



## **Elementary School Students Tell Us What's Important to Them:**

Connection and Relationships  
Learning and Achievement  
Active Lifestyle  
Feeling Safe  
And more...

**Summary of findings from the Tell Them From Me (TTFM) /  
OurSCHOOL Survey in Halton**

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# Our Kids Network

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Our Kids Network is a Halton-wide partnership of organizations and agencies serving children and youth. Our work is focused on child development from birth to 18 years. Partners from education, government, health, mental health and special needs, police services, and the multicultural community provide the backbone structure that guides our vision, strategy, planning, and activities.

OKN is a national leader in mobilizing knowledge to strengthen communities and improve life for families and children. We have established the “Halton 7” – seven fundamental conditions of high quality of life – and we use them to measure the progress of our work. For more information about the Halton 7 Population Results, visit [www.ourkidsnetwork.ca](http://www.ourkidsnetwork.ca).



# TTFM / OurSCHOOL Elementary School Survey

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TTFM / OurSCHOOL Elementary School Survey, developed and coordinated by the Learning Bar Inc., 2009, measures experiences at school and physical and mental wellbeing.

All 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.

TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey includes topics such as bullying, peer relationships, wellbeing, and participation in activities outside of school. The results reported here are a high-level summary of the results for grades 4 to 6. We examine the results by grade, sex, and newcomer or immigration status.

This summary is intended as a conversation starter. It is one more piece of information to add to what you already know about children, youth, and families in Halton. We hope that it will provide insights on the wellbeing and experiences of our children and youth, and build awareness of the needs of children in Halton.

These results complement other OKN research about children, youth, and families in Halton, including:

- The **Kindergarten Parent Survey (KPS)**, a Halton-designed survey of parents of kindergarten-aged children
- The **Halton Youth Parent Survey**, a Halton-designed survey of parents of grades 7 and 10 students
- **TTFM / OurSCHOOL Secondary Student Survey Community Profile**

More information is available online at [www.ourkidsnetwork.ca/Public/Our-Research](http://www.ourkidsnetwork.ca/Public/Our-Research)

# Survey Highlights

1

Connectedness and relationships matter. Strong relationships build strong children and youth. Research consistently shows a statistical relationship between quality of relationships and health and wellbeing. The majority of students report having more than one friend they can trust and report making friends easily, but belongingness needs more work. When students were asked if school is a place where they feel like they belong, just 68% of students agree or strongly agree. Further, the percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that they feel accepted for who they are drops from 83% in grade 4 to 77% in grade 6.



2

Regular physical activity for youth is an important indicator of wellbeing and has numerous benefits that extend into adulthood. Halton elementary students are physically active. Fifty-four percent of students report engaging in 30 minutes or more of intense physical activity after school each day. After-school physical activity increases steadily with grade.



Halton Region is a vibrant community located in Southern Ontario with nearly 550,000 residents and four municipalities – the City of Burlington and the towns of Halton Hills, Milton, and Oakville. Halton is one of the fastest growing communities in the province. Between 2006 and 2016, Halton's population increased by 25%, compared to an 11% increase overall in Ontario during this time period.

As Halton Region continues to grow, the population is also becoming more diverse. Nearly one in three Halton residents is an immigrant. In 2016, there were more than 20,000 newcomers living in Halton (those having immigrated to Canada in the last five years), an increase from about 13,000 newcomers in 2006.

# 3

Halton elementary students strongly believe in the value of learning and achievement for their future success. The majority of students (96%) agree or strongly agree that doing well in school is important for when they grow up, and this remains stable across grades.



# 4

Canadian sedentary behaviour guidelines for children aged 5 to 11 (from the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2012) recommend limiting recreational screen time to no more than two hours per day. Forty-three percent of students are spending two hours or more in front of a screen after school each day, and screen time increases steadily with grade.



# 5

Bullying can lead to significant health, social, and emotional problems. Grade 4 students report the highest level of any type of bullying in the past four weeks. After grade 4, this percentage decreases steadily from 47% in grade 4 to 41% in grade 6. Cyber-bullying is the least commonly reported type of bullying experienced by elementary students.



As a result of the shifting demographic profile of Halton Region and growth in the newcomer population, this report highlights the experiences and wellbeing of immigrant students in Halton. This information can be used by community partners to better understand the needs of newcomer children in Halton, and help make Halton a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive place for immigrant families.

# Who Participated?

The 2015-16 TTFM / OurSCHOOL elementary survey was completed by students in grades 4, 5, and 6 at all eligible schools in Halton. The survey results include a total of 126 schools, representing 18,047 students from the Halton Catholic District School Board and the Halton District School Board (see Table 1)<sup>1</sup>.

	Students	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Total Students
Halton	Eligible	6,699	6,635	6,825	20,159
	Participated	6,030	6,015	6,002	18,047
	Response Rate	90%	91%	88%	90%
Gender	Female (%)	2,951 (49)	2,938 (49)	2,914 (49)	8,803 (49)
	Male (%)	3,079 (51)	3,077 (51)	3,088 (51)	9,244 (51)
Municipality	Oakville	2,131	2,084	2,115	6,330
	Burlington	1,599	1,730	1,754	5,083
	Milton	1,562	1,488	1,409	4,459
	Halton Hills	738	713	724	2,175

<sup>1</sup> TTFM / OurSCHOOL elementary survey was completed by students in both school boards at various times between October 2015 and June 2016. Grades 7 and 8 were excluded from the analyses due to differences in how the surveys were administered by school boards. The survey is voluntary and if students did not respond to the question, the missing responses were not included in the calculation of percentages.

The majority of students were born in Canada (86%) and speak English most often at home (68%). Eight percent of students were born elsewhere and have lived in Canada for five years or more, and 6% of students are newcomers who have been living in Canada for less than five years.

The TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey relies on self-reported information from students. Caution should be exercised when interpreting the meaning of the findings as they may not be representative of all students. Be cautious and do not over-interpret a small difference in a few percentage points between categories, such as grade, males and females, and newcomer status.

The data in this report is from the TTFM / OurSCHOOL elementary school survey, which is separate and different from the secondary school survey conducted by the Learning Bar Inc., 2009. As such, the two reports should not be compared due to differences in survey item wording and response categories.

Unless otherwise noted, all differences described in this report are statistically significant.



# Life in School

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This section of the report examines the TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey findings on students' perceptions of their school experience, including their beliefs about learning and achievement, participation in sports, experience of safety at school, and bullying.

## Beliefs about learning and achievement

TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey asks students a number of questions about their beliefs related to school outcomes. Elementary students believe the relationship between school achievement and adult success is very strong.

- The majority of students (96%) agree or strongly agree that doing well in school is important for when they grow up. This finding does not vary by grade.
- Across all grades, a very high percentage of students (90%) agree or strongly agree that what they are taught in school is important.
- As grade increases, there is a pronounced decrease in the percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that what they learn in school is useful in their everyday lives.
- None of the results described above varied significantly by newcomer or immigration status.

Percentage of students who agree/strongly agree that what they learn in school is useful in their everyday lives, by grade. (TTFM / OurSCHOOL, 2015-16)



Grade 4:  
**84%**

Grade 5:  
**80%**

Grade 6:  
**75%**

## Participation in sports at school

Elementary students are participating in sports regularly at school.

- Three out of four students report playing school sports at least once a week.
- The percentage of students reporting that they play school sports at least once a week increases with grade, from 74% in grade 4 to 77% in grade 6.
- Girls are less likely than boys to report playing school sports at least once a week (71% vs. 80%, respectively).
- Students born in Canada are slightly less likely to play sports at least once a week at school (75%), compared to newcomer students (78%) and students born elsewhere who have lived in Canada for five years or more (79%).

Percentage of students who play school sports at least once a week, by sex. (TTFM / OurSCHOOL, 2015/16)



71% of girls

80% of boys

# Feeling Safe

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Students were asked whether they felt safe at school and whether they felt safe on their way to and from school. Students were also asked about fighting at school and whether they have ever stayed home due to safety concerns.

- In general, elementary students feel safe at school – 77% of students agree or strongly agree that they feel safe at school.
- The majority of students report that they feel safe on their way to school (83%), and on their way home from school (84%).
- Sixteen percent of students report being in a physical fight at school in the past four weeks. Boys are three times more likely to have been in a physical fight at school compared to girls (24% vs. 8%, respectively).



**77%** of elementary students feel safe at school

# Bullying

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Bullying is a global problem in schools and in communities. Bullying can lead to significant health, social, and emotional problems and it is important to understand and continue to discuss bullying.

Elementary students are provided with the following explanation about bullying: Bullying is when a person tries to hurt another person and does it more than once. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or social, and can also take place over the internet with emails or text messages. The bully usually has power over the person being bullied, such as when the bully is bigger or more popular. Sometimes a group of students will bully others.

Students were asked, yes or no, in the past four weeks, has the same person:

Pushed or punched you more than once? (Physical bullying)

Called you names or teased you more than once? (Verbal bullying)

Told lies about you or tried to make you look bad more than once? (Social bullying)

Used email, text messages, or social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to tease or threaten you more than once? (Cyber bullying)

- Grade 4 students report the highest level of any type of bullying in the past four weeks. After grade 4, this percentage decreases steadily, from 47% in grade 4 to 41% in grade 6.
- Boys are more likely to report experiencing any type of bullying compared to girls (46% vs. 41%, respectively).
- Reports of bullying do not vary by newcomer or immigration status.
- Examining the type of bullying shows that verbal bullying and social bullying are the most commonly reported forms of bullying across sex and grade (30% report verbal and 29% report social). The least common type of bullying is cyber-bullying (5%). The findings do not differ by newcomer or immigration status.
- Boys are more than twice as likely as girls to report experiencing physical bullying more than once in the past four weeks (23% for boys vs. 11% for girls). The other types of bullying show similar rates for both boys and girls.
- Students were also asked when and where bullying was most common. Bullying typically occurs outside at school (e.g., playground or parking lot) and 19% of students report that bullying most commonly occurs during recess.

Successful bullying prevention includes the community and a focus on relationships. Research suggests that healthy relationships help decrease victimization, and help protect children and youth from the negative consequences associated with bullying (PREVNet, 2012). Asset-building in Halton is the foundation of meaningful relationships. Learn more at:

[www.ourkidsnetwork.ca/Public/Building-Relationship](http://www.ourkidsnetwork.ca/Public/Building-Relationship)

# Relationships

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Strong relationships build strong children and youth. Research consistently shows a statistical relationship between quality of relationships and health and wellbeing. It's important to monitor how our youth are doing with their friends at school, and Tell Them From Me (TTFM) / OurSCHOOL Survey in Halton provides us with some indicators of belonging and friendships at school.

## Belonging

The TTFM / OurSCHOOL elementary survey asks students four questions about the extent to which they feel a sense of belonging at school, including whether they feel like they make friends easily at school, their feelings of acceptance, and their feelings of belonging. In general, students report high levels of acceptance and belonging.

- Seventy-six percent of students agree or strongly agree that they make friends easily at school. This finding remains stable across grades.
- Newcomer students are slightly less likely to agree or strongly agree that they make friends easily at school (73%) compared to students born in Canada (76%).
- Although three quarters of students agree or strongly agree that they make friends easily at school, when students were asked if school is a place where they feel like they belong, just 68% of students agree or strongly agree.
- This percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that they feel like school is a place where they belong decreases slightly as grade increases, dropping from 69% in grade 4 to 66% in grade 6.
- The other measures of belonging and acceptance show the same trend, with the percentage of students agreeing or strongly agreeing decreasing with grade. The most pronounced decrease is found in the percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that they feel accepted for who they are. This percentage drops from 83% in grade 4 to 77% in grade 6.
- Except for feelings of belonging at school, boys are more likely than girls to agree or strongly agree that they feel accepted and make friends more easily at school.



**76%** of students  
make friends easily  
at school

## Friendships

Friendships are vital to school aged children's wellbeing and development. TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey includes items that ask students about how many close friends they have, how often they talk to friends about their feelings, and how often they get along with others at school.

- When asked about the number of close friends at school, almost three quarters of students (73%) report that they have more than one friend at school that they trust. Twenty two percent of students have only one close friend. These rates remain stable across grades.
- Boys are more likely than girls to report having more than one close friend they can trust (76% vs. 70%, respectively).
- Students born in Canada are more likely to report having more than one close friend they can trust (74%) compared to students born elsewhere who have lived in Canada for five years or more (71%), and newcomer students who have lived in Canada for less than five years (64%).
- Only 20% of students report that they talk to a friend at school about their feelings often. Girls are twice as likely as boys to talk to a friend at school about their feelings (27% for girls vs. 13% for boys).
- Boys and girls report similar rates of getting along with others (68% and 70%, respectively).
- Fifty-eight percent of newcomer students report that they often get along with others, compared to 65% of students born elsewhere who have lived in Canada for five years or more, and 71% of students who were born in Canada.



**73%** of elementary students have more than one friend at school they trust

# Health and Wellness

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The TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey includes a number of items that measure the physical and emotional health outcomes of our children.

## Physical Wellbeing

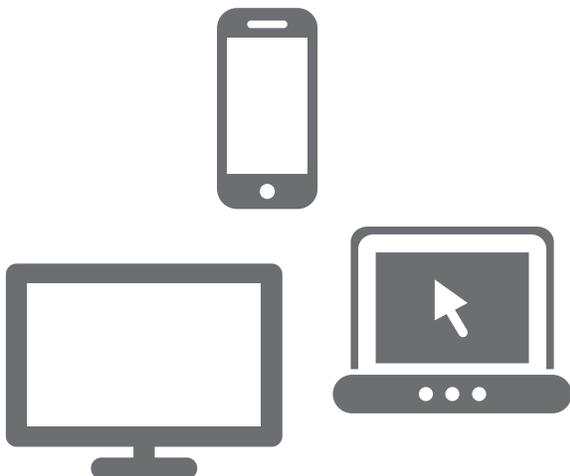
### Screen time

Canadian sedentary behaviour guidelines for children aged 5 to 11 from the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (2012) recommend limiting recreational screen time to no more than two hours per day. To calculate recreational screen time for students, we created a measure using the screen time guidelines that categorized the total amount of screen time from students' responses. We used these questions:

Two questions about how much time in minutes students spend after school each day using interactive communications technology (e.g., using a computer, tablet, or smartphone for email, gaming, and talking on the phone or texting)

One question about how much time in minutes students spend watching TV after school each day

- Forty-three percent of students spend two hours or more in front of a screen after school each day.
- Boys are more likely to exceed the recommended guideline of two hours (50%), compared to girls (42%).
- Recreational screen time increases steadily from grade 4 to 6, with 40% of grade 4 students spending two hours or more in front of a screen after school, compared to 45% in grade 5, and 53% in grade 6.
- Screen time does not vary by newcomer or immigration status.



**43%** of elementary students are spending two hours or more in front of a screen after school each day

## Physical activity

Regular physical activity is an important indicator of wellbeing and has numerous benefits that extend into adulthood. The TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey asks students how much time they spend after school each day doing physical activity that is moderate (e.g., walking, biking) and intense (e.g., activity that made them sweat or out of breath).

- Fifty-four percent of students report engaging in 30 minutes or more of intense physical activity after school each day.
- Boys are more likely to engage in intense physical activity for 30 minutes or more (57%), compared to girls (52%).
- Physical activity increases slightly with grade. Fifty-one percent of students in grade 4 report engaging in intense physical activity for 30 minutes or more, compared to 57% in grade 5, and 52% in grade 6.
- Rates of intense physical activity do not vary by immigration or newcomer status.
- Students are more likely to engage in light physical activity than intense activity. Seventy percent of students engage in light physical activity for 30 minutes or more after school each day.
- Boys are more likely to engage in 30 minutes or more of light physical activity (76%) compared to girls (64%).
- Light physical activity increases steadily with grade. Sixty-seven percent of students in grade 4 report engaging in light physical activity for 30 minutes or more, compared to 71% in grade 5, and 74% in grade 6.
- Newcomer students are much less likely to report engaging in light physical activity for 30 minutes or more after school each day (63%) compared to students born in Canada (71%) and students born elsewhere who have lived in Canada for five years or more (69%).

## Emotional Wellbeing

### Anxiety

The anxiety measure in TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey is based on a series of survey items that assess a student's feelings of worry. The Learning Bar Inc., 2009, then calculates the percentage of students that show signs of moderate to high anxiety. It is important to note that the criteria used in these calculations are not equivalent to those used in clinical diagnoses. TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey uses a more liberal threshold for assignment into the moderate and high categories of anxiety. As such, high rates of anxiety as rated by these items should not be confused with high rates of clinical anxiety in Halton students.

- Nineteen percent of students show signs of moderate to high anxiety. These rates remain relatively stable across grades.
- Newcomer students are more likely to show signs of moderate to high anxiety (23%) compared to students born in Canada (19%) and students born elsewhere who have lived in Canada for five years or more (19%).
- Girls show higher rates of anxiety compared to boys (23% vs 16%).

# Do More with Data

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The data from the TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey provide a snapshot of children experiences in Halton. The next step is to share the findings from this report and have conversations about what the results mean and how we can work together in Halton to respond to these findings.

These guidelines for interpreting and using the data can help you put research into action in your work:

- Look for patterns of findings rather than focusing on a specific finding.
- While each indicator is important, using multiple indicators as evidence of strengths and needs provides a more comprehensive representation.
- Use caution when making comparisons. Look for at least a 5% change or difference between groups. This helps to avoid “over-interpreting” small differences as being important.
- Several types of response bias have been identified related to self-report surveys. Use caution when interpreting the meaning of findings because some data may not represent all children and youth in Halton.
- Data presented are meant to provide a snapshot of information about how children and youth are doing. The data cannot explain why an indicator is at a certain level.
- Bring groups of different community partners together to talk about and explore the data.
- Use the [Data Conversation Tool](#) to work as a team and explore the data further.

For more information, visit [www.ourkidsnetwork.ca](http://www.ourkidsnetwork.ca). Explore Research (About the Data Portal) and Working Together (Early Years Initiative) for examples of how professionals relied on data in their work with children and families.

## Our Kids Network Protocol Partners

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