

A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario Middle Years Children Thrive

Gearing Up lays the groundwork for an integrated and coordinated approach to the planning and delivery of services and programs for young people in Ontario ages 6–12 and their families.

COMMON VISION

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

GOALS



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Establish a balanced, wholistic and strengths-based approach to child development
- Target support to those who need it
- 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

Who are middle years children in Ontario today?

Ontario is home to more than **one million** children ages 6–12. They make up **7.4% of the total population**.



67% live in urban centres



33% live in small, rural or remote communities

They are more and more diverse

32%

are racialized

3%

are Indigenous

46%

are first or second generation Canadian

4%

are living with disabilities or special needs

At a developmental turning point

- Burst of brain development
- Identity formation and intersections
- Establishment of healthy habits and attitudes
- Increasing independence
- Onset of puberty

A time to watch for warning signs

- **Up to 74%** of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence
- **43%** of children spend at least 3 hours a day of sedentary screen-time
- **20% of girls** and **6% of boys** report feeling hopeless

Back to basics: supporting MY kids to thrive

1

Establish and model healthy habits (food, sleep, exercise)

2

Structure screen-free time

3

Support kids as they explore personal and cultural identities

4

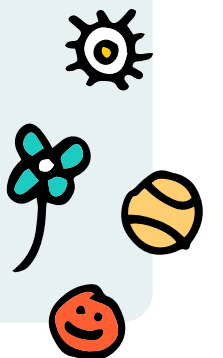
Recognize and encourage each child's strengths

5

Take an interest – in school, friends, opinions, online lives

6

Talk through and support them to express feelings





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

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.