

# Children, teens engaging less in risky behaviour: survey

By Julia Le

CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Children are engaging less in risky behaviour.

That was among the findings of Our Kids Network's Halton Youth Survey Community Profile, which measured key factors related to healthy youth development and compared the results to previous surveys conducted in 2006/07 and 2009/10.

Our Kids Network Director Elena DiBattista and Research Associate Liz Wells told Halton regional council's health and social services committee last week there has been a substantial drop in substance use from the last time the survey was conducted as well as a decrease in criminal activity.

Gesturing to a graph illustrating the statistics through a Power Point presentation, Wells said six per cent of Grade 10 students admitted they were smokers, compared to 13 per

cent in 2009/10 and 14 per cent in 2006/07. About 34 per cent of Grade 10 students admitted to having an episode of heavy drinking in the last 12 months, compared to 47 per cent in 2009/10 and 50 per cent in 2006/07.

"We see the same pattern in cannabis usage where 1 in every four Grade 10 students in 2006 and 2009 were using cannabis and now it's less than one in five," she said.

The survey also revealed 20 per cent of Grade 10 students admitted to being involved in some type of criminal activity, compared to 26 per cent in both 2009/10 and 2006/07 surveyed years.

The survey was carried out between October 2 and November 16 last year with a total of 10,379 Grade 7 and Grade 10 students in the Halton District School Board and Halton Catholic District School Board completing it. It asked students questions related to assets that help them develop into thriving individuals, relying on self-reported information that

may not be representative of all students. DiBattista explains the survey is used as a planning tool to get people engaged in a conversation about Halton's youth. It evaluates where the needs and gaps are and also tracks how the community is doing every three years in relation to the well being of children within Halton's communities.

"We know it takes a village to raise a child, we know we all need to work together and we're seeing that today," she said, referring to the positive results of the survey.

Overweight and obesity numbers have fallen among both Grade 7 and Grade 10 students surveyed. About 20 per cent of students in both grades admitted they are overweight or obese, compared to 25 per cent in 2009/10 for both Grade 7 and 10 students and 21 per cent and 23 per cent respectively in 2006/07. But while the recent survey reflects a positive direction youth are heading in, Wells said more work needs to be done to support

youth who are transitioning to high school. Committee members expressed that while there are improvement in the numbers, they are still concerned about the statistics, noting that it's alarming knowing about one in every three students in Grade 10 is binge drinking. DiBattista said Our Kids Network continues to do intentional work within the community, working with other groups to build on the communities assets that represent values needed for children and youth to succeed. The survey results will be circulated throughout the community.

Our Kids Network is a Halton-wide partnership of agencies and organizations serving children and youth that promotes healthy development, security and safety for all children, youth and families through neighbourhood collaboration and service integration. Julia Le can be reached at [jle@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:jle@miltoncanadianchampion.com) or on Twitter @JuliaMiltonNews.

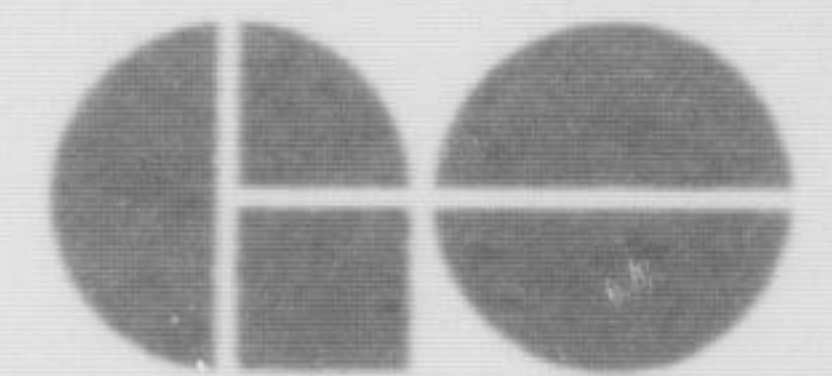
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## School considering scenarios for defunct kiss-and-ride lane: principal

Drivers parking their vehicles in the kiss-and-ride lane, sometimes even double-parking, while they escorted their children to the entrance.

"Some parents were being unsafe, double parking, driving (in the parking lot) as though they were in a speedway," she said, noting the school was built in a neighbourhood where the majority of students are expected to walk to school. "The safety of the children was at risk."

The school has 11 junior and senior kindergarten classes alone with an overall school enrolment of 1,036 students, Faulknor said, adding the school is considering scenarios for the defunct kiss-and-ride lane for the future. She said she believes this year's long, cold winter contributed to an increase in traffic around the school. Only four small buses and one large bus transports students. Public access to the parking lot is closed with

red safety cones, allowing no vehicular access from 8 to 10 a.m. and 2 to 4 p.m. Some drivers have been stopping on Scott Street in no-stop zones, parking in no-stop zones, making illegal U-turns and even double parking in some cases, Miloknay said.

Drivers have been seen motioning for children to run across the busy road to a waiting vehicle, she said.

Police have had joint meetings with the school, Town staff and Halton District School Board trustees to come up with a solution.

"Some parents are not complying with the signs," she said, adding the problem could happen at any school in Milton and Escarpment View is just a template for what police will do elsewhere, if needed.

She said it's unfortunate so few students walk to school.

Miloknay said ultimately she would like to see the school re-open the kiss-and-ride lane, but

for now, it's about education and preventing an accident.

With that in mind, police — through the school — also gave students a homework assignment that was to be signed by parents. On a sheet of paper, students were asked to answer the question: How can we make the roads safer for our children?

On Monday, eight officers were in the area chasing down offenders and informing them of the traffic laws. Six tickets were issued in a half-hour, and police handed out a reminder to parents to obey traffic laws and parking rules when dropping off or picking up their children. Some drivers appeared oblivious to police, stopping in clearly-marked, no-stop zones to let students out of vehicles. Others looked frazzled, asking for clarification of exactly where they could legally stop.

Several parents said they were happy to see the police presence because they agree

there's a safety issue.

Crystal Gawel walks her child to school each morning to avoid the traffic headaches.

"This is a good morning," she laughed, saying most mornings the traffic is more chaotic without police around. "I only drive if it's freezing or raining."

Gawel also said she would never let her child walk to school with the current traffic headaches because it would be "too dangerous."

Parent Helen Dawn, who walks her child to school most days, said she would like to see the school re-open the kiss-and-ride lane, even if it's just to parents who have younger children in car seats.

She said it's difficult to unbuckle her baby from the car seat and walk several blocks to drop off her child.

Julie Slack can be reached at [jslack@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:jslack@miltoncanadianchampion.com) or on Twitter @miltonmusing.