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Media Release

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New Halton survey finds kindergarten children doing well, while parents face growing pressures

Nearly all kindergarten children in Halton are getting along with their peers and feeling excited about learning, according to the latest Kindergarten Parent Survey (KPS), led by Our Kids Network (OKN). At the same time, the findings highlight areas where children and families may need additional support, including physical activity, parents' time and well-being, and neighbourhood connections.

The 2026 survey gathered responses from 1,956 families across Halton, offering insight into the strengths and experiences of kindergarten children and their families.

"The 2026 Kindergarten Parent Survey tells us that many kindergarten children in Halton are starting from a strong foundation," said Liz Wells, OKN Executive Director. "At the same time, parents are telling us that they are experiencing increasing pressure on their time and well-being. These findings remind us that supporting children means looking at the whole environment around them, from families and schools to neighbourhoods and community services."

Children are doing well

The survey found that 98% of kindergarten children get along with children their own age, and 97% of parents reported that their child is excited about learning. Almost all parents (98%) said their child feels safe at school and that their child's school is friendly and welcoming.

These positive social and learning experiences are important foundations for healthy child development and demonstrate the strengths that exist across Halton's communities.

Families are feeling the pressure

More parents reported feeling pressured for time and experiencing high levels of stress. In 2026, 52% of parents felt pressured for time at least five days a week, up from 44% in 2023. High levels of parental stress also increased, from 20% in 2023 to 28% in 2026.

The findings reinforce the importance of considering parent well-being as part of creating strong, stable family environments where children can thrive. Despite these pressures, many parents continue to report strong social connections and support in their lives.

Active childhoods

Physical activity is another area for continued attention. In 2026, 43% of kindergarten children were physically active for at least 60 minutes daily. Creating opportunities for children to be active through play, recreation and everyday activities can help support healthy development. Results also vary across Halton neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhoods matter

Most parents (96%) reported that their neighbourhood is a safe place to raise children. Positive neighbourhood cohesion was reported by 49% of parents and has remained stable since 2023, with results ranging from 26% to 64% across Halton neighbourhoods. This measure reflects how connected residents feel to one another and the strength of relationships and interactions among neighbours.

From data to action

The KPS provides important context for understanding children's development and the experiences of their families and communities. Through its work to interpret and share the findings, OKN helps the community understand what is changing, why it matters and where collective attention may be needed.

Schools, early learning programs, libraries, community services, recreation providers and other partners can use these findings alongside other data and local knowledge to build on what is working and identify opportunities to better support children and families.

"The opportunity now is to use what we've learned to build on what's working, understand where families are facing challenges and work together on solutions," said Wells. "The KPS gives our community another important piece of the picture, and a starting point for conversations about how we can support children and families across Halton."

Explore the KPS Highlights to learn more about the findings, or visit the OKN Data Portal to explore the data in greater detail.

Explore the 2026 Kindergarten Parent Survey Highlights.

Explore the KPS data in the OKN Data Portal.

About the Kindergarten Parent Survey

The Kindergarten Parent Survey is conducted every three years and asks Halton families with children in kindergarten about their experiences. Organized around the Halton 7, the seven evidence-based conditions of well-being needed for children, families and communities to thrive, the survey provides family and community context that complements other measures of child development.

The 2026 survey was conducted in partnership with Halton's four English and French school boards and Halton Region Children's Services, with OKN supporting data collection and sharing. This eighth survey cycle received responses from 1,956 families, representing a 34% response rate. Since 2003, 19,170 families have participated in the KPS.