



2012 Ontario Student, Parent & Educator Survey

Official Survey Report

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Quick Fact Sheet – 2012 Ontario Student Survey	6
Quick Fact Sheet – 2012 Ontario Parent Survey	7
Quick Fact Sheet – 2012 Ontario Educator Survey	8
School Community.....	9
Student Survey Question 1	9
Parent Survey Question 1	10
Educator Survey Question 1	11
School Safety.....	12
Student Survey Question 2	12
Parent Survey Question 2	13
Educator Survey Question 2	14
Student Feedback.....	15
Student Survey Question 3	15
Parent Survey Question 3	16
Parent Survey Question 3	17
Single-Gender Schools.....	18
Student Survey Question 4	18
Parent Survey Question 4	19
Educator Survey Question 4	20
Bilingual Education	21
Student Survey Question 5	21
Parent Survey Question 5	22
Educator Survey Question 5	23
Plastic Water Bottles.....	24
Student Survey Question 6	24
Parent Survey Question 6	25
Educator Survey Question 6	26
Civic Education.....	27
Student Survey Question 7	27
Parent Survey Question 7	28
Educator Survey Question 7	29
School Uniforms	30
Student Survey Question 8	30

Parent Survey Question 8	31
Educator Survey Question 8	32
Technology	33
Student Survey Question 9	33
Parent Survey Question 9	34
Educator Survey Question 9	35
Breaks in the School Year	36
Student Survey Question 10	36
Parent Survey Question 10	37
Educator Survey Question 10	38
Methodology	39
Respondent Breakdown	40
Student Survey.....	40
Contact Us	42

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 questions developed by students and for students.

This year, we had the highest-ever level of participation with 10,626 students from 70 of Ontario's English Catholic, English Public, French Catholic and French Public schools from all regions of the province participating in the online survey. In our parent survey, we asked the parents and guardians of the students of Ontario "yes" and "no" questions in regards to their student's education and provided the same opportunities for commenting as we did with the students. The parent survey had 2,202 participants from 10 school boards across Ontario. For the first time, we conducted an educator survey, which asked matching questions and gathered comments from 944 of Ontario's teachers, vice-principals, and principals across the province.

Student Vote, People for Education 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 Ontarian students, parents and educators were asked ten "Yes" or "No" questions about a range of education topics. Participants also had the ability to write comments for each question. This report includes the results, a summary analysis of the comments, and a few quotations from the comments.

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

- A majority of students indicated that they consider themselves active in their school communities, but this number was significantly lower than the estimations of parents and teachers.
- The vast majority of students and educators felt that their schools are safe learning environments, but parents were less confident.
- An overwhelming majority of students wanted a confidential system with which they could provide positive feedback on their teachers' practices. Parents and educators were in agreement, but educators were much less supportive.
- Less than 1 in 10 students thought their education would benefit from a single-gender education, but parents and educators were more optimistic.
- Almost half of students wanted French courses to be mandatory from grade 4 through 12, and a majority of parents and teachers agreed.
- Students were perfectly divided 50:50 on whether or not the sale of plastic water bottles should be banned from school. The majority of parents and educators were in agreement of such a ban.
- A significant majority of students felt that their education did not prepare them to vote in elections, while half of parents and two thirds of educators believed that students were well prepared.

- More than a third of students thought that their education would benefit from school uniforms, and even more parents and educators agreed.
- Almost two thirds of students thought technology was being used effectively in schools, but parents and educators were less convinced.
- Two thirds of students disagreed that their education would benefit from a shorter summer break and longer breaks throughout the year, while nearly 1 in 2 parents and a majority of teachers agreed that it would.

We hope that students, school boards, parents, 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 – 2012 Ontario Student Survey

10, 626 students from across Ontario took the Student Survey.

1. Would you consider yourself an active member of your community?
Yes – 78.6%
No – 21.4%
2. Do you feel that your school environment is a safe place to learn?
Yes – 94.7%
No – 5.3%
3. Should there be a confidential system to allow students to provide positive feedback on their teachers' practices?
Yes – 87.4%
No – 12.6%
4. Do you feel that attending a single gender school would benefit your education?
Yes – 9.3%
No – 90.7%
5. Should students in grade 4 to 12 be required to take courses in both English and French?
Yes – 46.4%
No – 53.6%
6. Should the sale of plastic water bottles be banned from your school?
Yes – 49.9%
No – 50.1%
7. Do you feel that school prepares you to vote when you become eligible to vote?
Yes – 42.4%
No – 57.6%
8. Do you feel that student uniforms would benefit your school environment?
Yes – 35.7%
No – 64.3%
9. Do you feel that technology is being used effectively in your school?
Yes – 67.6%
No – 32.4%
10. Would your learning benefit from a shorter summer vacation and more breaks throughout the school year?
Yes – 32.5%
No – 67.5%

Quick Fact Sheet – 2012 Ontario Parent Survey

2, 202 parents from across Ontario took the Parent Survey.

1. Do you consider your child an active member of your school community?
Yes – 82.9%
No – 17.1%
2. Do you feel that your child's school environment is a safe place to learn?
Yes – 89.9%
No – 10.1%
3. Should there be a confidential system to allow students to provide positive feedback on their teachers' practices?
Yes – 86.2%
No – 13.8%
4. Do you feel that attending a single gender school would benefit your child's education?
Yes – 15.8%
No – 84.2%
5. Should students in grade 4 to 12 be required to take courses in both English and French?
Yes – 54.4%
No – 45.6%
6. Should the sale of plastic water bottles be banned from your school?
Yes – 54.9%
No – 45.1%
7. Do you feel that school prepares your child to vote when they become eligible to vote?
Yes – 49.5%
No – 50.5%
8. Do you feel that student uniforms would benefit your child's school environment?
Yes – 46.5%
No – 53.5%
9. Do you feel that technology is being used effectively in your school?
Yes – 61.4%
No – 38.6%
10. Would your child's learning benefit from a shorter summer vacation and more breaks throughout the school year?
Yes – 46.3%
No – 53.7%

Quick Fact Sheet – 2012 Ontario Educator Survey

944 educators from across Ontario took the Educator Survey.

1. Do you consider your students to be active members of their school community?
Yes – 84.3%
No – 15.7%
2. Do you feel that your school environment is a safe place for students to learn?
Yes – 93.8%
No – 6.2%
3. Should there be a confidential system to allow students to provide positive feedback on their teachers' practices?
Yes – 62.7%
No – 37.3%
4. Do you feel that attending a single gender school would benefit your students' education?
Yes – 21.3%
No – 78.7%
5. Should students in grade 4 to 12 be required to take courses in both English and French?
Yes – 55.3%
No – 44.7%
6. Should the sale of plastic water bottles be banned from your school?
Yes – 71.4%
No – 28.6%
7. Do you feel that school prepares students to vote when they become eligible to vote?
Yes – 65.4%
No – 34.6%
8. Do you feel that student uniforms would benefit your school environment?
Yes – 47.5%
No – 52.5%
9. Do you feel that technology is being used effectively in your school?
Yes – 56.0%
No – 44.0%
10. Would your students' learning benefit from a shorter summer vacation and more breaks throughout the school year?
Yes – 55.4%
No – 44.6%

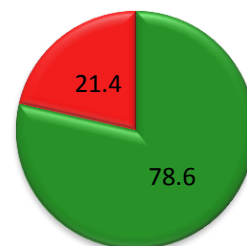
School Community

Student Survey Question 1

Would you consider yourself an active member of your school community?

Yes – 78.6% of respondents

No – 21.4% of respondents



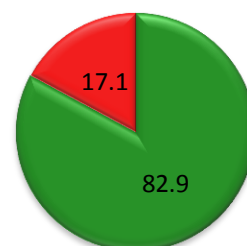
The majority of students surveyed showed an interest in extra-curricular activities and were engaged in a variety of extra-curricular work. Most students cited their work in student council and expressed a desire to continue on the path of student government. In addition, mentorship programs have drawn the interest of senior students and many of those surveyed felt that it would benefit the future generation of students if the current senior students shared the possibilities of opportunity in extra-curricular work as well as acknowledging the talents of their juniors. Religious conviction has also compelled students to take part in church committees, cultural celebrations, and charity fundraising. Beyond religious motives, students surveyed articulated on the importance of fundraising, social justice, and community outreach. Several of those surveyed found selflessness integral in building oneself and one's community. Furthermore, physical health oriented and kinaesthetic extra-curricular activities were cited by students as being one of the more important aspects and mediums of extra-curricular participation. Some students however, did indicate that lack of funds, lack of clubs, and apathy in their respective student bodies has hindered and/or discouraged them from participating in extra-curricular activities. Few of these students that stated their lack of participation in extra-curricular pursuits specified their dislike for extra-curricular activities while most of those not participating in extra-curricular activities desire to engage themselves but are hindered by distance, work commitments, and lack of school funds. The students surveyed implied that by participating in activities and associations such as student council, athletics clubs, arts associations, and charitable organizations, they can help build, nourish, and promulgate school spirit.

Comments from students:

"I live in a small community approximately an hour away from my school, therefore, making it extremely difficult to participate in many activities. With that being said, I still make a full attempt to participate in activities or events and attend all those which are made possible by the help of friends, family and the school itself." Gr. 12 Female (Rainbow DSB)

"My school has a variety of clubs and after school programs. However, it'd be amazing if the focus of the school wasn't mostly on sports teams. Eco clubs and Student Councils need love too!" Gr. 12 Female (Dufferin-Peel CDSB)

"Cannot stay after school for extra-curricular activities/clubs because I live 1-hour away from school and I take a bus." Gr. 12 Female (York Region DSB)



Parent Survey Question 1

**Would you consider your child to be an active member
of your school community?**

Yes – 82.9% of respondents

No – 17.1% of respondents

Most of the parents surveyed referred to their child's extra-curricular activities. Generally, most parents believed that their child is very active in the school and neighbourhood community. Numerous parents state that they were happy to assist their child in participating in extra-curricular activities in areas such as providing support through parent councils.

A smaller segment of parents surveyed pointed out that bullying, peer pressure, learning disabilities, lack of extra-curricular variety, and overall lack of self-confidence hindered their child from participating in extra-curricular activities.

Parents cite a variety of clubs as being of interest to their children. Most of these clubs that were cited belong under the category of arts, social justice, and athletics. Numerous parents mentioned Link Crew as being a popular and developmental extra-curricular activity for their children. Several parents appreciate the mentorship program which allows their children to ease into high school life. Many of the parents surveyed stated their pride in their son or daughter's athletic participation. Some parents also noted the benefits of such clubs for their child's physical and mental health. Some parents cited the lack of time that their child has due to the travel time from school to home. Parents found great importance in community building through social skills acquired in their child's extra-curricular activities.

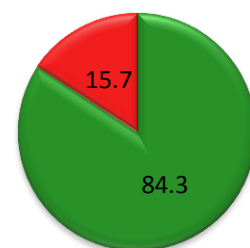
Ultimately, parents do recognize the merits of extra-curricular activities and view it as beneficial for their children.

Comments from Parents:

"The school is too heavily focused on sports. There are not enough alternative or interesting clubs for him to join. For example there could be, but there isn't, a computer rebuilding club, film and photography club, rock music club etc." Parent of Gr. 8 Student (Toronto DSB)

"[My son] has 330 volunteer hours and has been very involved in all aspects of a community from fundraisers to community building events in London and St. Thomas." Parent of Gr. 7 & 12 Students (Thames Valley DSB)

"Although she takes a bus to school, so there is limited school community after school hours, and in the vicinity of the school itself, she participates as much as possible during school hours." Parent of Gr. 12 Student (Conseil Scolaire Viamonde)



Educator Survey Question 1

Would you consider your students to be active members of your school community?

Yes – 84.3% of respondents

No – 15.7% of respondents

In contrast to students, the educators surveyed hinted at a lack of participation among students and believed that while a dedicated minority of students ran school activities, the majority expressed apathy towards the extra-curricular possibilities. A few educators expressed concern as to whether some of their pupils would be able to fulfill their community hour requirements for graduation.

Educators cited apathy as being one of the major factors eroding the need to be active in the school community. Other factors such as age, family background, ethnicity, learning difficulties, afterschool work, and non-developmental pursuits were pointed out as possible contributors to the lack of extra-curricular participation.

Despite that, educators that did mention the segment of the student body that were active also mentioned the accomplishments and praise-worthy deeds of their students. Many spoke of the enthusiasm of their student councils as well as athletic achievements in their school boards and in the province. Environmental clubs were also mentioned by educators who believe that student participation in the protection of the environment is beneficial for the future.

A smaller segment of educators did indicate high participation among students. These educators gave an assessment of their respective student bodies as being enthusiastic, engaged, and selfless. Overall, educators surveyed believed that there is great virtue in the pursuit of developmental extra-curricular affairs.

Comments from Educators:

“Students are on our fields before AND after school; the halls are never empty at 3:15 - it's "cool" to be involved at our school. Sometimes the level of activity gets a little frustrating (because there are always students missing classes for club or sport activities) but I'm glad that students are involved in so many aspects of school life.” Female Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)

“A small group of students are very active, others are reluctantly active, and a few struggle just to meet their community hour requirements for graduation.” Male Educator (Algonquin and Lakeshore CDSB)

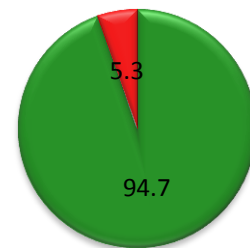
School Safety

Student Survey Question 2

Would you consider your school to be a safe place to learn?

Yes – 94.7% of respondents

No – 5.3% of respondents



Students indicated that for the most part they feel safe. Occasional drug use, theft, and verbal bullying are common concerns. For the most part, bullying is done verbally and is usually by the same group of individuals. The common consensus is that bullying is “not extinct”. Students in schools with segregated programs such as gifted or French immersion reported inter-program bullying to be much more frequent than bullying within programs themselves. Bullying between grades was uncommon, but within grades it was very prevalent. Some students also raised concerns about educators; indicating that they were harassed by their teachers. Many students felt that this was worse than peer-to-peer bullying.

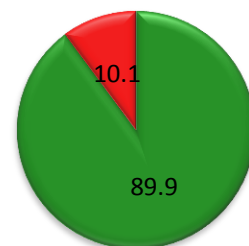
Security cameras installed in schools were cited as one reason students felt safer. Many felt that more effort was made to protect university level students from bullying than college-level students. Drug use was mentioned frequently, though many students did not feel that it impacted their personal safety. Theft, especially in gym changing rooms, was a big issue.

Comments from Students:

“The school as a whole is [safe]; yet there are educators who make their classroom an unsafe environment” Gr. 12 Female (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)

“I feel that the administration does a good job to monitor the school with the use of cameras and by having an onsite police officer.” Gr. 12 Male (Toronto CDSB)

“Yes, but no at the same time. I selected yes because for the most part it is. However bullying is still a huge issue within our education system.” Gr. 11 Female (Brant Haidimand Norfolk CDSB)



Parent Survey Question 2

Do you feel that your child's school environment is a safe place to learn?

Yes – 89.9% of respondents

No – 10.1% of respondents

Many parents felt that they did not have an accurate impression of the safety of their children's schools. Parents commended the work of educators and school staff to promote a safe environment, but they felt as though students are ultimately responsible for the safety of their schools. Bullying was by far the most important issue for parents. Concerns were raised over whether students caught bullying were being reprimanded appropriately to ensure that they stopped doing it. Many also indicated that they would like to be kept more informed of what happens in the classroom so that they can better teach the necessary life skills which promote safety and cooperation to their children.

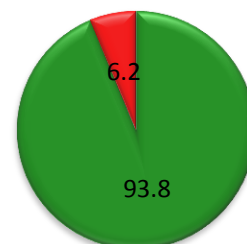
Drug use and theft were important problems for many parents. Some indicated that they felt that schools were too lenient in regards to illicit substances and cigarettes being used by students, even off the school grounds. Another issue raised was the emotional and mental safety of schools. Many felt that teachers were too harsh on students, and failed to problem solve effectively. Most agreed that teachers raise their voices and punish students unnecessarily far too often, and do not live up to their roles as role models and arbitrators in student conflicts.

Comments from Parents:

"Yes physically, but definitely not emotionally. Teachers are still yelling (raising voices) to students/parents continuously. There is a right way to discuss conflict and it is currently not being done. If the teacher is unhappy in their school situation they should get out; not take it out on our students." Parent of Gr. 4 & 6 Students (Bluewater DSB)

"Most times I do believe it is a safe environment but there are times when safety is questionable due to the use of drugs by some of the students." Parent of Gr. 6, 7 & 9 Students (Thames Valley DSB)

"The physical building is 'safe', but the availability of cell phones that the students use to bully one another with can create a hostile environment among targeted students that falls below the radar of teachers." Parent of Gr. 7 & 10 Students (Niagara CDSB)



Educator Survey Question 2

Do you feel that your school environment is a safe place for students to learn?

Yes – 93.8% of respondents

No – 6.2% of respondents

The vast majority of educators felt that their school environments were completely safe for students. Most felt that the frequency of physical bullying and theft or property damage were decreasing dramatically thanks to staff efforts. However, some teachers raised concerns about new kinds of bullying such as cyber-bullying. Teachers indicated that they cannot protect students from cyber-bullying in the same way they can protect them from physical or verbal abuse, mainly because they have no way of monitoring students online activities. Educators feel that more funding is needed to create resources for students to combat cyber-bullying. Unsupervised lunch hours were also a serious safety concern for many teachers.

Some said that while students are safe, they themselves feel unsafe in the classroom, especially in classes in which students with diagnosed behavioural disorders are placed. Teachers feel that not enough is done to reprimand and rehabilitate students who physically or mentally abuse other members of the school community, and that problems such as this are simply, “swept under the rug” by administration.

Educators cited student run anti-bullying groups to be important factors in improving the safety of their school environments, and are worried that these organizations are not protected or funded by the school administrations as much as they should be.

Comments from Educators:

“We try our best to provide a safe and secure environment for our students. I feel that we address any concerns quickly and professionally. We also have bullying hotline for our student to access if they are feeling threatened.” Female Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)

“We have Peer leaders who meet monthly to review issues in the school and to do presentation in the primary classrooms around bullying, assertiveness, how to resolve conflicts and respect and caring.” Female Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)

“Generally we have an inclusive classroom environment, but as with all schools, some difficulties occur in unsupervised lunch hours. I believe that more could be done to educate students about GLBTQ” Male Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)

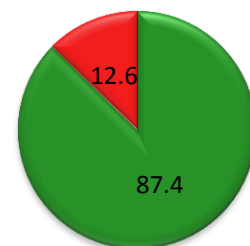
Student Feedback

Student Survey Question 3

Should there be a confidential system to allow students to provide positive feedback on their teachers' practices?

Yes – 87.4% of respondents

No – 12.6% of respondents



A large majority of surveyed students indicated that they would like to see a confidential system that would allow them to provide feedback on their teachers' practices. Even though most students supported the implementation of such a system, a notable number of students believed that negative *and* positive feedback should be accepted. Students indicated that they felt teachers deserved to be given constructive feedback (both positive and negative) on their practices so they can stop, start, or continue their certain methods of instruction.

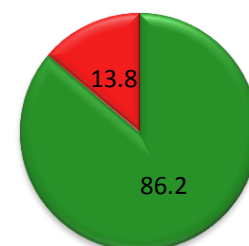
Students felt that such a system must be confidential and implemented on a system wide basis. Some students were concerned that mostly negative feedback would be given and the effect of such feedback would be detrimental to teachers. To neutralize the threat of having this system become a means for disgruntled students to bully teachers anonymously, protocol must be put in place to ensure that profane/unconstructive comments never reach the teachers.

Students commented that teachers cannot rely solely on Board and Ministry assessments to provide completely accurate feedback on the effectiveness of their practices. Student opinion would provide a unique perspective for teachers. Finally, students felt that if a system was implemented that only accepted positive constructive remarks; such remarks should be made public but nevertheless anonymous.

Comments from students:

"Teachers must be able to adapt to the progressive nature of learning styles. However, they must not necessarily be assessed by upper management according to student assessments, as students could possibly falsely accuse said teacher of misconduct, etc." Gr. 12 Female (Windsor- Essex CDSB)

"I find that sometimes a teacher's teaching style is not very helpful or appropriate. If there were a confidential way to comment on the teachers' behaviour and way of teaching, it would be beneficial because if a majority of the students are saying the same thing, there is a high chance it's true and that could affect many peoples quality of education." Gr. 12 Female (York Region DSB)



Parent Survey Question 3

Should there be a confidential system to allow students to provide positive feedback on their teachers' practices?

Yes – 86.2% of respondents

No – 13.8% of respondents

Most parents indicated that they believed the implementation of a confidential system that would allow students to provide feedback on their teachers' practices would be beneficial to all parties involved. Parents also suggested that the system should accept all forms of criticism, including negative comments if they are deemed constructive and relevant. However, a select few parents felt that the means by which students communicate criticism should be face-to-face rather than electronically.

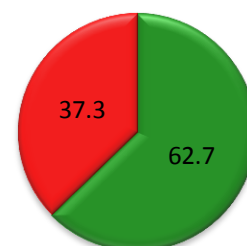
Parents stressed the need for such a system to be system-wide and moderated by dedicated staff. Most felt that, if done right, such a system would greatly benefit their child's education. However, if executed poorly and abused, would be extremely detrimental to the classroom experience. It was stressed that teachers are accountable to the taxpayers and, by extension, the children of the taxpayers – not the other way around.

Comments from Parents:

"If done in a positive manner absolutely, who better to give feedback than a student who agrees or disagrees with teachers approach to learning? A simple comment could make a world of difference. In some cases I think it could alleviate stress on the student's part knowing that someone has heard their thoughts on the teacher's practices." Parent of Gr. 7, 10 & 12 Students (CDSB of Eastern Ontario)

"I don't feel this is productive to the education system as a whole. I have always encouraged my daughter to talk to her teachers face to face if she has an issue/concern/positive feedback. I believe that a confidential system for positive feedback may turn into a place to confidentially scorn a teacher/teacher's practice." Parent of Gr. 9 & 12 Students (Waterloo Region DSB)

"I do feel that this would be beneficial to assess teachers' performance. This could show the teachers that really shine and go out of their way." Parent of Gr. 11 Student (Grand Erie DSB)



Educator Survey Question 3

Should there be a confidential system to allow students to provide positive feedback on their teachers' practices?

Yes – 62.7% of respondents

No – 37.3% of respondents

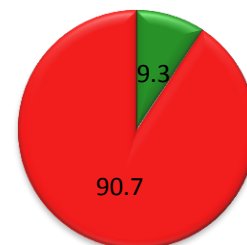
While a majority supported the idea, many teachers were strongly opposed because they felt that the system would be so abused by immature students that the entire initiative would be pointless. Teachers felt that it is the responsibility of the administration to provide constructive feedback on their teaching practices; not students. Teachers also felt that students were unqualified to evaluate their teaching practices. Overall, many felt that students and parents had no place in determining the practices of educators.

Comments from Educators:

"Teachers are accountable to parents and taxpayers; not students. A good teacher knows if they are successful by their students' success. This question is based on the assumption that all students can provide a fair assessment of their teachers based on performance and not on popularity..." Female Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)

"I think feedback from students is incredibly valuable. If teachers are truly committed to being life-long learners, then we should definitely want to solicit as much feedback as possible from those we work with every day." Male Educator (Halton CDSB)

"Absolutely not. Parents and students should not evaluate teaching staff in any way, shape or form. That is a strictly regulated process for administration only. First of all, I would preface my comments by pointing out that I am a teacher who goes above and beyond my contract (because I like the activity, not because I think I should) and I would receive a great deal of positive feedback from students and so this type of feedback would benefit me personally. As much as students can be marginalized by the student population, so can teachers. Unfortunately, evaluative feedback from students is VERY biased..." Female Educator (Hamilton-Wentworth DSB)



Single-Gender Schools

Student Survey Question 4

Do you feel that attending a single gender school would benefit your education?

Yes – 9.3% of respondents

No – 90.7% of respondents

The vast majority of students believe that co-ed schools are the most beneficial. Students recognize that social interactions with the opposite gender are important for developing life skills while contributing diversity to class discussions. Students feel that segregating males and females does not demonstrate gender equality. Furthermore, in this day and age not every student is sure whether they are male or female, singled gendered schools could cause controversy regarding this topic. Although some students who already attend single-gendered schools feel as though this has benefitted their education and reduced distractions, the majority believes it would not be beneficial.

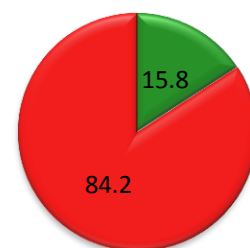
Many cited real world education as a proponent of co-ed schools, saying that in everyday life and in the workplace students need to be able to work and interact with members of the opposite gender, a skill they learn in co-ed schools. Many also felt that by segregating genders, there were increased risks of gender discrimination and inequality. Students indicated that main reason behind separating schools would be to vary the curriculum, and that any attempt to do this would be based on sexism and stereotypes.

Comments from students:

“Not at all. That makes for a segregated barrier between sexes. Also to consider that it allows no real room for self-identity and exploration, when it comes to the terms of gender and sexuality.” Gr. 12 Male (Simcoe County DSB)

“I believe that single gender schools only promote segregation and do not provide any benefits to education.” Gr. 12 Male (Dufferin-Peel CDSB)

“School is more than just a place to study, it is a place where you learn about the how to act and survive in the world. There are some days that I learn less fact and more about learning to deal with people and become an adult in this ever changing society. By dividing students by gender I feel you are taking away a great benefit: how to talk to people who are not the same as you. Our world depends on the relationships between males and females.” Gr. 12 Female (Lambton Kent DSB)



Parent Survey Question 4

Do you feel that attending a single gender school would benefit your child's education?

Yes – 15.8% of respondents

No – 84.2% of respondents

Overall, parents were more supportive of the idea than students, but a large majority was still in opposition. Many stated they could only go by experience, and did not have enough information to make an educated answer. For the most part, parents felt as though their children benefited from dual-gendered schools. Parents echoed students in their concerns that single-gender schools do not prepare students for the world outside. Many parents were concerned about their children's' social maturation and felt that being exposed to both genders was conducive to strong interpersonal skills. There were also concerns that bullying would increase dramatically in single-gender environments.

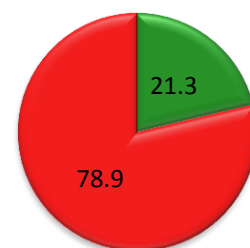
Parents recognized that students could potentially excel academically in a single-gender environment, but felt that this would have an unprecedented effect on social skills, which are key to future successes.

Comments from parents:

"There is so much more to children going to school than the academics portion. They learn to be social, conflict resolution, compassion, teamwork, relationships, and many other valuable traits that are required for them to become wonderful adults." Parent of Gr. 11 Student (Peel DSB)

"We don't live in a single gender world. We all need to learn to live, learn and work together." Parent of Gr. 4 Student (York Region DSB)

"Bullying has been an issue with my son and I believe that being in a single gender school would make matters worse for him." Parent of Gr. 6, 7 & 9 Students (Thames Valley DSB)



Educator Survey Question 4

Do you feel that attending a single gender school would benefit your students' educations?

Yes – 21.3% of respondents

No – 78.9% of respondents

Again, more educators supported single-gender schools than students or parents, but the majority were still in opposition. Many educators stated that they were often unsure as to whether a single gendered school would benefit students. The majority of educators felt that the mix of male and female students allows for more diverse class discussions resulting in a better education. However, some felt that single gendered schools would allow for more focused studies. Some talked about studies that had shown males excel in single-gendered classrooms where females perform to the same level or below.

Many teachers thought that schools themselves should be co-educational environments, but that more resources and educations should be available to teachers to best match their lessons to the learning styles of the students in their classes – whether they differ due to gender or other reasons. Many felt that while co-ed classrooms are often a distraction, especially to older students, students will always find sources of distraction, and that focusing academically is up to the student themselves.

Comments from educators:

"This might be beneficial to some students, however I think in general it is more important for students to learn how to learn and work together in a mixed environment." Male Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)

"Absolutely not. Relationships need to be developed between the genders. It is unlikely that the live in a single gender home, or will work in a single gender workplace. There are too many benefits seeing both genders grow up together and go through the childhood development stages, interacting together and learning how to treat and care for each other." Female Educator (Algonquin and Lakeshore CDSB)

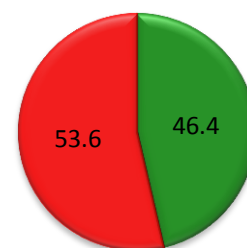
Bilingual Education

Student Survey Question 5

Should students in grades 4 to 12 be required to take courses in both English and French?

Yes – 46.4% of respondents

No – 53.6% of respondents



The majority of surveyed students believed that having English and French courses mandatory through grades 4 to 12 would not be a good idea. For the most part, it is believed that without a genuine interest in the subject, the students will not retain the information and that, although recognized as a valuable skill, is not something that is easily learned. It is also indicated that for those students who are not very strong in English literacy to begin with, the mandatory French courses would set the student up for further failure. It is believed by the majority of the students (due to reasons such as immigration, literacy capabilities in either language and perceived necessity) that having the English and French courses mandatory through grades 4 to 12 would not be a good or beneficial idea for the students of Ontario.

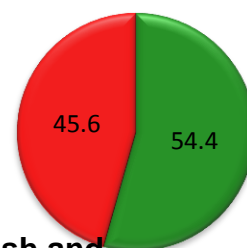
On the opposite side, some students state that because French is the second language of Canada that it is important to learn half (if not full) fluency throughout the course of our primary and secondary years of education. It is the view of some students that due to the investment in programs such as French Immersion and Extended French throughout Ontario, bilingualism in English and French would be extremely beneficial. It is also believed that the fluency in the two official languages will greatly assist the students in their future endeavours.

Comments from students:

“No, some people already struggle with courses in school and having to do them in a second language as well would be too much for them and turn them away from school/learning.” *Gr. 12 Male (Private School Board)*

“Yes, they should because being bilingual gives you more opportunities to have a good life in Canada. Maybe even if they started to learn French earlier then it would be more beneficial to the students because it is easier to learn a second language when you are younger.” *Gr. 12 Female (Toronto DSB)*

« Avoir une éducation dans les deux langues officielles du Canada nous permet d'être capable de communiquer de façons efficace dans plusieurs situation dans la vie quotidienne. » *Gr. 12 Female (CSC Franco-Nord)*



Parent Survey Question 5

Should students in grades 4 to 12 be required to take courses in both English and French?

Yes – 54.4% of respondents

No – 45.6% of respondents

The majority of parents believe that English and French courses should be mandatory through grades 4 to 12. They believe it is extremely beneficial to their children and see no harm in having them learn the two official languages of Canada. Furthermore, many of the parents have said that they did not experience the opportunity to participate in such programs and wish they would had been exposed to them at an early age.

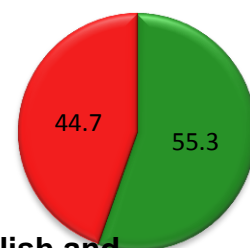
Alternately in response, some parents believe that it is not necessary for their children to learn both languages if they do not wish to or do not have the need to do so. Some parents believe that the English language should be mastered before the introduction and mastering of the French language as to not to confuse and distract their children from the basic learning curve. It is also believed that learning French should be a decision of the family and not of the school or the ministry.

Comments from parents:

"We are a bilingual country and the advantages of being bilingual are tremendous. Realistically it will be difficult for smaller schools to accommodate offering a cross range of courses in both languages. Other learning options would have to be explored" Parent of Gr. 5 & 10 Students (Near North DSB)

"Not all students can successfully manage more than one language. Some students may already be speaking other languages or struggling with language barriers as newcomers. The decision should be made on individual basis. Each situation is unique." Parent of Gr. 6 Student (Toronto DSB)

"Staying enrolled in a French Second Language program to Grade 12 will increase our children's' proficiency in the French language. There is much evidence to support the added benefits of knowing both official languages from an employment, economic, and cultural perspective regardless of their career paths." Parent of Gr. 5 Student (Toronto CDSB)



Educator Survey Question 5

Should students in grades 4 to 12 be required to take courses in both English and French?

Yes – 55.3% of respondents

No – 44.7% of respondents

In the responses from Ontarian educators, it was indicated that, for the most part, they believe that English and French courses should be mandatory throughout grades 4 to 12. They believed that speaking the two languages is essential in many parts of the province and all over the world.

Many indicated that it will benefit the students in many different ways throughout their life and that no harm can come from the further educating of the students in the country's second official language. It was also agreed upon that while learning this second language is an excellent skill to acquire, it should be acquired genuinely and with the plan to use it.

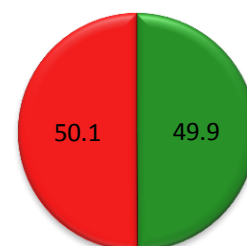
In contrast, some educators believe it is not a necessary course to be followed throughout a student's education and that, depending on the student, it is an excess stress that the students do not need to face.

Comments from educators:

"Learning another language has all kinds of positives, both in terms of literacy and linguistic skills, but also for brain development, creating better cultural understanding, etc. However, language learning must have a meaningful context." Male Educator (Toronto DSB)

« La connaissance et la compétence des langues sont d'une importance primordiale. La clarté et la précision de communication sont souvent ce qui causent les malentendus entre personnes. » Female French Educator (Conseil Scolaire des Écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario)

"As long as there are francophone communities spread throughout Canada, our national unity and identity rely on having a common language. While I recognise that our country is becoming multicultural and therefore multilingual, it is of benefit to our students to acquire an additional language." Female Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)



Plastic Water Bottles

Student Survey Question 6

Should the sale of plastic water bottles be banned from your school?

Yes – 49.9% of respondents

No – 50.1% of respondents

This question was very contentious, with student opinion almost perfectly undecided. Many students felt that a ban of water bottles would be beneficial for not only the environment, but education of environmental sustainability as well. Students found this ban to be a good leverage and promotion for school eco-clubs to get their message out about the importance of minimizing waste and caring for the environment. While a large number of students supported the ban altogether, others believed that there should be more focus on the sale of reusable bottles and the importance of recycling instead.

Students also raised the point that a ban of this nature meant much more than the environmental impact it would have in schools, but that it would be a message to corporations, parents, and students, that the public is informed about the nature of bottled water and is willing to stand up against it.

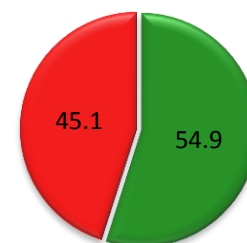
On the other hand, some students believed that due to the unsanitary water fountains in their schools, purchasing water bottles is the best alternative for obtaining water. Those against the ban also argued that if students do not have access to clean water, they are more likely to seek unhealthy choices such as soda drinks or sugary juices to get “hydrated”.

Overall, many students that were against the ban indicated that they saw no reason to ban plastic water bottles.

Comments from students:

“Plastic water bottles are very harmful to the environment and many students bring them to school because they are too lazy to fill up a stainless steel bottle. If the plastic bottles were banned, students would learn to adapt and it would create much more eco-friendly schools.” Gr. 11 Female (York Region DSB)

“No it should not because not everyone can afford the fancy Nalgene and metal water bottles. Also, for those who prefer bottled water, not everyone remembers to bring the reusable ones to school, every day.” Gr. 12 Female (Toronto CDSB)



Parent Survey Question 6

Should the sale of plastic water bottles be banned from your school?

Yes – 54.9% of respondents

No – 45.1% of respondents

This issue was also a controversial one for parents. However, the majority of surveyed parents supported the ban. Some of parents believe that discouraging, not banning, the sale of water bottles is the best course of action. Some parents believe that there should be a recycling program mandated in every school to encourage environmental stewardship and that if water bottles are going to be discouraged, schools must first ensure that water fountains are sanitary and safe. Parents who oppose the ban have a great concern about the potential inability to access water. They are afraid that their kids will easily become dehydrated throughout the day, and in turn, become compromised in their academic success. Parents are also concerned about the strong possibility of students switching to unhealthy choices in response to the ban.

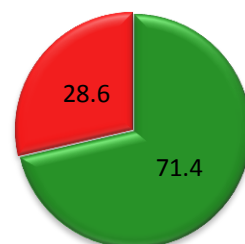
Many parents wanted to make sure that the importance of staying hydrated was still stressed. Many also supported the idea that such a ban would promote environmental consciousness with students, and that it may extend into students' lives outside of school. Some indicated that such a ban should be implemented as part of an environmental education program. Some raised the point that too much regulation can be a problem if students feel that their personal freedom is being compromised.

Comments from parents:

"Water is important. If water bottles are banned then one could make the argument for banning milk cartons too." Parent of Gr. 4 Student (Peel DSB)

"No need for them nowadays. We all use reusable water bottles - just need decent, reliable, good tasting water stations available for them. [They are] better for the environment by reducing waste." Parent of Gr. 4, 8 & 9 Students (Peel DSB)

"School choice would allow me to select a school where I may indicate a preference towards such matters. I would appreciate filtered hydration in the form of water be available in school. Until this is made available via other means, some sales of water bottles with appropriate recycling solutions should be available. Clean hydration is essential for optimal brain development and memory retention." Parent of Gr. 7 Student (Private School Board)



Educator Survey Question 6

Should the sale of plastic water bottles be banned from your school?

Yes – 71.4% of respondents

No – 28.6% of respondents

Unlike the surveyed students and parents, the large majority of surveyed educators supported the ban. Many educators indicated that it would inspire students to learn more about the environment, and could successfully be tied into the environmental education curriculum. Educators spoke from the perspectives of eco-teams and environmental clubs in schools, which have been lobbying for such bans for a long time.

Many indicated that they taught at schools where a ban was in effect, and found that the ban had little adverse effects and that the frequency of water fountain use and refillable water bottle use had increased dramatically. Some found that school spirit had improved as a result of school themed refillable water bottles.

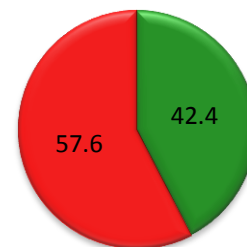
Some educators raised concerns that while their school would like to ban plastic water bottles, the decision usually resides with the school board. In many cases, imposing the ban would mean breaking contracts with vending machine providers, which might have other adverse effects.

Comments from educators:

"I don't like them being used and I would encourage that idea but I would hate to force schools who may require plastic water bottles for some reason to not be able to use them." *Female Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)*

"We have fountains to drink from. Students can bring a reusable bottle from home and refill it to their hearts content at school. There is no need to contribute to our landfills by promoting wasteful products." *Male Educator (Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB)*

« Nous devrions mettre plus d'emphasis sur l'importance de nos fontaines que sur les bouteilles. » *Male Educator (Ottawa CSB)*



Civic Education

Student Survey Question 7

Do you feel that your school prepares you to vote in government elections when you become eligible to vote?

Yes – 42.4% of respondents

No – 57.6% of respondents

The majority of students surveyed felt that their public education was not effectively preparing them for voting in Canada once they reached 18 years of age. Many responded to this question in the context of the perceived value of the Grade 10 Civics - a mandatory half-credit course for Ontario students. In general, they did not feel that the course provided useful and practical information on things like current political issues, the importance of being active voters, and inspiring political engagement among students. However, several students cited the curriculum's focus on the structure of government and laws as helping them understand society in general.

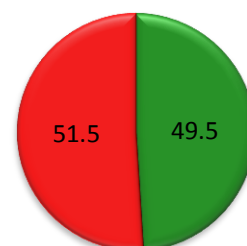
Some students commented that teachers are often not adequately educated in politics and that this discussion is given only a few days in the half credit course, providing an insufficient introduction to the voting process. Those that most benefited from the Civics course cited the influence of particular teachers. A number of respondents identified student elections as an opportunity to influence citizenship in schools but, for the most part, these end up becoming popularity contests and do not focus on political processes.

Comments from students:

"Since tenth grade I have not had any interaction with politics. I know nothing about the different parties, nor what they represent, nor whom I should vote for. Being such an important part of Canadian life, this should definitely be more emphasized in our education." Gr. 12 Female (DSB of Niagara)

"In grade 10, students are required to take Civics and Careers. I believe this course really helps the students by giving information about how the government works, what voting is, how one votes, etc. This information gives students a glimpse at what they should expect/are expected to do reaching the legal age." Gr. 11 Female (Thames Valley DSB)

« Absolument pas. Notre établissement scolaire ne fait rien dans le but de nous encourager à nous maintenir nous même au courant des élections et des parties politiques. » Gr. 11 Female (Conseil Scolaire des Écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario)



Parent Survey Question 7

Do you feel that your school prepares your child to vote in government elections when they become eligible to vote?

Yes – 49.5% of respondents

No – 51.5% of respondents

Parents were almost equally divided on this issue. Some parents referenced the Grade 10 Civics course and stated that a half-credit course was not enough to properly engage and educate their children in regards to the voting process. They raised the issue that teachers were either too delicate or afraid of expressing bias in the classroom or, conversely, expressed too much political opinion and bias. The quality of teaching on this topic was discussed numerous times by parents. An interesting recurring comment from parents was the perception that secondary school had less of an effect on the civic education of their children than elementary school. On the other hand, a few felt that the Civics course might be more appropriate in Grade 11 when students are a little more mature.

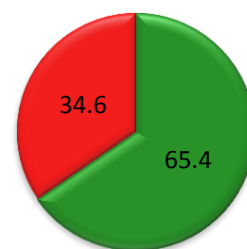
Parents also voiced opinion on the role of schools in political education. A significant number of respondents believe that knowledge and preference of political parties and the value of voting should be taught at home rather than by teachers.

Comments from parents:

“Not enough. The school should treat politics as a matter of fact, a part of daily life. Not for a select group of people or a matter of personal interest. Students must be educated on the current political parties, options to participate and vote and the purpose/importance of doing so.” Parent of Gr. 10 Student (Unknown School Board)

“We have had a LOT of elections in the last few years so politics (all levels) are actively discussed at our kitchen table. My kids are well schooled in voting and government. I don't need this to be a school activity. I'd rather the school work on reading.” Parent of Gr. 4 & 8 Students (Toronto DSB)

“They have a basic idea of how the system is supposed to work, and a basic idea of the political parties, but there's not much discussed about the political issues of the day, I find. Also, I find a number of students don't understand the importance of politics and how it affects their day-to-day lives (nor do many adults, either).” Parent of Gr. 4 & 7 Students (Hamilton-Wentworth DSB)



Educator Survey Question 7

Do you feel that your school prepares your students to vote in government elections when they become eligible to vote?

Yes – 65.4% of respondents

No – 34.6% of respondents

Among surveyed educators, more than half believed that Ontario's civics curriculum, in tandem with the rest of the K-12 education experience, significantly prepared students with the political fluency to vote. Most educators believed not only that the Civics curriculum was a well laid out course, but also that student government elections inside the school and assemblies featuring local politicians provided Ontario students with a wholesome political education. However, a significant number of educators strongly believe that the civics education should be reformed to provide a better education to all students.

Many educators mentioned the fact that the mandatory civics course in Ontario takes place in Grade 10 – about 2 years before students actually vote. The lack of interest in the course combined with the time that students have to forget relevant information lead, according to some educators, to a student's lack of preparation to vote. A few educators also commented that Civics should be a made a full credit course to provide more useful information to students.

Comments from educators:

"We promote a number of good citizenship skills and teach about the levels of government and citizen's rights and responsibilities -- at the elementary level this is what is needed, as well as encouraging children to be active in a variety of socially responsible causes." Female Educator (Toronto DSB)

"Although they learn about the government and voting in grade 10 civics, I feel much of it is lost as they continue through high school. Only if a senior student took politics would they really have a better understanding of voting once they left high school." Female Educator (Toronto DSB)

« Le cours de Civics ne devraient pas être en 10ème année mais justement en 12ème! On peut intégrer le fonctionnement du système gouvernemental canadien dans d'autres cours de 10ème tel Histoire. » Male Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)

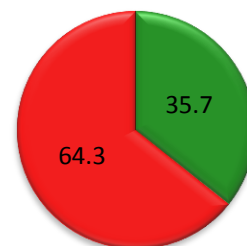
School Uniforms

Student Survey Question 8

Do you feel that student uniforms would benefit your school environment?

Yes – 35.7% of respondents

No – 64.3% of respondents



A majority of students surveyed were not in favour of introducing uniforms into the school environment. Though many positive attributes of uniforms were identified, the major deterrents including cost and reduction of self-expression were prominent concerns shown in the responses.

Many students indicated that uniforms create a sense of unity within the school community, and identified that they were a means by which students could identify with one another. Considerable emphasis was placed on the value of reducing inequality and discrimination based on fashion, in particular reducing status given to individuals based on the brands that they can afford to wear. Students also stated that uniforms could simplify the process of getting ready in the morning, and allow students to focus on their studies rather than their visual appearance.

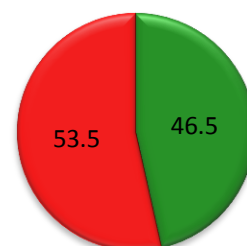
On the other hand, the majority felt that uniforms would limit opportunities for self-expression and would prevent the ability to develop their own unique style.

Comments from students:

"School uniforms hinder students' self-expression and are potential necessary expenses, which the school system should shy away from." Gr. 12 Male (Toronto DSB)

"Yes student uniforms would benefit my school environment because it teaches us students a sense of discipline. By wearing a uniform, you look "classy" while in school. Also, bullying is decreased due to the fact that uniform=equality." Gr. 10 Female (CDSB of Eastern Ontario)

"J'ai un uniforme, et je trouve que ça diminue l'intimidation". Gr. 12 Male (Conseil des Écoles catholiques du Centre-Est)



Parent Survey Question 8

Do you feel that student uniforms would benefit your school environment?

Yes – 46.5% of respondents

No – 53.5% of respondents

On average, parents surveyed were opposed to implementation of uniforms within schools. Like the responses from the surveyed students, they could identify many positive benefits of uniforms. Parents with female children especially expressed that there were far fewer pressures and stresses surrounding appearances. Most parents agreed that uniforms have the potential to create a greater sense of equality and inclusiveness, but concerns were raised regarding the enforcement of uniform/dress code policy. Like the majority of students surveyed, many parents were concerned that it would rid their children of the ability to express themselves through style and fashion.

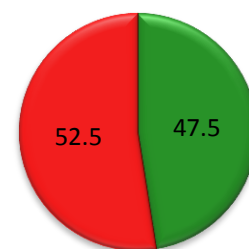
The issue of cost received mixed sentiments. Certain parents felt that uniforms were a significant cost that could be onerous for low-income families. There is a perception that uniform suppliers inflate prices. Specific issues raised included the practice of including school crests (which increase cost). Other parents, primarily those who had experience with uniforms, commented that uniforms saved them money in the long run.

Comments from Parents:

"I have older daughters who went through the system and the one thing that they all agree is that the uniform took one of the pressures off them. I wish they had uniforms in elementary schools. The idea of uniforms has been discussed at my school." Parent of Gr. 7 & 10 Students (Durham CDSB)

"Possibly if student uniforms were made inexpensive enough but for my family a cost of \$200 + would create a huge issue and with children growing so quickly you could end up purchasing three uniforms a year." Parent of Gr. 8 & 10 Students (Peel DSB)

"My children currently are at a school where they wear uniforms. They do not complain about it and we as a family like it. There is no "class" difference because of it. I encourage the idea." Parent of Gr. 10 & 12 Students (Brant Haldimand Norfolk CDSB)



Educator Survey Question 8

Do you feel that student uniforms would benefit your school environment?

Yes – 47.5% of respondents

No – 52.5% of respondents

The response from surveyed educators was fairly even with a slight favouring of no uniform policies. Many teachers concurred that uniforms have a positive effect on school communities by preventing students from coming to class dressed inappropriately, reducing the amount of bullying and creating a more equitable classroom environment. Several educators indicated that uniforms have the greatest positive impact in secondary schools. As with parents and students, teachers also raised concerns about cost in low-income demographics and indicated that they would limit opportunities for self-expression.

Teachers raised two additional issues not identified by parents or students. They supported uniforms as a contributor to safety of the students as non-members of the schools are quickly identified and cannot remain on the property unnoticed. They also voiced concern that implementing a uniform dress code would bring additional administrative burden in the form of ensuring adherence to the policy. Some felt that they would be required to devote time to dealing with uniform infractions.

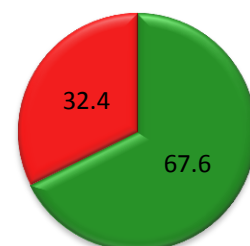
A majority of educators concluded that students should have the freedom to wear what they want to class and felt that the choice should ultimately be that of the students.

Comments from Educators:

"I have taught at schools where the disparity between have and have not translates to clothing choices and makes for an uncomfortable learning environment for those who 'have not'. I feel that uniforms can be a great equalizer. They can also instill a sense of pride and respect in the students." Male Educator (Toronto DSB)

"Although our school does not have them, I have heard many positive things from my colleagues about the atmosphere and how it is improved with the use of uniforms. As long as it doesn't involve a large cost to families." Female Educator (DSB of Niagara)

"I have worked in both environments and it does not matter. As a staff member it is just as difficult to enforce uniform rules as it is to enforce any dress code rules. The only limited benefit for uniforms is that it would eliminate the 'label' economic classism for students who cannot afford the 'label'." Male Educator (Toronto DSB)



Technology

Student Survey Question 9

Do you feel that technology is being used effectively in your school?

Yes – 67.6% of respondents

No – 32.4% of respondents

A majority of students surveyed believe that although great improvements have been made in the past few years, technology must be further implemented and used in the classrooms. The problem of implementation has been greatly stressed by Ontarian students. Many feel that although the resources are there, the knowledge to use the technology is lacking.

Students also feel that they are being restricted from using technology for academic purposes since there is a perception on the part of the administration that this can lead to abuse. Some believe that it is unfair that the majority who use the technology appropriately are being restricted from access because of the few students who abuse the privilege and use the technology for non-academic purposes within the classroom.

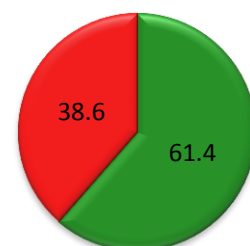
A number of points were brought up multiple times by students such as Smart Boards needing to be used more effectively by teachers, the need for a better control system regarding restricting use of technology for non-academic purposes, and faster implementation of Wi-Fi in schools.

Comments from students:

“Using laptops in class has definitely benefited our learning and in-class research. However, a lot of kids play games during class. That being said, I think the pros outweigh the cons when it comes to technology within the schools.” Gr. 10 Male (York Region DSB)

“We have smart boards, but they aren’t used to their potential” Gr. 10 Female (Durham DSB)

“The computers at our school are not great. By the time they get started up, the period is half way over. Also, sites like You Tube and other social media is blocked. But in today's society, these websites can and are used as tools for youth.” Gr. 12 Female (Niagara CDSB)



Parent Survey Question 9

Do you feel that technology is being used effectively in your child's school?

Yes – 61.4% of respondents

No – 38.6% of respondents

In general, parents surveyed were highly supportive of the use of technology in schools. However many expressed concern over the school's ability to keep the technology up-to-date. They believe that schools should invest in improving outdated hardware and software. Some commented that there are low cost or free on-line tools that students can access.

Similarly to the student's responses, parents stressed the importance of better training for educators to stay up to par with the technology. Parents also highlighted the need for training among the students. There is a general perception that youth are well-informed on new technologies but it cannot be assumed that everyone has the support and access, at school or home, to develop their technological skill.

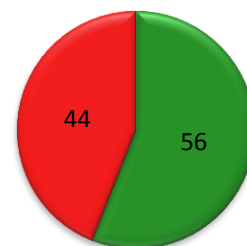
Many felt that there is value in educating the students on the proper and responsible use of computers and other technology. Parents were supportive of efforts by teachers to post class work on websites for both parent and student review. They would like to see increased use of this practice among teachers.

Comments from Parents:

"Too much emphasis on devices, not the use of the software/resources that they have access to on the internet. Low cost tablets or net books provide the access and would allow funding for teacher and student training." Parent of Gr. 4 & 6 Students (Toronto DSB)

"Although technology is being used, on a practical level, there are simply not enough computers or smart boards for technology to be used effectively. Technology changes so drastically that it would be very costly to provide one for every student. Perhaps, a laptop will be a requirement one day as a school supply." Parent of Gr. 5 Student (Halton CDSB)

"We do a great deal of fundraising through the year with the majority being spent on upgrading outdated technology and it's being used by all classes, all teachers and the students are loving it" Parent of Gr. 4 Student (Toronto DSB)



Educator Survey Question 9

Do you feel that technology is being used effectively in your school?

Yes – 56.0% of respondents

No – 44.0% of respondents

Educators were generally undecided on this question. A majority of educators felt that more could be done to advance technology in the classroom. Educators surveyed expressed interest to be better trained to use the technology available to them in order to improve the classroom experience for students.

Another common consensus was that educators do not have enough access to class sets of computers. Educators felt that the availability and reliability of technology is not at an appropriate level as of yet. Many are hesitant to adopt the newest technology because of concerns that it is not widely available and its use can be problematic.

The major thoughts raised by educators were that better training to use technological resources must be made available to educators, further access to computer labs must be given, and Wi-Fi services must be implemented.

Comments from Educators:

“We need more staff training. There are Smart Boards but people do not know how to use them.” Female Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)

“Availability of computer labs is practically nil. During two of the four periods of the day, there are NO computer labs available to classes in my school. Teachers are being encouraged to design technology-rich tasks and assignments, but are not being given the tools. Also, in my hallway, only half the classes have ceiling-mounted projectors - my classroom does not. I am asked to present visually-rich lessons to my students (this is especially important for ESL/ELL learners) and yet other than my ancient overhead projector, I have no way of doing this.” Female Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)

“Our building is a much older building and the cost to provide appropriate infrastructure to effectively use technology is prohibitive.” Female Educator (Lakehead DSB)

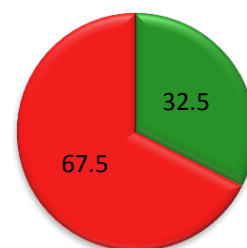
Breaks in the School Year

Student Survey Question 10

Would your learning benefit from a shorter summer vacation and more breaks throughout the school year?

Yes – 32.5% of respondents

No – 67.5% of respondents



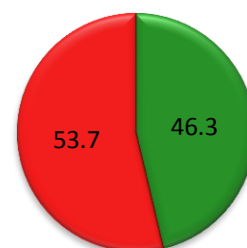
The majority of students surveyed felt that a long summer was an advantage. The summer is used for personal time and is looked at as a reward, providing motivation throughout the year. More frequent breaks can be brief stress relievers, however teachers often assign projects over these shorter breaks. In the longer summer break, no assignments are given. Students felt that a long summer could provide greater time for full recovery from a strenuous school year. It also allows greater opportunity to seek employment. It was stated that it is difficult to juggle school and work during the school year. These students also felt that summer months are more enjoyable and there is greater benefit to taking such a long time for a break. Some mentioned that it is easier for families that wish to take longer vacations. A minority of students commented that a shorter summer, coupled with more breaks throughout the year, is more beneficial to learning and retention of information as they are continuously exercising their knowledge. Some were concerned that a longer summer break contributes to loss of information gained during the school year.

Comments from students:

"More breaks throughout the year would allow students the chance to slack off more. With the summer break it makes students keep studying hard to do better throughout the year." Gr. 12 Male (York Region DSB)

"With a shorter summer vacation and more breaks throughout the school year, I feel that I would become lazier throughout the year which is not a good thing." Gr. 10 Female (CDSB of Eastern Ontario)

"I forget too much from one year to the next because of the long summer vacation. If there are more breaks then I would hold information and knowledge longer and be more successful in school. However, air conditioning and heating would have to be a number 1 priority to avoid complaints about the temperature affecting focus." Gr. 12 Male (Durham DSB)



Parent Survey Question 10

Would your child's learning benefit from a shorter summer vacation and more breaks throughout the school year?

Yes – 46.3% of respondents

No – 53.7% of respondents

For parents, responses to this question differed greatly depending on the ages of their children. Parents of elementary school children preferred a shorter summer vacation. They found that their children become less attentive and can become bored as the vacation stretches on. They echoed the comment that children will not forget as much during the shorter breaks. On the other hand, parents of high school students generally appreciated the longer summer breaks because their children could participate in summer jobs and earn money. The value of the summer job for generating experience and honing “real life” skills was emphasized. Many commented that the summer break is vital for their teenager's mental stability, since the high school year is increasingly stressful. Parents also placed significant value on longer time for vacations and visiting families in home countries.

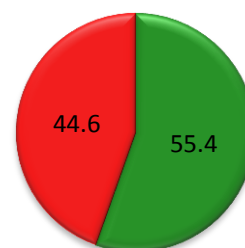
The parent group represented the greatest degree of indecisive responses to this question. They questioned whether the idea of shorter summer and more frequent breaks was realistic; however many were willing to give it a try.

Comments from parents:

“I really think a summer job is equally beneficial to a child's learning to be responsible, disciplined, and interacting with the general public outside of a controlled school environment. I don't support a part-time job during the school year so a shorter summer vacation is unlikely to produce a summer job.” Parent of Gr. 12 Student (Toronto DSB)

“My children get bored halfway through the summer and get worn out at times during the school year. More breaks and a shorter summer would greatly improve this.” Parent of Gr. 5, 7 & 11 Students (Durham DSB)

“I believe summer break is important for families, to travel and visit other family and places, to give children opportunity to have rich life experiences like camps, travel, picnics, time to play, learn, volunteer, and eventually work and make money.” Parent of Gr. 5 Student (Toronto DSB)



Educator Survey Question 10

Would your students' learning benefit from a shorter summer vacation and more breaks throughout the school year?

Yes – 55.4% of respondents

No – 44.6% of respondents

In contrast to students and parents, a majority of educators would like to see a modified school year. Teachers feel that by decreasing the length of the summer break, but by equally increasing the length of breaks throughout the year, students would forget less and the quality of their education would improve. Teachers agree that students need a break from a stressful school year and that breaks throughout the year are necessary stress relievers as well. Many felt that while students are reluctant to change, many would actually prefer rebalanced vacation days, once they got the chance to try them out.

Educators agreed that summers are necessary for students to find employment and save up for university. Teachers also want students to be able to find their personal identities outside of an academic environment. Educators believe students need their personal time, offered by a long summer break.

Comments from educators:

"Many students rely on the ability to have a summer job without the burden of school work. They rely on this money to fund part of their university fees, and would not necessarily work throughout the school year if it affected their school work." Female Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)

"Students need the time to work to save money or experience other activities where they foster multiple intelligences." Female Educator (Ottawa-Carleton DSB)

"With two months off students unfortunately "forget" what they have learned, especially in high school." Female Educator (Hamilton-Wentworth DSB)

Methodology

For the past three 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 10, 626 students from 70 school Boards, and all regions of the province, participating in the online survey. We co-operated with People for Education on a survey of parents, where we asked matching questions, and provided the same opportunities for comment. 2,202 parents from 69 school boards across Ontario participated. This year, for the first time, an educator survey was conducted with 944 teachers, principals, and vice-principals across Ontario participating. 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, 2012 and June 16th, 2012. The survey has been and continues to be a student run initiative. With the idea of the survey originating from student opinions and the questions for each year's survey designed by students, the student voice is truly captured.

Students were asked 10 "Yes" and "No" questions, and also offered the opportunity to add comments on each question. In this report, we reviewed 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, parents and educators in each section to provide a further look at what participants truly think. Students who completed the survey were eligible to win several cash prizes as well as an Apple iPad.

Many students took the time to comment on their responses, which added considerable depth to the report this year as it allows OSTA-AECO to look beyond raw data to understand student's' underlying perspectives on educational issues.

We protect personal information of all participants and adhere to all legislative requirements with respect to the protection of personal privacy. All data was reviewed and published anonymously and shall remain so that way. The only personal data that is published is as follows:

Students:

- Grade
- Gender
- School Board

Parents:

- Grade(s) of child(ren)
- School Board

Educators:

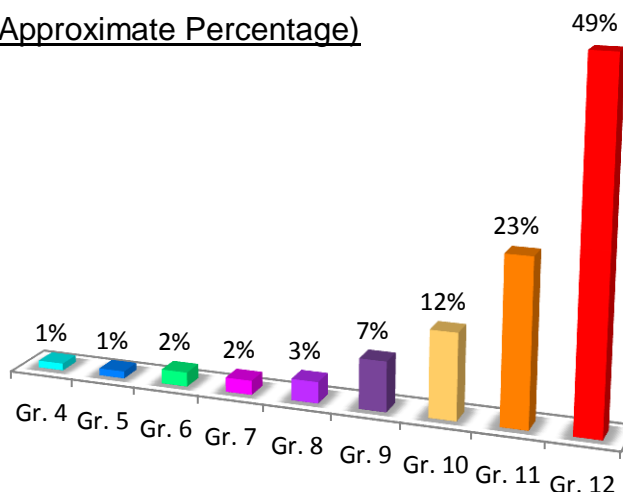
- Gender
- School Board

Respondent Breakdown

STUDENT SURVEY

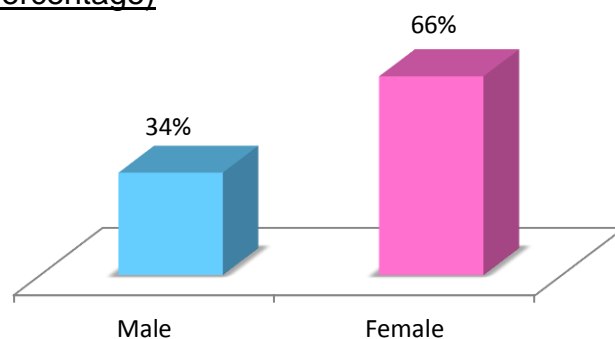
Percent of Known Respondents by Grade (Approximate Percentage)

Grade 4: 86 Students, **1%**
Grade 5: 94 Students, **1%**
Grade 6: 160 Students, **2%**
Grade 7: 241 Students, **2%**
Grade 8: 316 Students, **3%**
Grade 9: 692 Students, **7%**
Grade 10: 1,278 Students, **12%**
Grade 11: 2,320 Students, **23%**
Grade 12: 5,052 Students, **49%**



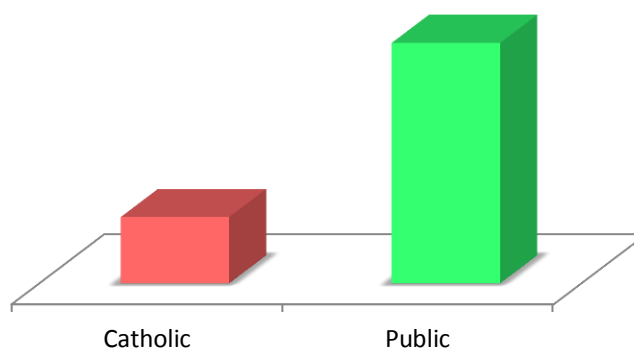
Percent of Respondents by Gender (Approximate Percentage)

Female: 7,064 Students, **66%**
Male: 3,562 Students, **34%**



Percent of Respondents by Catholic/Public School Boards (Approximately Percentage)

Public: 8,331, **78.4%**
Catholic: 2,295, **21.6%**



Top 10 School Boards by Percent of Student Participation:

- 1) Superior-Greenstone DSB, **17.35%**
- 2) Bruce-Grey CDSB, **11.42%**
- 3) Huron-Perth CDSB, **6.92%**
- 4) Algonquin and Lakeshore CDSB, **5.40%**
- 5) Ottawa-Carleton DSB, **5.00%**
- 6) Bluewater DSB, **4.04%**
- 7) Hamilton-Wentworth DSB, **3.54%**
- 8) Conseil scolaire de district Catholique des Aurores boreales, **3.30%**
- 9) Simcoe County DSB, **3.24%**
- 10) Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB, **3.02%**

CONTACT US

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this report, the 2012 Ontario Student, Parent & Educator Survey, or the upcoming 2013 survey, please feel free to contact us:



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