



Media Release

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Our Kids Network reports give insight into wellbeing of Halton children and youth Survey asked youth about peer relationships, safety, bullying, and physical activity

Halton Our Kids Network (OKN) has released two new reports outlining the results of the 2015-2016 Tell Them From Me /OurSCHOOL surveys of elementary and secondary students across Halton Region. The results show that most Halton students value what they're learning in school, have at least one close friend, and are physically active; at the same time, some students are lacking a sense of belonging at school and many are exceeding the recommendations for daily recreational screen time.

Dr. Elisabeth Wells is Research and Knowledge Broker for OKN. She said the survey results provide Halton-specific information, not only to inform the community, but also to help professionals and organizations working with children, youth, and families make informed decisions about programs and services.

“Our Kids Network collects and shares information to identify vulnerabilities and strengths in the population of children and youth. This helps our partners identify and implement changes needed to fill any gaps.”

Halton is the first community to work with The Learning Bar Inc. research institute (thelearningbar.com) to analyze and report the school survey data to the community. The researchers analyzed responses representing 18,047 students in grades 4 to 6 and 17,481 students in grades 9 to 12. Students in the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic District School Board were invited to participate. The survey is web-based and students complete it voluntarily and anonymously at school.

The data represent important aspects of youth experiences, including peer relationships, safety, bullying, and physical activity. Results are broken out by grade, sex, and newcomer status. OKN's Director Elena DiBattista said the reports are intended to be used to start conversations.

“The survey results give the community relevant, rich data to add to what they already know about children and youth in Halton. Students told us what their school lives are like and what is important to them. Now we can act on that information.”

Highlights of the findings:

Halton students are connecting with close friends but there is work to do to ensure students feel that school is a place they belong.

- The majority of elementary and secondary school students report having more than one friend they can trust.
- When elementary students were asked if school was a place where they feel like they belong, just 68% of students agreed or strongly agreed. Among high school students, females were less likely to feel included in school activities and feel accepted at school compared to males.
- Grade 4 students report the highest level of any type of bullying, with 47% indicating they've been subject to bullying within the last four weeks. Bullying decreases as grade increases.

Learning and achievement matter to Halton students.

- The majority of elementary students (96%) agree or strongly agree that doing well in school is important for when they grow up.

Halton children and youth are physically active; at the same time, many students are exceeding recommended screen time limits.

- Fifty-four percent of elementary students and 65% of secondary students report engaging in 30 minutes or more of intense physical activity after school each day.
- Many students are exceeding the recommended recreational screen time limit (Canadian Society for Exercise and Physiology, 2012), with 43% of elementary students and 90% of secondary students spending two hours or more in front of a screen after school each day.

OKN is a Halton-wide partnership of organizations and agencies serving children and youth. Partners are from education, government, health, mental health, special needs, police services, and the multicultural community.

“We’re looking forward to sharing the data about students’ experiences and views,” Wells said. “This information will be used by professionals who provide programs and set policies to help families learn how to have a positive impact on the wellbeing and development of their children and teens. And we can learn how to better engage youth in the matters that affect them. We’re sure these reports will be used to have positive and long-lasting impact on Halton children, youth, and families.”

Our Kids Network is online at ourkidsnetwork.ca. The 2015-2016 Tell Them From Me/OurSCHOOL surveys of elementary and secondary students can be found at <http://www.ourkidsnetwork.ca/Public/Our-Research>

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