

Survey shows

Public schools satisfy 75% of Halton parents

Halton Board of Education has received a rousing endorsement of its policies and practices from its students' parents.

The results of a survey of Halton parents this year shows over 75 per cent are at least moderately satisfied with the education their children are receiving in the region's public schools. Survey results were released Thursday.

Lengthy questionnaires were sent out to 4,800 randomly selected parents of elementary and secondary school pupils and 1,700 or 35 per cent were returned filled out. Members of the public without children in the school system weren't surveyed.

Out of 1,056 parents of elementary students questioned, 86 per cent answered they were either very or moderately satisfied with the education their children are receiving. Out of 600 high school students' parents, 76 per cent said they were very or moderately satisfied with education in Halton.

On a question dealing with the quality of education in Halton, 82 per cent of elementary students' parents and 76 per cent of parents of high school students indicated they feel there is quality education in the public schools.

Director of Education, Em Lavender, outlined his observations of the survey results, saying parents feel there is quality education and are satisfied with their children's achievement in reading, oral expression and basic math.

Current levels of French instruction were considered sufficient, the survey showed.

Parents are abby with the ways they are informed of their child's progress and support the inclusion of sex education in student studies. Special education is supported by Halton parents as is high school semestering. Promotion by subject rather than by grade at high school is the preferred method, parents say. They also feel discipline is well handled in elementary schools, according to the survey.

Survey results however weren't completely positive. Parents expressed concern about spelling, handwriting and written expression as well as their children's knowledge of Canadian history.

Survey results also showed parents want to see more physical education in Halton schools and are concerned about discipline in high schools.

Class size is another parent worry, the survey showed. Summing up the survey results, Lavender said the school system is in good shape and doesn't need a major overhaul. However there are issues cited by parents which Halton educators need to examine.

Only 52 per cent of high school students' parents felt the board was placing enough emphasis on the fundamentals while 69 per cent of the elementary school students' parents thought there was enough emphasis on fundamentals.

Among elementary school parents, 61 per cent thought classes are too large while only 39 per cent of secondary school parents felt the same way.

There was strong support for reducing class sizes with 81 per cent of elementary parents saying smaller classes would improve learning and 66 per cent of secondary parents taking the same stance.

When it came to paying for smaller classes with increased taxes, however, only 43 per cent of high school parents and 61 per cent of elementary parents answered in the affirmative.

There was strong support for parent-teacher interviews as 89 per cent of parents said they were helpful and over 80 per cent thought teachers were doing a good job of keeping them informed of their child's progress.

Examinations received strong support from parents. Eighty per cent thought they shouldn't be eliminated. Among high school parents 66 per cent thought final

examinations are needed in student evaluation and 54 per cent of elementary parents held the same view.

Discipline at school was viewed as "just about right" by 70 per cent of elementary parents but only 55 per cent of secondary school parents felt the same way.

Parents believe physical education is very important at every grade level and over 80 per cent thought it should be offered daily. Only 12 per cent of elementary parents thought physical education classes were too competitive and 45 per cent of the same parents thought physical fitness isn't given enough emphasis.

High school varsity sport is also viewed as important while 68 per cent of parents were opposed to team sports becoming the sole province of the community or municipal recreation department.

High school parents were opposed to percentage grading in physical education despite their strong support for physical education programs. Seventy-six per cent of the parents questioned were against percentage grades in physical education. Mandatory health and physical education in grades 9-13 was supported by a whopping 90 per cent of parents.

The majority of parents questioned support sex education. Sex education in all grades was supported by 58 per cent of the parents while 85 per cent of elementary parents wanted sex education included with other health topics and 89 per cent of secondary parents were of the same opinion.

Over 85 per cent of the parents thought the board should provide special education programs for children with learning disabilities and over 65 per cent support special programs for gifted children. In addition, more than 70 per cent of parents also thought the board should provide special classes for children who are behaviorally or emotionally disturbed.

High school semestering was viewed by parents positively with 72 per cent saying it was a good move. In addition 73 per cent didn't feel semestering had caused their child any problems.

Promotion by subject, instead of grades, at high school was viewed as an educational improvement by 89 per cent of parents but the option system didn't fare so well. Only 48 per cent of parents thought students should be given more freedom as they progress through secondary school to study that they like. A mere 22 per cent thought the range of courses available should be increased.

The present level of French instruction is just what parents want, the study showed.

Only 30 per cent of those questioned were for elementary French immersion programs and 61 per cent thought 20 minutes of French daily in elementary schools was sufficient.

Teaching of subjects in both French and English was supported by just 24 per cent of high school parents and 36 per cent of elementary parents.

Open concept schools are supported by 57 per cent of the parents and 22 per cent were strongly opposed to them.

Parents want more Canadian history studies. Only 44 per cent of elementary parents thought there was enough Canadian history and 55 per cent of secondary parents held the same view.

There is some support for parent volunteers helping teachers. Among elementary parents questioned, 68 per cent like the idea of parent volunteers in the schools but just 41 per cent of secondary parents agreed.

Spelling and handwriting achievement wasn't viewed as being adequate by parents. Only 66 per cent thought their children had mastered spelling and just 50 per cent were pleased with handwriting abilities.

Student oral idea expression was considered better

than writing expression. Eighty-three per cent of elementary pupils' parents and 75 per cent of the parents with children in high school thought their children expressed ideas adequately orally. Those figures dropped to 69 per cent for elementary parents and 64 per cent for secondary parents when it came to written expression of ideas.

Student achievement in reading for understanding and basic arithmetic was considered good by over 75 per cent of parents.

Parents said schools should be stressing development of learning, thinking and reasoning skills as its top priority closely followed by cultivation of social and occupational skills.

Teaching of cultural values, religious and moral values and social, political and economic justice were ranked four, five and six in importance. Teaching children to get ahead was ranked last in importance.

Band

Acton Citizens' Band did not compete at the Canadian National Exhibition this year. The decision was made by the band executive.

The band has competed many years, winning various awards. While the experience is valuable, the practices on a couple of selections were time consuming.

Board told:

Ban bar sales as project

Halton Board of Education has been asked to ban the sale of chocolate bars as a school fund raising venture.

In many schools students sell chocolate bars to raise money for athletics and school supplies which the board doesn't provide.

Banning the sale of chocolate bars was one suggestion of the joint school-health services committee which filed its annual report Thursday. Regional health officials and Halton educators sit on the committee.

Besides banning chocolate bar sales the committee also suggested only nutritional foods be sold in schools and all pop machines contain non-sweetened juices.

For several years now the board has been campaigning to improve nutrition in Halton high schools.

The committee's study of school cafeterias and student eating habits showed where schools are close to fast food outlets, shopping plazas and restaurants the quantity of food sold in school cafeterias is rather small.

It was discovered that when students bring their lunches they supplement them with snack foods and beverages.

34 enrolled in French immersion

This year, for the first time, French immersion classes will be held in a school in Halton Hills. The immersion course for 34 Grade One students, will begin at Joseph Gibbons School, and will be taught by Miss Sally Duggan.

Half the classes will be conducted in English and the other half in French, but reading and mathematics will be taught only in English.

The children will come from all over town, with parents providing the transportation. Parents in the Park School area have organized a car pool system, with parents taking turns



ASSISTANT CAMPING Supervisor Nancy Shorthill helps Kim Arnold, 10, during the donut eating contest in the arena Thursday. Many contestants were dressed as medieval knights and peasants.

Shut-in service pleases librarian

Chief Librarian Betsy Cornwell praises the shut-in service provided by Halton Hills Library Board as one which developed slowly and solidly and is now more than just a delivery of books.

The service has the advantage of being run by two trained nurses in both Acton and Georgetown, she explained to members of the library board last Wednesday. Patrons soon realized they offered counselling services because both librarians had worked in public health posts.

As a result they've turned into sort of paramedics and make actual recommendations about doctors and services available.

It is one aspect of the library never talked about and one which is never normally associated with libraries, Mrs. Cornwell explained.

The librarian said one Acton shut-in had benefited medically from a visit from the service because Mrs. New had taken the time to be concerned.

It is what I consider to be the nitty-gritty of all library service and it pleases me enormously, Mrs. Cornwell said.

Chairman Garry Morton, noted the 35 per cent response rate on the survey was excellent, pointing out there have been other surveys in Halton which drew much less public response.

Trustee Ivan Armstrong of Milton pointed out parents want more Canadian history but often students don't take it until grade 13. He wondered what Canadian history students take if they don't get to grade 13.

Lavender said he hopes parents who want their children to take courses like Canadian history and physical education will encourage them to pick those courses as options. He added Canadian history and geography are mandatory at the intermediate level.

Director of Education Em Lavender noted the survey was of parents and not the public. He agreed with Hinton there was a lot of room for improvement especially in program. Lavender said with all the work there is to be done in program, Superintendent of Program Bruce Mather who is leaving the board in October needs to and should be replaced. Earlier in the meeting Hinton had failed in a bid to have Mather replaced.

Georgetown Trustee Barry Shepherd said there is need for improvement but the board should also blow its own horn about the survey results. He said positive comments have a place in what the public learns about public education through the media, the same as criticism has its place.

Board parent survey doesn't impress Hinton

Although 75 per cent of Halton parents who answered Halton Board of Education survey this past spring are satisfied with public education across the region, Acton-Esqueving Trustee Bert Hinton isn't.

Thursday, during discussion of the survey of 1,700 parents which showed over 75 per cent are satisfied with the public education program in Halton, and over 75 per cent believe their children are receiving quality education, Hinton said he isn't "satisfied with the quality of education here."

He said people he talks to aren't satisfied and he thought the survey just meant parents don't feel Halton education is any worse than it is anywhere else.

Hinton said many people are still telling him the board doesn't stress basics enough and added he "questions" the board's survey showing over 50 per cent of parents said the board is stressing fundamentals sufficiently.

He suggested the board survey didn't poll enough

people, adding non-parent taxpayers should have been included.

Hinton concluded there is a lot of room for improvement even if people are satisfied with public education in Halton.

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