

OSTA-AECO 2011 Student & Parent Survey Analysis & Results

October 21st, 2011

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario (OSTA-AECO) is committed to ensuring that all students across Ontario have a chance to speak out on the issues that matter to them. One of the ways we ensure that students' voices are heard is by conducting an annual survey – with survey questions developed by students and for students.

This year, we had the highest-ever level of participation, with 7,112 students from 70 of Ontario's English, Catholic, and French school boards – and all regions of the province – participating in the online survey. For the first time, we also co-operated with People for Education on a survey of Ontario's parents, where we asked matching questions, and provided the same opportunities for comment. 2,445 parents from 69 school boards across Ontario participated.

Student Vote and ScholarshipsCanada.com have also been close partners throughout this survey, promoting it to students across the province. The survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey.com, and students and parents were asked ten "Yes" and "No" questions about a range of education topics. Students and parents also had the ability to write comments for each question. The report includes the results, a summary analysis of the comments, and a few sample quotations from the comments.

The results point to some areas of concern, and some surprising differences between parents and students:

- Students responded overwhelmingly in favour of students' rights to establish Gay Straight Alliances. A smaller majority of parents were also in favour.
- Parents and students were fairly evenly split about whether or not students would take the Grade 10 Civics and Careers course even if it were optional – with a slight majority of students saying no, and a slight majority of parents saying yes.
- The majority of students and parents agreed that healthy food options were being offered at the school.
- Nearly half of students say they feel pressure to finish high school in four years. In comparison, only one-third of parents believe that their child feels pressure to finish in four years.
- Just under two-thirds of students say it is acceptable for students to connect with teachers through social media websites. On the other hand, the vast majority of parents say it is not acceptable.
- Students and parents overwhelmingly agreed that teachers who coach or supervise extra-curricular activities should be recognized for their contributions.

- Just over two-thirds of students say schools should take action on cyber-bullying between students when it occurs outside of school time. In contrast, nearly all parents believe that the school should become involved even when cyber-bullying takes place outside of school time.
- Just under one-half of students say that sexual education does not adequately educate students about what they encounter or expect to encounter. In comparison, almost two-thirds of parents believe that sexual education does educate their child well.
- Over one-third of students say they would not know where to go for help if they or a friend was faced with mental health issues. The percentage of parents saying they would not know where to go for help was much smaller.
- One-third of students say fees charged for sports, teams, or extracurricular activities have prevented them from participating. The results were similar among parents, with approximately one-quarter of parents saying that fees were a barrier for their children.

We hope that students, school boards, education stakeholders, and the Ministry of Education use the results of this survey to support policy changes that benefit our student and parent communities.

QUICK FACT SHEET – 2011 ONTARIO STUDENT SURVEY

7,112 students from across Ontario took the Student Survey.

1. Do you think that a student wanting to establish a Gay Straight Alliance club in their school should be allowed to do so?
Yes – 87.8% or 6,246 students
No – 12.2% or 866 students
2. If the Grade 10 Civics/Careers course was optional, then would you take it?
Yes – 46.3% or 3,295 students
No – 53.7% or 3,817 students
3. Do you feel that healthy food options are being provided within your school?
Yes – 58.8% or 4,182 students
No – 41.2% or 2,930 students
4. Do you feel pressure to finish high school in four years?
Yes – 47.3% or 3,363 students
No – 52.7% or 3,749 students
5. Is it ever acceptable for students and teachers to connect through social media outlets (e.g. Facebook)?
Yes – 60.7% or 4,316 students
No – 39.3% or 2,796 students
6. Should teachers who coach/supervise extra-curricular activities be recognized for their contribution?
Yes – 97.4% or 6,930 students
No – 2.6% or 182 students
7. If cyber-bullying occurs between students outside of school time, should the school take action?
Yes – 69.5% or 4,946 students
No 30.5% or 2,166 students
8. Do you feel that sex-ed class adequately addresses concerns of a sexual nature that you have encountered and/or expect to encounter?
Yes – 55.2% or 3,926 students
No – 44.8% or 3,186 students
9. If you or a friend was experiencing mental health problems, such as stress, anxiety, or depression, would you know where to go to get help?
Yes – 63.3% or 4,522 students
No – 36.4% or 2,590 students
10. Has a fee charged for sports, teams, or extracurricular activities ever prevented you from participating?
Yes – 36.2% or 2,575 students
No – 63.8% or 4,537 students

QUICK FACT SHEET – 2011 ONTARIO PARENT SURVEY

2,445 parents from across Ontario took the Parent Survey.

1. Do you think that a student wanting to establish a Gay Straight Alliance club in their school should be allowed to do so?
Yes – 78.8% or 1,975 parents
No – 21.2% or 529 parents
2. If the Grade 10 Civics/Careers course was optional, would your child take it?
Yes – 52.2% or 1,338 parents
No – 44.8% or 1,084 parents
3. Do you feel that healthy food options are being provided within your child's school?
Yes – 59.7% or 1,435 parents
No – 40.3% or 968 parents
4. Does your child feel pressure to finish high school in four years?
Yes – 39.3% or 979 parents
No – 60.7% or 1,511 parents
5. Is it ever acceptable for students and teachers to connect through social media outlets (e.g. Facebook)?
Yes – 42.2% or 1,066 parents
No – 57.8% or 1,458 parents
6. Should teachers who coach/supervise extra-curricular activities be recognized for their contribution?
Yes – 93.7% or 2,377 parents
No – 6.3% or 160 parents
7. If cyber-bullying occurs between students outside of school time, should the school take action?
Yes – 84% or 2,129 parents
No – 16% or 404 parents
8. Do you feel that sex-ed class adequately addresses concerns of a sexual nature that your child has encountered and/or expects to encounter?
Yes – 63% or 1,490 parents
No – 37% or 875 parents
9. If your child or one of their friends was experiencing mental health problems, would you know where to go to get help?
Yes – 74.5% or 1,903 parents
No – 25.5% or 652 parents
10. Has a fee charged for sports, teams, or extracurricular activities ever prevented your child from participating?
Yes – 26.5% or 673 parents
No – 73.5% or 1,871 parents

GAY STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

Student Survey Question 1

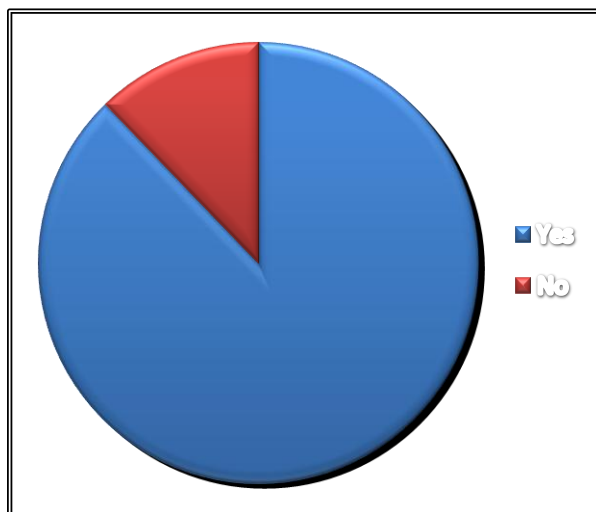
Do you think that a student wanting to establish a Gay Straight Alliance club in their school should be allowed to do so?

6, 246 students answered Yes – totalling **87.8%** of respondents

866 students votes No – totalling **12.2%** of respondents

In their comments, students said that it is their right to do so, because we live in a free and democratic country, where the Charter of Rights gives us the right to peaceful assembly. Students believe that this would help create a safe and comfortable environment for the LGBTQ community since school is the primary place of socialization and interaction for kids from a very young age. Bullying can make school a condemning and cold environment that would make the lives of these students unpleasant and unbearable.

There were a small number of students who took a more indifferent approach; stating that “they don’t see why not” or explaining that their school has already established an anti-bullying group and that it has had phenomenally positive outcomes.



The small portion of the respondents that responded no said that because of the many religious beliefs in schools, and they felt that school is not a place for a GSA.

Comments from students:

I feel students should be able to do what they wish as long as they do not force others to join their cause and they do not use means that make other students uncomfortable.

Keewatin Patricia District School Board, Grade 12, Female

I believe these clubs could provide opportunities for LGBT students to feel welcomed and express themselves in a safe environment. Especially in public schools, the administrative team should be supporting Gay Straight Alliance clubs

Peel District School Board, Grade 10, Male

I have no ill will towards anyone because of their sexuality, nor will I ever. It saddens me to see such rampant discrimination in our modern society. I see no logic in such a course of action.

Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board, Grade 11 Female

Many religions do not support gay rights, and therefore that should be also considered as no one wants to make an environment an uncomfortable one to be in.

Toronto District School Board, Grade 12, Female

Parent Survey Question 1

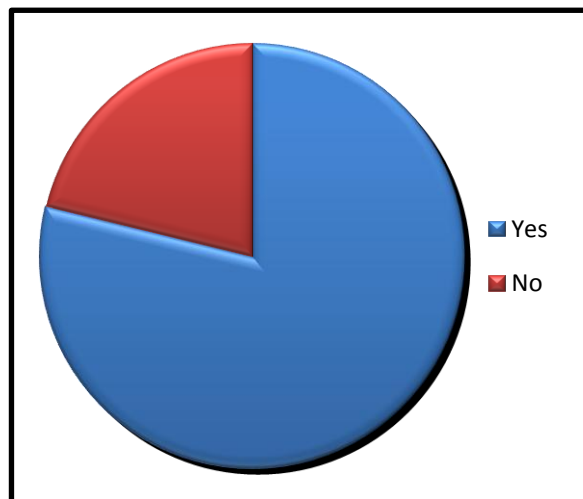
Do you think that a student wanting to establish a Gay Straight Alliance club in their school should be allowed to do so?

1,975 parents answered Yes – totalling **78.8%** of respondents.

529 parents answered No – totalling **21.2%** of respondents.

In their comments, parents gave two main arguments for the affirmative: a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) or an anti-bullying group for LGBTQ youth is beneficial to all students, and LGBTQ youth in particular; and it is any student's right to form whatever club they want.

Among the 21% of parents who did not support students' being allowed to set up GSAs, most said that a club based solely on sexuality has no place in the education system, but rather in the community. Some also emphasized that it was important to have support groups for anti-bullying within the school.



While fewer parents than students welcome the idea of GSAs in schools, overall, the majority of parents agree that GSAs or anti-bullying groups for LGBTQ youth belong in schools. However, many parents comment that GSAs must have teacher supervision and should be found primarily in secondary schools where the maturity level of students is higher than students in elementary schools.

Comments from parents:

I think that all students should be allowed to establish clubs as long as they have an adult sponsor to ensure that the club is a positive experience for all involved.

Parent of a Grade 10 student, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

Students should be able to organize themselves into groups for learning and educational purposes as well as for advocacy. As long as no harm comes to any student population as a result of this kind of organizing, students should be supported and allowed to express themselves and their interests.

Parent of a Grade 8 student, Upper Grand District School Board

Je crois que les élèves de 7e à 12e années sont trop jeunes et ils sont très influencés par des modèles des jeunes ou d'adultes. Alors il est souhaitable qu'on favorise une éducation sexuelle pour expliquer aux enfants les conséquences à long terme d'un bon et d'un mauvais choix par rapport à l'orientation sexuelle qu'ils auront à faire pour le reste de leur vie.

Parent of Grade 11 and 12 students, Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario,

I think that all students should be supported but these are very polarizing groups. I would prefer to see a different type of group established that supported all students who might be subject to bullying.

Parent of a Grade 10 student, Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

CIVICS & CAREERS

Student Survey Question 2

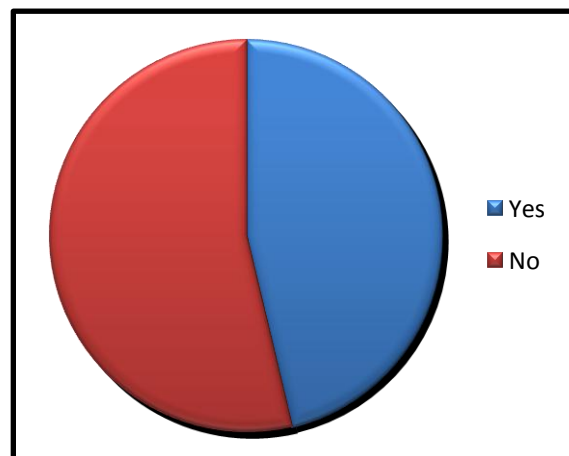
If the Grade 10 Civics/Careers course was optional, would you take it?

3,295 students answered Yes – totalling **46.3%** of respondents

3,817 students answered No – totalling **53.7%** of respondents

In their comments, many students said that the Grade 10 Civics/Careers course needs to be more intellectually stimulating. Students' opinions differed, however, regarding the usefulness of the course.

Of those who commented, about a third of students said that the course was extremely useful. Comments often praised the course for teaching students valuable skills, such as how to write resumes whereas many students criticized the personality tests, which according to them, were a waste of time. Moreover, students often said that it would be more effective if the course was covered in an assembly or workshop, because students will spend their own time thinking about their future careers anyways.



Some of the students praised the course because it helped them learn about things that every citizen should know. On the other hand, students often criticized the course for being overly dry and uninteresting. Overall, many students who took the course admitted that they did not see how important the course was until after they took it. As a result, many of the students believe that the course should remain mandatory, but that changes need to be made.

Comments from students:

I think that the Grade 10 Civics/Careers course is one of the most beneficial courses a student can take. The course helps student learn some basics about the Canadian judicial system and also about ethics in society. Plus the careers part of the course helps students create a strong resume (one that I still personally use in my job applications as a Grade 11 student) and experience a job interview situation to strengthen the students' communication skills.

Upper Grand District School Board, Grade 11, Male

If the grade 10 Civics/Careers course was optional, I would not take it. I found that the courses were not as helpful as I imagined them to be. I would enrol myself in classes that would be of use to me in the present and the future.

Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, Grade 12, Female

I would take Civics, but not Careers. It didn't feel like there was any legitimate work assigned in Careers class, but I actually feel like I learned a fair bit in Civics class. Civics class is also very important to make teenagers more aware of the electoral process and government structure, so they can make more informed votes in the future.

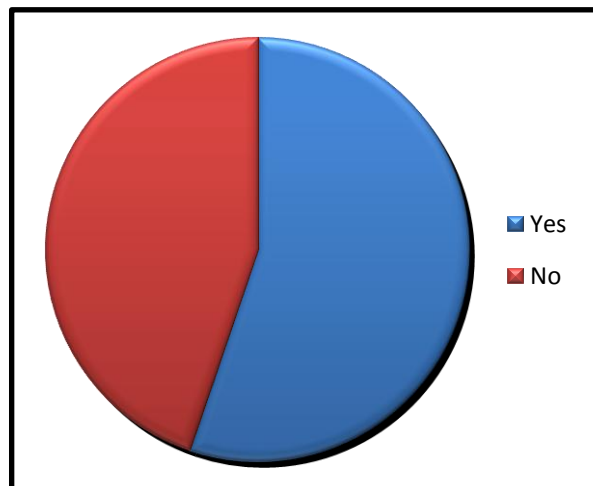
Toronto District School Board, Grade 12, Male

Parent Survey Question 2**If the Grade 10 Civics/Careers course was optional, would your child take it?**1,338 parents answered Yes – totalling **55.2%** of respondents.1,084 parents answered No – totalling **44.8%** of respondents.

About a quarter of the parents who commented believe that the course teaches students important life skills and is very beneficial to the students. These parents often applaud the fact that the course is mandatory because they believe that every student should learn the course's content. On the other hand, some of the parents who commented were unsure of whether or not their child would take the course if it were optional. These parents say that they would insist that their child take it.

Many of the parents who commented, say they believe the course is an absolute waste of time. These parents often say that their children frequently complained about the uselessness of the course content.

A number of parents suggest that the curriculum should be updated and be made more engaging to students. For example, many parents recommend that teachers invite parents who love their careers to come into the classroom to talk to the students as part of the careers class. Many of the parents believe that the civics and careers can do so much more than what it currently does for the students, and would really like to see the course updated. In comparison to the student result of this question, more parents believe that their child would take the course even if it were optional.

**Comments from parents:**

I hope these classes be made mandatory for each and everyone. In fact there should be such classes for parents as well to avoid conflicting teachings of kids, as we should not forget that we as immigrants come from different backgrounds

Parent of a Grade 8 student, Conseil scolaire Viamonde

There are so few optional opportunities for courses in high school, that there could be other optional courses that the student would rather take.

Parent of a Grade 11 student, Halton District School Board

Gardez ce cours obligatoire, il aide beaucoup les jeunes avec leur CV et pour penser au métier qu'ils veulent exercer. Aussi, l'éducation civique leur donne une bonne base pour mieux comprendre la citoyenneté et ce que veut dire vivre en communauté

Parent of a Grade 11 student, Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario

HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS

Student Survey Question 3

Do you feel that healthy food options are being provided within your school?

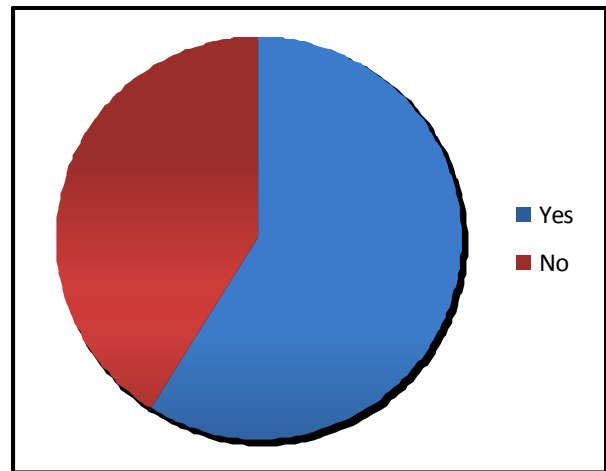
4,182 students answered Yes – totalling **58.8%** of respondents

2,930 students answered No – totalling **41.2%** of respondents

For question 3 of the Student Survey, “**Do you feel that healthy food options are being provided within your school?**”, there was quite an even divide between the students that did and didn’t believe that these options were being provided in their school.

Those that believed that healthy food options were being provided in their school had a variety of comments, one of which was the response that healthy food options were unaffordable. Some students also noticed that the healthy food options offered at their school was an unrealistic meal option, due to the fact that they were overly preserved, expired or simply undesirable for one

reason or another. Many students were also dissatisfied with their school’s provision of healthy food options, and wished that such alternatives were available for them at their school. Overall, it was apparent that many students believed that healthy food options were an asset in their school’s food distribution system, but despite the fact that slightly over half of the student respondents answered “Yes” with respect to this question, the quality of the healthy food options was questionable.



Comments from students:

Not this year nor have they when I will be at school but I am so happy to hear that there are plans to change it and become healthier! I do think that rather than promoting a healthy school, it is more important to promote healthy lifestyles beyond just school.

Grade 12 Female, York Region DSB

The cafeteria at my school has enough healthy choices, such as muffins, fruits, vegetables, pasta and soup.

Grade 9 Female, Toronto DSB

The foods at our school are mainly french fries and hamburgers. As well there is an assortment of unhealthy drinks and candy from the vending machines. These are not healthy sources of nutrition.

Grade 10 Male, Limestone DSB

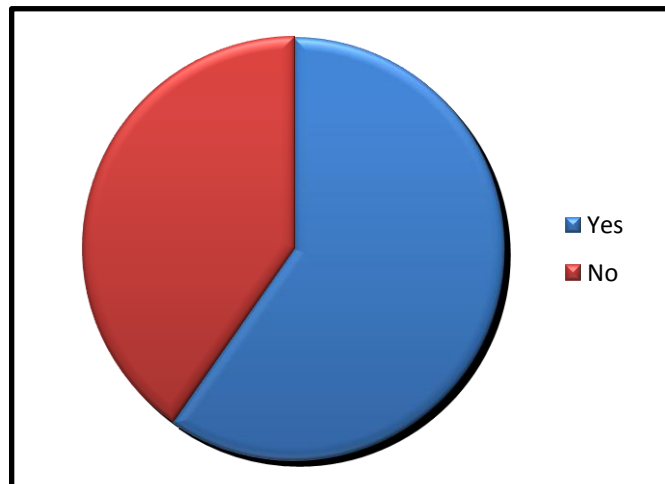
Yes there are many healthy options at my school. However they could be improved. They still sell some junk food that is cheap. This makes it hard to resist when comparing it to the more expensive healthy option.

Grade 12 Female, District School Board of Niagara

Parent Survey Question 3**Do you feel that healthy food options are being provided within your child's school?**1,435 parents answered Yes – totalling **59.7%** of respondents.968 parents answered No – totalling **40.3%** of respondents.

Many parents acknowledge that their child's school does provide healthy alternatives. However, many also say that their children will not eat at the school cafeteria simply because "it tastes horrible." In addition, there were a substantial number of parents who commented about the healthiness – or rather, lack thereof – of food offered at school.

Many also say they have trouble understanding the point of selling expensive, but healthy foods, when there are unhealthy food choices just down the block for a fraction of the price.



A very large portion of parents did complain about the meal plans at their children's schools, with some saying that they remain uninformed about the cafeteria menu. Approximately one-fifth of parents provide students with lunch and do not know of the options in their school's cafeteria. Some suggest that the cafeteria menu should be made readily available to parents. A small number of parents mentioned that the new governmental policy for healthy schools will make the food in schools healthier.

Comments from parents:

The key word is options! There are stores surrounding the school and the kids can get there the sugar or fat/salt fix there. Bottom line: What have we parents modeled until now? Time to let schools a bit off the hook.

Parent of Grade 9 and 11 Students at Trillium Lakelands District School Board

I think that the School Food and Beverage Policy will help with improving foods available to our children.

Parent of Grade 10 and 12 Students at Peel District School Board

This question drives me crazy - if you want your kid to have healthy food options - send them with a lunch... it's not the schools responsibility to make sure your kid eats a balanced diet. And unless teenagers have changed even with healthy options, most would eat hamburgers, fries with gravy and vachon pastries.

Parent of Grade 10 Student at Toronto District School Board

I think that if the parents were left to take care of their children's eating, and that school focuses on education, things would be a lot better. Keep the unhealthy food out of the schools, keep the food corporations out i.e. Lunch lady INC, pizza lunches etc.. And then start teaching.

Parent of Grade 8 student from Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

PRESSURE TO FINISH IN FOUR YEARS

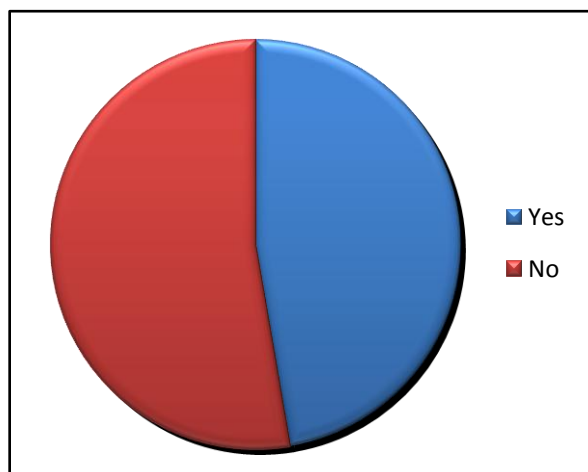
Student Survey Question 4 – Do you feel pressure to finish high school in four years?

3,363 students answered yes – totalling **47.3%** of respondents

3,749 students answered no – totalling **52.7%** of respondents

Of the students who commented on this question, many say that the pressure to complete high school in four years comes from their parents, friends, and society's general stereotype that students who do a fifth year, or a "victory lap" are somehow inferior.

Several students said that their parents do not give them the option, either by telling them they are not allowed to do an extra year or setting expectations that discourage taking an extra year. Others say they just want to get on with their lives and start working on their career. About a quarter of students who commented said that they were comfortable with the time span of high school, and that they were prepared for post-secondary options.



A significant group of students said there is nothing wrong with coming back for a fifth year, and would be comfortable doing so, if they were not already. Several comments also mentioned pressure regarding prerequisite credits, and lacking space to take credits of personal interest. Also, many students said the pressure they feel comes from themselves – both to do well and complete high school in four years. Overall, students are split on this question, however, those who feel pressure were much more likely to comment at length.

Comments from students:

I pressure myself to finish high school in four years because life is very short and I have great ambitions. If I want to be successful at a young age, I must move at a quick pace.

Lakehead District School Board, Grade 12, Female

There is no doubt that pressure and stress has been built throughout the studies of high school. Not only are there academic pressures but also pressures of part-time jobs, family, friends, and extra curricular activities.

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Grade 12, Male

There's no "pressure", but a fifth year would actually be very beneficial, because: more in-depth education in a familiar environment, more social development, students get more involved in the community, more chance to mature.

Peel District School Board, Grade 10, Female

[... The] homework load is insane. Most have part time jobs; sports; and everything else. They say be active, but how can you go outside when you're stuck sitting at a table trying to make deadlines?

Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, Grade 11, Female

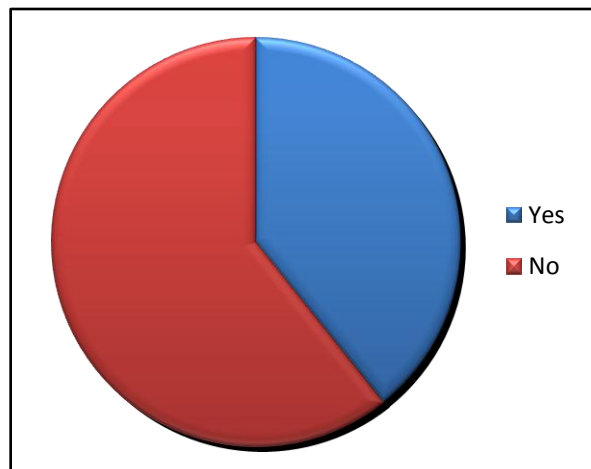
Parent Survey Question 4**Does your child feel pressure to finish high school in four years?**

979 parents answered Yes – totalling **39.3%** of respondents.

1,511 parents answered No – totalling **60.7%** of respondents.

Of the parents who commented, about a quarter say that they are telling their son/daughter that staying back for a fifth year is acceptable. Many suggest that a fifth year may be necessary to increase a child's maturity or for academic purposes. Another quarter, on the other hand, say that there is pressure for students to complete secondary school in four years.

Interestingly, the parents who say that there is pressure believe that this pressure comes from the school the student attends, teachers, guidance counsellors and society in general. (In contrast to the students, who are more likely to report the pressure comes from their parents.)



But most of the parents who commented say that there is no pressure for students to complete secondary school in four years and that they will support their child(ren) regardless of how long they remain in secondary school.

Comments from parents:

This is really a yes and no answer. There is no pressure to finish in 4 years, but there is peer pressure Ontario should be going back to the 5-year system, as it allows more room for options and choice of programs. Most students don't know what they want to take in post secondary and sometimes aren't ready yet age wise.

Parent of Grade 11 student, Halton District School Board

Many student are not mature enough after only four years of high school (I experienced this first hand going back to college myself two years ago). If my child wants to take another year to upgrade, or play another year of sports and work to save money for further education I highly encourage it.

Parent of Grade 7 student, District School Board of Niagara

It is unreasonable to ask 13, 14 and 15 year-olds to determine a career trajectory (in order to select 'prerequisite' courses) when they should still be exploring the options and, in the process, determining who THEY are as individuals.

Parent of Grade 8 and 12 students, Durham District School Board

Pour les enfants qui n'ont pas de difficulté d'apprentissage 4 ans c'est parfait. Mais pour ceux qui ont des difficultés d'apprentissage devraient continuer à leurs rythme.

Parent of a Grade 11 and 12 students, Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario

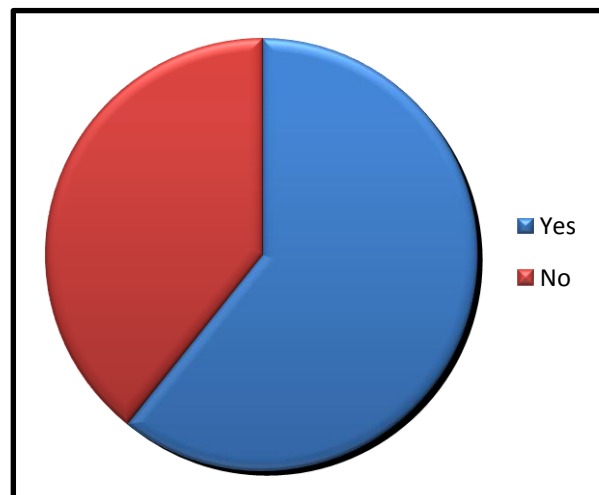
SOCIAL MEDIA

Student Survey Question 5 – Is it ever acceptable for students and teachers to connect through social media outlets (e.g. Facebook)?

4,316 students answered yes – totalling **60.7%** of respondents

2,796 students answered no – totalling **39.3%** of respondents

Many of the students who included comments say they believe that teachers should have the right to connect with whomever they like. They also say that by being allowed to connect with their teachers outside of school, it helps them to bond and form a deeper connection with educators, which could potentially help students enjoy school more. Of those who commented, about a quarter say that online networking should only happen if it is school-related. Students believe that sites like Facebook can be valuable and resourceful tools in education. Other students commented that online connections should be allowed if the student has graduated or is no longer a student of that teacher.



A number of students say that sites like Facebook reveal too much private information and it is unfair if students must censor themselves to avoid being reported by a teacher. They recommend that connecting with teachers should be done through more professional and board administered and monitored mediums.

Despite the fact that the majority of students voted that it was acceptable for students and teachers to connect through social media, the largest number of those who commented said that students should not have contact with their teachers online, stating that it would cross the professional line between teachers and students.

Comments from students:

I absolutely think that this would be a great way to involve students! Using social media would be relating more to students and even if it is just to hand in a project it becomes much more exciting to hand it in to your teacher over Facebook than in Moodle or in class. It could also be a really cool way for students to share work if there was a way they could all connect socially.
York Region District School Board, Grade 12, Female

It is unprofessional and completely inappropriate. Students need to respect the boundaries and the nature of their relationship with their instructor.
Peel District School Board, Grade 9, Female

Social networks are a way to communicate. They bridge the gap between students and teachers after school hours, which allow students to ask questions [and thus gain] knowledge and understanding.

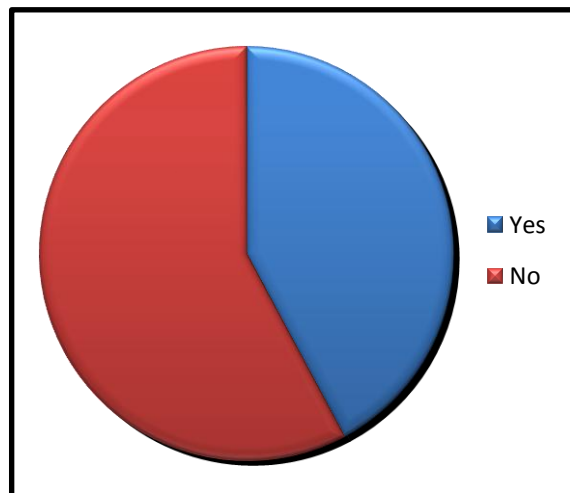
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, Grade 11, Male

Parent Survey Question 5 – Is it ever acceptable for students and teachers to connect through social media outlets (e.g. Facebook)?

1,066 parents answered Yes – totalling **42.2%** of respondents.

1,458 parents answered No – totalling **57.8%** of respondents.

In comparison to the student results, significantly fewer parents believe that students and teachers should be connecting through social media websites. Many parents commented that it is not professional or acceptable for students and teachers to connect on social media. It was often argued there is a very thin line between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour on these sites and that there were serious boundary issues when students and teachers interacted through social media.



As well, many parents say that teachers have sufficient resources to meet student needs, such as forms of “online workspace,” that are more appropriate than social media websites like Facebook. Most of those who commented believe that it can depend on the situation and the purpose for the contact. A small number of parents who commented did believe that students befriending teachers on Facebook was useful because the site is intuitive and holds great potential for building students’ engagement.

Comments from parents:

ABSOLUTELY!!!! Teachers have connected with our daughter on several occasions for extracurricular/homework/other times when it was an INVALUABLE tool!

Parent of a Grade 12 student, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

No, I think teachers should have boundaries, they need to remain professional at all times and chatting with students on Facebook isn't acceptable.

Parent of a Grade 9 student, Toronto Catholic District School Board

If the teacher wants to maintain info on Facebook and leave it open for viewing with no "friendships" from students and no personal exchange of info, strictly school related, I see no harm. Teacher should not lurk on students' pages.

Parent of a Grade 11 student, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

There are enough forums for students and teachers to connect - school websites, email, etc. Social media should not play a role as it blurs the lines of the teacher student relationship.

Parent of Grade 9 and 11 students, Upper Grand District School Board

Seulement dans le contexte d'un projet scolaire et si le compte Facebook créé ne sert qu'à cette fin. Il ne faut pas mélanger vie personnelle et professionnelle.

Parent of a Grade 11 student, Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario

TEACHERS' EXTRACURRICULAR CONTRIBUTION

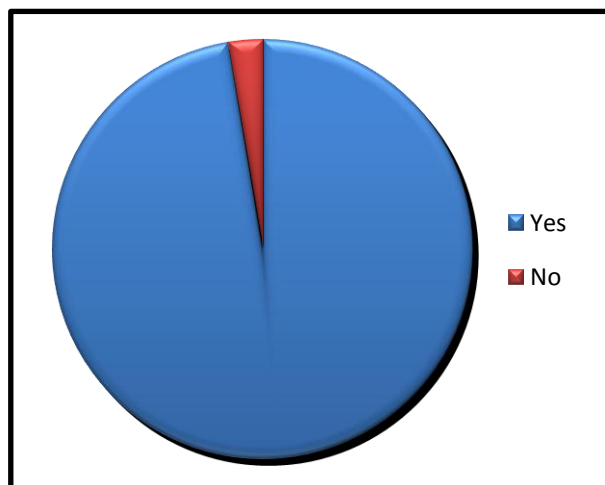
Student Survey Question 6 – Should teachers who coach/supervise extra-curricular activities be recognized for their contribution?

6,930 students answered yes – totalling **97.4%** of respondents

182 students answered no – totalling **2.6%** of respondents

This was the question with the highest level of agreement both among students and between students and parents. Of those who commented, a large majority mentioned the time commitment and the dedication that teachers put into their work outside of the classroom. Most students wanted the teachers to be recognized in some way, such as through an awards assembly or over the announcements.

Of those who commented, a small number even suggested a raise in pay or an “overtime” fee for coaching sports and clubs. Students thought that if teachers were recognized for their work, other teachers might be more inclined to get involved as well. A handful of students say that a teacher should find the role of coaching rewarding enough, and should be passionate enough about it without the need for recognition. Other students felt as though it was a teacher’s duty to get involved before and after school.



The underlying message that stood out the most was that students depend on these teachers, and want them to know that they are appreciated for their efforts.

Comments from students:

Extra-curricular activities are a very important aspect of anyone's life, and these teachers are a huge contribution to our physical and mental health. Sometimes, school can get a little overwhelming and stressful with the workloads, tests, and exams, and it is a great outlet for us to have a diverse range of extra-curricular activities to choose from and relax. There is always something to suit everyone's needs, and the teachers who teach us these activities give back a sense of motivation, drive, and energy, allowing us to balance fun with work and helping us concentrate better throughout school.

Toronto District School Board, Grade 12, Male

Teaching is about preparing students and enriching their lives - those who understand that tend to also understand that students need that kind of care outside of the classroom, and those teachers should be recognized for their work. Not as an incentive, but as a thank you.

Toronto Catholic District School Board, Grade 12, Female

[...] A true teacher does not need recognition for doing their job and serving their students well.

Peel District School Board, Grade 9, Female

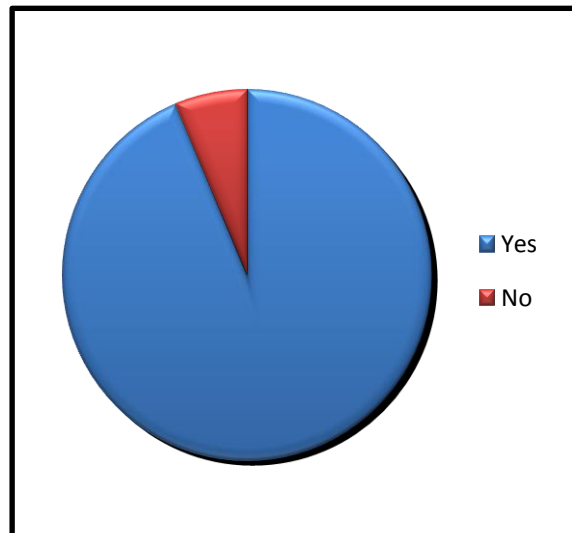
Parent Survey Question 6 – Should teachers who coach/supervise extra-curricular activities be recognized for their contribution?

2,377 parents answered Yes – totalling **93.7%** of respondents.

160 parents answered No – totalling **6.3%** of respondents.

Most of the parents who commented on this question agreed that teachers should be recognized by other teachers as well as by students and parents. About a fifth of the comments were focused on the importance of recognizing the amount of time teachers dedicate to support students, above the regular hours of their teaching job. A smaller number of parents believe that teachers should receive a monetary reward for their contributions to extra-curricular activities. Almost half of those who commented provided suggestions and examples of teacher recognition and how teachers should be recognized in their school community.

Although there was a small group of parents who thought that teachers volunteer for these roles and therefore don't need recognition, the large majority of parents believe that teachers deserve to be recognized for their efforts by their school community.

**Comments from parents:**

Absolutely! I think they should be paid for their time and given extra recognition – if this were the case a lot more interesting extra curricular programs would exist giving more opportunities for children to experiment and discover what is of interest to them

Parent of Grade 7 and 10 students, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

They already are as every school my children have attended spend a great deal of time congratulating teachers for all that they do, both those things that are in their job description and those that go beyond the norm. It is verging on the ridiculous. I do believe that where warranted they deserve appreciation and thanks for doing the extras.

Parent of a Grade 10 student, Peel District School Board

They can be thanked, but I would consider it part of their job, i.e. Drama teacher putting on school plays after hours, gym teacher involved in after school teams.

Parent of Grade 7 and 10 students, Grand Erie District School Board

Parce que faire du bénévolat sans être récompenser d'une façon adéquate. L'enseignant risque d'être épuiser et il n'aura plus d'énergie et de l'intérêt pour continuer à enseigner et faire du temps supplémentaire.

Parents of Grade 10 and 11 students, Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario

CYBER-BULLYING

Student Survey Question 7 – If cyber-bullying occurs between students outside of school time, should the school take action?

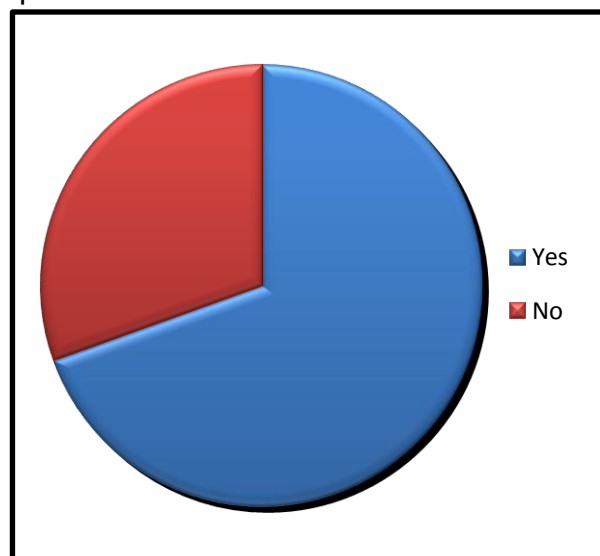
4,946 students answered yes – totalling **69.5%** of respondents

2,166 students answered no – totalling **30.5%** of respondents

In their comments, students expressed a wide range of beliefs and approaches concerning cyber-bullying. About half of those who commented say that it is a school's duty to provide a safe learning environment for each and every student, and that if cyber bullying is going on outside of school, it would eventually end up in the classroom.

On the other hand, about a quarter of the students who commented say that it is not within the school's jurisdiction to handle a crime such as this, and rather police should be involved.

Some argue that in the real world, one must solve one's own problems, and therefore school should allow the students to resolve the issue between themselves. A few students note that parents need to be more involved in their child's life and they should take action. Many students say that the action taken should depend on the situation, or only be taken once a student has asked for it. Students said that school staff shouldn't take charge on their own. Overall, the comments varied; but, students do believe that cyber-bullying is a growing issue.



Comments from students:

Cyber-bullying is like any other bullying. It is hurtful, and may lead to people injuring themselves (mentally and/or physically). Since students are still part of the school, the school should take responsibility and stop it before it gets any worse. It doesn't matter if it is during or outside of school. Bullying is bullying, and it is unacceptable.

Toronto District School Board, Grade 8, Male

[...Students] do not stop being students the moment they exit the school premises. Therefore, the school's responsibility to ensure the students' safety both in the real world and the cyber world should continue. Also, the sentiments expressed by a student in cyber-bullying would most likely carry over and continue in their attitude towards the other student whenever they see them in school.

York Region District School Board, Grade 12, Female

The school should not have to be responsible for the actions of its students 24/7. Although it is related to the school in that it may affect the student's ability to learn, the same could be said of any relationship. Should a break-up occur, the student will no longer function as well as they used to, for a while. That does not mean that the school should jump in and act.

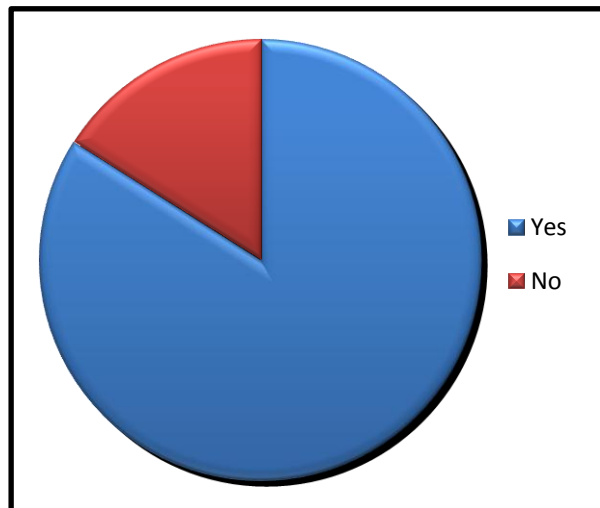
Upper Canada District School Board, Grade 12, Male

Parent Survey Question 7 – If cyber-bullying occurs between students outside of school time, should the school take action?

2,129 parents answered Yes – totalling **84.0%** of respondents.

404 parents answered No – totalling **16.0%** of respondents.

Of those who commented, half of parents agree that cyber-bullying should involve the school(s) that the students attend. However, about a third specified that schools should only become involved to stop cyber-bullying under certain circumstances. Many believe that if the two parties both attend the same school or if the student brings the problem to the attention of the school, the school should intervene regardless of whether the bullying occurred during or after school time. On the other hand, parents didn't think schools should be responsible for searching for cyber-bullying.



In terms of involvement from the authorities, of those who commented, some of parents mentioned that parents, schools and the police need to work together in dealing with cyber-bullying. A smaller number of parents believe that dealing with cyber-bullying is not within the school's jurisdiction. Many parents also suggested that the parents must control the student's access to social media and it is their responsibility to deal with the consequences.

There was a general consensus in the comments that cyber-bullying is a serious issue that can be just as harmful as regular bullying. Parents say that schools should intervene in some situations and work with parents and police in others to create a safe learning environment.

Comments from parents:

Cyber-bullying has repercussions that carry forth into the school day. Facebook connects the masses. And the masses can be stirred up and against an individual. The stress / danger doesn't stop being a concern at 8:15 and resume at 2:30.

Parent of a Grade 12 student, Thames Valley District School Board

The school can't [always] get involved in personal things that occur off site. If it is directly related to other things that are happening in school as well like verbal, physical bullying then I feel that would be okay. If it is affecting school life, parents, police need to work together. School can be a place to give extra information, but [I] don't feel they should be able to institute any punishment if not happening on school property.

Parent of Grade 8 and 11 students, Waterloo Region District School Board

[...] I think that the school should not interfere with the students' lives outside the school directly, unless there is a danger. Whatever occurs, it should include the victims' participation and input. What school administrators and teachers think is bullying, [students] may not [perceive] in the same way.

Parent of Grade 9 and 12 students, Toronto District School Board

SEXUAL EDUCATION

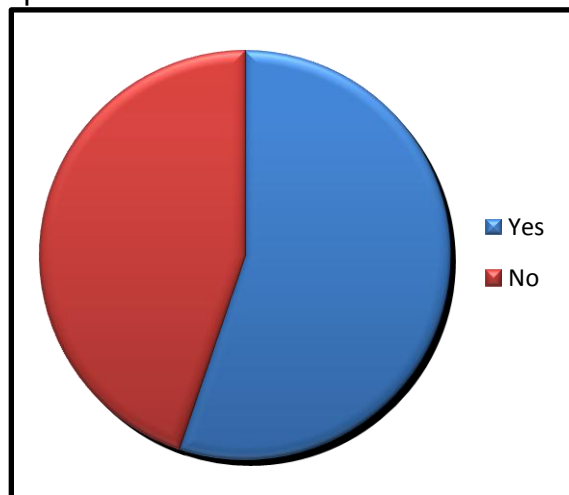
Student Survey Question 8 – Do you feel that sex-ed class adequately addresses concerns of a sexual nature that you have encountered and/or expect to encounter?

3,926 students answered yes – totalling **55.2%** of respondents

3,186 students answered no – totalling **44.8%** of respondents

Of those who commented, about a fifth of students believe that sexual education in schools adequately informs students to help them make educated choices in their future encounters. Others say that sexual education classes have prepared them well for the real world, outside of school.

On the other hand, about a third of the students who added comments say they that sexual education does not cover all the content that one needs to prepare themselves. These students say that the classes are overly theoretical. Students state that the courses in school do not focus on the more relevant issues such as LGBTQ relationships, personal experiences, and sexual emotions.



In addition, many students say that course is outdated and needs revising. Students comment that students need to be educated about sexual interaction, regardless of religion. Finally, a small group of students found that sexual education was embarrassing and an awkward experience. Students strongly recommended an anonymous question box in each sexual education classroom, and to continue sexual education into the later years of high school, when students are more likely to be engaging in sexual activity.

Comments from students:

Yes, it gives us the knowledge and comprehension we need to understand the natural process. Although the school could work to make it less uncomfortable and intimidating for the students, it is adequate enough as it is at the moment.

Peel District School Board, Grade 8, Male

For one, I'm gay and in the Catholic school board. They really do not talk about the differences with heterosexual intercourse and homosexual intercourse. I know that it does go against their beliefs, but it would be nice to hear something about homosexuals if I am being forced to listen to heterosexual talk. They do, however, inform us a lot about pregnancy and STIs, which are not limited to sexual orientation, which is and will be helpful to all students when they come across these problems [...].

Toronto Catholic District School Board, Grade 11, Male

It adequately addresses many concerns about sexuality but since it is such a complex topic there is no way to cover everything. Perhaps focusing on the emotional value of sexuality along with the scientific facts would be more beneficial.

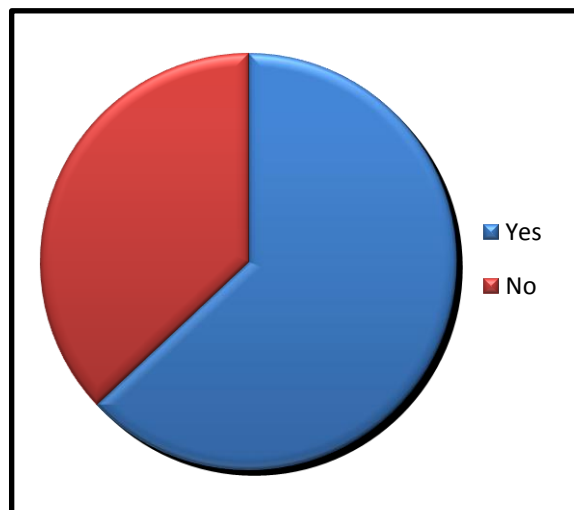
Simcoe County District School Board, Grade 12, Female

Parent Survey Question 8 – Do you feel that sex-ed class adequately addresses concerns of a sexual nature that your child has encountered and/or expects to encounter?

1,490 parents answered Yes – totalling **63.0%** of respondents.

875 parents answered No – totalling **37.0%** of respondents.

Interestingly, compared to students, a higher percentage of parents thought sexual education classes provide adequate preparation. Of the parents, most are unsure of the curriculum taught in the sexual education unit. Parents made suggestions for how sexual education can be improved, including better training for teachers and instructors, more involvement by health agencies and school nurses and a balance between facts on anatomy and the role of sexuality in relationships. Parents felt that not enough emphasis was put on issues of love, self-esteem and respect in relationships. Parents also said that schools should engage parents with the curriculum and ensure that parents are aware of the material covered.



Many parents feel that it is a parent's duty to monitor what is being taught in school and complement the Ministry's education with advice of their own that reflects the religious, cultural and personal values of their family.

Overall, though a majority of parents believe that sexual education is being addressed in school, many are unaware of the education their children are receiving, and recommend that there should be more transparency between the school and the parents.

Comments from parents:

I think there is a serious lack on the emotional aspects of relationships. It is diminished to physical details, but both boys and girls need to learn about how loving people care for one another and warning signals in relationships.

Parent of a Grade 7 student, Bluewater District School Board

The revised Sex Ed curriculum should have been launched for the 2010/2011 school year. Students need to get their sex-ed from the classroom, not from the school yard or inexperienced or misinformed peers. If some teachers are uncomfortable teaching this topic then assign someone who isn't, as this is not a topic that students should be uncomfortable discussing.

Parent of a Grade 12 student, Toronto District School Board

Je ne suis pas certaine car aucune communication ce fait au niveau du domicile pour indiquer ce qui est enseigné. Les enfants sont trop timides à décrire ce qui est enseigné. Les parents devraient recevoir un guide ou au moins un compte-rendu du contenu enseigné.

Parent of Grade 8 and 12 students, Conseil scolaire de district des écoles catholiques du Sud-Ouest

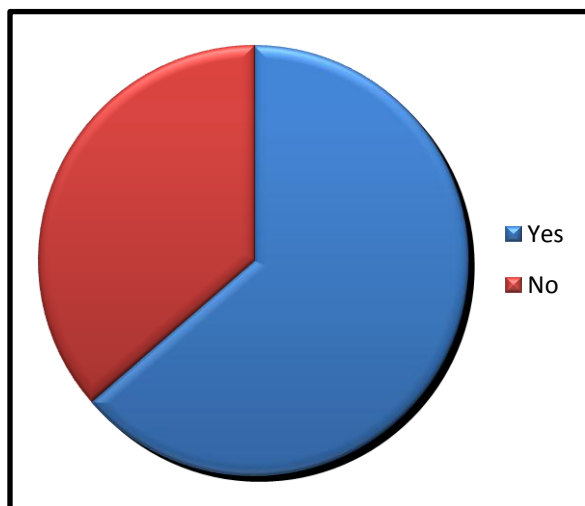
MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Student Survey Question 9 – If you or a friend was experiencing mental health problems, such as stress, anxiety, or depression, would you know where to go to get help?

4,522 students answered yes – totalling **63.6%** of respondents

2,590 students answered no – totalling **36.4%** of respondents

Some of the students who commented say that they have been able to find information about mental health within the school itself, but many referred to their experiences outside of school as a source of their information. Many students expressed their willingness to seek out the help they need and they mentioned positive experiences they had talking with guidance counsellors and social workers about mental health issues. However, quite a few students said that while they knew where to get help, they felt discomfort in doing so.



On the other hand, a number of students who experienced mental health issues said that while they knew where to find help, going to parents, guidance counsellors or a trusted teacher had not been adequate. Overall, many students have a basic knowledge of mental health and some places where they suspect they can get help (e.g. Kid's Help Phone, teachers, guidance, etc.) Mental health still remains a major concern for students when seeking help.

Comments from students:

I am experiencing mental health problems of stress, anxiety, and depression and I don't know where to go to get help. If there is a greater understanding of mental health problems in our peers, then I would feel, along with the rest of the students experiencing mental health problems that the schools are a place where I can go and feel relieved of all the emotional and stressful times in my life.

Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, Grade 12, Male

We would definitely know where to get help, but some people don't want to get help. Apparently, getting help is "wimpy". I think that we should encourage students to get help more, and to support each other, rather than to laugh at the ones at need.

Toronto District School Board, Grade 8, Male

There are several resources made aware to students about mental health. However, I feel like there could be more. In my school students sit through mandatory bully awareness assemblies and drug awareness days. However, mental health is never discussed in the school environment. I think it is a topic that could be brought to students attention and understanding.

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board, Grade 12, Female

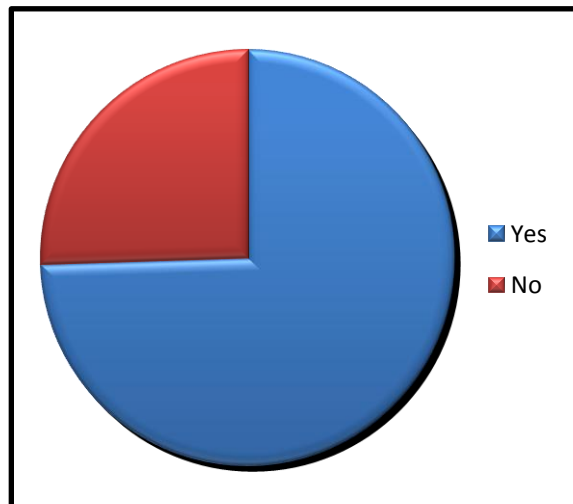
Parent Survey Question 9 – If your child or one of their friends was experiencing mental health problems, would you know where to go to get help?

1,903 parents answered Yes – totalling **74.5%** of respondents.

652 parents answered No – totalling **25.5%** of respondents.

Many parents' comments highlighted community and school programs or individuals who could help their children. However, many parents say that they would not know immediately where to find these supports, but could find out through traditional ways if they needed to.

In addition, a smaller number of parents say that they do not have enough information or had no idea of where to find support for their children. Many say that the schools are not doing enough, that many people are too worried about the stigma, and that even if they did know it would be nearly impossible to get help with the long waits. Several parents commented that they did not have access to services when dealing with mental health issues.

**Comments from parents:**

I do and did; however, this issue needs to be addressed much more fully in health classes. Many students are no doubt suffering from mental health issues, but don't have the education themselves or from those around them, to identify their problems, let alone know where to go to get help. If we want to address the horrendous level of teen suicide, we need to start with the education of our youth.

Parent of a student at an Ontario school

Not directly. Mental health is still treated like a 'special interest group'. Hospitals are more about incarceration of a teen - than they are for finding the causes and triggers.

Parent of Grade 9 and 11 students, Toronto District School Board

We are encountering this now. We have had 3 family tragedies which have extremely affected my son's ability to concentrate, hang on to friends, do work, complete assignments on time etc. But when [you] talk to the school it falls on deaf ears. Adults and children in this situation usually do not ask for help they just slide. A peer or teacher etc. can usually spot some of these problems so it is good for all of us to know where to go. Where do we go??????????????

Parent of a Grade 12 student, Keewatin-Patricia District School Board

Par l'école je ne crois pas qu'il y ait beaucoup de sensibilisation dans ce domaine. Il faut distribuer plus d'information dans ce domaine. Pour ma part, je serai l'orienter.

Parent of a Grade 11 student, Conseil scolaire Viamonde

STUDENT FEES

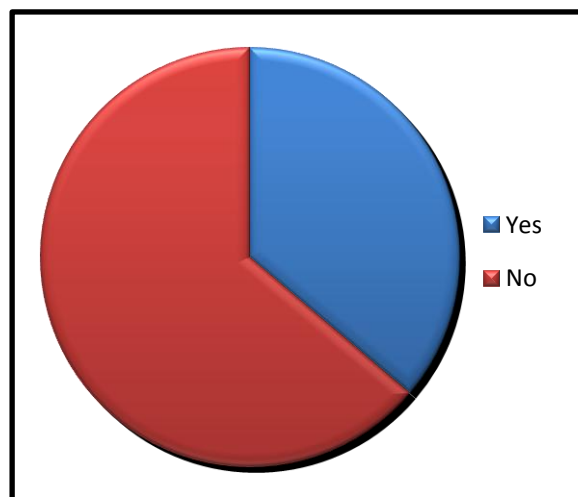
Student Survey Question 10 – Has a fee charged for sports, teams, or extra curricular activities ever prevented you from participating?

2,575 students answered yes – totalling **36.2%** of respondents

4,537 students answered no – totalling **63.8%** of respondents

Many students commented that the fees are too high in school, and this therefore discourages students from participating in extracurricular activities, teams and clubs. Some students also noted that though they have not personally been prevented from joining an activity due to a fee charged, but they know of situations within their school where this has posed a concern for some students.

On the other hand, many students say that the fees are relatively reasonable at their school and therefore many students have not been limited based on these fees.



Comments from students:

I come from a middle class family where needs are met prior to wants. Money has been tight which means I could not participate in certain extra-curriculars. Although I may feel as if I am missing out now, I realize that debt is not worth playing a game but food on the table must be there.

Toronto Catholic District School Board, Grade 12, Female

With my family circumstances with my father having cancer, money has been somewhat of a issue as he is not able to work. My school has made my life 100 times easier in financially supporting any tasks I wished to pursue within my school. They have helped pay for my football fee as well as a few field trip fees I was not able to afford. Unfortunately not every school has the opportunity to give this to their students, and for that reason I feel very blessed.

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, Grade 12, Male

I understand that maintaining sport teams and such can be very difficult for a school, but if the fee is too much, then students that want to participate will be unable to simply because it is too expensive. Schools need to consider these factors because it is not right for a student to be hindered from participating in a club simply because they can't pay. Thus schools need to address these problems and provide the right services to ensure that a student's financial condition doesn't prevent them from participating.

Peel District School Board, Grade 10, Male

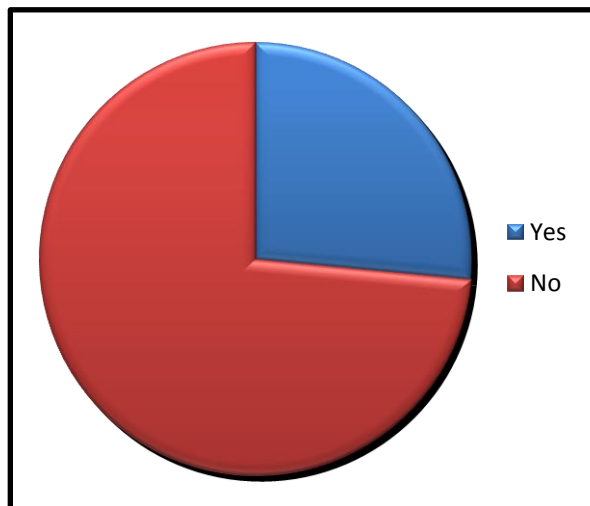
Parent Survey Question 10 – Has a fee charged for sports, teams, or extra curricular activities ever prevented your child from participating?

673 parents answered Yes – totalling **26.5%** of respondents.

1,871 parents answered No – totalling **73.5%** of respondents.

Though a majority of parents say that extracurricular fees have not prevented their children from participating, it has had an impact on their decision-making process. Of the parents who commented, a large majority say that fees have inhibited the number of activities their children could participate in, or that the fees have put a strain on the family. Other parents have specified that though they are able to pay for their children to get involved, they know others who were not as lucky.

Though some parents say that their school helped to pay for students who were unable to, other parents commented that pride and privacy prevents many parents from approaching the school administration. Many specifically mentioned sports fees, end-of-the-year trips, and graduation/prom fees as areas of concern; all of these activities are extremely important in the eyes of students, and should be dealt with as such. Though many people have managed to budget and cut costs from their everyday lives in order to pay for their children's involvement, almost all parents agree that they should not have to do so.

**Comments from parents:**

Not prevented - but discouraged. We are a single parent family with 3 kids who want to go on to university. We have had to be selective about what activities to do if there is a fee.

Parent of a Grade 11 student, Upper Grand District School Board

These fees are fair. The ones who can pay, pay and the ones who can't are subsidized. No one is left behind. It is the cost of having enrichment opportunities in the schools and must always be budgeted for, by the parents who can afford it, by the school & the TDSB.

Parent of a Grade 10 student, Toronto District School Board

Schools intimidate students into paying and although we are fortunate to be able to afford extra fees, I do not agree with them or how they are administered. I know of families who they are a hardship for, but families are too embarrassed to request help.

Parent of Grade 7 and 9 students, York District School Board

[...We] are fortunate to have a good income, [...unlike] many students. At my daughters' high school they [fundraise] just to accommodate those students that otherwise couldn't participate.

Parent of Grade 7, 10 and 12 students, Sudbury Catholic District School Board

I think that charging a fee for sports, teams or extra curricular activities creates a social divide between richer and poorer families. The fees should be waived or banned.

Parent of Grade 9 and 12 students, Trillium Lakelands District School Board

METHODOLOGY

For the last two years, the Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario (OSTA-AECO) has conducted an Ontario-wide student survey on a list of topical questions. This year, we had the highest-ever level of participation, with 7,112 students from 70 school Boards, and all regions of the province, participating in the online survey. This year, for the first time, we also co-operated with People for Education on a survey of parents, where we asked matching questions, and provided the same opportunities for comment. 2,445 parents from 69 school boards across Ontario participated. We had participation from Catholic and Public Boards, both English and French. We also had the unique opportunity to receive input from students with private sector Boards, various religious Boards, and Aboriginal Boards.

The survey was conducted on Suveymonkey.com for one month, between May 16th, 2011 and June 16th, 2011. The original idea for the Student Survey came from students; students from across the province proposed the questions for the survey and the final questions were also selected by students.

Students were asked 10 "Yes" and "No" questions, and also offered the opportunity to add comments on each question. In this report, we reported the yes and no responses for each question, along with an in-depth analysis of the comments given. We have also used specific quotes from students and parents in each section to provide extra depth. Students who completed the survey were eligible to win a \$1,000 scholarship.

Many students took the time to comment on their responses, which adds considerable depth to the report this year as it allows OSTA-AECO to look beyond raw data to understand students' underlying perspectives on educational issues. To analyze the patterns in the comments, they were grouped by themes. Each of the comments was separated into these trends in order to find where the majority of comments were. In the report, we include information about the comments highlighted and a general amount of how many students and parents commented on that trend. From this, each of the analyzers wrote a summary of the results for the report, which touched on all the trends in the comments and the apparent differences between the student and parent results.

We protect the students' and parents' personal information and adhere to all legislative requirements with respect to protecting privacy. All data was collected anonymously and shall remain so; there is no way to identify individual students who participated in this survey. The only data that is displayed about students and parents in the quotes is their respective District School Board and gender.

Please also note some additional details with the survey sample on the next page. Please also find a French-translated companion document that includes the quick facts and executive summary of the survey. Finally, find a companion document that outlines OSTA-AECO's recommendations for Ontario's education system based on this survey.

STUDENT SURVEY: Percent of Respondents – Grade

Grade 7: 61 Students, **0.9%**
Grade 8: 131 Students, **1.9%**
Grade 9: 373 Students, **5.2%**
Grade 10: 902 Students, **12.7%**
Grade 11: 1,548 Students, **21.8%**
Grade 12: 4,097 Students, **57.6%**

STUDENT SURVEY: Percent of Respondents – Female/Male

Female: 4,835 Students, **68%**
Male: 2,277 Students, **32%**

STUDENT SURVEY: Percent of Respondents – Catholic/Public

Public: **52.3%**
Catholic: **47.7%**

STUDENT SURVEY: Top 10 School Boards by Percent of Participation

Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board
Wellington Catholic District School Board
Bluewater District School Board
Near North District School Board
Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board
Rainbow District School Board
Trillium Lakelands District School Board
Simcoe County District School Board
Peel District School Board
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

PARENT SURVEY: Percent of Respondents – Grade (Parents may have more than one student)

Grade 7: 563 Students, **23.3%**
Grade 8: 501 Students, **20.7%**
Grade 9: 614 Students, **25.5%**
Grade 10: 594 Students, **24.6%**
Grade 11: 514 Students, **21.2%**
Grade 12: 639 Students, **26.3%**

PARENT SURVEY: Top 10 School Board by Percent of Participation

Toronto District School Board
Peel District School Board
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
Simcoe County District School Board
Hamilton -Wentworth District School Board
York Region District School Board
Thames Valley District School Board
Durham District School Board
Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
Toronto Catholic District School Board
Trillium Lakelands District School Board

CONTACT US

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