third, stereotypes about ethnicity and religion appear to have played a role in the principals’ decision to not follow the Board’s sexual assault policy.

PRINCIPAL
But what do you do if your student tells you she’ll be further abused if her parents find out?
While, thankfully, shootings in and around Toronto schools are still a relatively rare occurrence, the same cannot be said about sexual harassment and sexual assault. According to our survey of students at C.W. Jeffreys and Westview, violence against girls is pervasive.

Twenty-nine female students, seven percent of all the female respondents, all answered yes to the following question: “In the past two years, have you been sexually assaulted at school? Has someone ever forced you to have sex at school against your will?”

Twenty-nine young women answered yes.

And twenty-one percent reported that they knew of at least one student who was sexually assaulted at school over the past two years.

Twenty-one percent. One in five.

But those numbers only refer to the students in those two schools.

They’re not as high in other schools.

The seriousness of this problem requires immediate attention.

Current anti-bullying programs are not effective in preventing violence against girls.
CHAPTER 1

FALCONER
They are often gender-neutral and treat children and youth as a uniform group.

EDWARDS
We need to examine the roots of violence against girls.

MCKINNON
To talk about healthy relationships and equality among marginalized groups.

FALCONER
And counsel the boys who engage in sexual misconduct.

EDWARDS
The Board also needs to develop a new comprehensive Sexual Assault and Gender-Based Violence policy.

TEACHER 1
The new policy also needs to fight homophobia as well as sexual harassment and sexual assault.

TEACHER 2
There are 40 students who transferred out of their home schools to the Triangle Program this year because of homophobic bullying and harassment. Forty.

TEACHER 1
Forty students, all completing high school in a church basement, with only two teachers to teach the entire curriculum in four different grades: 9, 10, 11 and 12. But the students are happy to be there, because they finally feel safe.

TEACHER 2
Well, safer, anyway.
MCKINNON
(Nods at the students, but moves on) Current policy requires sexual assaults to be reported to police and that principals and vice-principals take direction from police concerning the informing of parents.

EDWARDS
But sexual assault experts agree that this policy of automatic reporting prevents some girls from coming forward.

FALCONER
For that reason, girls 16 years or older should be allowed to determine whether to report an incident to police or parents.

PRINCIPAL
What do you do if your student tells you that she’ll be further abused if her parents find out?

FALCONER
And principals and vice-principals should consult with girls younger than 16 to assess whether there is a pressing reason for them not to report an incident to police or parents.

TEACHER 4
What’s a pressing reason?

PARENT 2
I think parents have the right to know if their daughters have been assaulted.

PARENT 3
There are some decisions that shouldn’t be made by young girls. Not telling a parent about a sexual assault is one of them. Girls need their parents’ support.
EDWARDS
Female students must feel that their safety is a priority. They must feel that their concerns are being heard, and that a response will be given even if the incident is not reported. At present, this not the case.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT 3
The teachers and principals couldn’t protect her.

EDWARDS
Principal discretion around reporting a sexual assault to police or parents should not result in nothing being done. Perpetrators of sexual violence must be dealt with. The levels of violence against girls in Toronto schools are unacceptable.

TEACHER 3
This happens more frequently than I thought.

THE PANEL
Immediate action is required.

TEACHER 2
But what kind of action can we take?

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT 1
How could she have been protected?

MCKINNON
We need to break the silence around violence against girls in school. We need to break the silence around all forms of violence in school.

FALCONER
We need new security measures, improved accountability of trustees, and, perhaps, most important of all, we need a renewed relationship between teachers and students. A relationship that can create a positive bond between them.
Scene 5 Renewed Relationships Between Teachers and Students

(On the screen, the following appears: Renewed relationships between teachers and students.)

TARA GOLDSTEIN
Renewed relationships between teachers and students.

EDWARDS
Both teachers and students surveyed at C.W. Jeffreys and Westview reported that there are many students at their schools who do not respect their teachers.

MCKINNON
Further data from consultations with various teachers’ unions, parents’ associations and student focus groups tell us that this breakdown in the student-teacher relationship is a growing trend, not only at Jeffreys and Westview, but in all schools across the Board.

FALCONER
So what is causing the breakdown? Why are students not respecting their teachers?

EDWARDS
There are many factors. Here are six of them.

MCKINNON
Factor number one: Racism, both real and perceived, by members of the school community. Some students told us that they are singled out for unmerited discipline based on their race. It’s not surprising, then, that students of colour feel isolated from their school.

FALCONER
Factor number two: Lack of support for complex-needs youth.
CHAPTER 1

EDWARDS
Factor number three: Increase in delinquent behaviour by youth.

MCKINNON
Factor number four: Lack of teacher classroom management training. Teachers working in schools that serve marginalized and complex-needs youth need to be trained in effective practices that work in these particular kinds of schools.

TEACHER 2
Classroom management? Or community building? Teachers need to be trained in community building.

FALCONER
(Ignores Teacher 2) Factor number five: Lack of engagement of marginalized and complex-needs youth. The present pedagogy teachers are using in schools is not working for these students. Listen to what one of the high school students we interviewed has to say:

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT 1
If you are gonna be teaching here and then 50 percent or 60 percent of your students actually fail or drop out or feel that there is no hope, no one cares about them, maybe there is something you are doing wrong. The approach that has been taken here is not working for a lot of kids, a lot of kids are still feeling left out.

EDWARDS
Factor number six: Lack of engagement by some teachers at schools serving marginalized and complex needs youth. Listen to what another student we interviewed had to say:

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT 3
Get teachers who actually want to teach here. Do not just put someone here because they are a teacher and they have to be here. Show it, show that you actually care. I always say, your mouth is made to say anything, your action is what shows it.
THE PANEL
We agree.

FALCONER
Teachers who do not want to teach at schools serving marginalized and complex needs communities should be able to transfer out of the school without any negative consequences.

MCKINNON
Teaching students from marginalized and complex needs communities is not an easy task. Teachers must understand and be alive to the unique social and economic conditions affecting students from these communities.

PARENT 1
It’s not only about the “conditions” our kids live in. It’s not only about their “complex needs”. It’s about the skills and talents and resilience our kids bring to schools that teachers don’t recognize. Don’t take the time to learn about.

EDWARDS
Handling the pressures that are associated with these conditions can cause teachers a great deal of stress. Teachers who may request a transfer from schools in marginalized and complex needs communities are not bad teachers. They just need a respite from the stresses of the job.

FALCONER
But teachers cannot be given the sole responsibility for addressing all these students’ needs. As we said earlier, extra staff supports are needed. Youth workers, social workers, counselors.

MCKINNON
Addressing the issues of each of these six factors is important for improving and renewing relationships between teachers and students.
THE PANEL

Renewing relationships is essential.

(TARA GOLDSTEIN walks to downstage centre. On the screen, a picture of Jordan Manners from the cover of the report The Road to Health and the following appears: One Bullet Wounds Many.)

TARA GOLDSTEIN

And on that note of the need for renewal, my story about zero tolerance and creating safe schools comes to an end. Teachers in Ontario have inherited the consequences of zero tolerance policies and practices and an ongoing legacy of racism, sexism, homophobia, classism and other forms of discrimination in schooling. And even though creating safe schools means dealing with matters “beyond academics”, there is plenty teachers can do to create healthier learning environments. What are we doing at OISE to help teachers productively respond to discrimination in schools? Are we talking about how to respond to violence against girls? To homophobic bullying? Are teachers learning how to build community in their classrooms? To manage and resolve conflict through communication, as well as discipline? Are they learning to develop curriculum that is relevant to their students’ lives? What else can teachers be doing? How should they be doing it? How can we do our part at OISE to work against another shooting at a Toronto school? (Pause.) Like Bendale.

TEACHERS

How can we do our part?

PRINCIPAL

(Joins the STUDENTS and TEACHERS) How can we do our part?

PARENTS

(Join the STUDENTS and TEACHERS) How can we do our part?

THE MEDIA REPORTER

(Joins the STUDENTS and TEACHERS) How can we do our part?
How can we do our part?

End of play

NOTES ABOUT THE ROAD TO HEALTH

This performance entitled *Zero Tolerance* includes excerpts from and responses to *The Road to Health*, a report on school safety commissioned by the Toronto District School Board in early June 2007. The goal of the report was to analyze the events leading up to the tragic death of student Jordan Manners at C.W. Jefferys CI in May 2007, and to provide a set of recommendations for how to work towards safer schools. The report can be viewed and downloaded from the Toronto District Board’s website:

www.tdsb.on.ca

*What has happened at the Toronto District School Board since the release of the report*

Updated: October 7, 2011

Since its release of the report to the public on January 10, 2008, the Toronto District School Board has begun to respond to some of the 126 recommendations listed in the report.

2008

In their staff newsletter dated February 2008, the Board listed a number of steps that had already been taken in response to the report. The Board had (1) launched a Student Safety Line so that students could have an anonymous way to report personal and school-related safety concerns; (2) established a Leadership Action Team to coordinate the overall strategy for addressing the Panel’s report and (3) begun a review of all policies and procedures related to sexual and gender-based violence.

Between February and June 2008, the Board planned to establish (4) new Safe and Caring Schools Alternative Programs for expelled students; (5) evaluate key recommendations affecting staffing for
2008-09: (6) present a progress report about the work of the Leadership Action Team, and (7) complete their review of policies and procedures related to sexual and gender-based violence.


2009
Working with the findings of all three reports, in October 2009 the Board created a Gender-Based Violence Prevention team whose mandate is to develop and implement board-wide prevention programs focused on student awareness and ‘healthy relationship education’ and to coordinate existing resources to supports through board-wide prevention strategy to be integrated into all subject areas.

2010
In the spring of 2010, the Toronto District School Board implemented a new Gender-Based Violence Policy and new procedures for responding to sexual misconduct by students. For copies of the policy and procedures see:


In the fall of 2010, the (first) Africentric Alternative School at the Toronto District School Board opened under the leadership of Principal Thando Hyman. The school accepts students from JK to Grade 5 and has three key outcomes for its students: high academic achievement, high self-pride, and a high motivation to succeed. A unique feature of the school is its integration of the diverse perspectives, experiences and histories of people of African descent into the provincially mandated curriculum. The program also features a Parenting and Family Literacy Centre for pre-school children.
What has happened at C.W. Jeffreys since the release of the report

2010
In the three years since Jordan Manners’ death, new co-curricular activities such as football, cheerleading, leadership camps, a boys’ leadership group and a girls’ leadership group were established at C. W. Jeffreys. The school also has a School Resource Officer who coaches volleyball, provides curriculum support in the school’s law classes and helps build student awareness around issues of gangs and bullying. And in the fall of 2010, the school offered its first parent workshop to parents of students at C.W. Jeffreys.

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NOTES
1 The figure of 40,000 students, used to refer to the number of students suspended and expelled during the zero tolerance era, was cited at a community forum entitled: A Forum on School Safety and Equity: Community Responses to the Falconer Report. The forum was held on March 4, 2008 and was sponsored by the Black Action Defense Committee, The Miss G Project, MPP Rosario Marchese, Toronto District School Board (TDSB) School Trustee Chris Bolton, Toronto Coalition for Equity in Education and the Urban Alliance on Race Relations. It was not clear if the panel speaker, Yolisa Dalembe from the parent group Reclaiming our Children, was referring to the number of suspended and expelled students at the TDSB, or in the province of Ontario. However, further consultation with teacher educator and TDSB vice-principal, Belinda Longe (personal communication), revealed that depending on how one added up the numbers, it was possible that the figure of 40,000 students was referring to the number of suspended and expelled students at the Toronto District School Board over the course of the many years during which the zero tolerance policy was in place. A similar figure was recently used in an article on “turning gang members into community activists” in Now Magazine. The article reports that there were 17,371 suspensions across the TDSB in 2001-2002 and 24,238 a year later in 2001-2002 (Now Magazine July 17-23, 2008).