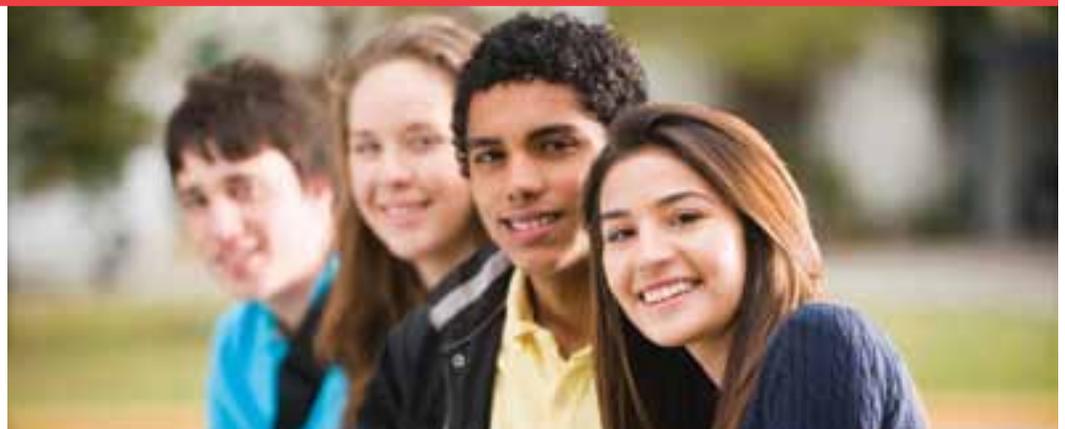




# *Executive Summary* **Report Card 2011** *A Vision for Children in Halton*



Find the full report at [www.ourkidsnetwork.ca](http://www.ourkidsnetwork.ca)

# About the Report Card

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## About Our Kids Network

Our Kids Network (OKN) is a Halton-wide partnership of organizations who embrace our vision: All children thrive! Our mission is to promote the healthy development, security, and safety of all children, youth, and families through neighbourhood collaboration, service integration, and measuring results.

OKN turns research into practice – creating a direct link between the results of our research and the programs and services that help children and youth thrive. It’s also about mobilizing the community to ensure everyone is accountable for positive outcomes.

## About the 2011 report card

*A Vision for Children in Halton, Report Card 2011* is a powerful tool for community-wide discussion about how to maintain and improve the well-being of our children and youth. This executive summary provides highlights of the report and provides an overview of challenges our children and youth face and the supports they need to help them overcome those challenges.

Everyone – parents, grandparents, educators, youth workers, employers, service providers, and young people themselves – can help. The entire community should contribute to creating the many positive experiences that children and youth need to develop and thrive. With a solid foundation, children can grow to become tomorrow’s competent, caring adults.

Note: The Developmental Assets® information contained in the full report has been adapted and reprinted by Our Kids Network with permission from Search Institute®. Copyright © 1997, 2004, 2006 by Search Institute®, 615 First Avenue NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413, USA. All rights reserved. To learn more or view the original list of 40 Developmental Assets, please visit [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org).

Note: The Halton Youth Survey questions used on Developmental Assets were not a scientific measurement of Developmental Assets® in the students assessed. The following are registered trademarks of Search Institute: Search Institute®, Developmental Assets®, Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth®, and ParentFurther®.

The questions that form the basis for the Halton Youth Survey are from the Ontario Student Drug Use Survey, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, The Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) Study and the Risk Behaviour and Injury Study in Canadian Youth (RISCY) and the Communities That Care Youth Survey. Each of these surveys has been conducted over a number of years and has a high degree of reliability and validity.

# What Have We Done Since 2008?

**Growing partnerships:** To support the expanded focus on all children from birth through 18 years of age, OKN established the School Culture Committee (now School Years Committee). Community groups focused on children's mental health and development, as well as on special needs, have since joined that committee. In 2009, the Integrated Planning Committee for Children and Youth and the Communications Advisory Committee were established to work on community engagement and education.

**Coordinating services:** Service coordination enables families to find and access the supports they need to maintain a quality of life consistent with their values, priorities, and preferences. The OKN Service Coordination Steering & Training Committee recently completed an extensive review of training delivery and access in Halton.

**Using Developmental Assets®:** Developmental Assets (see page 5) were included in the first Halton Youth Survey Reports in 2006/2007. Community reports of the Halton Youth Survey results (Community Profile, Grade & Gender Profile) and customized school profiles distributed in 2010, included more assets, providing a deeper understanding of Halton youth.

**Building community capacity:** Since adopting Results-based Accountability (RBA) as a framework to achieve its vision, OKN hosted a workshop with guest facilitator Mark Friedman. About 200 OKN associates and community members attended the introductory training workshop. The following September, a two-day workshop called Training for Trainers and Coaches helped partnering organizations build their capacity to use RBA.

**Supporting parents:** In 2009-2010, Our Kids Network provided funds so that four Parent Education Networks (Milton, Oakville, Halton Hills, and Community and Parent Partners for Kids (CAAP) could offer nine community-based workshops on a broad variety of topics for parents and others who care for children and youth.

**Tracking our progress:** In 2010, OKN produced a report titled *How Well Did We Do? Evaluating Our Progress*. The report included the results of the six-year pilot initiative, showing data collected between 2004 and 2010. Three performance results were evaluated:

## **1. Building towards service integration**

Participation and partnership-building have risen as service providers work together in new ways.

## **2. Supporting children, youth, and families through neighbourhood Hubs**

OKN Hubs in Aldershot, Acton, and Milton have significantly increased the number of children and families receiving services, as well as the level of community agency involvement.

## **3. Turning research into action**

Since 2008, OKN has continued to collect and report quality local data based on the Halton 7, which represent ideal living conditions for children and youth in Halton. Local agencies and others use these reports to improve service planning.

# Halton's Changing Demographics



## Increasing population

Halton has experienced a significant surge in population and continues to grow. According to Statistics Canada, Halton had a 15% increase in the population of children aged 0 to 18 years from 2001 to 2006. That translated into 14,700 more children in Halton in just five years.

In comparison, Ontario's growth rate for children was negative 3% during the same period.

While all four Halton municipalities have seen increases in the numbers of young children, Milton has experienced tremendous growth and is the fastest growing community in Canada.

The Ministry of Finance's Ontario Population Projections Update for 2009-2036 names Halton as the fastest-growing census division in Ontario over the projection period, with growth of 90% to 2036. Specifically, growth in the number of children aged 0-14 will be highest in Halton, at 76%. In contrast, other census divisions are projected to see a slight decrease in the number of children in their population.

Continued growth will have a significant impact as more services will be needed to meet demand. Services are struggling to keep pace with the current population and providers are feeling the pressure.

## Increasing diversity

From 2001 to 2006, Halton has seen a 78% increase in visible minorities living in Halton and a 47% increase in mother tongue languages other than English or French. Milton has seen the largest change in both areas.

Combine these trends with a 52% rise in the number of recent immigrants and it becomes clear that Halton is one of the fastest growing, dynamic, multi-ethnic communities in the province. This will compel us to find ways to meet the needs of all individuals, children, and families living in Halton, and to ensure that all residents are able to participate fully in the Halton community.

# Developmental Assets

## The power of Developmental Assets to promote and protect

Developmental Assets are described as the positive experiences and personal qualities that children and youth need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. Studies conducted by the Search Institute® of more than two million young people consistently reveal strong relationships between the number of assets young people have and the degree of positive healthy development.

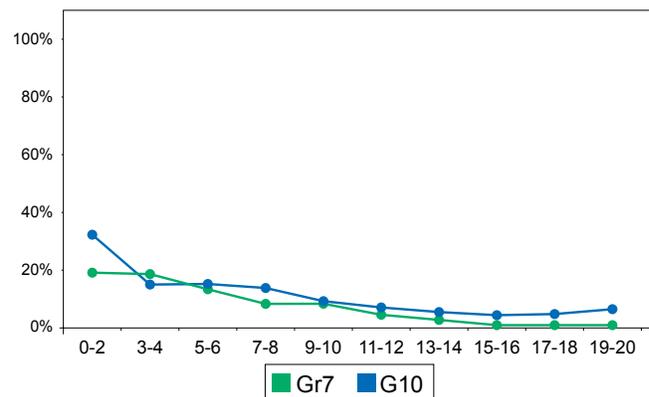
The more assets young people have, the less likely they are to engage in a wide range of risky behaviours, and the more positive and successful their development is likely to be. The Search Institute identifies 40 Developmental Assets that are essential for healthy child and youth development. The assets are divided under eight categories: support, empowerment, boundaries/expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity.

## Building Developmental Assets

Anyone who works with children and youth can help them build assets. In fact, much of what adults who work with young people already do on a regular basis helps with asset development. Asset-building can happen through something as simple as an affirming comment from a hockey coach, or when a police officer takes the time to learn the names of the young people he or she meets or praises them for good behaviour. It happens when a teacher engages in goal setting activities with students, or a shopper thanks a helpful cashier, or a school provides a safe place for young people to meet after school hours. One of the really appealing aspects of this framework is that anyone can help build Developmental Assets.

The findings from the Halton Youth Survey illustrate the powerful relationship between Developmental Assets and adolescent behaviour. The following graphs show that students with more assets are less likely to experience depression and more likely to perform well at school.

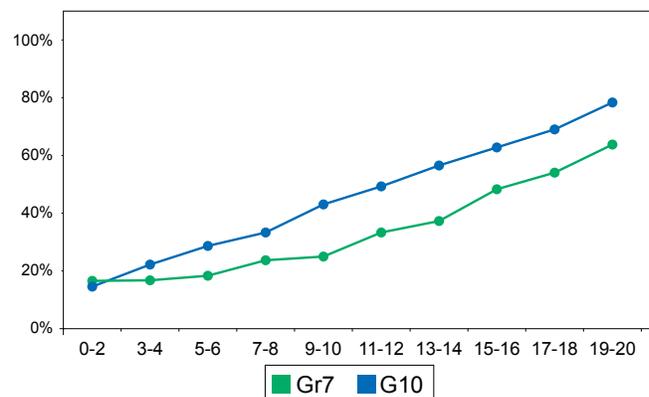
**Percent of students who are at risk for depression, by number of Developmental Assets**



Data Source: HYS, 2009-2010

HYS items were adapted from the Developmental Assets Profile Survey with permissions. Copyright © 2004 by Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN, USA. All rights reserved.

**Percent of students who usually get 'A' grades in school, by number of Developmental Assets**



Data Source: HYS, 2009-2010

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# Halton 7 Population Results & Indicators



Our Kids Network’s vision is “All children thrive!” Thriving is defined as growing strongly and vigorously and “doing well.” Thriving describes a child’s present state, but is also focused on his or her future prospects. By using a process (Research-Based Accountability) that begins with the end in mind and works backwards, step by step, Our Kids Network has identified seven conditions of well-being that children, families, and the community as a whole need to thrive. These conditions are known as the “Halton 7.”

The 2011 Report Card includes a collection of community indicators that measure the progress of Halton children. Community indicators are valuable tools for improving the quality of life and are a necessary ingredient for sustainable change. The Report Card shows how well Halton is doing in achieving these seven results.

## **Children are healthy**

Good health is a prerequisite for positive outcomes for children and youth. Both physical and emotional health are valued in this result. In addition, given the critical brain development that takes place in the first 12 months of life, infant health is closely monitored.

Indicators:

- At-risk births
- Healthy eating
- Healthy body weight
- Physical activity
- Mental health

## **Children are learning**

Learning is one of the cornerstones for success in life and starts at birth. Community progress for this result will show that children are learning both in their preschool and school years.

Indicators:

- Preschool learning opportunities
- Developmental readiness at kindergarten
- Student achievement (EQAO)
- School engagement

## **Children are positively connected**

All children need positive connections to their parents/caregivers, peers, school and community.

Indicators:

- Supportive and caring environments
- Boundaries and expectations
- Commitment to learning
- Positive values
- Social competencies

## **Children are safe**

Safe environments benefit children by providing a sense of personal security that allows them to take maximum advantage of learning, playing and making new friendships.

Indicators:

- Serious injury
- At-risk behaviours
- Safety from harm

## **Families are strong and stable**

Strong and stable family and child care environments provide stimulating, interactive experiences to nurture a child's positive development.

Indicators:

- Child care capacity
- Quality child care
- Parenting capacity
- Parental monitoring
- Quality time at home with family

## **Schools are connected to the community**

Children spend a great deal of their first 8 years learning in schools, thus, how schools connect to their community is important. Progress in this area will show good connections between schools, parents, community resources and the local neighbourhood.

Indicators:

- Parental involvement in schools
- Youth as resources
- Volunteerism
- Community use of schools

## **Neighbourhoods are where we live, work and play**

Children thrive in neighbourhoods that are safe and connected. Neighbourhoods that can meet all of our needs are valued.

Indicators:

- Neighbourhood safety
- Neighbourhood cohesion
- Walkability
- Caring for the community

# Children Are Healthy

The 2011 Report Card considers various issues associated with child health, including birth weight, newborn and childhood screening, nutrition, physical activity, and mental and emotional health.

## Key indicators and findings in Halton

### At-risk births

#### Key Indicators

- At-risk births for developmental difficulty
- Low birth weight

#### Key Findings

- The percentage of babies born at risk for future developmental difficulties in Halton (16%) is lower than the provincial average (23%).
- There has been little change in the rate of babies born at risk. Results show that the percentage of Halton infants born at risk for future developmental difficulties decreased slightly between 2008 and 2010, from 18% to 16%.
- In Halton, the percentage of babies born with low birth weight is slightly increasing (from 5% to 7% between 2004 and 2010).

### Healthy eating

#### Key Indicator

- Daily breakfast intake

#### Key Findings

- Eating breakfast every day is greatest among 5-year-olds and significantly declines as the child ages.
- Daily breakfast consumption among youth differs by municipality. For 12-year-olds, the rate of daily breakfast consumption is significantly higher in Oakville and Burlington. For 15 year-olds, the rate is significantly higher in Oakville only.

### Physical health

#### Key Indicators

- Healthy body weight
- Physical activity

#### Key Findings

- Rates of childhood obesity in Halton are similar to rates in Canada. Statistics Canada reports 21% of 2- to 5-year-olds are obese; among 12- to 17-year-olds, the figure is 29%. Obesity rates among 5-year-olds in Halton (21%) have remained consistent from 2006 to 2009. Among youth, obesity rates have increased by 3% from 2006 (16%) to 2009 (19%).
- In Halton, rates of obesity are significantly higher for 5-year-olds (21%) and 15-year-olds (22%) compared to 12-year-olds (16%).
- The percentage of 12- and 15-year-olds who are physically active (by Health Canada's recommendations) has declined slightly from 2006 to 2009.

### Adolescent and youth mental health

#### Key Indicators

- Depression
- Self-esteem
- View of personal future
- Personal power

#### Key Findings

- In Halton, 7% of youth are at risk for depression.
- Risk for depression significantly differs by age, with a higher percentage of 15-year-olds (9%) at risk compared to 12-year-olds (5%).
- Overall, 71% of youth reported high levels of self-esteem, with a greater percentage of males (75%) reporting high self-esteem in comparison to females (68%).
- Levels of self-esteem, positive view of personal future, and perception of personal power decrease as a child ages.

# Children Are Learning

Development and learning patterns are shaped by each child's family, culture, and daily experiences. The quality of interpersonal relationships and experiences, family values and beliefs, and the range of programs and supports available all have an impact on the pattern and rate of development and learning.

## Key indicators and findings in Halton

### During the preschool years

#### Key Indicator

- Preschool learning opportunities

#### Key Findings

- Families in Halton continue to involve their children in preschool learning opportunities. The percentage of 5-year-olds involved in preschool learning programs has risen from 28% in 2006 to 37% in 2009.

### On entry into Grade 1

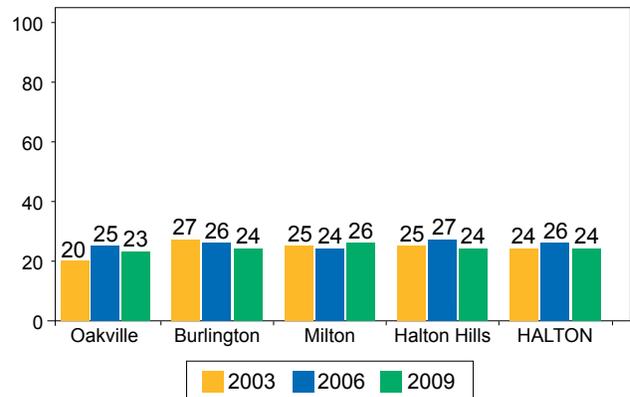
#### Key Indicator

- Developmental readiness at kindergarten

#### Key Findings

- There has been no change in the rate of 5-year-olds (24%) who are developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains on the Early Development Instrument. This represents approximately 1,220 vulnerable 5-year-olds in Halton.
- The percentage of vulnerable children is similar among the four municipalities.

Percent of 5-year-olds developmentally vulnerable on 1 or more domains, 2003-2009



Data Source: EDI, 2003; 2006 & 2009

### During the school years

#### Key Indicators

- Student achievement at Grades 3, 6, and 9
- School engagement
- Participation in youth programs

#### Key Findings

- Students in Halton continue to meet the provincial expectations for reading and math at greater rates than students living elsewhere in Ontario.
- Student reading and math achievement rates have significantly increased in Halton since 2007.
- Overall, 74% of youth reported having high levels of engagement with their school. Oakville students are statistically more likely to have high levels of school engagement than students in the other municipalities.
- In Halton, 12-year-olds (63%) were more likely to participate in youth programs than 15-year-olds (45%).

# Children Are Positively Connected

A vital component of child and youth development is connecting with parents, peers, schools, and communities. In the early years, parental connections form the secure base from which a child can explore his or her environment and develop a sense of competency. According to a report released by the Canadian Institute for Health Information, youth who say that they have positive ties with family, school, peers, and the community tend to be in better health and have higher self-worth.

## Key indicators and findings in Halton

### Developmental Asset category: Supportive and caring environments

#### Key Indicators

- Family support
- Caring neighbourhood
- Caring school climate

#### Key Findings

- Rates of positive family support differ by age. A significantly higher percentage of 12-year-olds (72%) reported feeling loved and encouraged by their families than 15-year-olds (53%).
- Overall, 63% of youth in Halton reported feeling that their neighbours cared about them. Youth in Halton Hills are statistically more likely to report feeling cared about by their neighbours than youth in other municipalities.

### Developmental Asset category: Boundaries & expectations

#### Key Indicator

- Positive peer influence

#### Key Findings

- Rates of positive peer influence decrease as children age. In Halton, 12-year-olds (75%) are more likely to report having positive peer influences in comparison to 15-year-olds (44%).

### Developmental Asset category: Commitment to learning

#### Key Indicator

- Bonding to school

#### Key Findings

- The percentage of youth who have developed strong bonds to their school statistically differs by age. A higher percentage of 12-year-olds (51%) report that they care about their school compared to 15-year-olds (44%).

### Developmental Asset category: Positive values

#### Key Indicators

- Equality and social justice
- Spiritual engagement

#### Key Findings

- Comparisons among all youth show that a significantly higher percentage of females (50%) than males (35%) report placing a high value on promoting equality and social justice.

### Developmental Asset category: Social competencies

#### Key Indicator

- Peer connectedness

#### Key Findings

- Overall, levels of peer connectedness are high with 74% of 12-year-olds and 73% of 15-year-olds reporting close relationships with their peers.

# Children Are Safe

The 2011 Report Card considers many indicators in assessing children's safety at home, at school, and in the community, all of which are important in helping them thrive. Safe environments benefit children by providing a sense of personal security that allows them to take maximum advantage of learning and social opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

## Key indicators and findings in Halton

### Safety from injury

#### Key Indicator

- Serious injury

#### Key Findings

- For the first time in 2009, high school students were asked about injuries in the past year. High school students (31%) were significantly more likely to report experiencing serious injury than 5-year-olds (8%).

### Safety from high-risk behaviours

#### Key Indicators

- Involvement in criminal activity
- Heavy drinking
- Smoking cigarettes
- Cannabis use

#### Key Findings

- Involvement in criminal activity was significantly greater for 15-year-olds (26%) than 12-year-olds (14%).
- The percentage of youth participating in heavy drinking at least once in the past year decreased from 2006 to 2009. For 12-year-olds the rate decreased from 10% to 6% and for 15-year-olds from 50% to 47%.



- Halton youth continue to adopt cigarette-smoking at rates similar to those of youth in Ontario. Statistics show that 1% of Halton 12-year-olds and 13% of 15-year-olds are currently smoking.
- The self-reported rate of cannabis use among students has not changed from 2006 to 2009. In Halton, the reported rate of cannabis use among 12-year-olds is 1%. For those aged 15, the rate increases to 25%.

### Safety from harm

#### Key Indicators

- Bullying
- Sense of safety

#### Key Findings

- In Halton, 39% of 12-year-olds and 28% of 15-year-olds have experienced some form of bullying at school.
- Overall, 86% of youth feel safe at school and in their neighbourhood. Comparisons among municipalities show that Milton youth are less likely to feel safe at school and in their neighbourhood.

# Families Are Strong and Stable

Strong families are the building blocks to a stable community. Strong families meet challenges and adapt to change. They provide the first line of emotional, social, and financial support to each other. Research into family influences on children and youth shows that parents who set firm boundaries, and are empathetic and nurturing, contribute to children's positive social development and good health. Stability in the home, the emotional availability of parents and how well children communicate with their parents are important protective factors.<sup>2</sup>

## Key indicators and findings in Halton

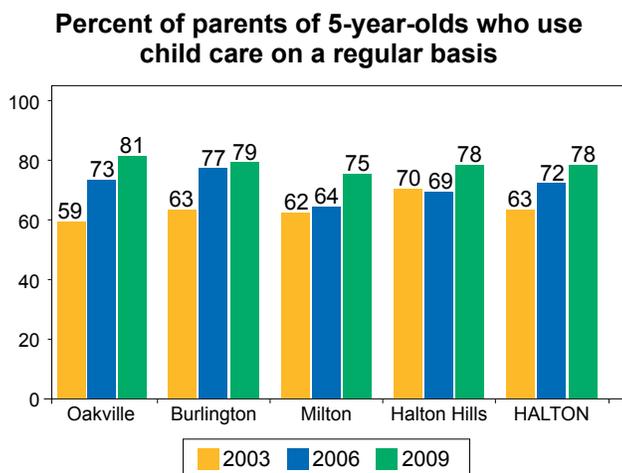
### Child care capacity

#### Key Indicators

- Child care space
- Use of child care

#### Key Findings

- In Halton, there has been a significant increase in the use of child care between 2003 and 2009; rates have increased from 63% to 78%.
- Similar trends in child care use are seen across the four municipalities.



Data Source: KPS, 2009; HYS, 2009-2010

### Quality child care

#### Key Indicator

- Quality First program

#### Key Findings

- More than 120 child care centres, representing 7,577 licensed child care spaces, are participating in Quality First, along with 1,195 Early Childhood Educators and centre staff.

### Parenting capacity

#### Key Indicators

- Parenting supports
- Positive family communication

#### Key Findings

- Most parents of 5-year-olds (91%) feel comfortable seeking advice about parenting.
- Approximately half of Halton's youth report high levels of positive communication with their parents or caregivers.

### Parental monitoring

#### Key Indicator

- Family boundaries

#### Key Findings

- Boundaries established by parents decrease as their children age, with a higher percentage of 12-year-olds (69%) reporting high levels of boundaries compared to 15-year-olds (44%).

### Quality time at home with family

#### Key Indicators

- Quality time spent with family
- Regular family meals

#### Key Findings

- Quality time spent at home with family varies by age, with 12-year-olds (70%) more likely to report spending time with family at home than 15-year-olds (55%). Among 15-year-olds, females (59%) are significantly more likely to report spending time at home than males (51%).
- Eating meals together regularly as a family decreases as a child ages.

# Schools Are Connected to the Community

Schools with the most successful community involvement programs are those offering a variety of opportunities for parents, youth and the members of the community to participate. When parents or caregivers are actively involved in their child's school, learning improves. Schools that are connected to the community engage students, parents and caregivers, communicate with them regularly, and include them in the learning process.

## Key indicators and findings in Halton

### Connection to parents

#### Key Indicators

- Parent involvement in schools
- Participation in community activities or events held at a school

#### Key Findings

- Rates of parental involvement are low across Halton, with only 31% of parents of 5-year-old children reporting involvement in their child's school.
- Less than half (42%) of parents surveyed have participated in a community activity or event held at school.

### Youth contributions to the community

#### Key Indicators

- Youth as resources
- Volunteerism

#### Key Findings

- Approximately 40% of youth feel that they can make a difference in their community.
- Volunteerism among youth differs by age, with 15-year-olds (40%) reporting higher levels of volunteerism than 12-year-olds (31%).

### Community use of schools

#### Key Indicator

- Our Kids Network Neighbourhood Hubs

#### Key Findings

- Since 2005, there has been a significant increase in the number children and adults served by OKN Hubs.
- From 2008 to 2010, the number of walk-ins and referrals to OKN Hubs significantly rose from 370 to 1,273.



# Neighbourhood Are Where We Live, Work, and Play

The social environment and neighbourhood vitality are strongly linked to the overall health of a community. Researchers have identified that healthy neighbourhoods are a significant determinant of well-being for individuals and families, and specify that neighbourhoods have an impact on children's learning and health outcomes.<sup>3,4,5</sup> Some qualities of a healthy community include a clean and safe physical environment, equality and social justice, strong supportive relationships and caring for others, strong local culture, neighbourhood cohesion, a vital economy, and protection of the natural environment and green spaces.

## Key indicators and findings in Halton

### Safe and supportive neighbourhoods

#### Key Indicator

- Neighbourhood safety

#### Key Findings

- Almost all (97%) parents of 5-year-old children believe that their neighbourhood is a safe place to raise children, up from 92% reported in 2003.
- All four municipalities have similar perceptions of safety. Since 2003, all have seen similar increases in the percentage reporting strong neighbourhood safety.

### Neighbourhood social cohesion

#### Key Indicator

- Neighbourhood cohesion

#### Key Findings

- Less than one-fifth (18%) of Halton parents report strong neighbourhood social cohesion. The rate of social cohesion is highest in Halton Hills, which was the only community to see increases in rates of social cohesion between 2006 and 2009.

### Walkability and friendly spaces

#### Key Indicator

- Walkability

#### Key Findings

- One-third (31%) of Halton youth walk to school every day.

### Caring for the community

#### Key Indicator

- Caring for the community

#### Key Findings

- On average, 18% of youth value helping other people and caring for the community.
- The percentage of females (21%) with this asset is substantially higher than the percentage of males (16%).



# Future Directions for Our Kids Network



With the six-year pilot initiative complete and solid data to inform our decisions, Our Kids Network has made a commitment to sustain the momentum. A plan for stable funding is in motion, we have a solid infrastructure, and we have developed and shared a five-year strategic plan.

## Vision

All Children Thrive!

## Mission

To promote the healthy development, security, and safety of all children, youth, and families through neighbourhood collaboration, service integration, and measuring results

## Strategic Directions

- Ensuring sustainable resources
- Conducting applied research
- Maximizing neighbourhood access to programs and services
- Building capacity to meet changing demographics
- Education, awareness and advocacy

## Building resilience with Developmental Assets

Building resilience in communities and increasing capacity in all sectors is our focus for the coming years. Developmental Assets is one of the strategies we will use to evaluate our progress within the Halton 7. Our Kids Network partners are already mobilizing to put a Halton-wide Developmental Assets strategy in place by engaging community partners to strategize, share, and collaborate. Through training and education we want to further our community's understanding of Developmental Assets and develop common goals and language. We will equip those working with children, youth, and their families to take action and empower families to better support their children.

“The 21<sup>st</sup> century will belong to our children and our children's children. It is their dreams and aspirations, shaped by the circumstances into which they are born and which surround them as they grow up, that will give this century its final definition.”

– *The Honourable Landon Pearson,  
internationally renowned child advocate  
and retired senator*

These organizations form the foundation of Our Kids Network: Halton Children’s Aid Society; Regional Municipality of Halton; Halton Regional Police Services; Halton District School Board; Halton Catholic District School Board; ROCK Reach Out Centre for Kids, Halton Multicultural Council; and ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment and Development. These “Protocol Partners” have signed a formal agreement to work together to provide financial support and share information and resources to further the vision and mission of Our Kids Network.



The OKN mission is carried out by Halton agencies and individuals focused on early learning and care; library services; child, youth, and family services; faith-based organizations; educational institutions; and those working in mental health special needs. Many people from participating agencies and the Protocol Partners participate to address the most important issues affecting children, youth, and families. OKN’s three neighbourhood-based “Hubs” are a key initiative, and provide space and resources for families, schools, and the community to work together to support children and youth.

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