



# Gearing UP

A STRATEGIC  
FRAMEWORK TO HELP  
ONTARIO MIDDLE YEARS  
CHILDREN THRIVE



The images used throughout this document were drawn by children who participated in family interviews and focus groups across Ontario during the development of *Gearing Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario Middle Years Children Thrive*.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services would like to extend a sincere thank you to all of the artists and their families for allowing the use of their drawings in this resource.

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# Message from the Minister of Children and Youth Services

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As the Minister of Children and Youth Services, it is my privilege and job to ensure all kids in Ontario are supported along their paths to reach their full potential.

As a parent of two kids in the middle years, I see how much they are growing every day and how their experiences shape them. As a parent I try my best to help them navigate the complicated worlds of school, friends, and community. I talk with them about what it means to be inclusive and to stand up to discrimination. I show them how important it is to put down our phones, go outside and I talk with them about their lives. I try to model healthy habits every day.

I often hear from parents about the challenges they face supporting their kids. How difficult it can be to access transportation and to access the programs and services their kids want. I hear how challenging the cost of sports, music, cultural and recreational activities can be. I hear their worries about bullying and the devastating impact of discrimination. I also hear how families feel disconnected, and want a stronger voice in the programs and services their children receive.

Their stories are backed up by statistics — not enough kids have access to vegetables on a daily basis, get enough sleep, are active, or have a caring adult to talk to when needed. Our kids today sometimes feel alienated and are discriminated against for their race, ethnicity, culture, gender identity, or sexual orientation. At an age where kids can be vulnerable because of their mental health, early intervention and support is more important than ever.

This is why the Ontario government has created *Gearing Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario Middle Years Children to Thrive*.

We are gearing up by bringing together Government, community, and philanthropic partners to drive innovation and collaborations to work together to improve the wellbeing of kids and families across our province. We are putting family voice at the heart of policies and programs across government. We are extending initiatives to serve middle years children and families. Much is underway in Ontario to support middle years children, and we are committed to doing even more.

For the first time, the government of Ontario has a holistic, balanced, strengths-based plan to make these outcomes a reality for all children and families. *Gearing Up* outlines our aspirations for middle years children and their families. In addition to our goals for all kids, we have specific outcomes for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families in Ontario that are aligned with the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy. We want children to be active and well, to have caring and connected families, to have positive relationships, to engage in learning, to feel valued, and to have communities that support them and their families to thrive. It is what all families want for their children.

We are reaching out to families, communities, educators, coaches, Indigenous partners, Elders, service providers and all adults working with children to Gear Up together. Together we will support more healthy, happy, hopeful and thriving children and families in Ontario.

**Michael Coteau**

Minister of Children and Youth Services



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OUR GOALS  
FOR ONTARIO  
CHILDREN







## The Importance of the Middle Years

The middle years (ages 6–12) are a developmental turning point and a critical period of transitions from early childhood to the teen years.

### Period of development and change

Middle years children are exploring who they are and who they want to be. They are learning skills and health habits, grappling with the physical changes and social and emotional impacts that come with puberty, and exploring their concept of self and spirit. They are growing into their own intersecting identities — including social identities (cultural, racial, ethnicity, gender expression, gender identity) and personal identities (preferences, values, beliefs, abilities). Children at this stage are deepening their understanding of interpersonal relationships, building the foundations of healthy romantic relationships and taking their first steps toward independence. It is also a time when early indicators of mental health, behavioural and learning challenges emerge — these are often known as the “seven years of warning”<sup>1</sup> — when early interventions can make a big impact on long-term outcomes.

Wellbeing for children cuts across all the domains of development — emotional, social, cognitive, physical and communication — as well as spiritual development and a child’s sense of self. Success in one area is related to success in others. The social, cultural, geographic and economic context

in which children grow up heavily influences their experiences and can affect their long-term outcomes. Wellbeing is a wholistic and all-encompassing concept, and this is particularly important for Indigenous children where wellbeing is grounded in cultural identity, and the wellbeing of family, extended family and community.

Positive interactions and experiences in middle childhood build a foundation for the future. There are many opportunities during middle childhood to foster a love of learning, build a strong sense of self-identity, establish healthy relationships, connect with culture, nature and community and establish healthy, active habits, all of which can have a lifelong impact.

### Families matter

Healthy, thriving families are fundamentally important to healthy, happy, thriving children. Strong and stable families support child wellbeing, and research shows that family involvement significantly improves a child’s resilience and long-term outcomes. The experiences that middle years children share with their parents, caregivers, siblings, extended and chosen families have an enormous impact on what and how they learn, and the way they see themselves and the world. We also know that stable, consistent and nurturing relationships are vital to supporting optimal mental health in middle childhood.<sup>2</sup>

All families want the best for their children. Parents and caregivers across Ontario work extremely hard to support their children and ensure they have what they need to succeed. However, some may not have all the supports and options they need to help their children reach their full potential. Some families are struggling to make ends meet while trying to provide quality after school child care, summer child care, and recreational activities, and other supports to benefit their children. We also know that lone-parent households may have additional challenges, in particular lone-parent households headed by women.

Families are the experts on their children's strengths and needs. Improving supports and services for middle years children and their families involves asking parents what they need, and developing policies and designing programs to help them achieve their goals.

## Working together to support middle years children to thrive

The evidence is clear — it is critical that middle years children and their families receive the support that they need to thrive. Children who have healthy, supportive experiences in their middle years are better prepared to develop into healthy, happy, hopeful and thriving young adults. Children who are not supported during their middle years are at increased risk for long-term physical, mental health and behavioural challenges, as well as poorer life outcomes. The Ontario government recognizes the importance of middle childhood, and the need for a common vision and framework to drive action and supports for middle years children and their families.

People and organizations throughout Ontario are working to contribute positively to the lives of children, and many are helping to change lives and build future leaders. Yet more can be done to drive collaborations, align priorities, equip leaders, and engage families around a common set of outcomes.

### Helpful Resources



*Gearing Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario Middle Years Children Thrive* is informed by **On MY Way:**

*A Guide to Support Middle Years Child Development*, a developmental resource that provides information on what the leading research tells us about how middle years children are changing across physical, cognitive, emotional, social and communication, as well as spiritual, domains. The resource describes what parents, caregivers and other caring adults can do to support optimal development. It maps the significant elements in a child's development and helps define the most critical opportunities for early interventions that will impact the future.

Learn more about child development at:  
[www.ontario.ca/middleyears](http://www.ontario.ca/middleyears)

To support middle years children and their families, and to harness the efforts of those who are already supporting them, *Gearing Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario Middle Years Children Thrive* will guide, focus and maximize support for middle years children and their families throughout the province.

Some of the actions the government will take to support middle years children are outlined below.

## **Focus on the needs of marginalized children and families**

Through *Gearing Up*, we will ensure that meeting the needs of marginalized children and their families are priorities in supporting middle years children to thrive.

## **Mobilize evidence**

*Gearing Up* is based on up-to-date evidence about middle child development. It reflects the voices of diverse communities, families and child advocates across the province, who already recognize the importance of middle childhood in shaping long-term outcomes for youth and young adults. We will gather this research and knowledge so that those who play a role in children's lives have access to the tools they need to understand what's happening developmentally in middle years children, and how to support them as they transition to the teen years.

## **Embed family-centred approaches**

Family-centred approaches promote the active engagement of parents/caregivers through access to resources and support, informed decision making and the delivery of flexible and responsive service based on family priorities, strengths and needs.<sup>3</sup>

Through *Gearing Up*, we are creating the conditions in which families are better able to support their children to thrive. It recognizes the important role of families and lays out the steps we will take to embed a strengths-based, family-centred approach in program design and delivery.

## **Drive alignment and collaboration**

*Gearing Up* lays the groundwork for an integrated and coordinated approach to

the planning and delivery of services and programs for children ages 6–12 and their families. It builds on significant efforts across Ontario to address systemic barriers and improve outcomes for children and families. For example, it builds on Ontario's Anti-Racism Strategic Plan by recognizing systemic racism and addressing it head on. It also recognizes the work being done through Ontario's Special Needs Strategy to provide services for children with disabilities and special needs in a more family-centred manner.

## **Establish a common set of outcomes, goals and indicators**

*Gearing Up* drives action toward a common set of evidence-based, wholistic, long-term and aspirational outcomes for children and families. It takes a bold step forward to map a first-of-its-kind, cross-sector, made in Ontario vision for children. *Gearing Up* joins with *Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework* and the Ontario youth strategy, *Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed*, to form a complete, cross-sector, life-course policy framework to support the wellbeing of children and youth in Ontario.

## **Catalyze leadership**

*Gearing Up* is a vehicle to catalyze or increase leadership, kick-start innovation and drive collaborations across governments, communities, and the philanthropic sector in order to expand and coordinate efforts to improve the wellbeing of children, families and communities.





# Middle Years Children in Ontario Today

Ontario is home to more than one million children ages 6–12. This number is expected to increase to 1.26 million in the next 20 years.<sup>4</sup> Middle years children in Ontario today are culturally, spiritually, linguistically, racially, ethnically and geographically diverse. Approximately four per cent of children under the age of 14 across Ontario have disabilities or special needs. Close to six per cent of the middle years population is enrolled in a French-language school.<sup>5</sup>

Some middle years children have ancestral connections to the land. Some were born in Ontario, some have migrated, and some have come as refugees. Some children practice their faith in places of worship such as temples, synagogues, churches, gurdwaras, and mosques; they engage their spirituality in forests, fields and in their homes and centres. For some, their faith is reflected in their manner of dress, the symbols they carry, their lived experiences, or in their silent prayers. Some children do not follow any faith at all. Middle years children speak many languages, and possess their own unique talents and skills.

## What the Data Says



Thirty-two per cent of middle years children in Ontario are considered racialized: this includes children who are South Asian (10 per cent), Black (seven per cent) and Chinese (five per cent).<sup>6</sup> Approximately 46 per cent of middle years children in Ontario are first or second generation Canadians, and almost 10 per cent are new immigrants arriving in the last 10 years.<sup>7</sup>

## What the Data Says



Indigenous children represent over three per cent of the middle years population in Ontario.<sup>8</sup> Of these Indigenous children, 73 per cent identify as First Nations, 22 per cent as Métis and two per cent as Inuk.

## What the Data Says



About 67 per cent of middle years children live in urban centres, and 33 per cent live in small, rural or remote communities. Most middle years children growing up in Ontario are concentrated around the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. By 2037, almost 60 per cent of all middle years children in Ontario will live in this region.<sup>9</sup>

## What the Data Says



Almost 14 per cent of middle years children in our province are reported to be living in low-income households, and 18 per cent are living in housing that is considered “not suitable.”<sup>10</sup> Provincewide screening of babies born in 2014 (who will be entering their middle years in 2020) showed that 13 per cent of these babies are at high risk of adverse childhood experiences, which is linked to poor long-term outcomes.

Many families face challenges and pressure points. Families in Ontario include parents who work out of the home, some at multiple jobs or in precarious or unstable employment, and some are lone-parent households

with added pressures. Finding quality time together can be hard and trying to afford the cost of recreational activities, as well as summer and after-school care, can cause stress and anxiety for many families. Other challenges include food insecurity and access to adequate transportation and stable housing. Many families also face barriers, bias and discrimination, including racism and heterosexism. All of these factors influence the wellbeing of families.

Middle years children are highly connected and digital. They learn and use technology and social media in more frequent and embedded ways than ever before, and this is changing the way they develop, learn, relate to others, and think about the world. While this brings many new opportunities, many parents and caregivers are struggling to guide their children through these new realities, including how best to establish appropriate limits and guidance around technology use in the home.

### Support for those that need it

Our vision is that all children in Ontario are happy, healthy, hopeful and well. However, we know that many children have unique circumstances and specific needs, and face multiple and complex barriers that affect their wellbeing. Some children need more targeted supports to ensure they have the same opportunities to succeed, and government and communities need to do more to reduce barriers and help all children to thrive. These children include:

**First Nations, Métis and Inuit:** Indigenous children and their families are very diverse. First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities across Ontario each have distinct cultures,

histories and experiences. The Indigenous population is younger than the non-Indigenous population: about 33 per cent of the Indigenous population in Ontario consists of children and teenagers ages 19 and under, compared with 23.8 per cent for the non-Indigenous population. The Indigenous population in Ontario is also growing faster than the overall population.<sup>11</sup>

Indigenous children in Ontario face complex challenges due to the historic and ongoing trauma caused by colonialism and residential schools, which have resulted in high rates of poverty, poor housing, and barriers to education and cultural learning. For example, Indigenous children in the middle years are more likely to be overweight,<sup>12</sup> have a long-term health problem,<sup>13</sup> live in a family without either of their parents, live in a lone-parent family,<sup>14</sup> or live in homes that are overcrowded or in need of major repairs.<sup>15</sup> Indigenous young people report lower levels of wellbeing and are at greater risk for health problems, depression, anxiety, suicide, substance use and lower educational achievement.<sup>16</sup>

**Racialized:** The experience of racialized communities is diverse, and the breadth of lived experiences needs to be recognized. We know that racialized children face challenges with racism, marginalization, education setbacks, and social and cultural isolation that can have a negative impact on their development. Racialized/visible minority children 14 and under are more likely to live in families with low income (25 per cent) than their non-visible minority peers (14 per cent).<sup>17</sup> They are also more likely to experience discrimination in their daily lives.

**Newcomers:** Immigrant, refugee and first generation children have unique needs and experiences as they navigate and adapt to a new culture and environment in Canada. These families are also more likely to be living far away from larger, and more rooted family and social networks. There can be a significant range in the social and economic position of newcomer families. Children who are new to Canada may speak English or French as a second language, may have past experiences with trauma, and may have extra responsibilities at home as they support their parents in navigating systems and services in their communities.

**LGBTQ2S:** Starting in the middle years and continuing into the teen years and beyond, many young Ontarians are beginning to contemplate their gender identity and/or their sexual orientation, and may begin identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or two-spirited (LGBTQ2S). We know that LGBTQ2S students are more likely to experience discrimination, verbal assault and physical violence than their peers. Almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of educators working with students in the middle years reported awareness of incidents of exclusion and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>18</sup> We also know that LGBTQ2S young people are more likely to face challenges with mental health, substance use and homelessness.

**Francophone:** Francophone children in Ontario face challenges in building a cultural and linguistic identity, and belonging within a diverse Francophone community. Almost six per cent of middle years students are enrolled in French-language schools throughout Ontario and almost three per

cent report having French spoken as one of the main languages at home.<sup>19</sup> French reading and media use has been shown to decrease with age through the middle years.<sup>20</sup>

**Children with disabilities or special needs:** Many children in Ontario have disabilities or special needs which cut across one or more domains including physical, cognitive, emotional, social and/or communication.<sup>21</sup> These include communication disorders, physical disabilities, mental health challenges, behavioural issues, acquired brain injuries, developmental disabilities, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), learning disabilities, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and chronic and/or long-term medical conditions.

Many children with disabilities or special needs face barriers and challenges relating to accessibility and social inclusion. These young people may be more vulnerable to abuse and bullying and living in poverty. Children with disabilities are less likely to participate in recreational activities than those who do not have disabilities.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, parents of middle years children with disabilities or special needs often need extra support to manage daily activities, child care and other family responsibilities. Two-thirds of parents surveyed reported these needs as unmet.<sup>23</sup>

**Living in families facing socio-economic pressures and precarious situations:** In 2011, almost 14 per cent of middle years children were reported as living in families with low income. We know that lone-parent families, in particular lone-mother led families, are facing particular barriers with 43 per cent of people living in



lone-mother families living below the poverty line. Approximately 20 per cent of middle years children live in lone-parent households, and 85 per cent of these lone-parent households are headed by women.<sup>24</sup> Evidence shows that children living in poverty are at an increased risk for a wide range of physical, behavioural and emotional problems. The chronic stress associated with living in poverty can also adversely impact a child's cognitive development, memory, concentration and ability to learn.<sup>25</sup> Children living in low-income families and neighbourhoods are much more likely to be overweight,<sup>26</sup> and much less likely to participate in recreational and extracurricular activities.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, families may be facing other pressures and situations that put them and their children at increased risk, including substance use, mental health challenges, domestic violence and family breakdown.

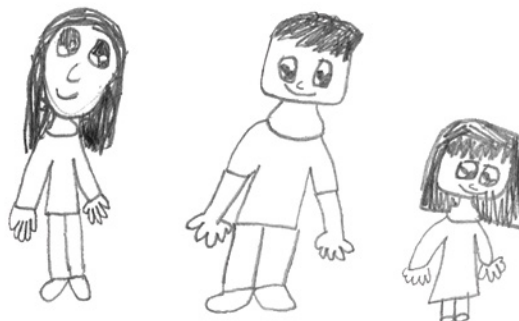
**Living in care:** In 2012–2013, the average number of children in the care of children's aid societies was 17,273, including 7,552 Crown wards and 1,304 children in formal Customary Care.<sup>28</sup> We know that some groups of children are over-represented in the child welfare system, including Indigenous and Black children. First Nations, Métis and Inuit children under the age of 15 represent three per cent of the provincial population, but more than 21 per cent of all children in the care of children's aid societies are Indigenous.<sup>29</sup> Compared to white children, Black children in Ontario are also more likely to be investigated and taken into care as part of the child welfare system.<sup>30</sup>

Eighty-two per cent of children in care have diagnosed special needs. Children

in care have a high school graduation rate of 46 per cent compared to their peers who, in 2015–2016, had an 86.5 per cent graduation rate.<sup>31</sup>

**Living in rural, remote and Northern communities:** Middle years children and families who live in rural and remote communities may face additional difficulties in accessing education, recreation, health and social services, due to distance and transportation options. Access to fresh and nutritious food may also be limited in some remote locations, and families may live far from one another, impacting opportunities for day-to-day connection with neighbours and friends.

**Gender diversity:** Gender stereotypes begin to appear in the middle years, and this is also a prime developmental period to build the confidence, critical thinking and perseverance needed to address sexism, transphobia and gender bias throughout the life course. During this period, children may also be subjected to “gender policing,” pressure to conform to traditional gender expectations and roles, and criticism and bullying if their gender expression falls outside of them. Many disparities also exist between girls and boys. It is important to empower children to explore a range of different learning and subject areas, activities and hobbies without a gender bias.



# Supporting Indigenous Children and Families in Ontario

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First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families in Ontario face unique challenges due to the trauma caused by colonialism. Government policies disrupted cultural practices and family relationships, and have resulted in deep-seated structural and systemic inequities. The impacts of these inequities can be seen in poor health and social outcomes experienced by many Indigenous children and families in Ontario.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report demonstrated the immense and prolonged impact that the residential school system has had on Indigenous people.<sup>32</sup> We recognize that this system was a manifestation of policies and programs driven by colonialism and racism,<sup>33</sup> and that its impacts on the wellbeing of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children in Ontario are lasting.

**“** All young people need to know who they are and from where they come. Aboriginal children and youth, searching for their own identities and places of belonging, need to know and take pride in their Indigenous roots. They need to know the answers to some very basic questions. Who are my people? What is our history? How are we unique? Where do I belong?

Truth and Reconciliation  
Commission Final Report, 2015

**”**

The tragedy of the colonial legacy is that “too many children are not growing up well in all the domains of healthy development, too many are removed from their families, and too many are not getting the opportunities they deserve to reach their full potential.” (Chiefs of Ontario)<sup>34</sup>

Many First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, families and communities are facing real challenges — poverty, lack of access to safe water and housing, high rates of youth suicide, barriers to good nutrition and health, and over-representation in the child welfare and justice systems.

We also know that these communities across Ontario are places of hope, strength, wisdom and care for children and families. Families and communities are drawing on multigenerational knowledge about wellbeing and practising “everyday good living” by striving to balance all aspects of life: the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.<sup>35</sup>

It is crucial for the wellbeing of Indigenous children, families and communities to preserve and promote the culture and identity of Indigenous children.

To support healing and reconciliation, *Gearing Up* includes a dedicated section for ways to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, families and communities to thrive.

## Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy

*Gearing Up* builds on the vision, principles and pillars established within the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy (OICYS).

### Vision

First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous children and youth are healthy, happy, resilient, grounded in their cultures and languages and thriving as individuals and as members of their families and Nations or communities.

### Guiding Principles

- Children and youth centred
- Culture and identity as foundational
- Respect rights and jurisdictional aspirations
- Co-development and partnership
- Outcomes focus
- Responsive to youth voice
- Flexibility
- Shared accountability
- Reconciliation (acknowledge the past, act now and look to the future)

### Pillars

#### **First Nations Jurisdiction and Control/Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous Control**

First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous communities and organizations have authority to care for their children and youth.

#### **Prevention, Culture and Opportunities**

First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous children and youth have access to preventive services focused on well-being, culture and opportunities.

#### **Coordinated and Responsive Circle of Care**

The child and youth service workforce is equipped to provide high quality, integrated and culturally appropriate services.

#### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Shared Accountability**

Progress is tracked through culturally and contextually appropriate monitoring and evaluation approaches.

#### **Transformed Relationships and Collaborative, Holistic Action**

Systemic change through collaborative action and transformed relationships with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous partners.

The OICYS is a long-term strategic framework approved through co-development in 2015 by the Government of Ontario and First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous partners across Ontario.

Central to the OICYS is a commitment to fundamental structural changes, beyond improvements to individual programs or services, that allow Indigenous communities to take the lead in the care of their children, and that enable the delivery of wholistic and culturally grounded services. A core pillar of the OICYS is systemic change through collaborative action and transformed relationships with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous partners.

*“ Aboriginal people and organizations must design, deliver and evaluate services for our people, and this must be facilitated through mechanisms that are cooperative and collaborative.*

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, Ontario Native Women's Association, and the Métis Nation of Ontario Collaborative Submission Regarding a Provincial Indigenous Children & Youth Strategy *”*

*Gearing Up* upholds the pillars of the OICYS and recognizes and respects the cultures and worldviews of Indigenous people, as well as Indigenous approaches to raising children. It recognizes that to support improved outcomes for Indigenous children and families requires a transformation in the way that services are governed, designed, delivered and evaluated.



## Supporting Indigenous children to thrive

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report and recommended actions, the Ontario government is moving ahead in supporting reconciliation, transformed relationships and improved outcomes for Indigenous children and families.

Identifying distinct Indigenous goals and outcomes in the Ontario Middle Years Strategy is meant to acknowledge the distinct rights and responsibilities that Ontario has towards Indigenous peoples and their communities, and to recognize the impact of colonialism and the need for governments to come together to support reconciliation.



“It is important to continue rebuilding Indigenous cultures; the future generation of Indigenous youth depends on it. Being able to self-identify as an Indigenous person is a powerful feeling.”

Indigenous youth engaged in the development of OICYS



Ontario worked collaboratively with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous partners to develop this specific section of *Gearing Up*. The priority outcomes outlined in *Gearing Up* are based on the OICYS outcomes, co-developed with Indigenous partners. The ways to support outcomes for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families was informed through discussions and papers submitted by partners, as well as other expert research.

The other six goals and 18 outcomes outlined in *Gearing Up* are also relevant to supporting Indigenous child and family wellbeing.

“Many First Nations in Ontario have experienced first-hand that our people have better wellbeing when they feel their voices are heard, when they have meaningful control over their own futures, and when they spend time on the land and keep connected to who they are. Many First Nations wish to pursue both Western and traditional approaches to health, education and overall wellbeing. Both approaches can be complementary, and in today's world, both are often absolutely essential for achieving successful, effective services that meet the real needs of First Nations children, youth and families.”

Chiefs of Ontario <sup>36</sup>





*Gearing Up* seeks to align and call into action all those who support middle years children around a strong and sustained commitment to ensure children have what they need to succeed.

## Common Vision

Our vision is that:

**All middle years children thrive as individuals and as members of their families and communities**

This is an aspirational vision. We are intentionally setting the bar high when we talk about child wellbeing. Achieving this vision means taking a wholistic and ecological view of child development. It also requires greater and more effective collaboration across governments, service providers, philanthropic partners, businesses and organizations, together with parents, caregivers and other caring adults. We all have a role to play in “gearing up” to support the wellbeing of our children now and into the future.

## Guiding Principles

*Gearing Up* was developed through conversations across government, and with parents and caregivers, service providers and funders, advocates, allies and experts. The advice we received led us to identify a number of principles that inform the way the strategic framework has been developed. These principles will guide the way Ontario works with a diverse set of partners in supporting middle years children and families going forward.

### What the Data Says



To develop *Gearing Up*, we engaged over 1600 families, including over 100 targeted interviews and small group discussions with families and children. We surveyed over 1500 parents and caregivers and engaged 80 researchers, 165 community agencies and 65 provincial stakeholders.

- **Establish a balanced, wholistic and strengths-based approach to child development:** We consider the interdependent relationship between cognitive, physical, emotional, social and communication domains, along with spirit and self, when supporting child development. We celebrate the diversity and strengths of children by providing high quality, equitable and inclusive programs and services that are child- and family-centred and contribute to children’s development and wellbeing. We acknowledge and reflect the whole child and family experience in the design, development and delivery of services and supports. We affirm the central role of families, the importance of strong and inclusive communities and the influence of other caring adults in supporting children in Ontario.
- **Target support to those who need it:** We will focus on the middle years children and families who face barriers and challenges to reaching their full potential. These include First Nations, Métis and Inuit, newcomers, racialized, LGBTQ2S, Francophones, children with disabilities and special needs, children living in poverty or in families facing precarious

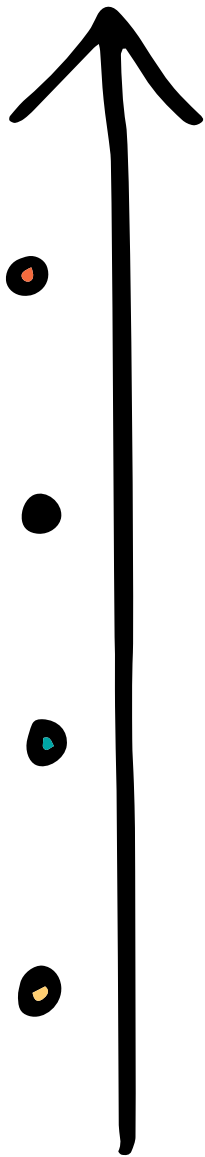
situations, children in care, those in rural or remote communities, as well as those experiencing disparities due to gender identity.

- **Collaborate and partner effectively:** We will seek opportunities to collaborate and bring an innovative, collective impact approach to children's services and supports, and work to break down barriers and strengthen connections between service providers, schools, foundations, community organizations, governments, families, employers, and other allies.
- **Address discrimination and foster equity and inclusion:** We commit to foster the diverse and intersecting personal and cultural identities of middle years children and their families in Ontario. We commit to advance human rights so everybody has equitable rights and to prevent discrimination and harassment based on race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or religion. We value culture and identity as foundational to optimal development and essential for a strong Ontario. We will continue to improve the way that services are designed and delivered so that they are barrier-free, inclusive, tailored to meet the unique needs of children and families and culturally responsive. We commit to recognizing and eradicating policies and services that contribute to systemic racism, homophobia and transphobia, Islamophobia, ableism and sexism.
- **Empower children and families:** We view children and their families as capable, and experts on their own strengths, needs, abilities and experiences.

We expect services to be delivered in ways that enable children and families to define and meet their goals. We see families as the foundation to supporting the abilities and strengths of children. We will work collaboratively with parents and caregivers to seek their input on ways that will support them to thrive.

- **Deliver high quality services that reflect evidence and research:** We will use evidence such as child development research (e.g., On MY Way developmental resource), program evaluation and the insights of those who support children and their families to inform the design and delivery of high quality policies and programs. We will use data to evaluate the impact of policies and programs, and to hold us accountable for how programs are delivered. An evidence-based approach is central to improving the ways we support middle years children and their families.
- **Embed the principles of the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy:** We acknowledge the conditions in Indigenous communities are results of racist, colonial policies that often tore families and communities apart, separated children from their families, and attempted to wipe out the languages and traditions of the many diverse Indigenous peoples in Ontario. We acknowledge that the pain of the past continues to traumatize children and families and that we must work harder to right these wrongs. By embedding the principles of the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy, we will work with Indigenous peoples and partners in new ways based on respect, reconciliation and support for Indigenous self-determination.

# ESTABLISHING OUR GOALS



The goals and priority outcomes of *Gearing Up* outline our aspirations for *all* middle years children and their families, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families.

In addition, to address the legacy of colonialism and in recognition of the unique context and worldview of First Nation, Métis and Inuit children, families and communities, a distinct and direct focus is reflected in *Gearing Up*, including a specific goal focused on improving outcomes for Indigenous children.



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# Vision

All middle years children thrive as individuals and as members of their families and communities

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## Guiding Principles

Establish a balanced, wholistic and strengths-based approach to child development

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Target support to those who need it

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Collaborate and partner effectively

---

Address discrimination and foster equity and inclusion

---

Empower children and families

---

Deliver high quality services that reflect evidence and research

---

Embed the principles of the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy

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# Goals and Outcomes

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## ● Children Are Active and Well

1. Ontario children play and are physically healthy.
2. Ontario children feel happy and mentally well.
3. Ontario children learn and practice healthy habits and connect to the natural world.

## ● Children Have Caring and Connected Families

4. Ontario children have at least one consistent caring adult in their lives.
5. Ontario families are financially stable and secure.
6. Ontario families are supported to thrive and are active in their children's lives.

## ● Children Have Positive Relationships

7. Ontario children form and maintain healthy, close relationships.
8. Ontario children respect others and value diversity, equity and inclusion.
9. Ontario children feel safe at home, school, online and in their communities.

## ● Children Engage in Learning

10. Ontario children are curious and love to learn.
11. Ontario children have relevant learning experiences that address their diverse interests, strengths, needs and abilities
12. Ontario children gain the knowledge and skills they need.

## ● Children Feel Valued

13. Ontario children are discovering who they are and who they want to be.
14. Ontario children are proud of their cultures and identities and live free from discrimination.
15. Ontario children can express what matters to them.

## ● Communities Support Children and Families

16. Ontario families are supported, engaged and inform the decisions that affect them.
17. Ontario families know about and easily access high quality resources in their communities.
18. Ontario service providers, governments and communities foster belonging and wellbeing for children and families.

## ● Indigenous Children Thrive

19. First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families are physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually well.
20. First Nations, Métis and Inuit children participate in and feel proud of their traditions, languages, cultures, and identities.
21. First Nations, Métis and Inuit children are engaged in and contribute to their families, communities and cultures.
22. First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and communities are supported to be self-determining in defining and meeting the needs of their children, families and communities.
23. Ontario service providers and governments and Indigenous communities respond to local needs and priorities and are accountable to communities.

# Establishing Ontario's Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing

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Through Ontario's Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing, we are committed to monitoring aspects of wellbeing and telling the story about how middle years children in Ontario are doing overall.

Ontario's Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing establishes an aspirational, wholistic, longer-term platform for monitoring changes in middle years child wellbeing over time. Improving these outcomes requires the combined efforts of many partners both within and outside government. It also requires the ongoing contribution of families.

The Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing is intended to drive action. It provides a platform for alignment and for communities and organizations to adapt local or program indicators within a common framework and vision.

For each of the priority outcomes for middle years children, three or more indicators tell us how children are doing. These indicators on their own do not necessarily tell the story of wellbeing, but overall they create a "profile" of what wellbeing looks like and can provide a compelling picture of how children are doing — where there are strengths and where there are opportunities to do more.

Outcomes for the goal that Indigenous children thrive are based on the outcomes for the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy, which were co-developed with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous partners. The OICYS outcomes and indicators will be reported through the OICYS, and Indigenous communities themselves will tell their own stories of how Indigenous children and their families are doing in relation to these goals. The annual report on *Gearing Up* will reflect these stories.

See page 108 for the indicators and outcomes that make up Ontario's Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing.



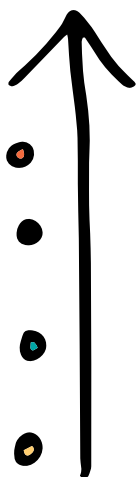




GOAL:



# Ontario Children Are Active and Well



Middle childhood provides the foundation for a full, happy and healthy life. Middle years children are learning how to keep themselves healthy and are starting to take on responsibility for their own eating, sleeping, exercise, dental care and personal hygiene based on their abilities.



## OUTCOMES WE WANT

1

Ontario children play and are physically healthy

2

Ontario children feel happy and mentally well

3

Ontario children learn and practice healthy habits and connect to the natural world

## Why it matters:

Health and wellness looks different for all children, and our goal is for optimum health and wellness for all children. Supporting children in the middle years to optimize their health means supporting them to be active and well according to their own abilities, establish healthy behaviours, connect with the land, and have a strong sense of self and spirit. These lay the foundations for a healthy and happy life.

## Snapshot of Ontario:

While we know many children in Ontario are healthy and well, there are also troubling signs.

For many Ontario children, challenges with being overweight and/or obese are undermining their health and this puts them at risk for obesity and associated chronic diseases in adulthood.<sup>37</sup> The problem is more severe in boys than girls.<sup>38</sup> Sedentary behaviours, excessive “screen time,” lack of unstructured outdoor play, sugary/unhealthy food choices, limited knowledge/participation in food preparation, and food insecurity are contributing factors. These factors also affect other aspects of children’s health and development beyond their physical health.

Mental health issues are increasingly being identified for children in their middle years. An estimated 13 per cent of young people ages 4–17 in Canada have some type of mental health issue, with anxiety, depression, conduct disorders and ADHD being the most common.<sup>39</sup> Girls have shown higher levels

of anxiety than boys,<sup>39</sup> while boys have shown higher levels of disruptive behavioural disorders.<sup>40</sup> Poverty and mental health are closely linked and bound in a negative cycle that creates spirals of decline and inequities in access and care in the mental health system.<sup>41</sup>

Some children are living in homes where parents struggle with mental health and addictions issues, and/or experience domestic violence, or face other forms of toxic stress. Toxic stress has far-reaching impact on children’s cognitive, social and emotional development.

Health outcomes for children and families can be associated with a number of social and environmental factors and barriers. The conditions in which we live explain in part why some Ontario children and families are healthier than others and why some are not as healthy as they could be. Race and ethnicity are shown to be factors associated with differing levels of health status, access to health care, experience with health care, and disparities in health outcomes for new immigrants, racialized communities and Indigenous peoples. Language is a barrier for many newcomer families accessing health services. Poverty, food insecurity, unstable housing and homelessness, isolation, and discrimination are other risk factors to good health and access to the resources and supports available in our neighbourhoods, schools, and communities.

# 1 Ontario children play and are physically healthy

When children grow up eating well and being physically active, they are better prepared to learn and develop. Middle years children are learning how to keep themselves healthy, and they are establishing attitudes about their physical health that are long-lasting. However, many children in this age group are still not getting what is needed for their optimal physical development — which impacts their development into adulthood.

Research shows that opportunity for play is critical to children's healthy development.<sup>42</sup> Play can include music, dance, walking, biking, cultural activities, and getting outside for time with families. Yet children are not getting enough time for unstructured free play.<sup>43</sup>

## Supporting this outcome involves:

### Ensuring children get enough sleep and access to nutritious food

Research tells us that getting enough quality sleep is essential for physical development and wellbeing. The ability to pay attention, think critically, and be happy are linked to getting sufficient sleep. Likewise, eating healthy, nutritious food contributes to wellbeing and stimulates brain development and physical growth. Ontario children who do not eat a healthy, balanced diet are more

vulnerable to obesity and illness, including Type 2 diabetes in adulthood.<sup>44</sup> We need to ensure that all children in Ontario have access to healthy nutritious food, every day.

### Building physical literacy skills and opportunities to participate in physical activities

Middle years children need to move and play in ways that are fun and rewarding. For some children, participation in physical activity can be challenging due to barriers like cost, transportation and the availability of accessible, safe and inclusive programs. We also know that girls drop out of physical activities at a faster rate and earlier than boys.<sup>44</sup> We need to ensure that all children are included in physical activity programming. We need to give children the opportunity to build their physical competencies and to participate in ways that build their sense of accomplishment and enjoyment. When we create affordable, accessible, inclusive sports and recreation opportunities, and get children involved in active, unstructured free play, everyone in the community benefits.

#### What Ontario is Doing



The Province has responded with a number of initiatives through the Healthy Kids Strategy, such as the Healthy Kids Community Challenge, and the Healthy Eating Active Living Program in Indigenous communities. The Student Nutrition Program and the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program together also provide healthy food to nearly a million children each year.



## Having access to primary health care

Regular, high quality, family-centred health care is essential for healthy child development. For the most part, middle years children in Ontario are connected to primary health care services, although we know that children living in remote areas or low-income neighbourhoods face additional barriers and are less likely to have a primary health care provider. Improving access to primary care for families, along with additional specialized services when they are needed, is crucial to support all children in Ontario to be healthy and meet their developmental milestones

### What Ontario is Doing



Healthy Smiles Ontario is an integrated dental program for children and youth from low-income families to improve access to care. To date, more than 365,000 children and youth from low-income families have been enrolled and have accessed dental care.

## Ensuring oral health

The importance of oral health to overall health is well supported by evidence. Untreated tooth decay and gum disease can negatively impact oral and physical health, and affect children's ability to learn. Not all families have access to dental insurance or can afford to pay for dental care. Supporting children from low-income families to improve access to dental care is a priority of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

### What Ontario is Doing



Starting in 2018, Ontario is making prescription medications free for everyone with OHIP coverage 24 years of age and younger, regardless of family income. The Children and Youth Pharmacare Program will provide free prescription medications for more than four million children and young people, helping families who may not have access to comprehensive drug benefit plans.

### What Ontario is Doing



The Focus on Youth program provides \$8 million in funding to 23 school boards to support summer programs for children and in communities of high needs (as determined by population, median family income and crime rate data). Through providing employment opportunities for youth, and summer recreation opportunities for children, both children and youth are supported to thrive.

### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ⬆ % of children who engage in vigorous physical activity for at least 60 minutes at least five times a week
- ⬆ % of children who eat vegetables at least once a day
- ⬆ % of children who play outdoors after school
- ⬆ % of children who sleep at least eight hours per night
- ⬆ % of families who have a primary care provider
- ⬆ % of children who rate their health as good or excellent



## 2 Ontario children feel happy and mentally well

Mental health is a key component of overall wellbeing. The middle years are a period when children continue to learn ways to support their own mental health. This includes learning to express their feelings, connecting to culture and history, building trusting relationships and being active outdoors. This is also a time when signs and symptoms of mental health concerns may become more visible and early interventions could help prevent escalation to more serious issues. Research shows that 70 per cent of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence.<sup>46</sup>

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Intervening early

Early identification and intervention can make a fundamental difference in the life of a child with special needs (e.g., with physical, developmental, learning and cognitive disabilities) or with mental health challenges.<sup>47</sup> We know that the ability of parents and caregivers to identify and address potential issues early varies, depending on the resources available to them. Families with low incomes, those that are in rural or remote environments, and those that face language, cultural or other barriers are less likely to access mental health and rehabilitation services and supports. Improving service accessibility, responsiveness and coordination is important to ensure children get the help they need, when they need it. This also means building on school initiatives that promote mental health for all students and include targeted prevention efforts for those at risk.<sup>48</sup>

#### What Ontario is Doing



Through *Open Minds Healthy Minds*, Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, and the Moving on Mental Health action plan, the Ontario Government is improving access to high quality mental health and addictions services, strengthening worker capacity, creating a responsive and integrated system and building awareness about mental health issues within communities.

#### Providing culturally responsive services

Many Ontarians have culturally embedded concepts of mental wellness as connected to a sense of self/spirit, family, community, culture and ancestry. For example, Indigenous ways of knowing understand health and wellbeing as a lifelong journey where wellness and spirituality are inseparable and include being connected to the land, nurturing the spirit, participating in culture and having healthy relationships.<sup>49</sup>

#### What Ontario is Doing



*Stop Now and Plan* (SNAP) is an evidence-based family-focused intervention program for high-risk 6 to 12 year olds. It teaches children self-control, problem-solving and emotion-regulation skills, and runs concurrently with a parents group that teaches child management strategies.

Through the 2017 Ontario Black Youth Action Plan, SNAP has been expanded to specifically target high-risk Black middle years children and their families.

By understanding and providing mental health services in culturally responsive, relevant, and safe ways, service providers and allies can honour the traditions and knowledge of all families in Ontario and provide interventions that are strengths-based, wholistic, and support the overall wellbeing of the child and family.

### **Promoting self-awareness and self-regulation skills for children and their families**

Having optimal mental health involves being supported to adapt to change, find balance and resilience, having a sense of purpose and satisfaction with life, and being able to understand and regulate feelings and behaviour. We know that childhood mental health difficulties, such as depression, are linked to factors like poverty, homelessness, toxic stress and family challenges.<sup>50</sup> Supporting children to understand and express their feelings helps them to deal with adversity and challenge. Children also need to know where to go, and who they can talk to if they need help dealing with a challenging or negative experience. Teaching skills such as help seeking, stress management and mindfulness, self-regulation, empathy for others, and self-care, and helping children build positive relationships, connect with culture, and be active can support resilience and wellbeing. Feeling good about yourself leads to improved self-care. Poor body image leads to the opposite, and we know that “body-bullying” is one of the most frequent forms of bullying.

### **Building self-esteem, positive relationships and reducing stigma**

Mental health challenges can “get under the skin” of children in their daily lives, leading to isolation and/or disengagement.<sup>51</sup> Talking

about mental health, disability, mental health challenges and mental illness openly and honestly, and promoting awareness and empathy among children, helps to reduce stigma and can ensure that more Ontario children and their families are seeking help and getting support when they need it.

#### **What Ontario is Doing**



Ontario is making new investments in life promotion and suicide prevention for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous children and youth through the Ontario's First Nations Health Action Plan, and *The Journey Together: Ontario's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*. Annual investments will grow to \$23 million at maturity in 2018–19 and include funding for:

- wholistic response and prevention supports that combine clinical supports, and cultural and land-based programming
- enhancements to the Tele-Mental Health Service to enable more outreach and support
- mental health and addictions workers and supports for students in First Nations schools

In 2016–2017, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services committed \$4.5 million to First Nations and urban Indigenous partners to build capacity and to lay the ground work for ongoing life promotion investments.

#### **HOW WE CAN TELL:**

- ⬆ % of children who report their mental health as good, very good or excellent
- ⬆ % of children who think it is important to experience joy in life and that their life has meaning and purpose
- ⬇ % of children who had a mental health or emotional problem and didn't know where to turn
- ⬇ % of children who feel under stress, strain or pressure
- ⬇ % of children who feel hopeless
- ⬇ % of children who had seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year

## 3 Ontario children learn and practice healthy habits and connect to the natural world

Healthy habits formed early in life act as protective factors and help ensure that children in the middle years have the foundation they need to have a happy, healthy and well-balanced life.

Children in this age range are learning and practising ways to take care of their own health, safety and wellbeing. It is also a time when children can continue learning about their bodies and deepen their sense of body image, confidence, self-awareness, and self-efficacy (their belief in their ability to succeed at something). Part of healthy habits and wellbeing is being able to connect with the land and get outside in the natural world. It is important that children not only gain connections with the natural world as part of their wellbeing, but are also learning about their responsibility to the land and their role as environmental stewards.

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Modelling healthy habits

We know that many habits and skills, including eating, physical activity, healthy relationships, being safe from violence, and technology use, and awareness of risks such as sedentary behaviour, are learned through watching role models at home, at school and in the community. When families and other adults are able to model healthy habits and behaviours, children are more likely to be healthy. Some examples are preparing nutritious meals, eating together as a family, and getting outdoors.

#### What Ontario is Doing



Under the Healthy Kids Strategy, the Province passed the *Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015*, requiring food service premises with 20 or more locations in Ontario to post calories on menus, making it easier for families to make informed and healthier food choices when dining out.

#### Fostering a love of active living and connecting to the land



Learning to be active in ways that are fun, responsible and relevant to their abilities, cultures and backgrounds can support children to build healthy habits that will last a lifetime. Children who connect to outdoor activities have lower risks of being overweight and depressed, do better in school, have better social

skills, feel less isolated and have better self-control and stress management.<sup>52</sup> It is also important to support environmental stewardship (such as recycling, not littering, not wasting water) and build children's connection to nature. Opportunities for adventurous, unstructured outdoor play and land-based activities can help children get outside, be active and learn how to assess and take managed risks. We need to create opportunities for children to engage in safe and independent exploration of our communities and natural world. This is particularly important for First Nations,

Métis and Inuit children and families, as connecting to the land and environmental stewardship is a key part of cultural learning.

### What Ontario is Doing

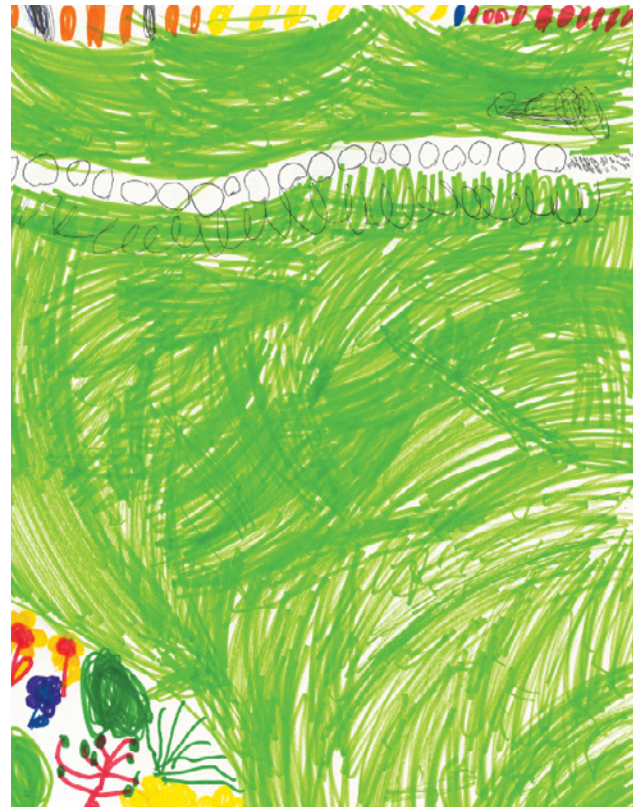


The Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund (OSRCF) is a grant program designed to provide funding to organizations for the successful delivery of sport, recreation and physical activity projects.

The key goals of the program are to support initiatives which: increase opportunities for participation in PHYSICAL ACTIVITY; embed PHYSICAL LITERACY throughout sport and recreation; and increase the CAPACITY of the sport and recreation sector to deliver quality programming. The program is targeted at populations that lack equitable access to participate and/or have been historically less physically active.

### Teaching healthy and responsible use of technology

Technology provides children with an ability to interact with the world around them and an opportunity to participate as digital citizens. Learning healthy, safe and responsible online habits requires guidance from parents and caregivers. This could mean talking to children on a regular basis about their online lives, how to identify and address cyberbullying, modelling responsible and healthy practices, and establishing rules and healthy boundaries around technology use.<sup>53</sup> Evidence shows that for many middle years children in Ontario, excessive use of technology can hinder development and increase vulnerability to social and emotional stressors. This is due to both direct impacts (for example on brain development) as well as lost opportunities, such as physical activity and prosocial interactions. However, research also shows that strict monitoring and surveillance of



online behaviour may not be as effective as promoting responsible independent behaviour.<sup>54</sup> Children can be supported to use technology appropriately and responsibly, including building in short and longer breaks from screen time.

### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ↓ % of children who spend at least three hours a day of sedentary screen time
- ↑ % of children who brush their teeth at least once a day
- ↑ % of children who think it is important to feel connected to nature
- ↑ % of children who have rules at home about talking to people they don't know online or on a cellphone



# SPOTLIGHT

## Helping Children Be Active and Well

The goal of the Healthy Kids Community Challenge (HKCC), a key part of the Healthy Kids Strategy, is to support the wellbeing of Ontario's children and to help create communities where it's easy for children to lead healthier lives.

Forty-five communities across Ontario are participating in the Healthy Kids Community Challenge. The government provides them with resources including funding, training and social marketing tools to help promote healthy eating, physical activity, and healthy behaviours for children.

The communities rally around themes to develop programs, policies, environmental supports and events with the support of local partners. Three themes have been launched to date:

- Run. Jump. Play. Every Day. was the first theme launched in September 2015, and encourages physical activity through a mix of active play, active transportation, sports and structured physical activity.
- Theme two, Water Does Wonders, encourages kids and families to reach for water when thirsty instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Theme three, Choose to Boost Veggies and Fruit, encourages kids and families to eat healthier and to make vegetables and fruit part of their everyday lives.



Agencies in London have opted to stop offering juice to kids, and instead only offer water. At special celebrations, fruit, veggies and herbs are added to “boost” the flavour without added sugar!



“These were so well received. We’re hoping to expand this option in the future! A fun way to get kids outside and learning new things.”

“We have had a lot of fun trying different combinations of fruit and veggies in our water and everyone has really embraced this healthy drink of choice! Huge thanks to the Healthy Kids Community Challenge for helping us support and promote healthy choices for the people living and working in the neighbourhood!”



# Ontario Children's Outdoor Charter:

Getting children outside to discover the wonders of nature

Children have the right to explore and play in the outdoors. Research shows that kids who spend regular time in nature are happier and healthier.

The Ontario Children's Outdoor Charter aims to get children outside to discover the wonders of nature. Spending time outdoors is essential to every child's development, health and well-being. It builds a connection to our rich natural and cultural heritage. Kids connected to nature grow up caring for the Earth and helping to conserve biodiversity.

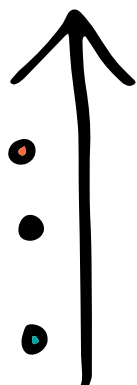
People, organizations, governments and communities that support the Charter recognize that time outdoors is important for children's health and wellness. Supporters of the Charter can promote it in their communities and improve opportunities for children of all abilities and backgrounds to play and learn outdoors.



GOAL:



# Ontario Children Have Caring and Connected Families



A committed, caring relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver or other adult is the single most important factor in helping children develop resilience, self-confidence, motivation to learn, and healthy social skills and relationships.<sup>55</sup>



## OUTCOMES WE WANT

4

Ontario children have at least one consistent caring adult in their lives

5

Ontario families are financially stable and secure

6

Ontario families are supported to thrive and are active in their children's lives

## Why it matters:

Caring and connected families also support children's overall healthy social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.<sup>56</sup>

Despite growing independence during the middle years, children need the guidance of their families. We know that all families are different. A child may have one caregiver or several different caregivers in different homes, or may be in the care of an appointed guardian.

### Helpful Resources



**Authoritative parenting** is warm but firm, structured parenting with consistent rules, high expectations and encouragement.

The presence of a caring and authoritative caregiver who sets rules and expectations, while being supportive, nurturing and sensitive to the child's needs, can help instil self-efficacy, motivation, social competencies, self-esteem and health-promoting behaviours. Being connected with parents/caregivers is associated with a decrease in mental health challenges and an increase in a range of prosocial behaviours.<sup>57</sup> Families play an important role in supporting identity formation of their children. Families transmit culture and language, model self-worth, and can establish open, supportive home environments where children are enabled and encouraged to express their feelings and experiences and explore who they are.

### Helpful Resources



Experts say that parents/caregivers' involvement in children's education has a significant impact on children's academic and developmental goals.

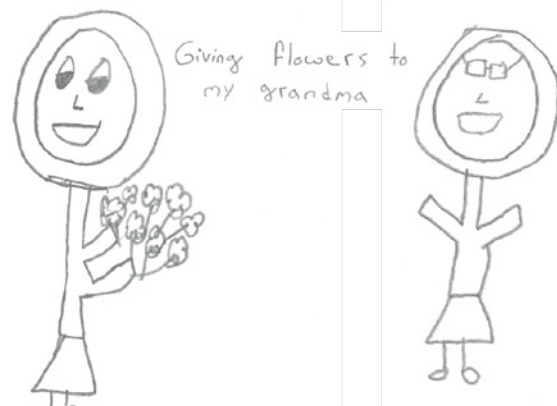
Parents can make a significant impact on their children's educational goals by being actively engaged at home, such as:

- communicating high (but reasonable) expectations of children and belief in children's potential
- talking with children, particularly about school
- helping children develop positive attitudes towards learning and strong work habits
- reading to or with children and talking about books and stories

Source: People for Education, Doing What Matters Most

## Snapshot of Ontario:

Ontario is home to over four million families — each of which has unique strengths and challenges. Families in Ontario are diverse with a range of structures, including children living in foster care, with extended family, with one or more parents, with LGBTQ2S parents, and from mixed race, language, cultural, or religious backgrounds.



## **4 Ontario children have at least one consistent, caring adult in their lives**

Research on child development is clear — having the support of a consistent caring adult can make a profound difference in the life of a child. Children who have one or more caring adults in their lives feel more worthwhile, have greater self-esteem and are more resilient.<sup>58</sup> Having a strong, supportive parent, caregiver, or other consistent adult can be a protective factor against risks associated with poverty, living in high-risk neighbourhoods and mental health challenges.

However, we know that there are complex factors such as poverty and precarious employment, as well as other things that cause toxic stress such as abuse/neglect and/or exposure to domestic violence that can contribute to family breakdown. These families need tailored supports in order to create a healthy home life for their children.

### **Supporting this outcome involves:**

#### **Supporting parents and caregivers as central to a child's wellbeing**

Parents and caregivers are the most important and influential people in the lives of middle years children — and often the greatest advocates they have. Empowering and equipping them with information resources and skills to access and apply that information can ensure children get the help they need when they need it. Investing in parents and caregivers means providing wholistic supports to help them understand their child's development, navigate service systems when it is required, and access additional support when it is needed.

Evidence suggests that whole-family interventions provide broad-based benefits beyond those that focus on a child or parent alone. Concurrent counselling and therapy interventions, for example, can help children and their caregivers address challenges together.<sup>59</sup>

#### **What Ontario is Doing**



The Youth Mentorship Program supports evidence-based, regionally specific and locally-developed mentorship initiatives for high-risk young people ages 6–25 in target communities across the province. Programs focus on four outcomes streams: employment and entrepreneurship; educational achievement; civic engagement/leadership; and building strong cultural identities.

The 2017 Ontario Black Youth Action Plan builds on the Youth Mentorship Program with the introduction of a culturally focused mentoring network for Black children and youth.

#### **Fostering role models and mentors**

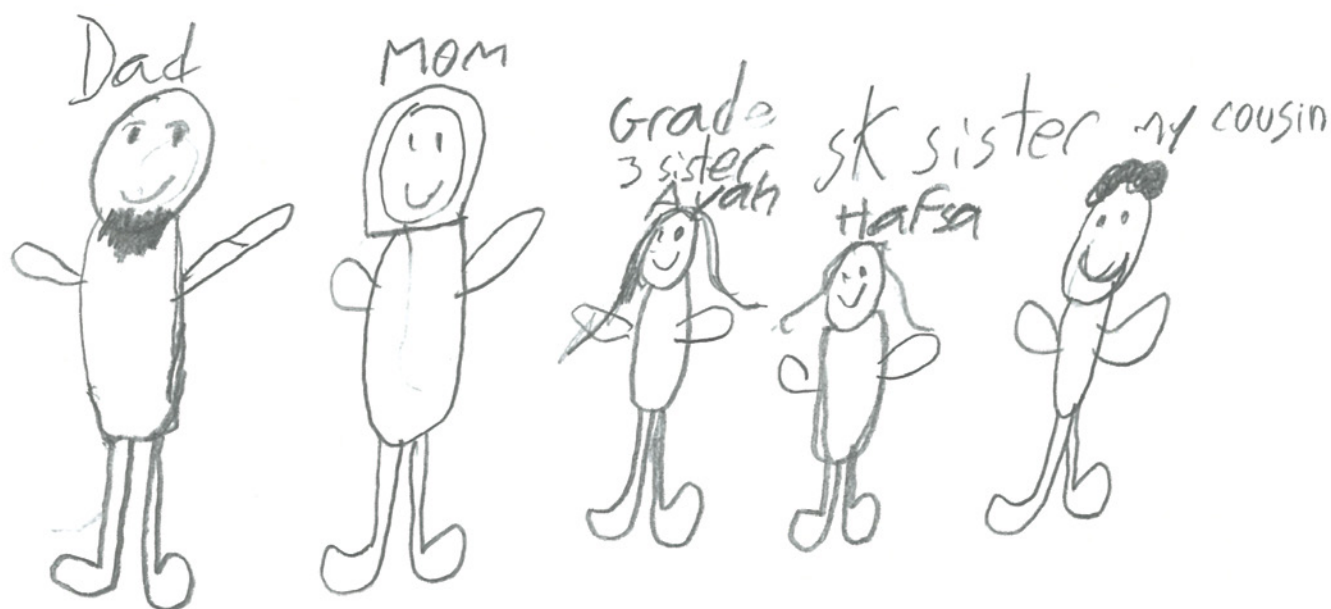
Children benefit from having positive relationships with supportive adults outside the home. Maintaining a relationship with a mentor has been shown to support optimal development, reduce problematic behaviours and promote strong attachments later in life. A recent study from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) found that young girls with a mentor were four times less likely to bully, fight, lie or inappropriately express anger than girls without a mentor.<sup>60</sup> High quality mentorship can be informal, such as with a neighbour, coach or extended family member, or



created through formalized mentorship programs. Both types have been found to improve outcomes.<sup>61</sup> Research has shown that equipping formal mentors with high quality training and finding mentors from a similar social background can contribute to their effectiveness.<sup>62</sup> Indigenous approaches to mentorship and caretaking of children often include an acknowledgment of the important role played by Elders, Senators and traditional knowledge keepers, in supporting young people.

#### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ⬆ % of children who have at least one parent/caregiver who usually knows where they are
- ⬆ % of children who feel they have a family member who could provide emotional help and support when needed
- ⬆ % of children who talk about the activities they do in school with their parents/caregivers
- ⬆ % of children who feel their teachers care about them as a person



## 5 Ontario families are financially stable and secure

Families want the best for their children. But we know that some families in Ontario are in precarious or unstable situations and are not able to provide for their basic needs. Research shows that optimal development of middle years children is diminished when they are facing food insecurity, have poor access to safe and affordable housing and transportation, do not have access to health care or are exposed to hazardous conditions. Increased stress on families also affects the wellbeing of children in terms of their mental health, ability to develop positive relationships, identity formation and spiritual wellbeing

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Addressing food insecurity

Evidence shows that providing nutritious, regular meals to children helps them do better in school and in their daily lives. We know that some Ontario families do not have access to enough affordable nutritious food to provide for the healthy growth and development needs of their children. Food insecurity has both acute and long-lasting impacts on children, including the physical and cognitive impairments that result from malnutrition, and the emotional and social developmental challenges associated with uncertainty about access to food. Supporting low-income families with school- or community-based food programs can have a big impact and contribute to better outcomes for children, families and communities.

#### What Ontario is Doing



The government has committed to reforming the income security system, including social assistance. The Income Security Reform Working Group and parallel First Nations and urban Indigenous working groups have been asked to provide a potential roadmap to guide reform over multiple years based on equity, adequacy, simplicity and sustainability.

The government is also, through the Basic Income Pilot, testing whether a basic income can better support vulnerable workers, improve health and education outcomes for people on low incomes, and help ensure that everyone shares in Ontario's economic growth.

#### What Ontario is Doing



Ontario is proposing the largest increase to the minimum wage in the province's history, raising it to \$15 per hour by 2019, as part of a plan to create better jobs and fair workplaces.

#### What Ontario is Doing



Each year Ontario invests \$32.2 million in the Student Nutrition Program to provide healthy meals and snacks to more than 896,000 children and youth during the course of the school year. In 2015–2016, the Ontario Student Nutrition Program was expanded to 120 educational settings in 63 First Nations communities to help children and youth access a healthy diet. Many programs incorporate traditional foods and cultural practices.

### What Ontario is Doing



The Portable Housing Benefit for Survivors of Domestic Abuse is available through the Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy to help survivors of domestic violence find safe and affordable housing beyond traditional social housing assistance.

### Improving access to affordable housing

As a basic need, children require a safe and supportive living environment, yet this is not a reality for Ontario families who cannot access affordable housing. For example, we know access to affordable housing is a major barrier for those fleeing domestic violence. Finding secure housing can be a challenge for families who have children with special needs, as accessible housing or modifications to a home to make it more accessible can be costly. Inadequate housing can cause children to experience stress and anxiety, reduce their feeling of safety, and lead to illness and allergies.<sup>64</sup> Flexible housing supports need to be available to families so that they can choose where to live and be closer to relatives, social support networks, schools and employment opportunities.

### What Ontario is Doing



Through the Ontario Child Benefit, monthly benefits to children under 18 have more than doubled since 2008 and the current maximum annual payment is \$1,356 per child. Child support benefits are now fully exempt from social assistance benefit calculations, which will help the monthly income of almost 19,000 families, most of whom are lone-parent, mother led households.

### Increasing access to affordable child care and recreation programs

Ontario families rely on access to high quality, affordable child care and before- and after-school programs for their middle years children. Recreational and before- and after-school programs are important opportunities for children to develop peer relationships, build connections to caring adults outside the home, and provide needed before- and after-school care for working parents. However, some families face barriers to accessing programs. These include cost, transportation and location of services, waitlists and lack of specialized programs and supports for children with special needs. Increasing access to high quality, affordable child care and recreation programs for middle years children can enrich their development and help caregivers to make ends meet.

### What Ontario is Doing



Ontario is championing women's economic empowerment through a number of initiatives, including the Gender Wage Gap Strategy to close the gender wage gap, create equal opportunities and eliminate barriers that prevent women's full participation in the workforce.

### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ↓ % of families living in deep poverty and struggling to afford housing
- ↓ % of children living in low income households (LIM 50 — low income measure)
- ↓ % of families who experience food insecurity

# Snapshot of Ontario Families Living in Poverty

In Ontario, 13.9% of children live in a low-income<sup>65</sup> household.

Low-income families are more likely to be:

## Led by a female lone parent

## Two times more likely to live in poverty

**32.6%**

of female headed lone-parent families are low income, compared to **18.2%** of male led lone-parent families.<sup>66</sup> Proportion of low income increases to **43.3%** for female lone-parent families who live without other relatives. This is almost twice the low income rate of similar families headed by males (**24%**).<sup>67</sup>



Female lone-parent median income was **\$40,160** compared to **\$58,190** male lone-parent median income.<sup>68</sup>



**More than 35.1%** of families in Canada led by female lone parents experience food insecurity, compared to **19.6%** of families led by male lone parents and **16%** of all families.<sup>69</sup>

## Indigenous

## Two times more likely to live in poverty

**23.5%**

of Indigenous families living off-reserve are in low-income households.<sup>70</sup>



**22%** of on-reserve and **21%** of off-reserve households lived in inadequate housing and spent more than **30%** of their income on housing, compared to **2.5%** of non-Indigenous households.<sup>71</sup>



**27.1%** of Indigenous households across Canada experienced food insecurity, over twice the Canadian household average.<sup>72</sup>

## Newcomers

## Two times more likely to live in poverty

**33.5%**

of very recent immigrants and **19.4%** of recent immigrants live in low-income households.<sup>73</sup>

## Racialized

## 1.5 times more likely to live in poverty

**20.1%**

of visible minorities live in low-income households.<sup>74</sup>

*(Data obtained from Statistics Canada and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*







## **6 Ontario families are supported to thrive and are active and engaged in their children's lives**

When families are active and engaged in their children's lives, children tend to have higher self-worth and social competence, and are less likely to engage in problematic behaviours. We want all of Ontario's families to be the place where children find love, guidance and positive role models so they can achieve their full potential. Some families, however, may face complex challenges and need additional supports before that can happen. This is particularly true for families living in poverty, with precarious employment, headed by single parents, or where parents face mental health and addiction challenges, have a disability, are newcomers or racialized.

### **Supporting this outcome involves:**

#### **Encouraging families to spend quality time with their children**

Engaged parenting is about being aware of their children's needs and experiences, and being present in their lives on a daily basis. Research tells us that what matters most is the quality of time spent together. Family dinners can connect parents and caregivers to the daily lives of their children. Parents and caregivers can also encourage family connection and communication by putting away their own screens and technology. Children are more likely to share information about their experiences, feelings and needs when communication is open, respectful and a part of daily life.

#### **Connecting families and schools**

We know that school attachment is important for middle years children — and it is also important for their parents and caregivers. Connecting parents and caregivers to what children are learning in school can help ensure that they know how to support home-based learning activities, address questions and concerns, are able to keep track of how their children are doing, and see themselves as active participants in their child's learning. Supporting parent engagement in children's learning means building effective, collaborative and respectful relationships between families and their school/school board. Parents should receive regular communications about their children's progress. There should be opportunities for parents and caregivers to participate in school decision making (such as school councils). Most importantly, parent engagement needs to be culturally appropriate, flexible and responsive to a variety of different family needs and constraints.

#### **What Ontario is Doing**



Through the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan, MCYS is investing in, and evaluating, innovative culturally focused supports for Black parents.

## Recognizing that all families need help sometimes

All families face challenges that can sometimes feel overwhelming. Removing stigma and encouraging parents and caregivers to seek help can ensure they are well-positioned to cope with challenges and to be resilient. Support may come in the form of programs and services, but it may also mean strong and reinforcing strong community networks and parenting supports.

Some families are at greater risk of isolation and face barriers to accessing services. We know that having a coordinated, easy to navigate service system is essential. We also know that some families living in remote communities or without strong transportation networks face additional challenges accessing services and programs. Providing practical, family-oriented services that address common barriers — things like transportation, flexible hours and cultural responsiveness — can support all families to access the supports they need. Effective services are those that are designed with the whole family in mind. Supporting the family is often an important part of supporting the child.



### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ↑ % of children who eat dinner with a parent on a regular basis
- ↑ % of teachers who share suggestions with parents/caregivers to support learning at home
- ↑ % of teachers who share information with parents/caregivers on their child's progress

## Helping Children Have Caring and Connected Families

London's Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre helps children by supporting families during an emergency, crisis, severe stress, or other disruptive situation.



Being creative with beads

Merrymount provides a safe, positive environment where children can develop and learn through programs that build self-awareness, self-esteem, help them handle stress and emotional challenges, develop confidence and social skills, improve coping strategies, build resiliency, and increase their sense of safety and wellbeing.

Merrymount's Crisis Residential/Respite Program offers 24 hour continuous care to children from birth to 13 years of age. The program provides services that meet children's needs over a temporary period of family instability. Each year 2,300 children use the 18 available beds. Merrymount then works with the family to help them cope with the present crisis, become involved with community supports, and plan for adequate care for the child's return home.

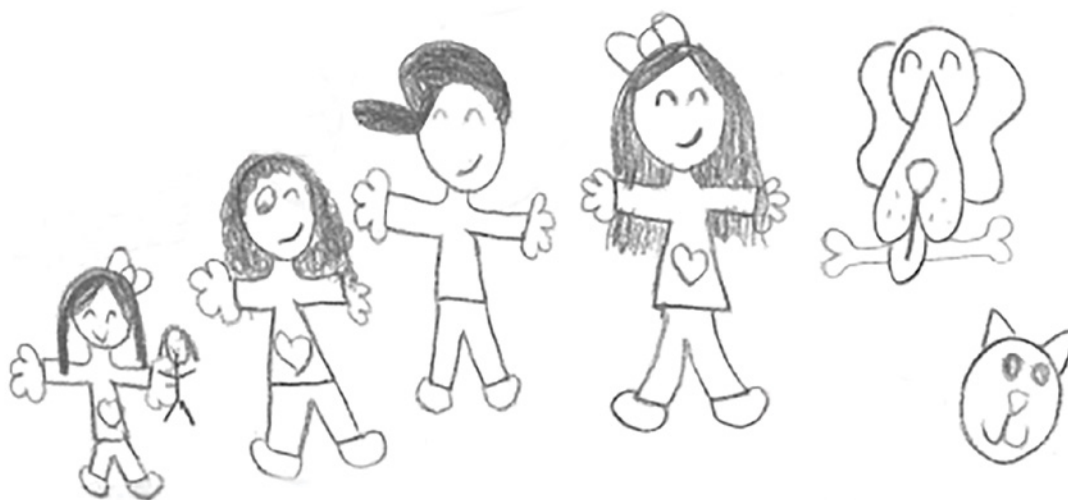


"I like it here because the staff make me feel happy and good about myself and teach me how to share." Montana, 8



"I have fun here and my Mom gets to have a break." Ashton, 8

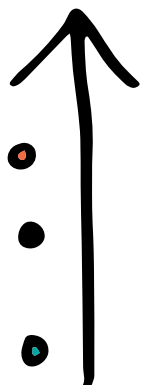




GOAL:



# Ontario Children Have Positive Relationships



Friends play an important role in the lives of middle years children. As children develop through the middle years, they are acquiring the skills they need to develop healthy and close friendships, which are important basic life skills.



## OUTCOMES WE WANT

7

Ontario children form and maintain healthy, close relationships

8

Ontario children respect others and value diversity, equity and inclusion

9

Ontario children feel safe at home, at school, online and in their communities

## Why it matters:

Middle years children need adults in their lives who care about them, encourage them and believe in them, and who can help them learn how to have positive interactions with others. This includes having access to adults outside the home, such as mentors, Elders, Senators and traditional knowledge keepers. A strong sense of identity and prosocial values about inclusion, equity and diversity can help ensure that middle years children in Ontario grow up to contribute to their communities in positive ways.

Children need safe places to play, build independence and explore social connections. It's important that middle years children are supported as they learn how to manage conflict, stand up to bullying, and respectfully navigate social networks.



*Every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her.*

Urie Bronfenbrenner



## Snapshot of Ontario:

Children increasingly relate to each other through technology and online. More than one-quarter of students in Grade 4 have their own phones, with the numbers increasing as they age (85 per cent in Grade 11). This means that children today are often connected when they are not together in person, and are using portable tools to communicate.

### What the Data Says

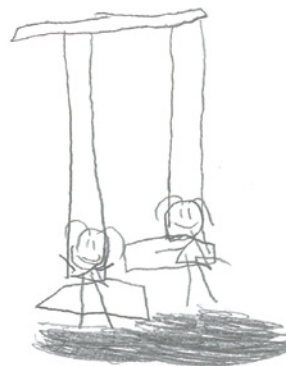


More than one-third of students in Grades 4–6 have Facebook accounts, even though the site's own terms of use forbids anyone under the age of 13 from joining.<sup>75</sup>

Middle years children are also increasingly exposed to social media sites that rely on stereotypes and embed commercial messages into a child's sense of identity, and expectations for relationships.<sup>76</sup>

Middle years children need help to develop the skills to be safe, including managing the ways they deal with conflicts and risks at school and online.

The new Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum (Grades 1–8) supports students to develop the skills and knowledge to understand themselves and others, develop and maintain healthy relationships, and be safe physically and emotionally. Younger students learn about how to be a good friend and have respectful two-way communication. Older students (by Grade 6) learn the effects of stereotypes, including homophobia and sexism, and the importance of respecting



themselves and others, in all their diversity — including people of all gender identities, sexual orientations, mental and physical abilities, and social and cultural backgrounds.

## **7 Ontario children form and maintain healthy, close relationships**

Social connectedness supports optimal child wellbeing. During the middle years, children strengthen their sense of belonging, through being connected to friends, family and community.

Children in the middle years are still closely linked to their caregivers and families, but the role of friends and others is taking on increasing importance. Children are beginning to develop close, trusting friendships and as they get older, they develop the foundations of romantic relationships. Studies show that children's social connectedness is linked to self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as academic achievement.

### **Supporting this outcome involves:**

#### **Building strong social and emotional skills**

When children learn social and emotional skills — when they feel confident making new friends, expressing their ideas and dealing with conflicts — they are more likely to feel good about themselves and make healthy choices. When children experience challenges in this area they are more likely to feel isolated, anxious, and depressed.

Most middle years children have the developmental foundation they need to hone their social and emotional skills, including the ability to be empathetic, use language to communicate in different ways, and solve problems while considering other people's perspectives. Some social skills — such as coping with bullying or demonstrating respect for others — are especially valuable.

Encouragement, patience and active coaching from adults and caregivers can help children develop these basic life skills. We know that some middle years children with developmental concerns or special needs face additional barriers to developing social skills, and helping them overcome these barriers is extremely important, as friendships can be a protective factor for them.

#### **Helpful Resources**



Ontario's Health and Physical Education curriculum helps children and youth understand what "consent" means and learn the skills they need to stand up for themselves and respect themselves and others.

Link to Parent Fact Sheets:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/HPEconsent.pdf>

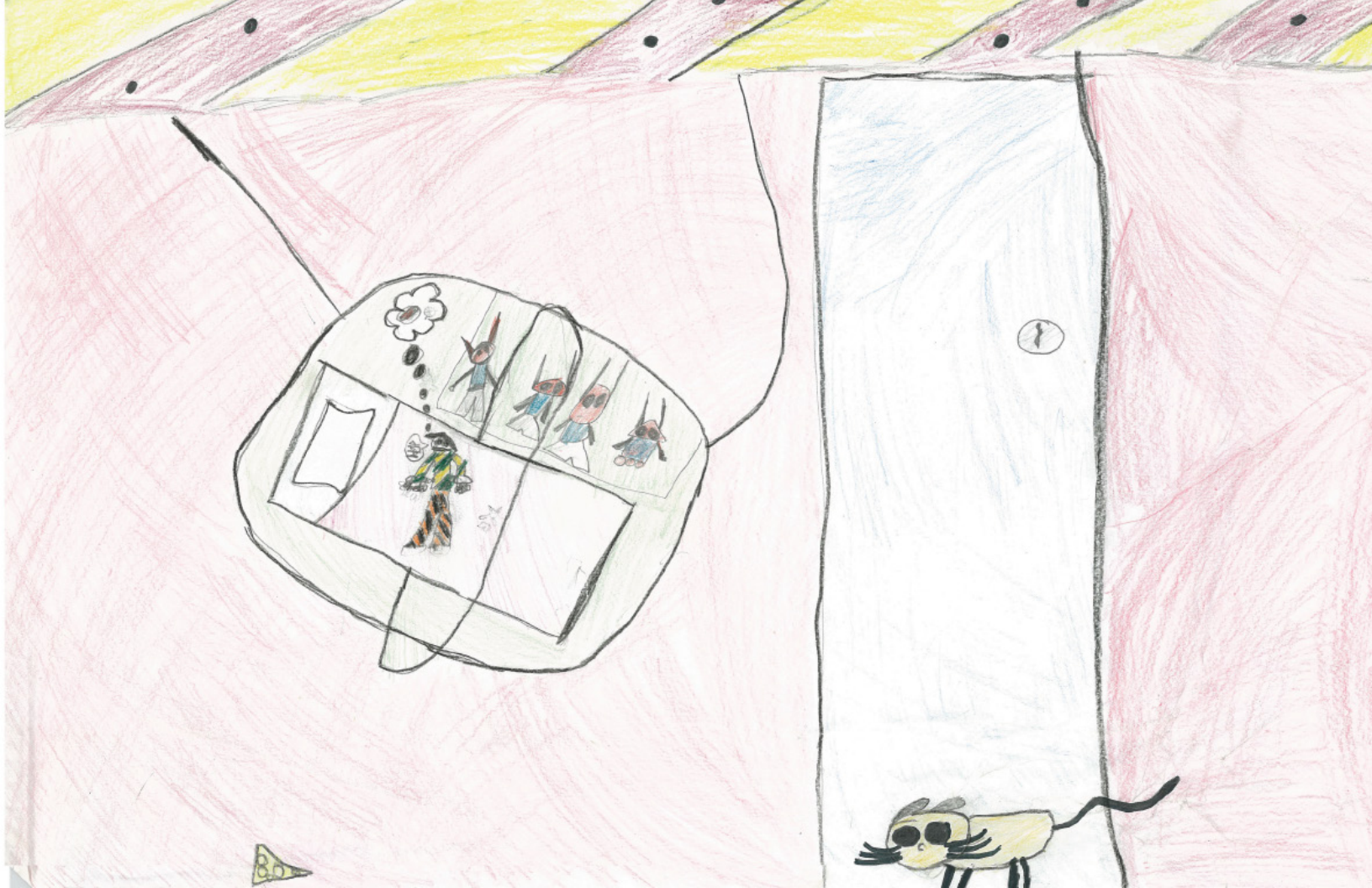
#### **Providing diverse, positive opportunities**

We know that school provides significant opportunities for middle years children to learn how to form and maintain healthy relationships, and this is extremely important. We also know that when they are able to explore and develop friendships outside of school, they thrive even more. Access to diverse social activities and opportunities to establish and deepen different friendships help children build confidence and other core social and emotional skills.

#### **Role modelling healthy relationships**

We know that children learn from watching and copying the behaviour of those who





are close to them. Positive relationship role modelling can help form social skills and give children a sense of confidence in their interactions with a variety of people. Also, introducing children to diverse role models could help to break down bias and stereotyping, such as gender stereotypes, which can negatively impact children's development of relationships and children's understanding of roles and healthy relationships.

Negative role model experiences can put children at risk for developing unhealthy relationships, and toxic stress has a negative impact on growth and development. This is true, for example, with children who experience violence in the home.

#### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ⬆ % of children who have at least one friend they can trust and rely on
- ⬆ % of children who can talk through disputes with a friend

## 8 Ontario children respect others and value diversity, equity and inclusion

Ontario is one of the most diverse provinces in Canada. Every child who grows up here should be socially included and respected. A sense of belonging is an important element of child growth and development and builds a strong sense of self and respect for others within a diverse society.

Children at this age should be supported in developing respectful and inclusive attitudes and behaviours about all dimensions of diversity, including families with one or more parents, LGBTQ2S-led families, and families where children live with grandparents or with caregivers, as well as children who are Black, racialized, Indigenous, newcomer, from diverse ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds or who have disabilities and special needs. It is important for children to learn that inclusion means everyone is welcomed, accepted and belongs, regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, sex, physical or intellectual ability, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other factors. In addressing bias and discriminatory attitudes, language and behaviour, parents, caregivers, teachers and other caring adults play an important role in supporting children to understand the impact they have on others, take responsibility and where needed, take corrective action to promote equity and inclusion.

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Valuing diverse identities and embracing equity and inclusion

Middle years children are thinking about their own identity, considering the diversity of others, and can appreciate perspectives that are different from their own. Increasing the visibility of the strengths and assets of people from diverse cultures, backgrounds and abilities will help to create a broader awareness and understanding of the contributions of diverse communities and individuals. Increasing the understanding and acknowledgment of diverse cultures and social identities helps to normalize and value diversity. True inclusion happens when we celebrate our diverse identities on a day-to-day basis. Valuing diversity and embracing difference helps middle years children develop healthy attitudes about themselves and their identities. Recognizing contributions of diverse communities and individuals deepens possibilities for equity and inclusion.



## Valuing First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures and histories

Individuals, community leaders, governments and others need to make deliberate efforts to recognize, reflect upon and celebrate Indigenous people in Ontario. There are vast differences across and within First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, yet many Ontarians do not understand or appreciate these differences. Lack of awareness of different cultures — a type of stereotyping — results in a lack of respect for different cultural identities. There needs to be more information about First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures in school curriculums and in extracurricular learning.



### What Ontario is Doing



The “We Are All Treaty Peoples” educator’s toolkit was developed and launched by the Anishinabek Nation. The kit is connected to the Ontario curriculum and contains engaging activities that will help students in Grades 1–8 learn about treaty relationships.

### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ↓ % of children who bully others
- ↓ % of children who have been bullied
- ↑ % of children who feel students treat each other with respect
- ↑ % of children who think it is important to be kind and forgiving of others

## Encouraging children to stand up to discrimination

Children at this age are capable of empathy and may express thoughts and feelings when they witness discrimination against people based on their social and cultural identities. They are also able to problem-solve and are learning how to respect the opinions of others. We know that learning about the shared and distinct history, traditions, values and ideas of others helps children develop skills to be culturally responsive, accepting and inclusive of others.



## 9 Ontario children feel safe at home, at school, online and in their communities

Children in the middle years are learning how to keep themselves safe and beginning to recognize and manage risks. As children progress through the middle years, they begin to develop more independence, exercise more autonomy from their parents and are increasingly exposed to new influences. This is a healthy part of growing and developing through the middle years. Understandably, however, many parents and caregivers worry about how their children are managing the increased independent interactions with new people and experiences, the role and influence of social media, and other possible risks.

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Planning for safety at home and in communities

Statistics show that the home is the most likely place for childhood injuries, and that many incidents are preventable. Parents and caregivers can help protect children by implementing safety plans (such as a home fire escape plan, or establishing an emergency contact person), and teaching children basic fire safety and other skills to avoid or cope with emergencies (such as first aid or proper use of kitchen equipment). Children in the middle years benefit from having firm but fair guidelines, allowing them to explore new activities, and take measured risks, all while being responsible and safety-conscious.

#### What Ontario is Doing



Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking aims to ensure that everyone in the province can live in safety — free from the threat, fear or experience of exploitation and violence.

#### Helpful Resources



Having students learn a “safety mindset” that can be applied in situations of all kinds, at school, at home, and in the community is an important goal of Ontario's Health and Physical Education curriculum.

#### Link to Parent Fact Sheets

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/staysafefact.pdf>

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/HPEonline.pdf>

### Creating safe, inclusive and accepting schools and communities

We know that some students feel more vulnerable at school and in their communities than others. This can be due to homophobia and transphobia, as well as stereotypes and assumptions about sexual orientation, gender expression, race, ethnicity, culture, disability and mental health. Children who are subjected to these stereotypes or assumptions may face unwanted negative attention, bullying, discrimination, isolation, assumption of gender roles or exclusion. Discussing the harmful effects of these stereotypes, and the importance of changing and challenging them, can help children understand and develop the skills they need to prevent and address bullying and help them build a safe, inclusive and accepting school environment for themselves and their communities. Equipping parents to support their children in preventing and addressing bullying and discrimination is also critically important. It is up to adults to set the tone and create a space where everyone feels included, where diversity is valued and discrimination is not tolerated.

## Preventing and addressing the abuse and exploitation of children

It can be a difficult topic to discuss, but children also need to be aware that sadly, abuse and exploitation do occur in our world. Children need to be supported to understand how to recognize abuse, and feel comfortable asserting their own boundaries and limits. They also need to know who and where to go for help, if they ever feel they need it. This foundation can help lessen current and future risk, including the risk of human trafficking or abuse by someone known to the child. The children most vulnerable to human trafficking include those in the care of a children's aid society or Indigenous child well-being society, Indigenous girls and newcomers, with 14-year-old girls as one of the most vulnerable groups.<sup>77</sup> Adults also need to be proactive in monitoring, following up with children, and intervening where harm is suspected. We all share a responsibility to protect children from harm. Anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection must promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a children's aid society.

## Teaching media smarts

More and more middle years children are accessing social media and using technology to connect with others — one study has found that children as young as nine are getting up in the night to check their phones. It is important to begin talking to children about managing their screen time and the potential risks of social media from their first interactions with technology and ongoing.<sup>78</sup> It is also important to teach children about what to do when experiencing cyberbullying and how to recognize, assess and manage potentially dangerous situations, and who they can go to if they need help.

### Helpful Resources



Media Smarts provides tips about keeping children safe online and dealing with cyber-bullying.

<http://mediasmarts.ca/parents>

### What Ontario is Doing



On May 30, 2017, the Ontario government passed Bill 65, Safer School Zones Act to help municipalities target unsafe drivers and protect children, seniors, other pedestrians and cyclists. The new act will give municipalities more tools to fight speeding and dangerous driving in community safety zones and school zones.

MTO, in partnership with the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA), recently updated the Ontario Road Safety Resource website. This voluntary road safety curriculum is available at [www.ontarioroadsafety.ca](http://www.ontarioroadsafety.ca) and includes pedestrian safety as one of the topics for classroom discussion.

MTO also partners with TVOKids to deliver road safety messages as part of TVO's on-air programming; web-based activities and printed resources targeting children ages 2–11. TVOKids promotes pedestrian safety during its annual Road Safety Week in May.

### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ↑ % of children who feel safe at school
- ↑ % of children who feel their community is safe for children to play outside during the day
- ↑ % of children who feel they can trust people in their community
- ↑ % of children who feel confident they have the skill needed to protect themselves online



## Helping Children Have Positive Relationships

The Ministry of the Status of Women funds and participates in the development and delivery of a number of educational initiatives to prevent violence against women in communities across the province.



Promoting Healthy, Equal Relationships is an initiative designed to reach students ages 8–12, with resources and supports to instil positive attitudes and behaviours, and create new social norms of equality and respect.

We know that gender-based violence is rooted in a person's belief of inequality, and research has shown that these beliefs often form long before adulthood.

We know, too, that along with parents, teachers play a vital role in guiding children's and youth's attitudes and behaviours toward healthy, equal relationships. Promoting Healthy, Equal Relationships provides resource materials to help young students understand what healthy, equal relationships are and the importance of respecting themselves and others. While most of the material is suitable for students ages 8–14, the information is applicable for many grade levels.

Resources for kids include:

- online information about abuse, positive relationships, and warning signs of unhealthy relationships
- ways to contact help lines, such as Kids Help Phone
- the award-winning online video game to promote healthy relationships, Replay: Finding Zoe. <http://www.metrac.org/gamesandapps/>

The full list of Promoting Healthy, Equal Relationships resources can be found at this link, under the heading Promoting Healthy, Equal Relationships: <http://www.women.gov.on.ca/owd/english/ending-violence/education.shtml>

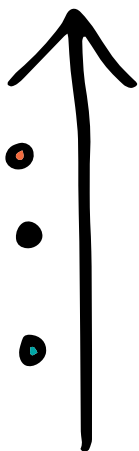
Other Public Education resources aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women and girls can be ordered for free at [Service Ontario Publications](#). To order, you must create a username and password, or call 1-800-668-9938.



# GOAL:



## Ontario Children Engage in Learning



We want all children to feel motivated, supported and encouraged to learn. Flexible, experiential, inclusive, and strengths-based learning environments that respond to individual learning needs can help shape a lifelong love of learning for children of all abilities, and from all backgrounds.



### OUTCOMES WE WANT

10

Ontario children are curious and love to learn

11

Ontario children have relevant learning experiences that address their diverse interests, strengths, needs and abilities

12

Ontario children gain the knowledge and skills they need



## Why it matters:

Learning takes place in all environments, every day. School staff, families, coaches, before- and after-school providers, recreation leaders, Elders, Senators, traditional knowledge keepers and community members and others all have a role to play. Inside and outside of school, children need to feel a sense of accomplishment, and to develop social and emotional competencies, and develop confidence as learners. They need help and support in becoming critical and informed young citizens and lifelong learners. They need to learn respect for themselves and for others, and they need to learn to embrace the core values of diversity, equity and inclusion. They also need supportive learning environments that value them and accept them for who they are.

Experts say children begin to envision their “future selves” around ages 7–10. This developmental window is a time when children should start reflecting on what they are good at and what they want to do when they grow up, and they need to be supported in doing that. Exposing children to diverse career options and supporting them to develop a sense of “agency” or control can help empower them to take charge of their learning journey now and into the future.

## Snapshot of Ontario:

Approximately 1.4 million children (Kindergarten to Grade 8) attend Ontario’s 4,000 publicly funded elementary schools. We recognize that strong literacy and numeracy skills lay a critical foundation for academic achievement and for a lifetime of

success. In Ontario, 72 per cent of elementary students are meeting or exceeding the provincial standard (equivalent to a B grade) in reading, writing and math.<sup>79</sup> Yet some children are falling behind in these early grades.

The Ontario education system recognizes that children’s wellbeing contributes to their ability to learn in all disciplines, and that learning in turn contributes to their overall wellbeing (Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario).<sup>80</sup> Educators are taking students’ wellbeing into account when planning instructional approaches. Educators also recognize that supporting and promoting wellbeing goes beyond the curriculum. It requires creating opportunities to build positive relationships, centred on caring and supportive relationships with adults and students in the school environment. It requires schools to be inclusive learning environments, so students feel they belong and differences are accepted and valued. It also means empowering students to have a say on how to support their own wellbeing and their own learning journey.

In an environment based on the principles of inclusive education, equity and diversity is valued, and all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. Every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning. In an inclusive education system, all students see themselves reflected in the curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, so that they can feel engaged in and empowered by their learning experiences (Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12).<sup>81</sup>

## 10 Ontario children are curious and love to learn

In the middle years, children begin to take on the characteristics most important for learning — curiosity, creativity, imagination, cooperation, confidence, and enthusiasm. Their minds are opening to the wider world. We want children to be happy to go to school and feel excited about learning. Supporting children to feel joy in learning can set them up for success and a lifetime love of learning.

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Motivating children and instilling a love of learning

A child's perception of learning is influenced by relationships — friends, families, extended families, school staff, Elders, Senators, traditional knowledge keepers and community members and other caring adults. These networks can help promote a love of learning and sense of connection to school. Another important way to build enthusiasm for learning is to create healthy conditions for children to learn. Physical exercise, plenty of sleep, healthy nutrition, and limited screen time all result in the brain being wired and primed for learning.

#### Helping children set realistic goals so they feel happy and confident about their achievements

Helping children feel good about themselves as learners means finding opportunities for them to feel proud of their achievements, in and outside of the classroom. Children need to be recognized for all types of achievement, such as when they help a friend with a challenge, improve a skill, make a healthy



choice, or learn something new that sparks interest. Overcoming obstacles can also help them build a sense of achievement.

Teaching children to value all aspects of their personal, emotional, social, academic or extracurricular achievement helps to build happy, balanced learners.

### Making school a place where children want to be and where they belong

Healthy, inclusive and safe school communities are places where children want to be. They are fun, respectful, and promote healthy behaviours. They give children space to socialize, have quiet time, and find resources to address a range of needs. Across Ontario, school boards are focusing efforts on the “school climate” and the importance of wellbeing in the learning process.







School boards are also focusing efforts on appreciating diverse cultures, balanced power dynamics between students and school staff, and learning environments where students feel accepted, valued and acknowledged.

#### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ⬆ % of children who really like school
- ⬆ % of children who like to read
- ⬆ % of children who enjoy mathematics
- ⬆ % of children who feel that they belong at their school

## **11** Ontario children have relevant learning experiences that address their diverse interests, strengths, needs and abilities

Research shows that children's success in school is linked to their willingness to engage in tasks, and this is influenced by their interests.<sup>82</sup> Learning experiences need to be interesting, relevant, and respond to a range of contexts, cultures, backgrounds, and abilities.

### **Supporting this outcome involves:**

#### **Flexible and supportive learning environments**

In order to learn, children need opportunities to move around, be active, try out new things and have hands-on activities. We know that all children benefit from learning in an environment where they can use all their senses to explore and play. Children also need opportunities to explore their personal and cultural identities freely. The use of technology, for example through Blended Learning, can be used to support students with a variety of learning needs. Blended Learning is a combination of face-to-face and online learning.

#### **What Ontario is Doing**



The Ontario education system has a process for identifying and supporting children who require special education programs and services. In the 2014–2015 school year (the most recent figures available) more than 340,000 students, or approximately 17 per cent of the total student population, were provided with special education programs and services.

#### **Early identification and support for children with special needs or learning challenges**

We know that all children benefit from tailored supports in school. Children with special needs may face unique challenges in learning. For children identified with special education needs, individualized programs, supports and/or services are essential for them to succeed in school. By providing early and ongoing assessments and interventions, we can respond to their unique learner profiles of strengths and needs and set them up for success. Children with special needs may also need support and opportunities to build social and emotional competencies, to help them form close friendships and support their overall wellbeing inside and outside of the school environment.

#### **What Ontario is Doing**



The Ministry of Education is leading an Indigenous Education Strategy to improve Indigenous students' educational attainment from Kindergarten to Grade 12, and support their transition to postsecondary education, training or the workplace. The ministry is also working with Indigenous partners to revise the Ontario curriculum to include mandatory teaching about treaties, the history of residential schools and the legacy of colonialism.

In addition, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Connections: Scope and Sequence Kindergarten to Grade 8 (2016) Resource Document assists educators in providing students with learning opportunities about Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives across all subjects and grade levels.

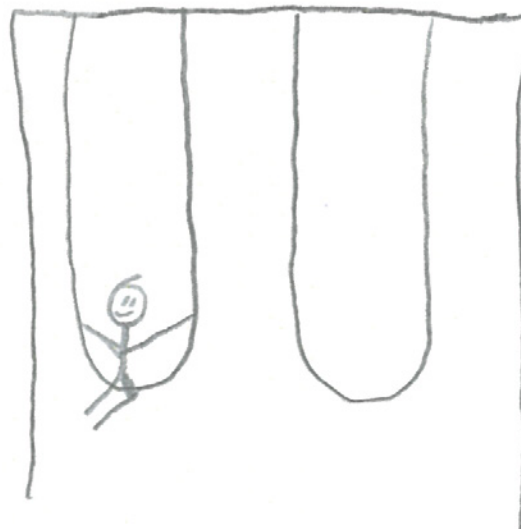
## Learning opportunities reflect student realities and new perspectives

All children should see themselves, their families and their cultures reflected in their learning. This means breaking down assumptions and biases and exposing children to the full diversity of cultures, gender identities, races, religions, and experiences. This could include showing women in “non-traditional” positions or Indigenous people in leadership roles. It could mean inviting artists, athletes, traditional knowledge keepers, architects, gardeners or Indigenous storytellers to talk about different lived experiences. This provides examples for students of all backgrounds and reinforces the notion that the definition of success is different for everyone. It is particularly important that children in Ontario learn about the histories of Indigenous peoples in a way that recognizes the strengths and values of Indigenous cultures, as well as the impact of colonization.

### What Ontario is Doing



The Ministry of Children and Youth Services is investing in a network of “postsecondary education connectors” to conduct culturally relevant, community-based outreach to Black children, youth and parents/ caregivers in order to increase access to postsecondary education.



## Children are supported to develop confidence and pride in their abilities

Children need opportunities to build their own sense of agency, to be good at things, to work through challenges, and to explore different interests. Children in the middle years are primed to make connections between what they learn, their world, and what they hope for the future, and to develop the kind of confidence and pride in their abilities that will set them on a positive course.

### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ⬆ % of children who feel they can get extra help at school when they need it
- ⬆ % of children who feel their teacher accepts them as they are
- ⬆ % of children who regularly take part in a school club or group



## **12** Ontario children gain the knowledge and skills they need

In the middle years, brain development is accelerating and many changes occur. It is a time when a child's brain is fine-tuned for learning. Children are geared up to combine ideas into new information, make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and thrive in their own communities and the ever-changing global world. For children to want to learn, they need to be interested in what they are learning, feel it is relevant to their lives, and have opportunities to apply knowledge and skills inside and outside of the classroom.<sup>83</sup> They also need opportunities to develop social and emotional competencies.

### **Supporting this outcome involves:**

#### **High quality learning opportunities inside and outside of school**

Children need high quality opportunities to learn, apply and build on their social, emotional, physical and cognitive skills, as well as their experiences in their environment. Children need to be able to connect what they learn at school with their lives at home and in the community including after-school programs, recreation programs, cultural activities, and other extracurricular activities, and they need to use their newfound knowledge and skills in their relationships with peers and families.

#### **Learning through play, inquiry and exploration**

During the middle years, basic academic skills and aptitudes such as reading, writing, telling time, math and computing develop and are strengthened. Children use creative, imaginative and practical thinking to find solutions to problems. Attention spans and the ability to concentrate on tasks vary. Evidence shows that children learn well through play, exploration, and inquiry as well as through reflection on what they are doing and what they want to accomplish.

#### **What Ontario is Doing**



Through Ontario's Renewed Math Strategy, the Province is investing in intensive supports for children and schools where learning needs are higher. It will draw on culturally relevant and responsive curriculum to support French-language students and First Nation, Métis and Inuit students, as well as more precise instructional strategies for children in care and students with special education needs.



### **Achievement in relation to their individual potential**

Children thrive when faced with high, yet realistic, expectations that challenge them to strive to achieve goals, and also allow them to feel a sense of accomplishment. Every child deserves the opportunity to feel pride in a task well done. Experts talk about the importance of “mastery” of a skill to instil a sense of confidence.<sup>84</sup> At this age, mastery should be relative to each child’s ability. Expectations for children should be clear, achievable, and measurable, so children have the opportunity to take pride in their own abilities.

#### **HOW WE CAN TELL:**

- ⬆ % of Grade 3 students who are at or above the provincial math standard
- ⬆ % of Grade 3 students who are at or above the provincial reading standard
- ⬆ % of Grade 3 students who are at or above the provincial writing standard
- ⬆ % of teachers that implement a social and emotional learning program
- ⬆ % of children who enter Grade 1 ready to learn



## Helping Children Engage in Learning

The Children's Book Bank is dedicated to the principle that learning to read is the right of every child.

Since 2008, the Children's Book Bank has been distributing free, gently used books to children and their families who face numerous barriers to purchasing new ones, while its engaging programs positively contribute to literacy development for those with the greatest need.

A visit to the storefront, located on Berkeley Street in the Regent Park-St. James Town neighborhood, is much like a visit to a favourite children's bookstore, except that the books are free. Staff and volunteers sort through and organize a large inventory of beautiful books suitable for children from birth to age 12 and arrange them in the Children's Book Bank's welcoming space. Families and caregivers with children are encouraged to visit as often as they like, and every person is welcome to choose one book to take home each visit. The staff and volunteers are literacy experts who enjoy providing advice about selecting appropriate books.

Every month, the Book Bank distributes over 5,000 books to help support the programming at literacy centres including Albion Neighbourhood Services in United Way's Rexdale Hub; Macaulay Child Development Centre in the Eglinton

Humber area; East York East Toronto Family Resources in the Ontario Early Years Centre in the Crescent Town Hub; Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office in the Ontario Early Years Centre. Other partnerships include Robertson House, The Native Women's Resource Centre, Parents for Better Beginnings and the Yonge Street Mission. In 2016, The Children's Book Bank gave away 120,000 donated books. By recycling books that might otherwise end up in landfill, the Book Bank also contributes to a more sustainable future for all.



Children checking-out books from the Book Bank get to take them home, keep them, and share them with others.

# Ensuring Equity in Ontario's Education System



In September 2017, Ontario launched its Education Equity Action Plan to serve as the province's blueprint for identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices, systemic barriers and biases from schools and classrooms. This action plan will build on the ministry's 2009 Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, bringing new focus and resources to bear as a means of accelerating our progress.

The action plan will unfold over three years — beginning with the 2017–2018 school year — and bring together parents, educators, principals, board staff, trustees and community leaders who will bring it to life.

The key components of Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan include enhancing:

- School and Classroom Practices by ensuring that they reflect and respond to the diversity of all students and staff.

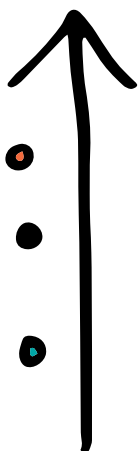
- Leadership, Governance and Human Resource Practices by ensuring that the diversity of the teachers, staff and school system leaders in Ontario schools reflect the diversity of their students, and that those education leaders are committed to equity for all learners and to upholding and promoting human rights.
- Data Collection, Integration and Reporting by collecting and analyzing demographic data to gain a clearer understanding of who Ontario's students and staff are, which will enable our school and system leaders to more precisely address the barriers to student success through data-informed decision-making.
- Organizational Culture Change by applying an equity, inclusion and human rights perspective to the Ministry of Education's internal organizational structures, policies, programs and practices. The Ministry of Education will become an example of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and demonstrate our commitment to upholding and promoting human rights.

Ontario's vision for education is about creating the best possible experience for staff, educators and students. The result of this work will be positive learning environments where student achievement, well-being and equity are the top priority.

GOAL:



# Ontario Children Feel Valued



Every child in Ontario deserves to grow up happy, safe and valued. Children need to be supported in exploring and expressing who they are as individuals, and to feel they matter as members of their family, school community, broader community and the world.



## OUTCOMES WE WANT

**13**

Ontario children are discovering who they are and who they want to be

**14**

Ontario children are proud of their cultures and identities and live free from discrimination

**15**

Ontario children can express what matters to them

## Why it matters:

Over the course of the middle years, a child's concept of "self" and "spirit" develops dramatically. Children begin to gain a more complex understanding of who they are, their sense of purpose and what matters to them. As they grow and develop, they begin to examine themselves inwardly and more abstractly, and they have a growing sense of themselves as autonomous individuals as well as their place in their families and communities. As a child's identity is taking shape, they need support to feel and express pride in their culture, language, religion, ethnicity, unique abilities, and gender identity.

## Snapshot of Ontario:

Middle years children growing up in Ontario are exploring their intersecting identities — including their gender, culture, race, ethnic and religious identities, as well as their personal interests and beliefs. Children need safe spaces and encouragement to explore all aspects of who they are and who they are becoming. Experiences of racism, homophobia, Islamophobia, antisemitism, discrimination based on disabilities and other unacceptable forms of intolerance have long-lasting negative impacts on the social and emotional development of children, break down families and communities, and perpetuate disparities in outcomes for different population groups.

### What Ontario is Doing



A Better Way Forward: Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic

Plan targets systemic racism by building an anti-racism approach into the way government develops policies, makes decisions, evaluates programs, and monitors outcomes. It calls for a proactive, collaborative effort from all government ministries and community partners to work toward racial equity.

Despite efforts to create safe and inclusive schools, community organizations, and neighbourhoods, racism and other forms of discrimination still exist. Structural inequities in our systems were established long ago and continue to shape the present. For example, systemic racism can lead to the over-representation of racialized, Black and Indigenous people in the child welfare and the justice systems. Whether through direct acts or hidden biases, on an individual or institutional level, racism affects children and families across the province.

The implementation of anti-discrimination principles in education influences all aspects of school life. It promotes a school climate that encourages students to work to high levels of achievement, affirms the worth of all students, and helps students strengthen their sense of identity and develop a positive self-image. It encourages staff and students to value and show respect for diversity and inclusion within the school and in the broader community.



## 13 Ontario children are discovering who they are and who they want to be

During the middle years, children are beginning to explore the many facets of who they are as individuals, as well as their intersecting social and cultural identities. They need to be able to do this in safe and supporting environments. This is an important time to encourage and help children to explore a wide variety of potential future “selves” related to their goals for education, physical activities, community involvement, the environment and career.

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Children need exposure to a wide range of opportunities and activities

During the middle years, children are deepening their sense of their own competencies — what they believe they can achieve. They need to be supported to develop social, physical, and academic competencies, along with pride and confidence in those abilities. This requires opportunities for them to explore new activities, reach higher levels of performance, and receive positive feedback from parents, peers, mentors, cultural role models and school staff.

#### Children need to feel safe and supported in exploring their identity

Children need support to develop their own set of values and to have opportunities to express them in safe and accepting spaces. Adults (family, extended family, educators, school staff, mentors, Elders) should encourage children to ask themselves questions like: “Where did I come from?

What are my dreams for the future? What are my strengths? What do I need to work more on? What do I value? What do I want to do? What things can I have a say in?” Children from diverse backgrounds need encouragement and safe and accepting spaces to explore and express their cultural and personal identities.

#### Monitoring social media to restrict negative images

In part because of social media and other mass messages, children often struggle with maintaining a positive image of themselves. Images and ideas on social media are often beyond the maturity level of children in this age group. They are increasingly exposed to age-inappropriate sexualized online content without the tools to understand what they are seeing and what to do about it. Parents and other caring adults can play a role in monitoring the social media content to which their children are exposed and having open, honest discussions about any negative or stereotypical images.





#### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ⬆ % of children who say they have confidence in themselves
- ⬆ % of children who participate in art, music or drama activities outside of school
- ⬆ % of children who are involved in community groups



## Ontario children are proud of their cultures and identities and live free from discrimination

Research shows that connecting with culture can help children make sense of the world, develop a sense of purpose and meaning, find balance and deepen their interactions with family, extended family and community. Culture can also protect against risk factors such as mental health issues, family breakdown, and social isolation.<sup>85</sup> Protecting and promoting culture is particularly important for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, as it is central to their wellbeing and identity.

Identity is multi-faceted and intersecting and includes elements that are personal, social, spiritual and cultural. It includes many different aspects of who we are as people and what our experiences are in the world. It can include family and cultural heritage, religion, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, and special needs. It may include belonging to a specific cultural or linguistic group, including the Francophone community or Deaf culture.

All children deserve to be able to safely and confidently express their many identities and cultural realities as they come to deepen their understanding of who they are as individuals, as members of their family, culture, communities and broader Ontario and Canadian society.

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Empowering children to connect to their cultural heritage

We want children to feel grounded in their cultural backgrounds and supported to express their cultural identities. For this to happen, children need opportunities to express themselves and connect with their language, cultural traditions and ceremonies, and to see positive reflections of their cultures in their school, community, media and society at large. In particular, there is a need and responsibility to support Indigenous children and families to deepen their connection with Indigenous languages and cultural traditions.

#### What Ontario is Doing



Ontario is working with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous partners and organizations to co-implement the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy, which will improve outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous children and youth. The Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy will enable community-driven, integrated and culturally appropriate supports for First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous children, youth and their families, particularly preventative services focused on wellbeing, culture and opportunities that can better meet their needs.



## Enabling children to explore, experiment and feel pride in their multiple identities

Children are curious, questioning, and exploring during this time and need a safe space to talk about, understand and take pride in themselves. As children in the middle years deepen their understanding of who they are, and the intersectionality of their identities, they are also becoming increasingly aware of social power dynamics. Children may face discrimination, bullying or other forms of social exclusion and these issues need to be addressed. Adults (teachers, school staff, mentors, community leaders) need to take a leadership role to create safe, inclusive spaces and talk to children about the importance of diversity and inclusion.

## Supporting children to stand up against discrimination

This is a prime time for families, schools and cultural leaders to engage children in discussions about racism, discrimination, injustice and inequity. It is a time to teach children to be advocates for themselves and their peers. Children need to be empowered to stand up against various forms of discrimination, including racism, anti-Indigenous racism and anti-Black racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, Islamophobia, and antisemitism. We all are responsible for acknowledging and valuing the diversity of all members of our society, and upholding human rights in our province and our country.



### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ↓ % of children who are treated badly or differently at school because of their race, ethnicity, colour of skin
- ↓ % of children who are treated badly or differently at school because of their gender identity or sexual orientation
- ↑ % of children who feel other children accept them as they are



## 15 Ontario children can express what matters to them

Children have values, opinions, and feelings about issues in the world around them and are experimenting with how they express themselves as individuals and as part of a group.

By the middle years, most children want a bigger role in decision making, and to have their opinions heard. They have a lot of ideas and need a voice in determining how things are done. Building confidence in children means listening to their ideas and finding opportunities for them to make decisions and have an impact. It helps when children are empowered to set priorities at home, at school and in their communities.

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Supporting children to express ideas and opinions

Children are developing the capacity for more complex thought and ideas. They should be supported to experiment with ideas and engage in conversations with family, extended family, and other adults. Research shows the importance of families eating dinner together and carving out time for these conversations. Take the time to explore the ideas that children are expressing. Ask what matters to them and give them the space to discuss their opinions.

#### Helping children think about and get involved in the “big issues”

In the middle years, children are becoming more connected with the broader community. This is an opportune time for them to learn about civic engagement and get involved in their communities through volunteerism, participation in social and cultural networks, and being a good neighbour. To put this learning into practice, communities and schools can provide children with opportunities to volunteer and participate as leaders in their community. Some middle schools have student councils, so children can get involved in their school. The concept of service to community is an important developmental milestone for middle years children, and in particular, this is an important concept in Indigenous communities.

#### What Ontario is Doing



Through Ontario's Citizenship Education Framework, children are given opportunities to learn about what it means to be a responsible, active citizen, both in the classroom and in the diverse communities to which they belong within and outside the school.

### Encouraging appropriate opportunities for independence and having a voice in decisions that impact them

During the middle years, children are building increasing independence and autonomy from their parents. Research tells us that this process is both normal and healthy. By helping children to safely build independence from their parents in an age-appropriate way, we can help them develop into independent young people, feel a sense of agency and think critically about their role as community members, leaders, and citizens

#### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ↑ % of children who have someone in their family who listens to them when they speak
- ↑ % of children who feel they are encouraged to express their own view in their class(es)



## Helping Children Feel Valued

Autism Ontario's Summer Camp and March Break Camp give children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) the chance to participate in fun skill-building activities outside of school.

At the camps, kids have a chance to go bowling, swimming, and skating. They get to play music and participate in arts and crafts programs.

Through support from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, families are able to hire workers to give their children one-to-one support so that while their children are at the camps, parents can relax knowing their children are well cared for, safe and happy. Children and youth with ASD are eligible for these funds until their 18th birthday.



Having fun at the summer camp

The program receives frequent praise by parents, who appreciate the chance for their child to attend camp. During the summer of 2016, more than 2,800 children and youth with ASD attended summer camps. In March 2017, more than 2,000 children and youth participated in March Break camps across the province.

**"Willow had a good March Break. Thank you so much for the support. I had a bad car accident and this was such a help in getting Willow out and giving me some needed rest."**

Janet S., Willow's mother

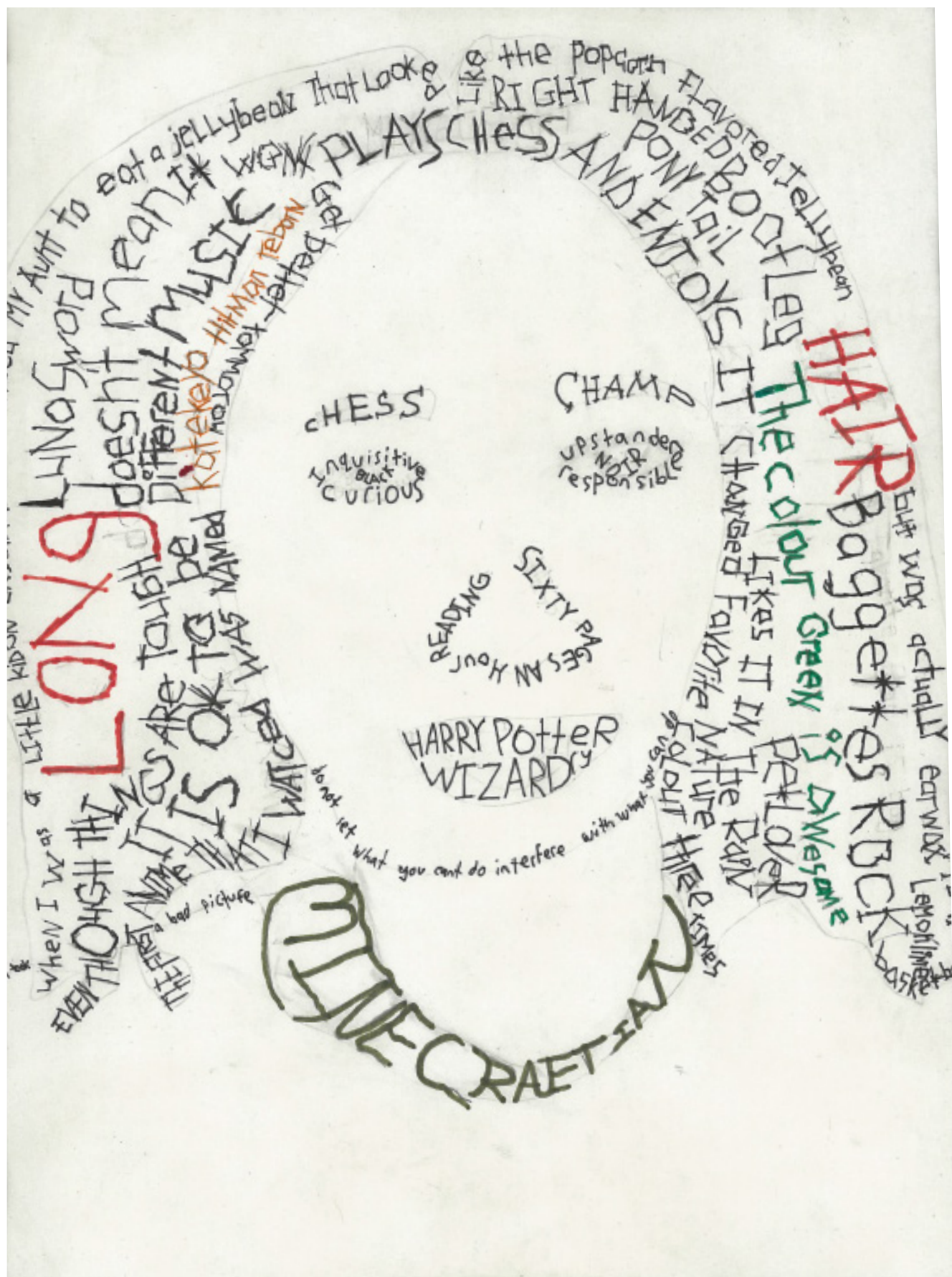


Learning to ride horses at the March Break camp

**"We as a family cannot wait for Bianca to attend swim camp this year as she will learn life skills. We are so grateful for this program. Thank you for this amazing opportunity!"**

Bob, Anna, and Bianca



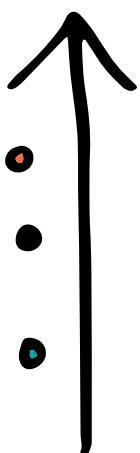




GOAL:



# Ontario Communities Support Children and Families



Supporting healthy, safe, hopeful and engaged children “takes a village.” Children live in families, and families are part of communities. Strong communities break down feelings of isolation and build strong social bonds within and across diverse groups of people.



## OUTCOMES WE WANT

16

Ontario families are supported, engaged, and inform the decisions that affect them

17

Ontario families know about and easily access high quality resources in their communities

18

Ontario service providers, governments and communities foster belonging and wellbeing for children and families

## Why it matters:

Family friendly communities create the conditions for children to thrive. Similarly, strong and stable children and families lead to strong and vibrant communities. A family's social connection can have a direct impact on children. Children whose parents are socially connected to their neighbourhood are less likely to experience challenges than those whose parents are not well integrated.

### What Ontario is Doing



Ontario's After-School Program provides programming for over 22,000 children and youth to participate in fun, safe, supervised activities.

Children need opportunities to participate in quality programs, take part in solving challenges facing their neighbourhood, and build positive relationships with other peers and adults. Schools, recreation programs, cultural organizations, religious groups, health providers, community service providers and others need to work closely with each other and with families to create a network of opportunities that promote the wellbeing of children now and into the future.

Communities can help children and families thrive by ensuring they have equal access to programs and services, supporting community networks, and by giving them a voice in decisions that affect them.

## Snapshot of Ontario:

A lot is happening in the life of a middle years child, and parents have many questions about how to best support their children's needs, and prepare them for transitions into the teen years. Parents learn from each other and build networks to connect locally with other parents.

### What Ontario is Doing



The new *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* affirms Ontario's commitment to equity and inclusion, and seeks to address systemic racism and barriers.

In addition to the legislation, the ministry will support the implementation of the One Vision One Voice framework, developed by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies in partnership with leaders from the Black community, to support culturally appropriate child welfare services for Black children, youth and families.

Many programs and services exist to support children and families in Ontario. These are delivered by different levels of government, non-profit organizations, foundations and the private sector. We have heard from families that they need help trying to find and navigate services for their children. They often start with the Internet, but get lost in the many services listed. We also know that some families face barriers to accessing services, such as cost or transportation. This may be of particular concern for parents of children with special needs.<sup>86</sup>

Efforts are underway to improve the service experiences of families across sectors by integrating services into a coordinated, seamless system. For example, through the Ontario Special Needs Strategy, the government is bringing together service providers from across sectors to ensure they are all working toward the same goals.

### What Ontario is Doing



In 2015, Ministry of Children and Youth Services launched a child and youth mental health directory on Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Health Care Options (HCO) web portal. HCO includes more than 1,500 programs offering direct services to children and youth in Ontario.

# 16

## Ontario families are supported, engaged and inform the decisions that affect them

We know that well-connected families who have opportunities to meaningfully engage in their children's lives and their communities bring about improved outcomes for their children.

However, many families often feel disconnected from the institutions that are in place to support them and their children, and they are not as engaged in their community as they would like to be. Families often feel they do not have a voice in decisions that affect their children and struggle to have their voices heard.

For Indigenous families, a history of colonialism as well as their current experiences with the child welfare system often leads to distrust of "mainstream" community institutions and government services.

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Building trust and empowering families to have a voice in how programs are designed and delivered

Families have told us they want to provide input into the way programs are designed and delivered in their communities. Families don't want to be just the recipients of services, they want to steer the ship in terms of what is happening for their children. Actively engaging families in how programs are designed and delivered builds trust. It also results in programs for children that are more relevant and accessible, and reflect the diversity of the children, families and communities.

#### What Ontario is Doing



In developing the new Ontario Autism Program, MCYS engaged parents through consultations and an OAP advisory council. One outcome of this engagement is the implementation of a direct funding option so families have the flexibility to determine the best services for their children.

#### Fostering family-centred approaches to the delivery of services for children

All children require strong and stable families to support their wellbeing and research shows that family involvement is a significant predictor of a child's long-term outcomes. Despite this, engaging families as a key part of a child's service plan is not always central to the design and delivery of programs for middle years children. Incorporating understanding and responsiveness to the needs and perspectives of parents and caregivers addresses the full context of a child's life. Family-centred approaches promote the active engagement of parents and caregivers by providing access to resources and supports informed decision making and delivering flexible and responsive service based on family priorities, strengths and needs.

## What Ontario is Doing



The new *Child, Youth, and Family Services Act* (CYFSA) affirms and strengthens the rights of children and youth receiving services, including their right to have their views heard in decisions regarding the services they receive.

## Talking to children about the importance of being actively involved in the decisions that affect them

Children also need opportunities to have a voice in their world. This is a prime time in a child's development to emphasize the importance of being productive citizens and contributing to society. Children need opportunities to contribute to things that could make a difference in their lives or the lives of others. They can be mentors to younger children, they can volunteer in community projects, and they can add their voice and ideas to the decisions being made in their schools, neighbourhoods and community.



## HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ⬆ % of children who are involved in volunteer work
- ⬆ % of parents/caregivers who highly agree their child's school does a good job including them in their child's education





## Ontario families know about and easily access high quality resources in their communities

We know that communities that provide accessible, inclusive activities that are fun, active, and relevant to the diversity of children's lives can help children build the skills they need to set them up for success.

The middle years is a time when mental health, learning and behavioural challenges may begin to emerge. Unfortunately, families with the greatest needs report encountering biases and systemic barriers to service, with little support to help them navigate the system. These challenges and barriers are intensified for families living in poverty, newcomer, racialized and Indigenous families — who are often the families most in need of community support.

### What Ontario is Doing



Through the Ontario's Special Needs Strategy, Coordinated Service Planning provides families of children and youth with multiple and/or complex special needs with a seamless and family-centred service experience through the support of a Service Planning Coordinator. A Service Planning Coordinator connects families with the services and supports that will meet their needs; develops and monitors a single Coordinated Service Plan responsive to their goals, strengths and needs; and works together with the child and family and all service providers and educators involved in the child's care towards a set of common goals. Coordinated Service Planning will help make service pathways clear for families, and will provide seamless referrals to services so that families only have to tell their story once.

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Integrated service planning and delivery to prevent “wrong doors”

Local service providers work to build local infrastructure and networks to plan for and provide services that “wrap around” children and families. However, more could be done to clear pathways for parents/caregivers in the delivery of services. The government is taking a leadership role to support more integrated service delivery in provincially funded systems, as recommended in [Community Hubs in Ontario: A Strategic Framework and Action Plan](#).

#### Culturally relevant and safe services

We know that children do better when services are specifically designed for their needs, and respond to their unique lived experiences, cultures and backgrounds. For example, this includes programs that are targeted based on race, ethnicity, culture and other communities of belonging including LGBTQ2S and special needs.

#### Children have access to safe spaces that provide quality opportunity for play and recreation

Families are looking for child-friendly spaces once the children outgrow the playground. Children need to be able to play outdoors in safe spaces, both in structured and unstructured activities. Children need open, age-appropriate, accessible, inclusive spaces where they can congregate, feel they belong, and have quality opportunities for play.



## Family support networks

Families can be powerful resources for other families. They can be referral sources, knowledge keepers, support networks and champions. Yet families are often disconnected from each other. Children may attend the same program, but often there are few opportunities for their respective parents to network with one another. The local school community can provide a good avenue for parents to meet other parents, network and to connect along shared experiences or interests.

## HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ⬆ % of parents who indicate that their children have access to after-school care
- ⬆ % of parents who feel public facilities and programs for sports/recreation meet their child's needs
- ⬆ % of children who feel that there are good places to spend their free time (e.g., recreation centres, parks, shopping centres)
- ⬆ % of parents who are satisfied with the accessibility (cost/location) of opportunities to be active in their community

## 18 Ontario service providers, governments and community organizations foster belonging and wellbeing for children and families

Strong communities are built on solid bonds that enable a sense of belonging for all. In turn, strong communities create social stability and unity and contribute to individual wellbeing. It is the responsibility of all of us — government, service providers, and community-based organizations — to ensure that our work is benefiting the wellbeing of all children, in particular the most vulnerable, and that all families feel they matter and belong.

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Building communities where all children and families belong

Belonging is not just a feeling — it is a way to support wellbeing in children, and build healthier, safer and more unified communities. We know that people who feel they belong to a community are more likely to take action with others for the common good.<sup>87</sup> We also know that a sense of community belonging is highly correlated with physical and mental health.<sup>88</sup> A child's sense of belonging intersects with all aspects of their day-to-day life — at school, at the park, in after-school activities, and in the community at large. It helps children perceive life to be more meaningful, they are better able to learn, and their culture and identity can flourish. However, some children and families such as newcomers, Indigenous, racialized, LGBTQ2S, and others face discrimination, social exclusion or isolation. All of us in Ontario need to do our part to address these issues and build strong and resilient communities that support wellbeing for all children.

#### Services are responsive to diverse needs

In Ontario, we expect all provincially funded programs and services to be delivered in a culturally relevant and responsive manner and respond to the diverse needs and identities of children. We expect that children with special needs will have access to targeted programs that support them and help them achieve, build friendships and feel connected to others. We expect that children from diverse communities can express their personal identities, and feel their cultures are recognized and valued. We expect that Francophone communities can access programs offered in French. We expect that Indigenous children and families will receive culturally relevant and responsive programs and services. We expect that children feel safe in their gender identity and are encouraged to explore their interests and goals in an environment without gender bias.



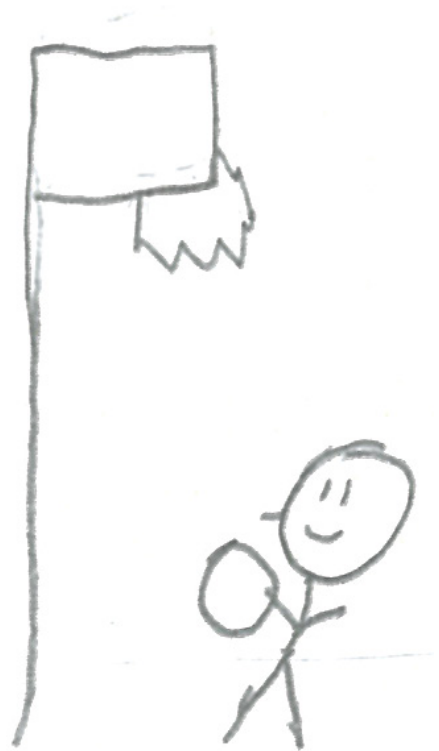
### What Ontario is Doing



The Family Well-Being Program provides funding to provincial Indigenous organizations, Metis, Inuit, First Nations and urban Indigenous communities to support the delivery of programs and approaches to address family wellbeing for Indigenous children, youth and families in diverse communities across Ontario.

### Building respectful relationships with Indigenous organizations

Indigenous children, families and communities benefit when service providers, governments and other allies commit to learning from the approaches of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and Indigenous organizations and respect the best interests of their children, as defined by community and individual needs and priorities. Through the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy, we are working to build lasting relationships that uphold shared accountability, Indigenous decision making, and self-determination and partnership. We are also committed to providing culturally relevant services that are driven by and responsive to local needs and priorities, and measuring impacts in ways that are culturally relevant, responsive and safe.



### HOW WE CAN TELL:

- ⬆ % of families who are satisfied with health care in their community
- ⬆ % of children who would speak to a school social worker, counsellor, psychologist, nurse or other school staff if they needed help for concerns regarding their mental health



# SPOTLIGHT

## Communities Support Children and Families

Girls Inc. Limestone delivers programs to assist girls in overcoming and avoiding adversity, living healthy and active lives, developing strong self-confidence, and setting education and career goals to strive for future self-sufficiency.



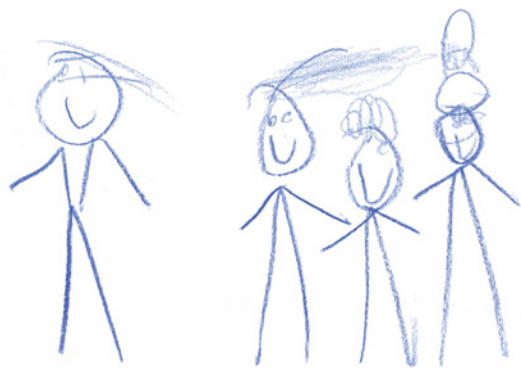
Girls Inc. inspires all girls to be strong, smart and bold, and advocates for an equitable world.

Girls Inc. serves more than 1,400 girls each year. Programs for girls ages 6–12 are delivered in the healthy lifestyle after-school program, in school and community groups for girls, and free summer day camps.

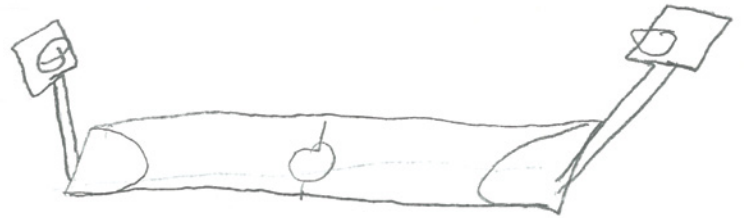
The comprehensive, research-based programming effectively addresses the issues faced by girls today. It includes self-defence and personal safety, media literacy, relational aggression and bullying, economic literacy, sports and motor skills development, science, technology, engineering and math, healthy sexuality, and community leadership.



**“Percephony looks forward to the program every day and gets mad when there are snow days because she can’t go. Even when she’s had a bad day at school, she always looks forward to going to Girls Inc. She loves it there.”** Percephony’s mother



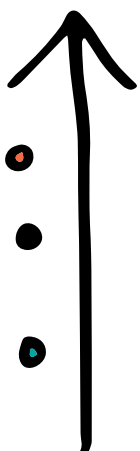
basket ball  
court



# GOAL:



## Indigenous Children Thrive



The legacy of the residential school system and the Sixties Scoop, in addition to the broader history of colonialism in Canada have affected Indigenous peoples' ability to experience healthy family relationships, their sense of belonging, self-esteem, and knowledge of their languages and cultures. This trauma is passed down through generations.



### OUTCOMES WE WANT

19

First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families are physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually well

20

First Nations, Métis and Inuit children participate in and feel proud of their traditions, languages, cultures, and identities

21

First Nations, Métis and Inuit children are engaged in and contribute to their families, communities and cultures.

22

First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and communities are supported to be self-determining in defining and meeting the needs of their children, families and communities

23

Ontario service providers, governments and Indigenous communities respond to local needs and priorities and are accountable to communities

## Why it matters:

Colonialism led to the loss of culture, which resulted in both historic and ongoing emotional trauma and poverty. However, despite colonialism, First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures and traditions have survived. Traditional knowledge keepers have worked to keep the cultures and languages alive. Indigenous children and youth are reclaiming pride in their identities.

“The children and youth of today and tomorrow cannot grow up in health and safety if the traumas of the past are not addressed, and the cycle of intergenerational trauma remains unbroken and unhealed. Too many First Nations parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents are still suffering.”  
Chiefs of Ontario<sup>65</sup>

There is great diversity among First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Ontario, but they share ways of knowing about wellbeing, including:

- wellbeing of a child is integrated with the family and community;<sup>90</sup> belonging within a family and community is one of the most important indicators of Indigenous wellbeing
- wellbeing is rooted in cultural connection and is strengthened through having purpose, cultural knowledge and spiritual wellness<sup>91</sup>
- wellbeing involves being connected to the land and the natural world

*Gearing Up* approaches health, healing and wellness from a wholistic perspective. It recognizes Indigenous ways of knowing that explain the passages of life through

a continuum from childhood and youth to adulthood and seniority, and that people have evolving needs through the life cycle. It respects Indigenous ways of knowing that are grounded in the importance of meaning, purpose, belonging and hope, and where wellbeing cannot be separated from culture.

## Snapshot of Ontario:

### Indigenous communities in Ontario are young, growing and diverse

The Indigenous population is one of the youngest and fastest growing segments of Ontario's population. A total of 25 per cent of Indigenous people in Ontario are under the age of 15. The majority (84 per cent) of Indigenous people in Ontario live off-reserve. The population of Indigenous people in Ontario is 301,430, with roughly 253,400 living off-reserve.<sup>92</sup> There are 133 First Nations communities in Ontario. There is diversity across First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in terms of how they express cultural traditions.

### Deeply embedded systemic inequities lead to disparities in outcomes

While many Indigenous peoples are achieving success in school, the workplace and their communities, significant gaps and barriers still exist. These challenges include lack of access to the basic determinants of health, high rates of poverty in Indigenous communities, high rates of complex physical and mental health problems among Indigenous young people, underfunded infrastructure, and an over-representation of Indigenous children in the child welfare and justice systems. Suicide rates are disproportionately high in many Indigenous communities and affect children as young as 10 years old. Inuit communities have the highest rates of suicide in the world.



The number of Indigenous children in child welfare services today is linked to intergenerational trauma. It also demonstrates that racism, bias and lack of cultural understanding are still deeply embedded in our institutions.

“No child should be removed from their family due to poverty and poor housing”<sup>93</sup>

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, Ontario Native Women’s Association and the Métis Nation of Ontario

### Cultural traditions are strong and central to wellbeing

Colonial systems and practices continue to have complex impacts on Indigenous cultural traditions, practices, and intergenerational knowledge transmission.

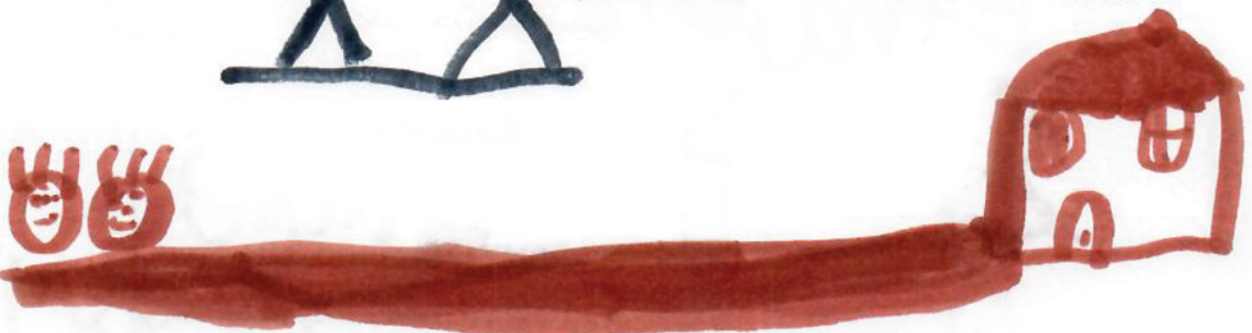
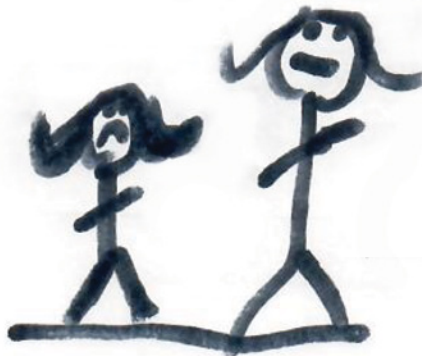
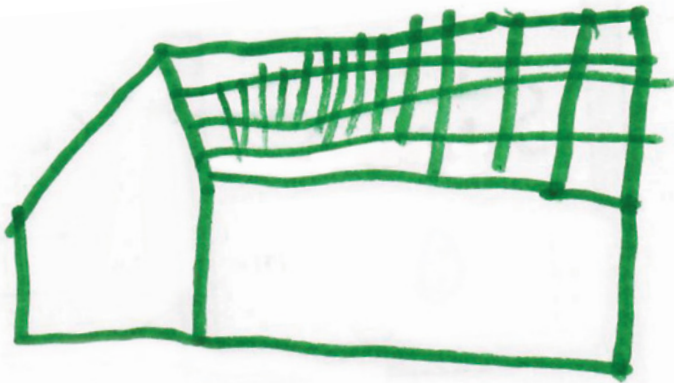


Despite this, Indigenous parents, families and communities have shown an overwhelming level of resilience that has kept their culture and traditions alive and thriving. Indigenous ways of knowing provide people with connections to the land and the elements.<sup>94</sup> And while there is diversity across cultures, what is consistent is the connection of culture to spiritual wellbeing.

### Transforming relationships for improved outcomes

Ontario is working with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous partners to implement the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy (OICYS) together. The OICYS focuses on:

- transforming Ontario’s relationship with Indigenous children, youth, and their families
- enhancing First Nations jurisdiction and Indigenous control for children and youth services
- prioritizing preventative services for Indigenous children and youth that are culturally appropriate
- building a high quality integrated services network that supports Indigenous children and youth
- enabling government and Indigenous service providers to track and evaluate their work in implementing the strategy



## 19 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families are physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually well

Wellbeing for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children is an all-encompassing, wholistic concept.<sup>95</sup> Achieving balance across the cognitive, physical, emotional, social, communication and spiritual domains is an interactive, lifelong journey of learning and doing that is essential for the wellbeing of Indigenous children in Ontario. Indigenous spiritual wellness is grounded in cultural connections, and so for Indigenous children in the middle years, participation in cultural learning and activities can inspire healthy choices and healthier living.<sup>96</sup>

For Indigenous children, physical activity often involves cultural activity and land-based practices.<sup>97</sup> It has been recognized that “physical activity is cultural activity” and that these acts lead to wellbeing.<sup>98</sup>

Spiritual wellness and connection to culture is central to a child’s overall emotional, social, physical and cognitive development. This development is not exclusive to childhood and continues throughout all the stages of a person’s life (childhood, youth, adulthood and seniority).<sup>99</sup>

### Helpful Resources



The Aboriginal Children’s Health and Well-Being Measure was developed from the perspective of First Nations children in Wiikwemkoong. It gives children voice in their own health assessment. Data on health and wellbeing guide community policies, health services planning and evaluation and is an important tool to support communities on their path to health and wellbeing.

<http://www.achwm.ca/>

The strength and resiliency of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people are embedded in their language, culture and traditions, and experienced through strong bonds with family, extended family, Elders, Senators, traditional knowledge keepers and the community as a whole.

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Understanding and promoting wholistic wellness

Promoting cultural and traditional connections, and promoting the sharing and transmission of Indigenous ways of knowing and being has the power to help Indigenous children and families thrive. Indigenous knowledge teaches that wellness and spirit are inseparable.<sup>100</sup> Efforts to support the spiritual development and wellness of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children need to be grounded in cultural connections, cultural experiences, cultural identities, and cultural relationships.

### Ensuring access to strengths-based, culturally relevant and responsive programs and services

Supporting wellbeing for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families requires routine and regular access to high quality programs and services. These programs and services must be culturally relevant and responsive, accessible and wholistic to promote and strengthen the wellbeing, security, interests and identities of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and their families. We know that programs and services that best support Indigenous children and families to thrive are those that demonstrate a commitment to prevention and strengths-based approaches, and that promote connections with community, culture and tradition. Enabling strong communities

and Indigenous community-based organizations to deliver programs and services can ensure that the unique interests of those they serve are addressed.

### Acknowledging past and present context and inequality

A precursor to wellbeing for Indigenous children and families is acknowledging and appreciating the immense impact of colonization, racism and inequity. Supporting wellbeing, as a result, must acknowledge the systemic inequities Indigenous children and their families face and include supporting them to navigate present-day realities and find balance through cultural and spiritual connections.<sup>101</sup>





## First Nations, Métis and Inuit children participate in and feel proud of their traditions, languages, cultures and identities

Culture, language and traditions are central to the wellbeing of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples. These are the pillars that enable Indigenous children to thrive.

*“Culture is the part that makes our spirit flourish, grow and evolve into the person we become.”<sup>102</sup>*

Research has shown that children who feel they belong to a cultural community tend to have higher academic motivation and achievement, fewer mental health problems, and take fewer health risks.<sup>103</sup> For Indigenous children, immersing in their culture and participating in traditional activities and practices support the development of pride, identity and spirit, and have far-reaching, lifelong impacts.

There are vast differences across, and within First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures. Yet many Ontarians do not understand or appreciate these differences. This type of confusion and lack of awareness undermines respect for the diversity of Indigenous cultural identities. It can also undermine a child's sense of self at a critical time when they are beginning to develop their cultural (or spiritual) identity.

To support healing and reconciliation, all Indigenous children need opportunities to participate in cultural activities in safe and positive ways. They need to feel pride in their cultures, and feel safe, supported and valued in their identities as Indigenous peoples in Ontario. They need opportunities

to learn and practice their Indigenous languages, both inside and outside of the school system.

*“Culture and language is very important. I want them to learn English and French but also Inuktitut. I am proud when they want to share their culture.”*

Parent interviewed by the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Enabling Indigenous children to connect to culture in meaningful ways

It is important for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families to have culturally safe spaces to learn traditional teachings.<sup>104</sup> Children need opportunities to share in and feel proud of how they express themselves through these cultural traditions and practices.<sup>105</sup> This is especially important for children who are removed from their families and placed into care outside of their communities, where the threat to their cultural safety is high. More efforts are needed to support traditional knowledge keepers to help children build cultural knowledge and pride.

*“To live a good life, one should know who they are and where they come from, have access to services and live life not worrying about negative stigma.”*

Inuk youth

## Supporting Indigenous languages to thrive

Language is one of the most tangible symbols of culture and group identity. It is not only a means of communication, but a link which connects children with their past and grounds their social, emotional and spiritual vitality. Language also embodies and imparts cultural beliefs and worldviews. Yet almost 90 per cent of First Nations children under 12 years of age cannot speak their own First Nations language at a fluent or intermediate level.<sup>106</sup> We need to work together to support Indigenous peoples to preserve language and pass it on to their children. Language and cultural knowledge can give Indigenous children a strong sense of who they are, which can help them to develop resiliency and support school achievement.<sup>107</sup>

“The original language is the most expressive communication of the spirit, emotions, thinking, behaviour and actions of the people. Language is the “voice” of the culture and therefore the true and most expressive means for the transmission of the original way of life and way of being in the world.

Elder Jim Dumont, National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation



## Collective recognition and celebration of First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures

Deliberate efforts are needed to debunk stereotypes and reflect First Nation, Métis and Inuit symbols, practices and people through all aspects of life (programs, services, and systems) in Ontario. Examples include:

- more information about Indigenous cultures in curricular and extracurricular learning
- parents, teachers, community leaders, and others talking about the strengths of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities
- teachers, leaders, parents and others addressing discriminatory language and behaviour when it happens
- relationships with Indigenous peoples should be based on respect, cultural dignity and reconciliation

### Helpful Resources



Recognizing the importance of supporting cultural learning and development is consistent with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Article 13 of UNDRIP acknowledges the rights of Indigenous peoples to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions and philosophies.<sup>108</sup>

### What the Data Says



Thirty-four per cent of off-reserve Indigenous children ages 6–14 years in Ontario speak primary Indigenous language. (Statistics Canada) Only five per cent of Indigenous people in Ontario identify an Indigenous language as their mother tongue.

## 21 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children are engaged in and contribute to their families, communities and cultures

Indigenous children are navigating what it means to be Indigenous in today's world, and they have a unique voice to bring to the success of their families, communities and cultures. They are also navigating mainstream Canadian culture, popular culture, and social media, and considering future school and career goals. Indigenous children in their middle years may be required to “master” the contradictions of two or more cultures — the mainstream Canadian culture and the traditional culture/s of their ancestors.<sup>109</sup>

Walking this path requires support for Indigenous children to build skills, supportive relationships and confidence to have a voice in decisions that affect them. First Nations, Métis and Inuit children need to feel they are contributing, their voices are heard, and they have opportunities to develop into spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally healthy leaders with strong cultural, family and traditional bonds. Children also need support to express themselves and ask for help when needed.

“Stop telling our children and youth what they need and start asking them what they need.”

Community participant from Six Nations submission for the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy

Culture-based education is grounded in traditional knowledge, as shared by Clan Mothers, Elders, Senators, traditional knowledge keepers and faith keepers, and protects the ownership and integrity of traditional knowledge.

“I want my kid to be a kid for as long as she can, and I know that she has a better chance for that if she has good friends to do things with.”

Parent interviewed by the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Cultivating young, resilient community leaders

Efforts are needed to support Indigenous children as leaders and contributors to their families, communities, and cultures. To support this, children need opportunities to talk about their experiences, hopes and dreams. They need help to build resilience, self-confidence, problem-solving skills and other life skills that will enable them to thrive and contribute to decision making at home and in their communities.

#### Providing children with opportunities to practice traditional ways with their families and with Elders

Children need a strong sense of belonging in their family, as well as opportunities to contribute to their family wellbeing, community and culture. This may be to go on the land, learn traditional practices and storytelling,



and to participate in social activities with family. It also means opportunities for children and families to learn traditional knowledge and practices and build relationships with Elders, Senators, traditional knowledge keepers and others within the community. Elders, Senators, Clan Mothers and other traditional knowledge keepers are the teachers — they provide guidance, support, knowledge and a window into Indigenous histories.

### Supporting Indigenous children to succeed in school

Indigenous children have lower graduation rates than the non-Indigenous population. There are systemic reasons for this — jurisdictional issues, underfunding, history of the residential school system, and discrimination. Indigenous families talk of racism, judgment and lack of support in the education system. Children need after-school homework support, and culturally relevant and responsive opportunities to learn the skills they need to succeed.

They need to feel they are safe and supported at school, and that school is where they belong and want to be.

“ I want them to be able to say  
'I can do this.'  
Inuit parent ”

“ I teach my children to talk more  
and to not be afraid to ask for help.  
Get them to use their voice!  
First Nations parent ”



## First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and communities are supported to be self-determining in defining and meeting the needs of their children, families and communities

The wellbeing of First Nation, Métis and Inuit children is grounded in their connection to strong families and communities. Indigenous concepts of family include the recognition that family includes not only parents and siblings, but also the extended family. Elders, Senators, and traditional knowledge keepers are key parts of the broader community. First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities recognize the value that this broad network of kin provides to their children.

### What Ontario is Doing



Through the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy, children and families will have greater access to programs that protect, promote and strengthen the wellbeing, interests and identities of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families. The Ontario government is responding to this call for culturally appropriate services that are tracked through culturally appropriate monitoring and evaluation approaches.

Researchers<sup>110</sup> note that the history of abuses experienced in residential schools has negatively affected parenting capacity and contributed to the over-representation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system. Misinterpretations of traditional Indigenous ways of parenting may also play a role in children being removed from their homes. Unfortunately, this reflects a lack of cultural competency and safety in the delivery of child welfare services.

A key pillar of the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy is that First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous communities and community-based organizations have authority to care for their children and youth. These partners lead the way in defining the needs for their children, families and communities and ways to provide services and supports, as needed.

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Supporting families

Reconciliation requires acknowledging the ongoing harm that colonization has had on family wellbeing. The residential school system removed children from nourishing, loving, child-centred families where they were healthy and balanced, placed them in institutions that prohibited their cultural traditions and languages, and left them vulnerable to violence, abuse and isolation. Intergenerational trauma has ongoing impacts to family wellbeing in these communities.

Support for survivors of intergenerational trauma may include mental wellness programs and opportunities to reconnect with lost languages, traditions and teachings. Indigenous families are the experts in knowing what is best for their children, and need support to enable them to define and achieve their own goals.

### **Valuing Indigenous ways of knowing**

Indigenous concepts of childhood and family are deep-rooted in traditional ways of knowing and being. Values and approaches to parenting vary and may look different from those of non-Indigenous families. Understanding and respecting these differences is crucial to supporting Indigenous families. Indigenous knowledge is “connected to all of nature, to its creatures, and to human existence. Knowledge teaches people how to be responsible for their own lives, develops their sense of personal relationships to others, and helps them model competent and respectful behaviour.”<sup>111</sup>

### **Wellbeing of children and families promoted by strengths-based and culturally reflective services**

First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and Indigenous community-based organizations have the capacity to deliver strengths-based and culturally reflective programs and services that serve the interests of children, youth and families. Being able to demonstrate that these programs are having an impact requires organizations to regularly monitor who is accessing the services, evaluate the needs of the children and families, establish goals, and determine the measures of success.



## Ontario service providers, governments and Indigenous communities respond to local needs and priorities and are accountable to communities

The Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy is based on the recognition that in order for First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to thrive, more work is needed to build lasting relationships that uphold shared accountability, Indigenous decision making and partnership. Improved outcomes through transformed relationships means that service providers and governments support the decision-making authority of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in the design, development, delivery and governance of programs and services for Indigenous children and families. Indigenous decision-making authority for programs and services demonstrates a shared commitment to supporting and being accountable to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. The OICYS also recognizes that First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous peoples benefit from services they design and deliver themselves.

The OICYS states that service providers and governments can demonstrate respect for the decision-making authority of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities by supporting transparent, equitable partnerships. This includes acknowledging shared accountability that is driven by and responsive to local needs and priorities, and a commitment to measuring impacts in ways that are culturally reflective and safe. It means having mechanisms for organizations to be able to evaluate and demonstrate the impact programs and services are having on the outcomes of children and families they serve.

“When strong community-based supports are in place to keep families healthy in the first place, far fewer First Nation children and youth will become vulnerable and come into contact with “end of the line” systems like child welfare and youth justice, or experience devastating impacts such as addictions, suicide, or serious violence.”<sup>112</sup>

### Supporting this outcome involves:

#### Enabling Indigenous communities and organizations to address needs of children and families

First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and Indigenous community-based organizations are best positioned to understand and address the needs of their children and families. Enabling these communities and organizations to be strong and stable means ensuring they have the capacities, resources and government structures necessary to design, develop, deliver and evaluate their own programs and services. This also means honouring the importance of community decision making.



### **Shared, mutual accountability of Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers and governments**

To support improved outcomes requires service providers, governments, Indigenous communities and community-based organizations working in partnership to demonstrate how investments in First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and Indigenous community-based organizations are improving the lives of children, families and communities. We are all mutually accountable to set clear expectations for the outcomes programs are to achieve, and to determine the measures that will be used to evaluate impact. Any assessment of impact must be culturally relevant and responsive, and designed in partnership with Indigenous partners.

### **Partnership building between non-Indigenous service providers and Indigenous communities**

Supporting the wellbeing of Indigenous children requires that all programs and services that they access are designed and delivered in culturally responsive ways. This means non-Indigenous service providers engage with Indigenous communities and organizations to determine culturally responsive and appropriate ways of delivering services. It means service providers and governments work with Indigenous communities and community-based organizations to build respectful and collaborative relationships at the local level. This is a key step in achieving the kind of transformed relationships required for reconciliation, and will help us collectively improve outcomes for Indigenous children and families.



# SPOTLIGHT

## Helping Indigenous Children Thrive

The Akwe:go and Akwe:go High-Risk Urban Aboriginal Children's Programs were developed by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) in 2005 when a need was identified for programming for at-risk and high-risk Aboriginal children between the ages of 7–12.

Traditional cultural teachings and values are the guiding principles for client-based programming and individualized one-to-one supports that encourage healthy lifestyle

choices. The programs are funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and delivered by the OFIFC. The stories that follow are from Akwe:go program workers.



"I am writing about a participant who is successfully becoming a young man. He loves to be part of the First Nations Gatherings and Powwows. I see his excitement in being part of the Akwe:go programming. He always wants to learn and to help with program set up and delivery. He expresses his grass dance with pride. He isn't shy to show his Ojibway roots. This fine young man will be a great helper one day, in every way."



"During the school year, I taught the "Walking the Path" program at one of the local schools. This included educating the children about the traumas of the residential schools. Later on, during the summer, five children were brought to Horseshoe Lake for several nights of camping. It was at this time, while talking around the campfire, that one of the children shared his experience. He had gone to his grandmother and told her what he had learned during the "Walking the Path" program, and wanted to understand what it was that she had experienced. His grandmother told him many stories, and some were painful to hear. His story not only moved the program workers, but it was apparent that the other campers were interested and they soon began sharing their own family stories in relation to residential schools. I am extremely proud of this young man for his kindness in listening to his grandmother, and for his bravery in sharing with others."



"During our cultural sewing circle, clients and participants were able to make these pillows with very little outside help. They worked countless hours cutting, measuring, and hand-sewing their Oopik (owl) and Tiriganiaq (fox). This was the first major sewing project that they had completed and they were so proud of themselves. Once the pillows were completed, you could see them being carried around and used in the classrooms and the children showing them off to their teachers."



Oopik and Tiriganiaq pillows reflect the culture of the Akwe:go participants.

# Programs for Indigenous children, youth and families

Ontario supports Indigenous children and youth through services and programs. Together with Indigenous communities, we are also building the [Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy](#) to improve services to meet the needs of Indigenous children and youth.

## Education

- [Aboriginal institutes](#): Are you an Aboriginal student? Find out more about resources and opportunities for study in Ontario.
- [Education strategy](#): Learning support for Indigenous students and resources for raising awareness about First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures in Ontario classrooms.
- [Post-secondary education and training policy](#): The complete policy on Aboriginal post-secondary education and training including background, goals and measurements for success.

## Skills and economic development

- [Youth jobs programs](#): Answer a few simple questions to find out what jobs, skills training and entrepreneurship supports may be available to you.
- [Youth work exchange](#): Are you an Indigenous youth looking to gain valuable work experience? Apply for a summer work placement.

- [Summer jobs for Indigenous youth](#): How First Nations youth aged 16 to 18 can apply for a summer job working on forestry projects in Northern Ontario.
- [Funding for Indigenous economic development](#): How Indigenous peoples can get support for business, employment and training opportunities.
- [Aboriginal law summer program](#): Summer work opportunities for first and second year law students interested in Aboriginal law and policy issues.
- [Northern Ontario internship program](#): Provides recent graduates who are interested in launching and building their careers in Northern Ontario access to internships.
- [Reading, writing, math and computer skills](#): Improve your reading, writing, math and computer skills online.

## Health and home

- [Healthy babies and children](#): Helping children get a healthy start in life in ways that honour and respect Indigenous culture and beliefs.
- [Health and wellness strategy](#): Learn more about how we promote health and healing among Indigenous people.
- [Off-reserve housing](#): Affordable housing options for families living off-reserve.



## Actions

Through *Gearing Up*, Ontario is committed to mobilizing and sustaining our focus on the wellbeing of middle years children and their families.

In order to support progress towards the outcomes we want for our children and families, the government is committed to cross-cutting actions that will create the conditions for middle years children to succeed and to thrive.

We will leverage and maximize the efforts of all those who are working to support children, families and communities.

We will also monitor the overall state of wellbeing in the province through Ontario's Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing.

These are the actions we will take:

1

Mobilize evidence on optimal child development

4

Increase the voice of families

2

Catalyze leadership

5

Increase capacity to better serve diverse and marginalized children and families

3

Focus on the needs of marginalized children and families

6

Provide updates and information on the wellbeing of middle years children and their families

## Action 1

### Mobilize evidence on optimal child development

*Gearing Up* is based on up-to-date evidence on middle childhood development. We consolidated this research into a resource for those who play a role or influence the life of middle years children either directly or indirectly, including:

- parents, caregivers and caring adults
- Elders, Senators and traditional knowledge keepers
- community leaders and community groups
- educators and learning institutions
- agencies/organizations that serve children
- family physicians and health care organizations

***On MY Way: A Guide to Support Middle Years Child Development*** maps the interdependent developmental domains of middle years children from an inclusive, wholistic and strengths-based perspective.

***On MY Way*** describes the major developmental milestones (“What is happening?”) and indicators (“How do we know?”), and highlights opportunities to help children succeed.

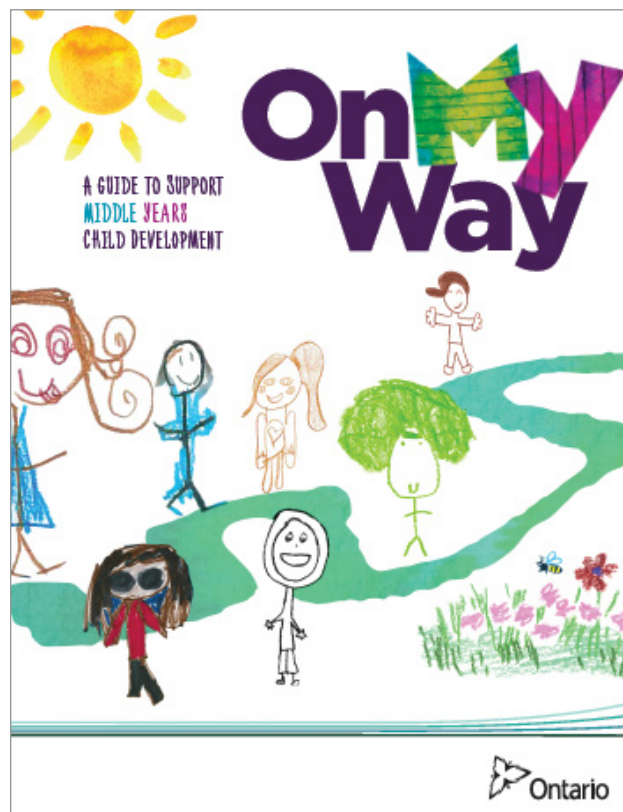


The purpose of the guide is to help families, caring adults and others understand what is happening developmentally, the importance of supports and experiences for childhood development, and ways to support children to develop to their optimum ability.

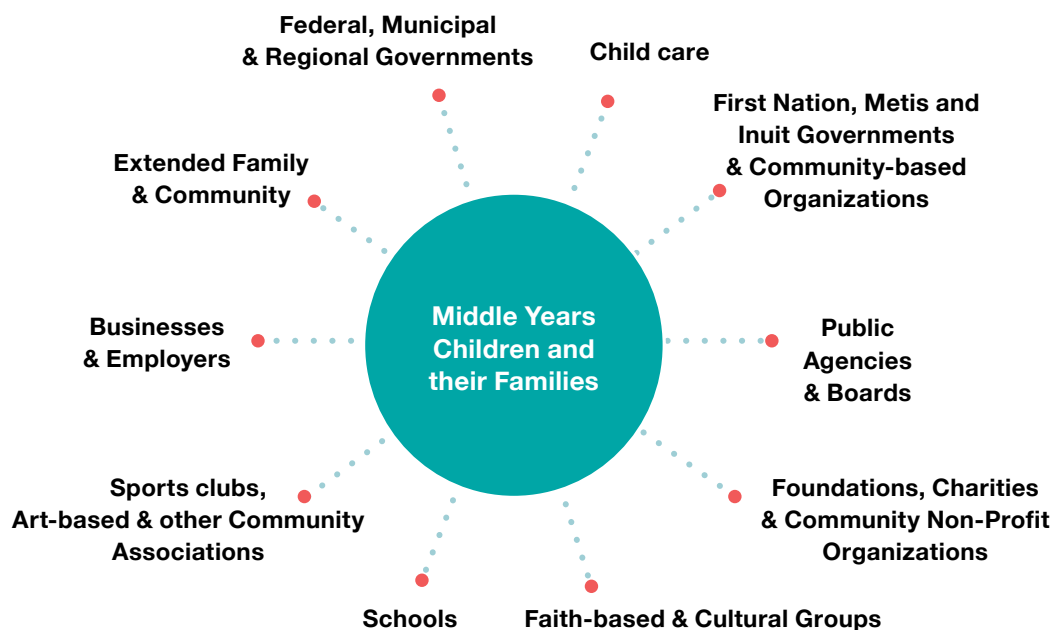
We will mobilize this research, so those who play a role in children’s lives have the tools they need to support children on their way to their teen years.

We also need to do a better job of measuring the outcomes of services that children receive.

*On MY Way: A Guide to Support Middle Years Child Development* is available online at:  
[www.ontario.ca/middleyears](http://www.ontario.ca/middleyears)







## Action 2

### Catalyze leadership

We recognize that our vision for all children in Ontario to thrive is aspirational. Yet with the right leadership and in partnership with communities, we can get there. Supporting this vision does not rest on any one sector, level of government, community service provider, or organization. Rather, it involves a complex, interconnected and multi-faceted network of players who all have a role in designing and delivering services, programs, policies and activities. This is what we consider the child and family “ecosystem” or environment.

The Ontario government is committed to using the core principles for the wellbeing of middle years children and their families as a basis for our work in this sector.

Through *Gearing Up*, we will increase and align our impact as leaders in supporting

children and their families. This will result in an ecosystem for middle years children that will be:

- coordinated, efficient and effective
- connected and responsive to the needs and strengths of families, especially marginalized families
- accountable for the provision of outcomes-focused, strengths-based, inclusive and evidence-informed programs and services

An important part of a strategic framework like *Gearing Up* is to provide a set of outcomes and indicators that will drive our work on a provincewide basis to support middle years children to thrive. It is also a set of outcomes that can support how communities, service providers, and others will use the framework to establish their own program frameworks for children and families.

## Action 3

### Focus on the needs of marginalized children and families

Ontario will continue to focus efforts to support the wellbeing of children and families as priorities, and to focus investments on improving the wellbeing of marginalized children and families.

A number of new initiatives in Ontario focus on marginalized and vulnerable people, including families and children. We will continue to align our efforts for maximum impact.

For example, *Gearing Up* will align with Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework, A Better Way Forward: Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan, the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy, the Healthy Kids Strategy, the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan, OHIP+: Children and Youth Pharmacare, Aboriginal Community Capital Grants Program, Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women, the Ontario Autism Program, Ontario's Special Needs Strategy, the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Strategy, Access Talent: Ontario's Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities, new initiatives to reform the child welfare sector, expansion of mental health and addictions services, including those for children and youth, the Updated Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, and other initiatives, investments and strategies that focus on marginalized children and families.

Through *Gearing Up*, we will ensure that meeting the needs of marginalized children

and families are top priorities. We know that supporting marginalized children and families creates a fairer, more equitable society, which creates a strong and thriving province for all Ontarians.

## Action 4

### Increase the voice of families in the design and delivery of services

On a day-to-day basis, parents and caregivers in Ontario are doing the best they can to support their children to thrive. Families are the most important resource in the wellbeing of children in Ontario, and as a government, we are committed to helping families thrive.

We know that families are competent and capable experts on their children's strengths, needs, abilities, and experiences.

When we talk about children, we cannot separate their needs from those of their families.

We are making a commitment to listen to families when we design policies and programs to support their children.

At the program level, we will work with government and community partners to embed a strengths-based, child- and family-centred approach to how programs and policies are designed and delivered.

At the system level, we will explore different mechanisms to give families a voice in the design and delivery of policies and programs across government.

We will do more to meet the needs of the family, as well as the needs of the child.

## Action 5

### Increase capacity to better serve diverse and marginalized children and families

Ontario's network of programs and services needs to be responsive to the diverse needs and backgrounds of the children and families we serve. We will take steps to ensure that all provincially funded programs and services are delivered in culturally relevant ways and respond to the diverse needs of children and their families.

To do this, we will take the following actions:

- work with service providers to ensure that services are responsive to diverse needs
- build the capacity of service providers to better serve diverse children and families
- collect identity-based data on children and families who access our programs
- align efforts across the child and youth continuum

We will continue to work with partners across the child “ecosystem” to promote an inclusive and equitable system of services for children.



## Action 6

### Provide updates and information on the wellbeing of middle years children and their families

An important part of *Gearing Up* is establishing a shared set of outcomes and indicators to drive our work to support children to thrive. These outcomes can be used by communities, service providers, and others to establish their own program frameworks for children and families.

Beginning in 2018, the government will report annually on the provincial level outcomes outlined in Ontario's Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing, by tracking *Gearing Up* indicators. We will also use qualitative and other community-based methods to understand and tell the stories of how middle years children are doing, including First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous children and families.

# Moving Together

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There is a great deal of work underway in the province to support children to succeed. Communities, governments, service providers, families, and Indigenous partners are all working hard to support children to be active and well, to have caring and connected families, to have positive relationships, to feel valued, to be supported by their communities, and to support Indigenous children to thrive.

But there is more work to be done.

We have to align our efforts, make collaboration a central part of our work, and break down silos. We have to look for intersections and scale up our efforts. We have to invest in middle years children and their families. We need to be creative, responsive, and inclusive in all that we do. We can do a better job telling the story of how everyone's efforts are making a difference in the lives of children and families.

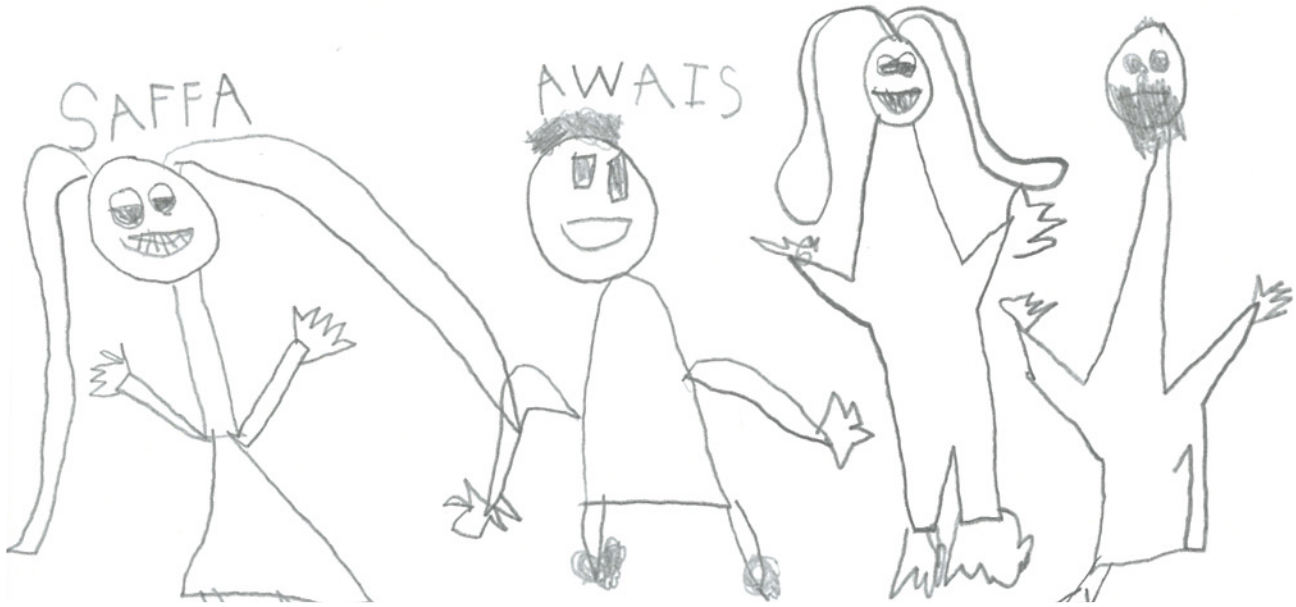
It's our collective responsibility to support this generation of middle years children, and the generations that follow, to thrive and prepare them to transition to the teen years and beyond.

Individual gears working alone cannot move us forward. The real impact of *Gearing Up* is when all of us come together to mobilize and leverage our efforts.

## **If you are a parent, caregiver, guardian or family member:**

We are grateful for all that you do to support middle years children to thrive. The impact you have on a child's life is enormous. Your love, guidance, support and involvement is the game changer for children. The behaviours you model have a lifelong impact on children. We invite you to review the research on child development, and to think about how your efforts are making a difference. Your experiences, skills, cultural traditions and knowledge are what build a thriving society both locally and provincially. We hope you continue to raise your voice, advocate for your children, family and community, and be a positive force for change. We are listening. We welcome and respect your input and commit to embed it into the way we support the children of Ontario.





**If you are a teacher, educator, coach, mentor, frontline service provider, or other caring adult:**

You are a critical part of a child's life. Children look to you for guidance, to help open up the world of possibilities, to expose them to a world where they strive to be the best they can be, and to help them build on their strengths and overcome challenges. We invite you to think about how you can apply the principles of *Gearing Up* to the work you do. Continue to work from a strengths-based perspective and build on what children can do, without focusing on what they cannot do. You should recognize that some children need additional support and either provide that support or help connect them with someone who can, and stay involved through the process. You can support families to be active and engaged in their children's lives by reaching out to them, engaging them in conversations about their children, their cultures and traditions, and acknowledging that they are the experts on their child's strengths, needs and abilities.

**If you are a cultural leader, traditional knowledge keeper, Elder or Senator:**

We know your influence can support children to find meaning and purpose, a key element to help them thrive. We invite you to think about the outcomes of *Gearing Up* and how they relate to the work you do with children and families, and the values you bring to the lives of children and families. We encourage you to continue to be role models for children to support their optimal development, and to support them to achieve the goals outlined in *Gearing Up*. Ontario is more vibrant because of the role you play in your communities, and the influence you have on helping middle years children shape their identity.

**If you are a service provider,  
government representative,  
Indigenous community-based  
organization, foundation or  
philanthropic organization:**

Your continued leadership is an essential ingredient of *Gearing Up*. We invite you to continue the conversation about the kind of communities we can build together for children and families in Ontario. Think about ways community-based and provincial leadership can improve child wellbeing in our communities and across Ontario. We also ask that you integrate the *Gearing Up* principles and outcomes into the design and delivery of programs, policies and services. These include looking at ways to embed family-focused, strengths-based supports, fostering belonging and helping to break down barriers for the groups of children and families who face barriers. We encourage you to reach out to the Indigenous community-based leadership in your communities to transform relationships and work collaboratively for the wellbeing of Indigenous children and families.



**If you are an employer or  
private sector partner:**

You are an integral part of communities, providing jobs and leadership. You have a tremendous role to play in supporting children and families to thrive. We invite you to think about yourselves as key allies in bringing the principles of *Gearing Up* to life as a core part of daily business and having an impact on the lives of children and families. Think about the opportunities in your communities that could be realized through your involvement. Middle years children are the leaders of tomorrow. They are a tremendous pool of talent. We invite you to join government and community partners in conversations about how to leverage the talents of middle years children today for the benefit of our communities today and into the future.



## Ontario's Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing

Ontario's Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing presents a set of 23 outcomes and 75 indicators, which were selected to create a wholistic picture of how middle years children are doing in Ontario. The outcomes provide an ideal reality that we hope all children and families can experience. The indicators allow us to know, each year, how many children and families are getting closer to reaching that reality.

More than 200 possible indicators were reviewed. The indicators that were selected scored high on the following criteria:

- relevance: aligns with outcomes and reflects a key issue that supports progress under a goal
- data quality: validity, reliability, sensitivity and sampling methodology
- representation: reflects the portion of the sample in the middle years age range.
- survey frequency: survey cycles support the measurement of change over time
- outcome-focused: indicators show an outcome rather than a process or output
- actionable: potential for data to inform and influence policy and program design and delivery

- strategic alignment: aligns with indicators from Stepping Up to monitor changes over different ages

At times we encountered limitations in the data landscape in Ontario, such as limited data representing children ages 6–12, partial age coverage (e.g., ages 11 and 12 only in some cases), infrequency of surveys and, in some cases, survey exclusion of Indigenous peoples living on reserves.

### Why a profile?

The Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing will help us to better understand how middle years children and their families are doing, and to help identify areas where additional focus may be needed. It is a commitment to paying attention to the wellbeing of children and families.

It is also a “snapshot” in time — a story of a generation, their context and overall wellbeing. It will be updated annually to be able to track progress.

The value is not found in the individual data points but in the overall picture that the profile creates about a unique cohort of middle years children.

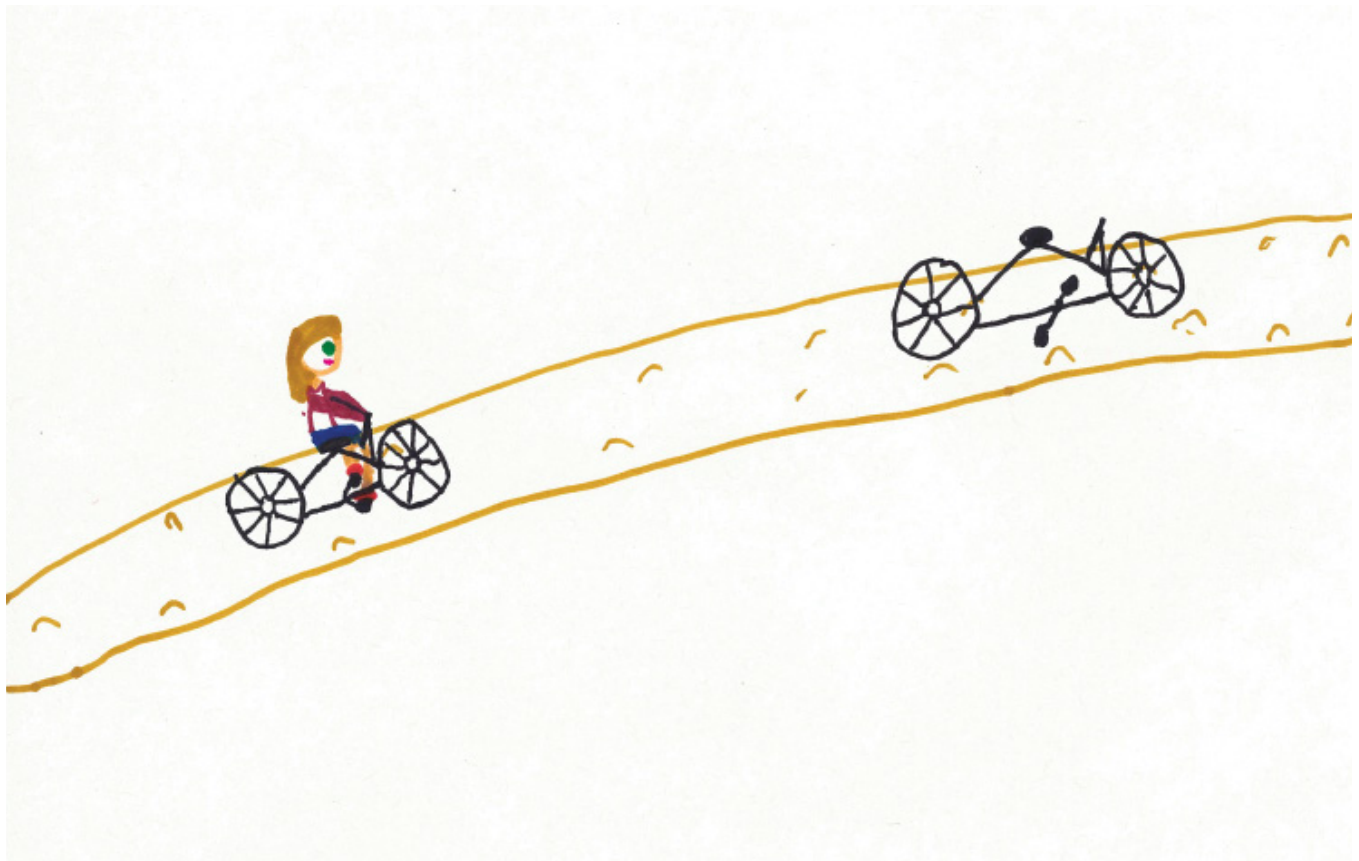
While the profile does not necessarily reflect the experiences of all individual young people, it does play an important role in painting an overall picture of how children are doing, and what more is needed to help them to thrive.

### How was the profile developed?

The outcomes were selected based on research and in consultation with

stakeholders and families. For each outcome, indicators were selected based on available research. We also referred to *Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Youth Succeed* to find areas of alignment.

The indicators rely on data that is collected on a regular basis. It is publicly reported data. It includes population-level data, as well as data on government programs where available.







# ONTARIO'S MIDDLE YEARS PROFILE OF WELLBEING



Ontario children play and are physically healthy.

**66.4%** of children engage in vigorous physical activity for at least 60 minutes at least 5 times a week  
**49%** of children eat vegetables at least once a day  
**82%** of children play outdoors after school  
**63%** of children sleep at least 8 hours per night  
**93.3%** of families have a primary care provider  
**86%** of children rate their health as good or excellent

Ontario children feel happy and mentally well.

**91.5%** of children report their mental health as good, very good or excellent  
**79%** of children think it is important to experience joy and that their life has meaning and purpose  
**18.7%** of children had a mental health or emotional problem and didn't know where to turn  
**14.4%** of children feel under stress, strain or pressure  
**12.9%** of children feel hopeless  
**7.1%** of children seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year

Ontario children learn and practise healthy habits and connect to the natural world.

**43.3%** of children spend at least 3 hours per day of sedentary screen time (playing/chatting/surfing/emailing/watching)  
**92%** of children brush their teeth at least once a day  
**64%** of children think it is important to feel connected to nature  
**53.8%** of children have rules at home about talking to people they don't know online/on cellphone

Ontario children have at least one consistent, caring adult in their lives.

**96.7%** of children have at least one parent/caregiver who usually knows where they are  
**67%** of children feel they have a family member who could provide emotional help and support when needed  
**50%** of children talk about the activities they do in school with their parents/caregivers  
**77%** of children feel their teachers care about them as a person

Ontario families are financially stable and secure.

**6.3%** of families live in deep poverty and struggle to afford housing  
**14%** of children live in low-income households  
**10%** of families experience food insecurity

Ontario families are supported to thrive and are active in their children's lives.

**74%** of children eat dinner with a parent on a regular basis  
**89.2%** of teachers share suggestions with parents/caregivers to support learning at home  
**93.5%** of teachers share information with parents/caregivers on their child's progress

Ontario children form and maintain health and close relationships.

**68.1%** of children have at least one friend they can trust and rely on  
**78.8%** of children can talk through disputes with a friend

Ontario children respect others and value diversity, equity and inclusion.

**6%** of children bully others  
**30%** of children have been bullied  
**68%** of children feel students treat each other with respect  
**80%** of children think it is important to be kind and forgiving of others

Ontario children feel safe at home, school, online and in their communities.

**56.1%** of children feel safe at school  
**76%** of children feel their community is safe for children to play outside during the day  
**60%** of children feel they can trust people in their community  
**83.9%** of children feel confident they have the skill needed to protect themselves online

Children Are Active and Well

Children Have Caring and Connected Families

Children Have Positive Relationships



Ontario children are curious and love to learn.

**47 %** of children really like school  
**47.1%** of children like to read  
**59.5%** of children enjoy mathematics  
**68 %** of children feel they belong at their school

Ontario children have relevant learning experiences that address their diverse interests, strengths, needs and abilities.

**80 %** of children feel they can get extra help at school when they need it  
**83 %** of children feel their teachers accept them as they are  
**28.7 %** of children regularly take part in a school club or group

Ontario children gain the knowledge and skills they need.

**64 %** of grade 3 students are at or above the provincial math standard  
**72.6 %** of grade 3 students are at or above the provincial reading standard  
**74.6 %** of grade 3 students are at or above the provincial writing standard  
**27.5 %** of teachers implement a social and emotional learning program  
**70.6 %** of children enter grade 1 ready to learn



Ontario children are discovering who they are and who they want to be.

**69 %** of children say they have confidence in themselves  
**45.3 %** of children participate in art, music or drama activities outside of school  
**10 %** of children are involved in community groups

Ontario children are proud of their cultures and identities and live free from discrimination.

**14.3 %** of children are treated badly or differently at school because of their race, ethnicity, colour of skin  
**14.6 %** of children are treated badly or differently because of their gender identity or sexual orientation  
**71 %** of children feel other kids accept them as they are

Ontario children can express what matters to them.

**72 %** of children have someone in their family who listens to them when they speak  
**70 %** of children feel they are encouraged to express their own view in their class(es)

Ontario families are supported, engaged and inform the decisions that affect them.

**25 %** of children are involved in volunteer work  
**56 %** of parents/caregivers highly agree their child's school does a good job including them in their child's education

Ontario families know about and easily access high quality resources in their communities.

**52 %** of parents have access to after-school care  
**66 %** of parents feel public facilities and programs for sports/recreation meet their child's needs  
**74 %** of children feel there are good places to spend their free time (e.g., recreation centres, parks, shopping centres)  
**71 %** of parents are satisfied with the accessibility of opportunities to be active in their community

Ontario service providers, governments and communities foster belonging and wellbeing for children and families.

**87.9 %** of families are satisfied with health care in their community  
**46.4 %** of children would speak to a school social worker, counsellor, psychologist, nurse or other school staff if they needed help for concerns regarding their mental health

First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families are physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually well.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit children are engaged in and contribute to their families, communities and cultures.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit children participate in and feel proud of their traditions, languages, cultures, and identities.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and communities are supported to be self-determining in defining and meeting the needs of their children, families and communities.

Ontario service providers and governments and Indigenous communities respond to local needs and priorities and are accountable to communities.

- Many of the indicators in the broader Profile of Middle Years Wellbeing do not accurately reflect the disparities in outcomes experienced by Indigenous children and families.
- Indicators for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, families and communities are being developed under the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy.

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# Ontario Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing Source Material

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# Ontario Children Are Active and Well

1

## Ontario children play and are physically healthy

### Indicator:

**The percentage of children who engage in vigorous physical activity for at least 60 minutes at least five times a week**

### Desired Direction of Change



UP

### Definition:

The indicator is defined as the proportion of 10- to 12-year-old respondents who reported they engage in vigorous physical activity for at least 60 minutes “at least five times a week on a regular basis.”

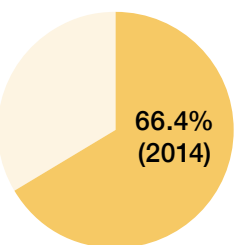
### Source:

The data is based on responses to the 2014 *School Mental Health Survey* led by Drs. Kathy Georgiades and Michael Boyle at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The SMHS is a cross-sectional study examining the associations between the school environment and student mental health and wellbeing.

### Sample:

A total of 11,347 Ontario students ages 10–12 received the survey.

### Data:



### Indicator:

**The percentage of children who eat vegetables at least once a day**

### Desired Direction of Change



UP

### Definition:

The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who reported they eat vegetables “at least once per day or more.”

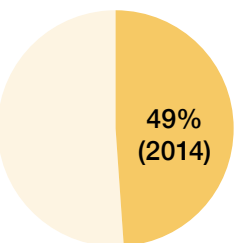
### Source:

The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

### Sample:

The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

### Data:





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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who play outdoors after school**

**Desired Direction of Change**

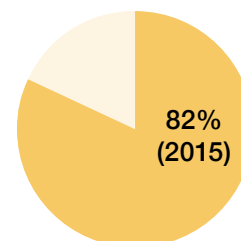


UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the percentage of parents who indicate that their 6- to 12-year-olds play outdoors between the time school ends and dinner on a typical day.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014–2015 *CANPLAY* Study, by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,038 parental responses for children ages 6–12 residing in Ontario.

**Data:**

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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who sleep at least eight hours per night**

**Desired Direction of Change**

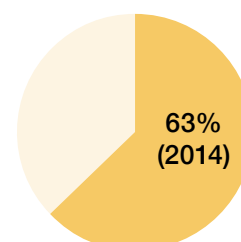


UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who reported they sleep at least eight hours per night on a regular basis.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada Survey*. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen's University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:**

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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of families who have a primary care provider**

**Desired Direction of Change**

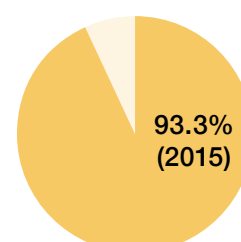


UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the percentage of Ontario families with at least one child 15 years or younger, who have a pediatrician, family doctor, nurse practitioner, or other regular health provider for their child.

**Source:** The data is based on the responses to the 2015 *Health Care Experience Survey*, conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

**Sample:** The sample includes 2,414 Ontario families who had at least one child 15 years old or younger.

**Data:**

**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who rate their health as good or excellent**

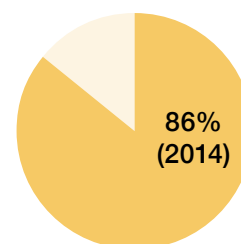
**Desired Direction of Change**

UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who rate their health as “good” or “excellent.”

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada Survey*. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:****2****Ontario children feel happy and mentally well****Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who report their mental health as good, very good or excellent**

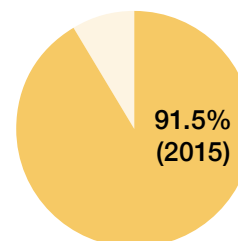
**Desired Direction of Change**

UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who report their mental health as “good,” “very good” or “excellent.”

**Source:** The data is based on the 2015 *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* administered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The survey is conducted every two years and collected through anonymous, self-reported questionnaires.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,504 Ontario students ages 11–12.

**Data:**

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**Indicator:**

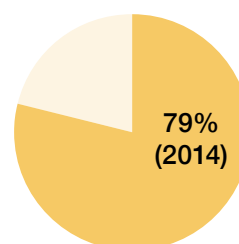
**The percentage of children who think it is important to experience joy in life and that their life has meaning and purpose**

**Desired Direction of Change**

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who think it is “important” and “very important” to experience joy in life and that their life has meaning and purpose.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada Survey*. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:**

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**Indicator:**

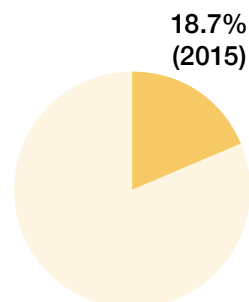
**The percentage of children who had a mental health or emotional problem and didn't know where to turn**

**Desired Direction of Change**

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who answered “yes” when asked if they had a mental health or emotional problem and didn’t know where to turn in the past year.

**Source:** The data is based on the 2015 *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* administered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The survey is conducted every two years and collected through anonymous, self-reported questionnaires.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,504 Ontario students ages 11–12.

**Data:**

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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who feel under stress, strain or pressure**

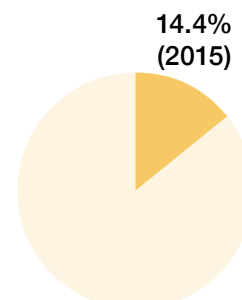
**Desired Direction of Change**



**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who reported feeling under stress, strain or pressure “a lot of the time” or “almost more than they could take.”

**Source:** The data is based on the 2015 *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* administered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The survey is conducted every two years and collected through anonymous, self-reported questionnaires.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,504 Ontario students ages 11–12.

**Data:**

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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who feel hopeless**

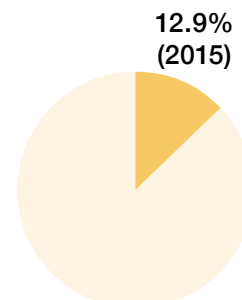
**Desired Direction of Change**



**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who reported feeling hopeless “sometimes,” “most of the time,” or “all of the time.”

**Source:** The data is based on the 2015 *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* administered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The survey is conducted every two years and collected through anonymous, self-reported questionnaires.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,504 Ontario students ages 11–12.

**Data:**

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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who had seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year**

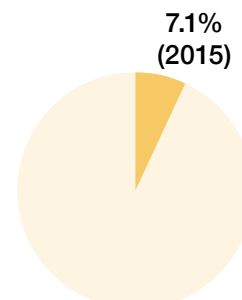
**Desired Direction of Change**



**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who had seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.

**Source:** The data is based on the 2015 *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* administered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The survey is conducted every two years and collected through anonymous, self-reported questionnaires.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,504 Ontario students ages 11–12.

**Data:**



### 3

## Ontario children learn and practice healthy habits and connect to the natural world

### Indicator:

**The percentage of children who spend at least three hours a day on sedentary screen time**

### Desired Direction of Change



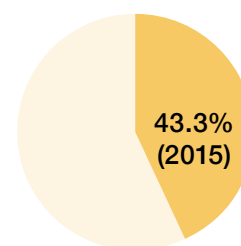
DOWN

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who spent at least three hours per day watching TV/movies/playing video games/emailing in free time in the last seven days.

**Source:** The data is based on the 2015 *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* administered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The survey is conducted every two years and collected through anonymous, self-reported questionnaires.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,504 Ontario students ages 11–12.

### Data:



### Indicator:

**The percentage of children who brush their teeth at least once a day**

### Desired Direction of Change



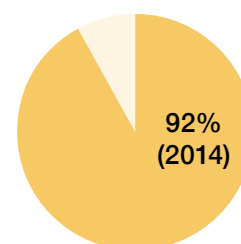
UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who brush their teeth “at least once a day” and “more than once a day” on a regular basis.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada Survey*. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

### Data:



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who think it is important to feel connected to nature**

**Desired Direction of Change**

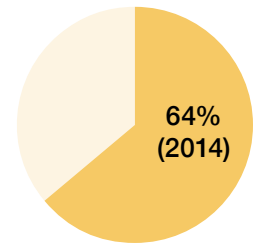


**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year old respondents who feel it is “important” or “very important” to feel connected to nature.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada Survey*. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:**



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who have rules at home about talking to people they don't know online or on a cellphone**

**Desired Direction of Change**

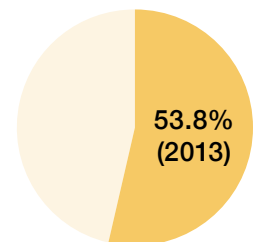


**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of Grades 4–6 students who have rules at home about talking to people they don't know online/on a cellphone.

**Source:** The data is based on the responses to the 2013 MediaSmarts report, *Young Canadians in a Wired World—Phase III Student Survey*. This series of reports provides a snapshot of how children and youth are engaging with digital technologies and how it impacts their daily lives.

**Sample:** The sample includes 757 Ontario students in Grades 4–6.

**Data:**



# Ontario Children Have Caring and Connected Families

4

Ontario children have at least one consistent, caring adult in their lives

## Indicator:

The percentage of children who have at least one parent/caregiver who usually knows where they are

## Desired Direction of Change

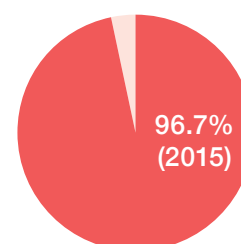
UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who report that at least one parent/caregiver usually knows where they are.

**Source:** The data is based on the 2015 *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* administered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The survey is conducted every two years and collected through anonymous, self-reported questionnaires.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,504 Ontario students ages 11–12.

## Data:



## Indicator:

The percentage of children who have a family member who could provide emotional help and support when needed

## Desired Direction of Change

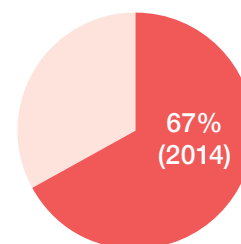
UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” and “strongly agree” they have a family member who could provide emotional help and support when needed.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

## Data:



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who talk about the activities they do in school with their parents/ caregiver**

**Desired Direction of Change**

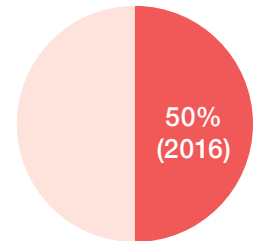


**Definition:** This indicator is defined as the proportion of English-speaking and French-speaking Ontario Grade 3 students who talk about the activities they do in school with their parents/guardian “every day” or “almost every day.”

**Source:** The data is based on 2015 Education Quality and Assessment Office (EQAO) scores for Grade 3 students, administered by the EQAO. The Assessment tests the reading, writing and math skills students are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 3. Students write this test during a two-week testing window in May and/or June each year.

**Sample:** The 2015–2016 Ontario student questionnaires were administered to 128,727 Grade 3 students.

**Data:**



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who feel their teachers care about them as a person**

**Desired Direction of Change**

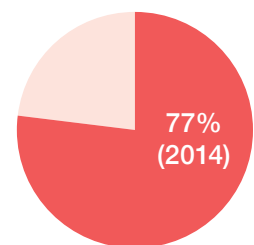


**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” and “strongly agree” that their teachers care about them as a person.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:**





## 5

### Ontario families are financially stable and secure

#### Indicator:

**The percentage of families living in deep poverty and struggling to afford housing**

#### Desired Direction of Change

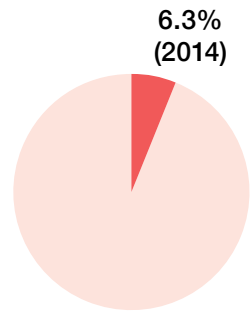
↓ DOWN

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the percentage of households with at least one child under the age of 18 that have incomes below 40 per cent of the median household, after-tax income, and spend more than 40 per cent of their total income on housing.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Canadian Income Survey* conducted by Statistics Canada. The Ontario Housing Measure tracks the percentage of households with children under 18 that have incomes below 40 per cent of the median household income (LIM 40) and spend more than 40 per cent of their income on housing.

**Sample:** The 2014 Canadian Income Survey sample size is approximately 8,400 Canadian households.

#### Data:



#### Indicator:

**The percentage of children living in low income households (LIM 50)**

#### Desired Direction of Change

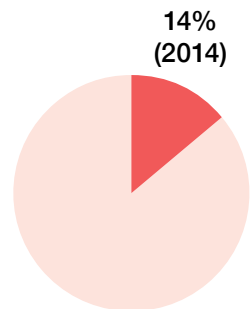
↓ DOWN

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the percentage of households with at least one child under the age of 18 living "in low income" as defined using Ontario's "fixed" LIM 50. LIM 50 is the number and percentage of people living in a household with an after-tax income less than 50 per cent of the median adjusted household income measured in 2008 and adjusted for inflation for 2009–14. The after-tax threshold varies according to household size.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Canadian Income Survey* conducted by Statistics Canada, which replaced the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics in 2011. The most recent data is from 2014, released in July 2016.

**Sample:** The 2014 Canadian Income Survey sample size is approximately 8,400 Canadian households.

#### Data:



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of Ontario families who experience food insecurity**

**Desired Direction of Change**



DOWN

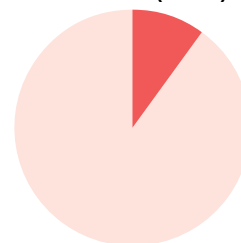
**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the percentage of families with children from birth to age 17 who experience food insecurity, as defined by a household's ability to afford the food it needed over the past 12 months.

**Source:** This data is based on the responses to the 2012 *Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)*, conducted by Statistics Canada. The CCHS is conducted every year.

**Sample:** This sample includes Ontario households with children from birth to age 17. Excluded from the CCHS are residents of First Nations reserves, health care institutions, some remote areas and full-time members of the Canadian Forces.

**Data:**

10%  
(2012)



---

**6**

**Ontario families are supported to thrive and are active in their children's lives**

---

**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who eat dinner with a parent on a regular basis**

**Desired Direction of Change**



UP

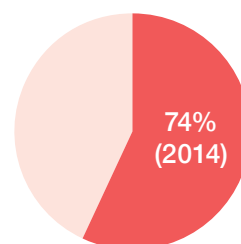
**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who eat dinner with a parent 5 days or more a week on a regular basis.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen's University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:**

74%  
(2014)



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of teachers who shared suggestions with parents/caregivers to support learning at home**

**Desired Direction of Change**

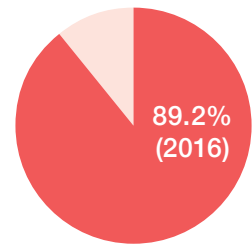


**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the percentage of teachers who shared suggestions with parents at least two to three times in the last year to support learning at home.

**Source:** The data is based on 2015 Education Quality and Assessment Office (EQAO) scores for Grade 3 students, administered by the EQAO. The Assessment tests the reading, writing and math skills students are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 3. Students write this test during a two-week testing window in May and/or June each year.

**Sample:** The sample includes 6,833 Ontario teachers.

**Data:**



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of teachers who shared information with parents/caregivers on their child's progress**

**Desired Direction of Change**

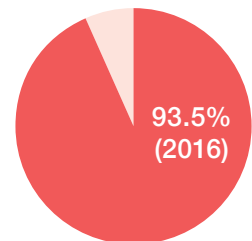


**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the percentage of teachers who shared information with parents/caregivers at least two to three times in the last year on their child's progress.

**Source:** The data is based on 2015 Education Quality and Assessment Office (EQAO) scores for Grade 3 students, administered by the EQAO. The Assessment tests the reading, writing and math skills students are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 3. Students write this test during a two-week testing window in May and/or June each year.

**Sample:** The sample includes 6,833 Ontario teachers.

**Data:**



# Ontario Children Have Positive Relationships

7

Ontario children form and maintain healthy, close relationships

## Indicator:

**The percentage of children who have at least one friend they can trust and rely on**

## Desired Direction of Change

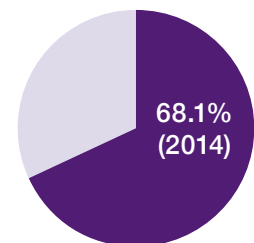
↑ UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 10- to 12-year-old respondents who reported they have at least one friend they can trust and rely on “often or very true.”

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *School Mental Health Survey* led by Drs. Kathy Georgiades and Michael Boyle at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The SMHS is a cross-sectional study examining the associations between the school environment and student mental health and wellbeing.

**Sample:** A total of 11,347 Ontario students ages 10–12 received the survey.

## Data:



## Indicator:

**The percentage of children who can talk through disputes with a friend**

## Desired Direction of Change

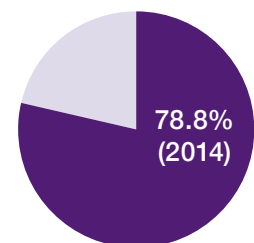
↑ UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 10- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” and “strongly agree” that if they get angry with a friend, they can talk about it and make things better.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *School Mental Health Survey* led by Drs. Kathy Georgiades and Michael Boyle at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The SMHS is a cross-sectional study examining the associations between the school environment and student mental health and wellbeing.

**Sample:** A total of 11,347 Ontario students ages 10–12 received the survey.

## Data:





**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who bully others**

**Desired Direction of Change**

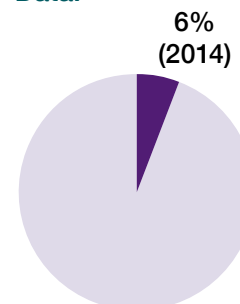


DOWN

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who report that they had bullied others “at least two to three times per month”, “once a week” and “several times per week”.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:****Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who have been bullied**

**Desired Direction of Change**

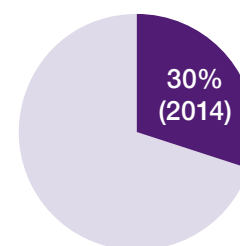


DOWN

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who have been bullied “at least two to three times per month”, “once a week” or “several times per week.”

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:**

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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who feel students treat each other with respect**

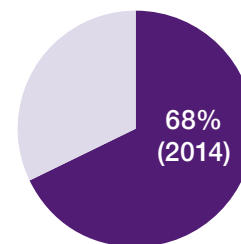
**Desired Direction of Change**



**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 10- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” and “agree a lot” that students treat each other with respect at school.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *School Mental Health Survey* led by Drs. Kathy Georgiades and Michael Boyle at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The SMHS is a cross-sectional study examining the associations between the school environment and student mental health and wellbeing.

**Sample:** A total of 11,347 Ontario students ages 10–12 received the survey.

**Data:**

---

**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who think it is important to be kind and forgiving of others**

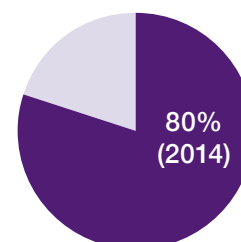
**Desired Direction of Change**



**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who think it is “important” or “very important” to be kind and forgiving of others.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:**

## 9

### Ontario children feel safe at home, at school, online and in their communities

#### Indicator:

**The percentage of children who feel safe at school**

#### Desired Direction of Change

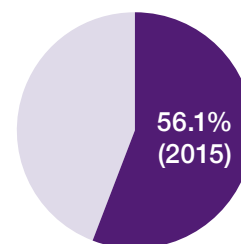
↑ UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who “strongly agree” they feel safe at school.

**Source:** The data is based on the 2015 *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* administered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The survey is conducted every two years and collected through anonymous, self-report questionnaires.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,504 Ontario students ages 11–12.

#### Data:



#### Indicator:

**The percentage of children who feel their community is safe for children to play outside during the day**

#### Desired Direction of Change

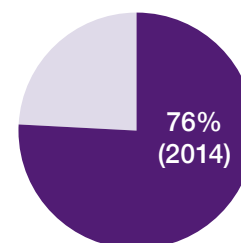
↑ UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” or “strongly agree” their community is safe for children to play outside during the day.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

#### Data:



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who feel they can trust people in their community**

**Desired Direction of Change**

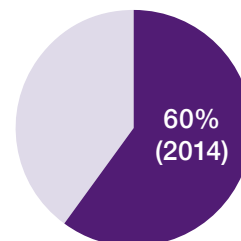


**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” or “strongly agree” they can trust people in their community.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:**



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who feel confident they have the skill needed to protect themselves online**

**Desired Direction of Change**

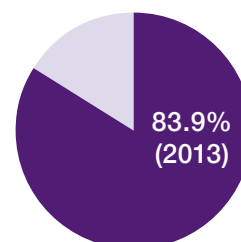


**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of Grades 4–6 students who “agree” they have the skill needed to protect themselves online.

**Source:** The data is based on the responses to the 2013 MediaSmarts report, *Young Canadians in a Wired World—Phase III Student Survey*. This series of reports provides a snapshot of how children and youth are engaging with digital technologies and how it impacts their daily lives.

**Sample:** The sample includes 757 Ontario students in Grades 4–6.

**Data:**





# Ontario Children Engage in Learning

10

## Ontario children are curious and love to learn

### Indicator:

**The percentage of children who really like school**

### Desired Direction of Change

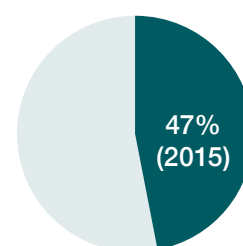
↑ UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of Grade 4 students who “agree a lot” that they like school.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2015 *Trends in International Math and Science Survey* (TIMSS). TIMSS is administered every four years to Grade 4 and Grade 8 students. In 2015, data was collected from 57 jurisdictions. The response rates associated with the indicators are 77 per cent for the home questionnaire. Response rates on individual indicators ranged from 96 per cent and 99 per cent for the student questionnaire.

**Sample:** Ontario student data is derived from a random stratified sample of approximately 4,500 Grade 4 students.

### Data:



### Indicator:

**The percentage of children who like to read**

### Desired Direction of Change

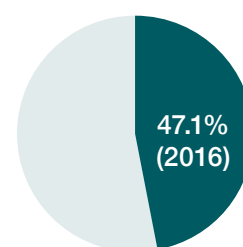
↑ UP

**Definition:** This indicator is defined as the proportion of English-speaking and French-speaking Ontario students who like to read “most of the time.”

**Source:** The data is based on 2015 Education Quality and Assessment Office (EQAO) scores for Grade 3 students, administered by the EQAO. The Assessment tests the reading, writing and math skills students are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 3. Students write this test during a two-week testing window in May and/or June each year.

**Sample:** The 2015–2016 student questionnaires were administered to 128,727 Grade 3 Ontario students.

### Data:



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who enjoy mathematics**

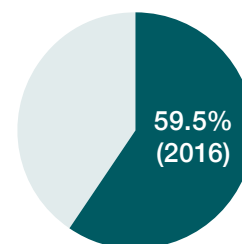
**Desired Direction of Change**



**Definition:** This indicator is defined as the proportion of English-speaking and French-speaking Ontario students who enjoy mathematics “most of the time.”

**Source:** The data is based on 2015 Education Quality and Assessment Office (EQAO) scores for Grade 3 students, administered by the EQAO. The Assessment tests the reading, writing and math skills students are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 3. Students write this test during a two-week testing window in May and/or June each year.

**Sample:** The 2015–2016 student questionnaires were administered to 128,727 Grade 3 Ontario students.

**Data:**

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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who feel they belong at their school**

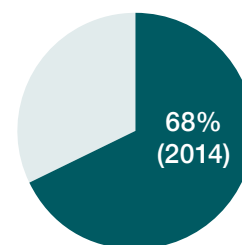
**Desired Direction of Change**



**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 10- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” or “strongly agree” they belong at their school.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *School Mental Health Survey* led by Drs. Kathy Georgiades and Michael Boyle at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The SMHS is a cross-sectional study examining the associations between the school environment and student mental health and wellbeing.

**Sample:** A total of 11,347 Ontario students ages 10–12 received the survey.

**Data:**

# 11

## Ontario children have relevant learning experiences that address their diverse interests, strengths, needs and abilities

### Indicator:

**The percentage of children who feel they can get extra help at school when they need it**

### Desired Direction of Change



UP

### Definition:

The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” or “strongly agree” that when they need extra help at school, they can get it.

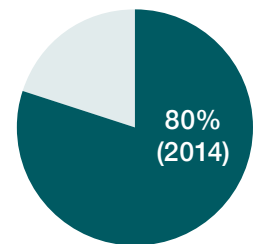
### Source:

The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

### Sample:

The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

### Data:



### Indicator:

**The percentage of children who feel their teacher accepts them as they are**

### Desired Direction of Change



UP

### Definition:

The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” or “strongly agree” their teacher accepts them as they are.

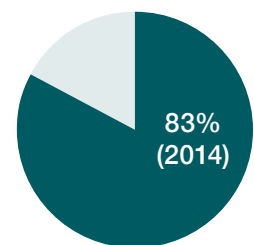
### Source:

The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

### Sample:

The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

### Data:



**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who regularly take part in a school club or group**

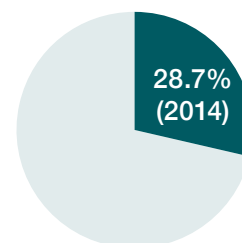
**Desired Direction of Change**

⬆️ UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 10- to 12-year-old respondents who regularly take part in a school club or group “once a week”, “a few times a week” or most days.”

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *School Mental Health Survey* led by Drs. Kathy Georgiades and Michael Boyle at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The SMHS is a cross-sectional study examining the associations between the school environment and student mental health and wellbeing.

**Sample:** A total of 11,347 Ontario students ages 10–12 received the survey.

**Data:**

## 12

### Ontario children gain the knowledge and skills they need

**Indicator:**

**The percentage of Grade 3 students who are at or above the provincial math standard**

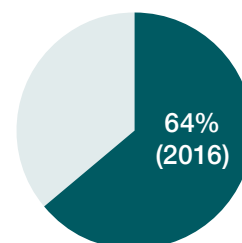
**Desired Direction of Change**

⬆️ UP

**Definition:** This indicator is defined as the proportion of English-speaking and French-speaking Ontario Grade 3 students meeting the provincial standard in applied math. Results are scored on a four-point scale, with a score of three or above being defined as meeting the provincial standard.

**Source:** The data is based on 2015 Education Quality and Assessment Office (EQAO) scores for Grade 3 students, administered by the EQAO. The Assessment tests the reading, writing and math skills students are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 3. Students write this test during a two-week testing window in May and/or June each year.

**Sample:** The 2015–2016 EQAO Math Assessment was administered to 133,830 Grade 3 students.

**Data:**

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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of Grade 3 students who are at or above the provincial reading standard**

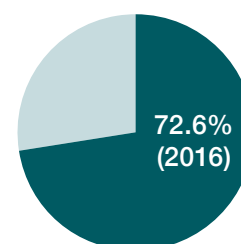
**Desired Direction of Change**



**Definition:** This indicator is defined as the proportion of English-speaking and French-speaking Ontario Grade 3 students meeting the provincial standard in reading. Results are scored on a four-point scale, with a score of three or above being defined as meeting the provincial standard.

**Source:** The data is based on 2015 Education Quality and Assessment Office (EQAO) scores for Grade 3 students, administered by the EQAO. The Assessment tests the reading, writing and math skills students are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 3. Students write this test during a two-week testing window in May and/or June each year.

**Sample:** The 2015–2016 EQAO Reading Assessment was administered to 127,191 Grade 3 students.

**Data:**

---

**Indicator:**

**The percentage of Grade 3 students who are at or above the provincial writing standard**

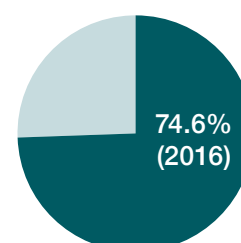
**Desired Direction of Change**



**Definition:** This indicator is defined as the proportion of English-speaking and French-speaking Ontario Grade 3 students meeting the provincial standard in writing. Results are scored on a four-point scale, with a score of three or above being defined as meeting the provincial standard.

**Source:** The data is based on 2015 Education Quality and Assessment Office (EQAO) scores for Grade 3 students, administered by the EQAO. The Assessment tests the reading, writing and math skills students are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 3. Students write this test during a two-week testing window in May and/or June each year.

**Sample:** The 2015–2016 EQAO Writing Assessment was administered to 127,213 Grade 3 students.

**Data:**



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of teachers that implement a social and emotional learning program**

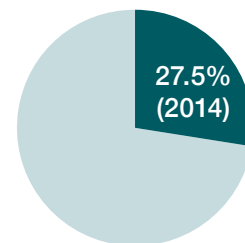
**Desired Direction of Change**



**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the percentage of teachers that implement a social and emotional learning program.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *School Mental Health Survey* led by Drs. Kathy Georgiades and Michael Boyle at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The SMHS is a cross-sectional study examining the associations between the school environment and student mental health and wellbeing.

**Sample:** A total of 1,326 Ontario Grade 1 to Grade 6 teachers completed the teacher survey.

**Data:**

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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who enter Grade 1 ready to learn**

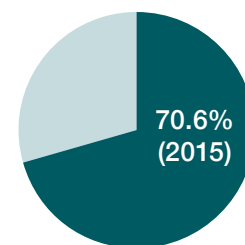
**Desired Direction of Change**



**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the percentage of students who meet the development targets for Grade 1 school readiness.

**Source:** Data is based on responses to the 2015 *Early Development Instrument* (EDI). The questionnaire is completed by kindergarten teachers to measure a child's ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations in five general domains.

**Sample:** The sample includes 135,936 Ontario Kindergarten student assessments, conducted by their teachers.

**Data:**

# Ontario Children Feel Valued

13

Ontario children are discovering who they are and who they want to be

## Indicator:

The percentage of children who say they have confidence in themselves

## Desired Direction of Change

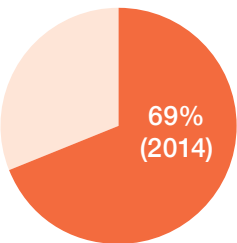
UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” or “strongly agree” they had confidence in themselves.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

## Data:



## Indicator:

The percentage of children who participate in art, music or drama activities outside of school

## Desired Direction of Change

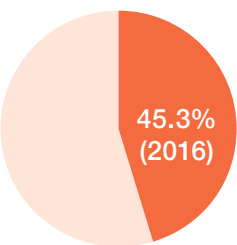
UP

**Definition:** This indicator is defined as the proportion of English-speaking and French-speaking Ontario students who participate in art, music or drama activities (outside of school) “at least once a week.”

**Source:** The data is based on 2015 Education Quality and Assessment Office (EQAO) scores for Grade 3 students, administered by the EQAO. The Assessment tests the reading, writing and math skills students are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 3. Students write this test during a two-week testing window in May and/or June each year.

**Sample:** The 2015–2016 Ontario student questionnaires were administered to 128,727 Grade 3 students.

## Data:



**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who are involved in community groups**

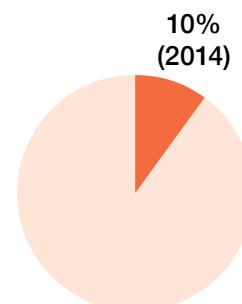
**Desired Direction of Change**

UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who are involved in community groups.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen's University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:****14**

## Ontario children are proud of their cultures and identities and live free from discrimination

**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who are treated badly or differently at school because of their race, ethnicity, colour of skin**

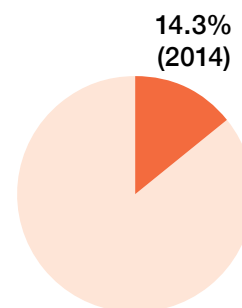
**Desired Direction of Change**

DOWN

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 10- to 12-year-old respondents who indicated they are treated badly or differently at school because of their race, ethnicity, colour of skin over a six-month period “once or a few times”, “once or twice a month”, “once or twice a week”, or “almost every day.”

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *School Mental Health Survey* led by Drs. Kathy Georgiades and Michael Boyle at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The SMHS is a cross-sectional study examining the associations between the school environment and student mental health and wellbeing.

**Sample:** A total of 11,347 Ontario students ages 10–12 received the survey.

**Data:**

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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who are treated badly or differently because of their gender identity or sexual orientation**

**Desired Direction of Change**



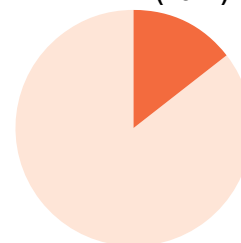
**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 10- to 12-year-old respondents who indicated they are treated badly or differently because of their gender identity or sexual orientation over a six-month period “once or a few times”, once or twice a month”, “once or twice a week”, or “almost every day.”

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *School Mental Health Survey* led by Drs. Kathy Georgiades and Michael Boyle at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The SMHS is a cross-sectional study examining the associations between the school environment and student mental health and wellbeing.

**Sample:** A total of 11,347 Ontario students ages 10–12 received the survey.

**Data:**

14.6%  
(2014)



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who feel other children accept them as they are**

**Desired Direction of Change**



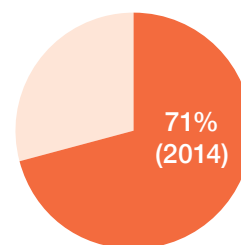
**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” or “strongly agree” other children accept them as they are.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:**

71%  
(2014)



# 15

## Ontario children can express what matters to them

### Indicator:

**The percentage of children who have someone in their family who listens to them when they speak**

### Desired Direction of Change



UP

### Definition:

The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” or “strongly agree” they have someone in their family who listens to them when they speak.

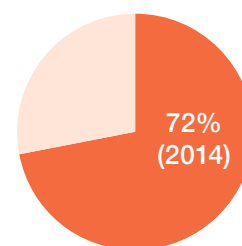
### Source:

The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

### Sample:

The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

### Data:



### Indicator:

**The percentage of children who feel they are encouraged to express their own view in their class(es)**

### Desired Direction of Change



UP

### Definition:

The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” or “strongly agree” they are encouraged to express their own view in their class(es).

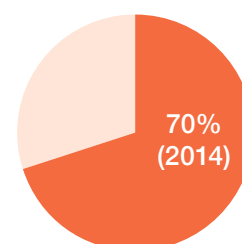
### Source:

The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

### Sample:

The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

### Data:





# Ontario Communities Support Children and Families

16

Ontario families are supported, engaged and inform the decisions that affect them

## Indicator:

The percentage of children who are involved in volunteer work

## Desired Direction of Change

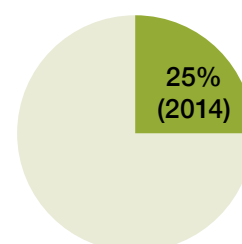
↑ UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who are involved in volunteer work.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen's University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

## Data:



## Indicator:

The percentage of parents/ caregivers who highly agree their child's school does a good job including them in their child's education

## Desired Direction of Change

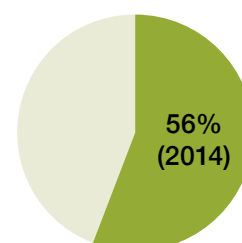
↑ UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of parents/ caregivers of Grade 4 students who “agree a lot” that their child's school does a good job including them in their child's education.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2015 *Trends in International Math and Science Survey* (TIMSS). TIMSS is administered every four years to Grade 4 and Grade 8 students. In 2015, data was collected from 57 jurisdictions. The response rates associated with the indicators are 77 per cent for the home questionnaire. Response rates on individual indicators ranged from 96 per cent and 99 per cent for the student questionnaire.

**Sample:** Ontario student data is derived from a random stratified sample of approximately 4,500 Grade 4 students.

## Data:



# 17

## Ontario families know about and easily access high quality resources in their communities

### Indicator:

**The percentage of parents who indicate that their children have access to after-school care**

### Desired Direction of Change

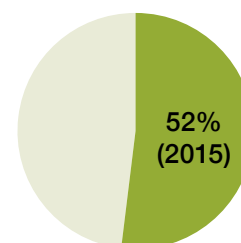
↑ UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of parents who indicated that their children have access to a supervised program during the after-school period.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014–2015 *CANPLAY* Study, by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.

**Sample:** The sample includes 762 parental responses for children and youth ages 6–12 residing in Ontario.

### Data:



### Indicator:

**The percentage of parents who feel public facilities and programs for sports/recreation meet their child's needs**

### Desired Direction of Change

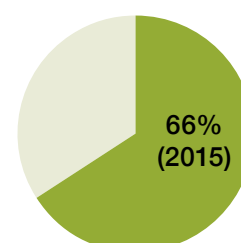
↑ UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of parents who indicate that available public facilities and programs to do physical activities or sports meet their child's need "quite or very" well.

**Source:** The data is based on a subset of responses to the 2014–2015 *Physical Activity Monitor*, conducted by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.

**Sample:** The sample includes 790 parental responses for children and youth ages 6–12 residing in Ontario.

### Data:



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**Indicator:**

**The percentage of children who feel that there are good places to spend their free time (e.g., recreation centres, parks, shopping centres)**

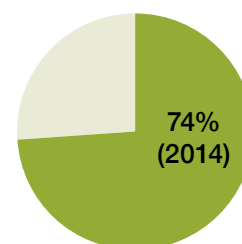
**Desired  
Direction  
of Change**



**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of 11- to 12-year-old respondents who “agree” or “strongly agree” that there are good places to spend their free time such as recreation centres, parks, shopping centres.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *Healthy Behaviour in School Age Children in Canada* survey. The survey is administered every four years by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen’s University on behalf of the World Health Organization and funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

**Sample:** The sample includes 1,641 students ages 11–12 from 81 Ontario schools.

**Data:**

---

**Indicator:**

**The percentage of parents who are satisfied with the accessibility of opportunities to be active in their community**

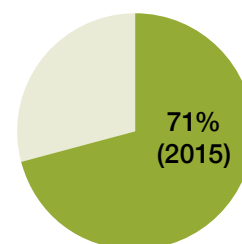
**Desired  
Direction  
of Change**



**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the proportion of parents who are “quite or very” satisfied with the accessibility of opportunities to be active in their community, such as cost and location.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014–2015 *CANPLAY* Study, by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.

**Sample:** The sample includes 895 parental responses for children and youth ages 6–12 residing in Ontario.

**Data:**

## Indicator:

**The percentage of families who are satisfied with health care in their community**

## Desired Direction of Change



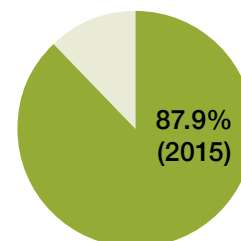
UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the percentage of Ontario families with at least one child 15 years or younger who are satisfied with health care in their community.

**Source:** The data is based on the responses to the 2015 *Health Care Experience Survey*, conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

**Sample:** The sample includes 2,414 Ontario survey respondents.

## Data:



## Indicator:

**The percentage of children who would speak to a school social worker, counsellor, psychologist, nurse or other school staff if they needed help for concerns regarding their mental health**

## Desired Direction of Change



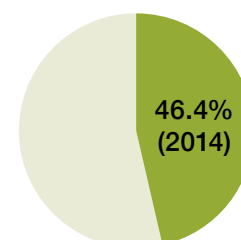
UP

**Definition:** The indicator is defined as the percentage of children who answered “yes” that they would speak to a school social worker, counsellor, psychologist, nurse or other school staff if they needed help for concerns regarding their mental health.

**Source:** The data is based on responses to the 2014 *School Mental Health Survey* led by Drs. Kathy Georgiades and Michael Boyle at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The SMHS is a cross-sectional study examining the associations between the school environment and student mental health and wellbeing.

**Sample:** A total of 11,347 Ontario students ages 10–12 received the survey.

## Data:



## Acknowledgements – *Gearing Up*

*Gearing Up* was developed over the course of a year with support and input from many people, including families, child development experts, Indigenous partners, community partners, and partners across 13 Ontario ministries including the ministries of: Children and Youth Services; Education; Tourism, Culture and Sport; Citizenship and Immigration; Health and Long-term Care; Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation; Community and Social Services; Housing; Transportation; Community Safety and Correctional Services; Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; Advanced Education and Skills Development; and Labour.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services appreciates the contributions of the organizations and individuals that shared their expertise, perspectives and experiences:

### Families

We would like to thank the many families across the province that shared insights on parenting children in the middle years. The following individuals and organizations helped to do outreach and bring these families together:

Bob Rumball Canadian Centre  
of Excellence for the Deaf

Boys and Girls Club of Thunder Bay

Britannia Woods Community House

Centre psychosocial d'Ottawa

Dilico Child and Family Services

Halton Multicultural Council Connections

Toronto Kiwanis Boys and Girls Clubs

Merrymount Family Support  
and Crisis Centre

Middle Childhood Matters Coalition

Ontario Inuit Children's Centre

Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa

Reach Out Centre for Kids

The Premier's Council on Youth  
Opportunities

Tungasuvvingat Inuit

Weechi-it-te-win Family Services

### Indigenous Partners

Anishinabek Nation and  
the Union of Ontario Indians

Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI)

Chiefs of Ontario

Grand Council Treaty #3

Independent First Nations

Métis Nation of Ontario

Nishnawbe Aski Nation

Ontario Federation of Indigenous  
Friendship Centres

Ontario Native Women's Association

Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre

Six Nations of the Grand River

Tungasuvvingat Inuit



## **Workshop Participants**

100 Pourcent Actifs, Extracurricular Activities  
4-H Ontario  
Adventure Place  
Afghan Women's Organization  
Aisling Discoveries Child & Family Centre  
Atlohsa Native Family Healing Services  
Autism Ontario  
Bahá'í Community of Canada  
Banff Avenue Community House  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Boys & Girls Club of West Scarborough  
Boys and Girls Club of Thunder Bay  
Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada  
Boys and Girls Clubs of Ottawa  
Brampton Multicultural Community Centre  
Bruce Woodgreen Early Learning Centre  
CAFCAN Social Services  
Caledon institute  
Canadian Centre for Gender & Sexual Diversity  
Canadian Council of Muslim Women  
Canadian Mental Health Association  
Canadian Mothercraft Society  
Canadian Women's Foundation  
Carlington Community Health Centre  
Children's Aid Society of Toronto  
Catholic Family Service Ottawa  
Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin

Catholic Children's Aid Society  
Child Develop Institute  
Centre psychosocial  
Centretown Community Health Centre  
Chatham-Kent Children's Services  
Chiefs of Ontario  
Child Development Resource  
Connection Peel  
Children and Youth Mental Health Services for Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry  
Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario  
Children's Centre Thunder Bay  
Citizen Advocacy  
City of Brampton  
City of Halton  
City of Mississauga  
City of Thunder Bay  
City of Toronto  
CivicAction  
Coaches Ontario  
Community Living North Bay  
Community Living Toronto  
Confederation Court Community House  
County of Wellington  
Craigwood Youth Services  
Crossroads Children's Centre  
Deaf Culture Centre  
Debra Dynes Family House  
Dietitians of Canada  
Dixie Bloor Neighborhood Centre

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board  
 East Metro Youth Services  
 Egale  
 Emily Murphy Non-Profit  
 Housing Corporation  
 Enaahrig  
 Erin Mills Youth Centre  
 ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment  
 and Development  
 Etobicoke Children's Centre  
 Family & Children's Services  
 of St. Thomas and Elgin  
 Family and Children's Services, Waterloo  
 Family Day Care Services  
 Family Services of York Region  
 Foster Parents Society of Ontario  
 George Jeffrey Children's Centre  
 Girl Guides of Canada  
 Hincks Dellcrest Centre  
 Holland Bloorview Kids  
 Rehabilitation Hospital  
 Hospital for Sick Children  
 Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society  
 Indspire  
 Investing in Children  
 John McGivney Children's Centre  
 Kerry's Place Autism  
 Kids Help Phone  
 Kinark Child and Family Services  
 Lansdowne Children's Centre-West

Macaulay Child Development Centre  
 Madame Vanier Children's Services  
 Maison Fraternité  
 Malton Neighbourhood Services  
 Malvern Family Resource Centre  
 McMaster University  
 MediaSmarts  
 Merrymount Children's Centre  
 Midaynta Community Services  
 Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto  
 Native Child and Family Services of Toronto  
 Nelson Youth Centres  
 Nexus Youth Services  
 North York Community House  
 NorWest Community Health Centre  
 Office of the Provincial Advocate  
 for Children and Youth  
 Ontario Association for Family Mediation  
 Ontario Association for the Support  
 of Physical and Health Education  
 Ontario Association of Children's  
 Rehabilitation Services  
 Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition  
 Ontario Medical Association  
 Ontario Native Women's Association  
 Ontario Public School Boards' Association  
 Ontario Student Nutrition Program Network  
 Our Kids Network, Halton  
 Oxford Children's Aid Society  
 Parent Resource Centre

Parents' Lifelines of Eastern Ontario  
 Parks and Recreation Ontario  
 Pathways Health Centre for Children  
 Peel Children and Youth Initiative  
 Peel Children's Centre  
 Peel Region  
 People for Education  
 Pinecrest-Queensway  
 Community Health Centre  
 PLASP Child Care Services  
 Polycultural Immigrant  
 and Community Services  
 Public Health Ontario  
 Quinte Children's Homes  
 Reach Out Centre for Kids  
 Ryerson University  
 St. Alban's Boys and Girls Club  
 Salvation Army Bethany Hope Centre  
 Sarnia Lambton Rebound  
 Sarnia Lambton Ontario Early Years Centre  
 Six Nations  
 Somerset West Community Health Centre  
 South East Ottawa Community Health Centre  
 Sport for Life  
 Surrey Place Centre  
 Thames Valley Children's Centre  
 The County of Lambton Social  
 Planning and Children Service's  
 The George Hull Centre  
 for Children & Families

The Ontario Federation of Home  
 and School Associations  
 Thunder Bay Children's Aid Society  
 Thunder Bay District Health Unit  
 Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre  
 Thunder Bay Ontario Provincial Police  
 Toronto Public Health  
 Toronto Public Library  
 Town of Caledon (Caledon Centre for  
 Recreation and Wellness)  
 United Way Toronto & York Region  
 Valoris for Children and Adults  
 of Prescott-Russell  
 Vanier Community Service Centre  
 Vanier Institute of the Family  
 Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health  
 Wesley Urban Ministries  
 West Neighbourhood House  
 West Scarborough Neighbourhood  
 Community Centre  
 Western Ottawa Community  
 Resource Centre  
 YMCA of Greater Toronto  
 YMCA of Kitchener-Waterloo  
 YMCA of South Western Ontario  
 YMCA-YWCA of the  
 National Capital Region  
 York Region District School Board  
 York University  
 Youth REX  
 Youthdale Treatment Centres

# Endnotes

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