

# PRESS RELEASE

*For Immediate Release*

## 2011 Ontario Student and Parent Survey Release

*Students make their voices heard on everything from Gay Straight Alliances, to fees and sex education*

Toronto (**21 October 2011**) - The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario (OSTA-AECO) released the results of their 2011 student survey on Friday and which show that while students are united in favour of students' rights to establish Gay Straight Alliances, their feelings are mixed when it comes to evaluating Ontario's sex education.

At the (OSTA-AECO) Fall General Meeting in Toronto, student trustees from around the province heard the results of the survey and will vote on a set of recommendations coming out of the survey report.

"We're looking forward to working with the new Minister of Education on some of these issues," says Jenny Williams, President of OSTA-AECO. "It's vital that students across Ontario have a chance to speak out about the things that matter to them. One of the ways we ensure that students' voices are heard is by conducting this annual survey – with survey questions developed by students and for students."

Over 7000 students from 70 of Ontario's 72 English, Catholic, and French school boards and from all regions of the province participated in the online survey. Student Vote and ScholarshipsCanada.com promoted the survey to students Ontario-wide, and were vital partners in the success of the survey. This year, for the first time, OSTA-AECO co-operated with People for Education to disseminate a complementary survey to Ontario's parents – over 2400 responded.

"The results of the survey give a great snapshot of students' and parents' thoughts on issues that mean a great deal to them," says Annie Kidder, Executive Director of People for Education. "Sometimes we forget who the education system is for, and this survey helps remind us. It's all about the students."

### **Among the results from the student survey:**

- 88% of students think a student wanting to establish a Gay Straight Alliance Club in their school should be allowed to do so.
- Only 46% of students would take the Grade 10 Civics/Careers course if it were optional.
- 59% of students feel that healthy food options are being provided in their schools.
- 47% of students feel pressure to finish high school in four years. Interestingly, most of those students say the pressure comes from their parents. Parents, on the other hand, say the pressure to finish in four years comes from the school system. A number of parents say they encourage their children to take five years to complete high school.
- 61% of students say it is at least sometimes acceptable for students and teachers to connect

through social media outlets (e.g. Facebook). Parents were much less likely (42%) to agree it was acceptable.

- 97% of students think teachers who coach/supervise extra-curricular activities be recognized for their contribution. Over 90% of parents agreed.
- 70% of students think schools should take action on cyber-bullying between students even when it occurs outside of school time, compared to 84% of parents.
- 45% of students did not feel that sex-education classes adequately addressed concerns of a sexual nature that they had or expected to encounter. Only 37% of parents had similar concerns.
- 36% of students said they would not know where to go for help if they or a friend was experiencing mental health problems, such as stress, anxiety, or depression. Only 26% of parents said they wouldn't know where to go for help. Both parents and students commented that even though they might know where to go, there were often waiting lists or that sometimes the help wasn't sufficient.
- 36% of students said that at some time a fee charged for sports, teams, or extracurricular activities has prevented them from participating.

The recommendations from the (OSTA-AECO) Fall General Meeting will be available on Monday, October 24, 2011.

The full report is available on both the (OSTA-AECO) website at <http://www.osta-aeco.org/> and People for Education's website at [www.peopleforeducation.ca](http://www.peopleforeducation.ca).

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