



YOUTH CONFIDENCE IN LEARNING AND THE FUTURE: Mobilizing Youth as Agents of Change in Milton



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INTRODUCTION

Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future is a youth engagement and research initiative that involves students as partners in school and in community change. This study examines how young people's confidence in their learning affects their aspirations, their confidence in the future, and their belief that they can act on the world to have a positive impact. The Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future initiative consists of three components: research, student engagement, and school and community development.

Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future is a collaborative effort (funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation) between the Canadian Education Association and five Ontario social planning councils who coordinate the work locally and are the primary contact with schools in the municipalities of Milton, Hamilton, Peterborough, Sudbury and Toronto. The Canadian Education Association coordinated the overall initiative and had primary responsibility for the development of an on-line survey for youth and related written materials.

The Canadian Education Association contracted with Ascentum Incorporated to assist with instrument design to ensure confidentiality, security, the successful launch of the on-line survey, and to perform the initial analysis of the survey findings. The survey questions were tested with a sample of youth for readability, language, and timing prior to implementation.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This initiative is influenced by a report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century called "*Learning: The Treasure Within*"¹. This 1996 ground-breaking report reinforces the view that learning should nurture all aspects of a person's potential and that education throughout life should be seen as both a public and individual right and good. The *Four Pillars of Education*, as described in Chapter 4, serves as the foundational philosophy for the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future study.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF EDUCATION

The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century was chaired by Jacques Delors, an economist and former President of the European Commission.

¹ For more information on *Learning: The Treasure Within* and *The Four Pillars of Education*, as described in Chapter 4, please refer to: www.unesco.org/delors.

The Commission studied the challenges facing education in the 21st century – the promises and risks of globalization – and made recommendations to policy makers from a broad range of developed and developing countries. There are a number of different views on what the primary goal of education should be. It ranges from education’s contribution to the growth and development of children (human development perspective) to the preparation of young people for the labour market (human capital perspective). Although some believe that the various goals are incompatible, earlier debates about the purpose of education are giving way to a broader understanding of what learning is, where and how it takes place, and its pivotal role in human, social, democratic, and economic development.

“*Learning: The Treasure Within*” has had a significant influence on international dialogues about lifelong learning, as it attempted to reconcile different political ideologies and views about the purposes and requirements of education in the 21st century. It also recognized that education has other important purposes in addition to providing a skilled workforce for the economy, foremost among which are promoting co-operation and solidarity in order to advance social cohesion, strength and unity. The Commission proposed the Four Pillars of Education as the foundations of learning throughout life:

To know; To do; To live together; and To be.

Below is a description of the Four Pillars of Education. In order to provide a Canadian illustration of how the Pillars may be applied, the Canadian Council on Learning’s (CCL) adaptation for the Composite Learning Index (CLI) is also mentioned.

LEARNING TO KNOW

Learning to know is about learning to think and learning to learn. It is both a means and an end of human existence; a means because people have to understand the world around them in order to lead lives of dignity, develop work skills and communicate with others; an end because it underpins the “pleasure that can be derived from understanding, knowledge and discovery”. It is a pleasure that used to be reserved for researchers, philosophers and poets but, with a good education it is available to everyone. Learning to know includes intellectual curiosity, critical thought and the capacity to make independent judgments – competencies that are important in the workplace and that enhance people’s lives outside of work.

In the Composite Learning Index, learning to know includes the development of skills and knowledge needed to function in the world. These skills include literacy, numeracy, critical thinking and general knowledge. The Composite Learning Index uses data from existing surveys to construct its measures.

LEARNING TO DO

Learning to do is about acquiring both occupational and ‘people skills’. Delors recognized that new types of skills are required in the modern-day workplace and that personal competence are becoming increasingly important, not only in the service industries but even in the high tech organizations of the future.

Personal competence comes from a mix of skills and talents, including those acquired through technical and vocational training, “social behaviour, personal behaviour and willingness to take risks.” It includes the personal competence to deal with many situations and to work in teams.

With respect to learning throughout one’s lifetime, learning to do could involve alternating between study and work. The Composite Learning Index defines learning to do as the acquisition of applied skills that are often linked to occupational success such as computer training, managerial training, and apprenticeships.

LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

Learning to live together entails understanding other people, appreciating inter-dependence, and learning to manage conflict. While all four Pillars are considered to be extremely important, the Commission explicitly put greater emphasis on learning to live together as it is the foundation of education. It recognized that “to induce people to implement common projects or to manage the inevitable conflicts in an intelligent and peaceful way” was a lofty, but necessary goal if we want to build healthy societies.

The implications for education are two-fold. First, the need for students to learn about human diversity and develop an awareness of the similarities and inter-dependence of all people, and second, the recognition that collaborative projects can create “a new form of identity which enables people to transcend the routines of their personal lives and attach value to what they have in common versus what divides them”. The Composite Learning Index defines learning to live together in terms of the values of respect, concern for others, fostering social and interpersonal skills, and an appreciation of the diversity of Canadians.

LEARNING TO BE

Learning to be is about human development and nurturing the ‘whole person’. Education should contribute to the complete human development of every person, a “dialectic process” that involves both self-knowledge and relationships with others. Learning to be involves developing one’s personality, acting with greater autonomy, exercising judgment, and assuming personal responsibility.

The Commission argued that children and young people must be offered every opportunity for artistic, aesthetic, scientific, cultural and social discovery. Imagination and creativity “must be accorded a special place” so as not to be threatened by “uniformity in individual behaviour”. The Composite Learning Index defines learning to be as contributing to the development of a person’s body, mind and spirit, including personal discovery and creativity. The indicators include learning through culture and learning through sports.

Pillar of Education	Delors/ UNESCO	Canadian Council on Learning Composite Learning Index
To Know	Learning to think and learning to learn. Includes developing intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and ability to make independent judgments.	The development of skills and knowledge needed to function in the world, including literacy, numeracy, critical thinking & general knowledge.
To Do	Occupational skills, as well as ‘people skills’, the personal competencies to deal with many situations and work in teams.	Acquisition of applied skills that are often linked to occupational success, such as computer training, managerial training, and apprenticeships.
To Live Together	Developing an understanding of other people, appreciating inter-dependence, understanding what people have in common, and learning to manage conflict.	Values of respect and concern for others, fostering social and interpersonal skills, and an appreciation of the diversity of Canadians.
To Be	Nurturing the whole person/human development. Developing one’s personality, acting with greater autonomy, judgment, and personal responsibility.	Learning that develops a person’s body, mind and spirit. This also includes personal discovery and creativity.

The Four Pillars of Education still have tremendous currency. A 2007 European conference on “Learning to Live Together: Impact and Future of the Delors Report” identifies key issues, addressed in “*Learning: The Treasure Within*” that are highly relevant to the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future initiative. These include:

- Two major purposes of learning:
 - To develop key competencies based on the *ability to learn*, rather than on the *accumulation* of learning; and
 - To accept that there are multiple identities.

This latter point, it was stressed, should lead us away from ‘us and them’ thinking to a vision of belonging and participation;

- The acknowledgement that young people’s role in their learning is rapidly changing from one of “absorbers of information” to one of “social change agents” in light of shifting definitions of what is knowledge and who defines knowledge (Carneiro and Draxler 2008).

For the purpose of this report, the terms “visible minority” and “racialized” are used interchangeably and refer to the definition of visible minority outlined in the Employment Equity Act.

PRESENT STUDY

The Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future study aims to understand and create conditions that encourage youth's confidence in their learning both in and out of school, (broadly understood to include the people, the supports, and the organizations that nurture learning) based on the Four Pillars of Education.

Meaningful student engagement contributes to a deeper connection with learning; an improved automatic awareness of their own knowledge including their ability to understand, control, and manipulate their own cognition; and a greater level of responsibility among learners. Cognition pertains to the mental processes of perception, memory, judgment, and reasoning.

The researchers hope to examine youth's confidence in their learning and the future from the perspective of their level of belief in that, through their actions, they can become agents of change in their world. Acting on the world to have a positive impact is embedded in both the process whereby students are involved, and the content of the issues/questions on which they are being asked to deliberate.

As the authentic and active involvement of youth is at the heart of this initiative, students, schools and the broader community are involved in examining what and how students are learning both in and out of school. It also looks at whether youth have confidence in their learning – both the process and the content – and how this affects their aspirations and their expectations for the future.

The Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future study aims to answer questions such as:

1. Do young people have confidence in learning (in and out of school) and the future?
2. Based on the five dimensions of confidence, how do young people feel about their learning experiences and their learning environments?

The approach of the Four Pillars of Education will serve as a reference for the conceptualization of 'learning' because it is well suited to the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future initiative in the following ways:

- It can be applied to both in school and out of school learning;
- It reconciles different views of the purposes of education, thereby increasing the likelihood of agreement around further action;
- It holds a broad appeal and can be applied in Canada and other countries.

This understanding of education allows for a sweeping interpretation of what learning is, where and how it takes place, and its pivotal role in human, social, democratic, and economic development. Youth's confidence in their learning and the future has an impact on youth's perceptions of community engagement, community solidarity, and the self-image as contributing members of their community.

THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF CONFIDENCE

For the purpose of this study, the Canadian Education Association has developed five dimensions pertaining to confidence with the intent of facilitating our interpretation of the Four Pillars of Education, and our ability to measure youth confidence in learning and the future in a consistent manner. These five dimensions emerging out of the Pillars are:

1. *Trust:* Both in relationships and in institutions
2. *Engagement :* Deep connection with learning, with school; personal relevance
3. *Efficacy and Empowerment:* Belief that you can act to make a difference, either alone or with others
4. *Fit:* Between in and out of school learning
5. *Future:* Being aware of/thinking about the future

The five dimensions of confidence are further sub-divided into the categories of '*in school*', '*out of school*' and '*overall*'², experiences and/or environments (see Appendix A Table 1: Categories of Each Dimension, page 40). The sub-division of dimensions into experiences and/or environments permits the researchers to: further investigate, compare, and relate findings; consider related implications; and make recommendations for future action.

The following working definitions and assumptions reflect the understanding of youth confidence as it relates to learning and the future for this study:

1. Confidence includes young people's confidence in themselves, and in organizations and institutions.

² To help the reader distinguish between results as they relate to the sub-divided categories of '*in school*', '*out of school*' and '*overall*', they are italicized and underlined throughout the report.

- Confidence in themselves: a belief in their own abilities and competence, and the related expectation that they can act on the world to have a positive impact;
 - Confidence in organizations and institutions: a belief in the responsiveness of organizations and institutions and/or their effectiveness in performing their designated roles.
2. Confidence is a function of a person's relationship with the world. Young people's confidence is not fixed; it can be influenced by the world around them. Related to the above, confidence is generally structural or situational rather than an inherent attribute of individuals.
 3. Confidence is not always or necessarily positive; it can have negative implications or consequences. For example, exaggerated self-confidence can result in arrogance or risk-taking behaviour.
 4. Learning results in social and cultural capital that has a positive influence on young people's aspirations. The less confidence young people have in their learning, the less positive their expectations, aspirations and actions will be.
 5. Young people's expectations of the future and their aspirations can be different. Expectations are what young people expect to happen based on their perceptions and understandings; aspirations are what they want to happen. Their level of confidence in the future lies in the difference that exists between their expected future and the future they desire.

Learning environments that support young people's engagement, voice, sense of urgency or control, and their ability to think critically increase their confidence and capacity to learn throughout their lives and to act so as to meet their aspirations.

SITE SELECTION

A review of potential sites in the Halton Region was conducted in the initial phase of the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future initiative and after careful consideration Milton was identified by Community Development Halton as a prime site for this study.

The decision to proceed with Milton was made in consultation with the Halton District School Board and the Canadian Education Association and was heavily influenced by the social profile of Milton.

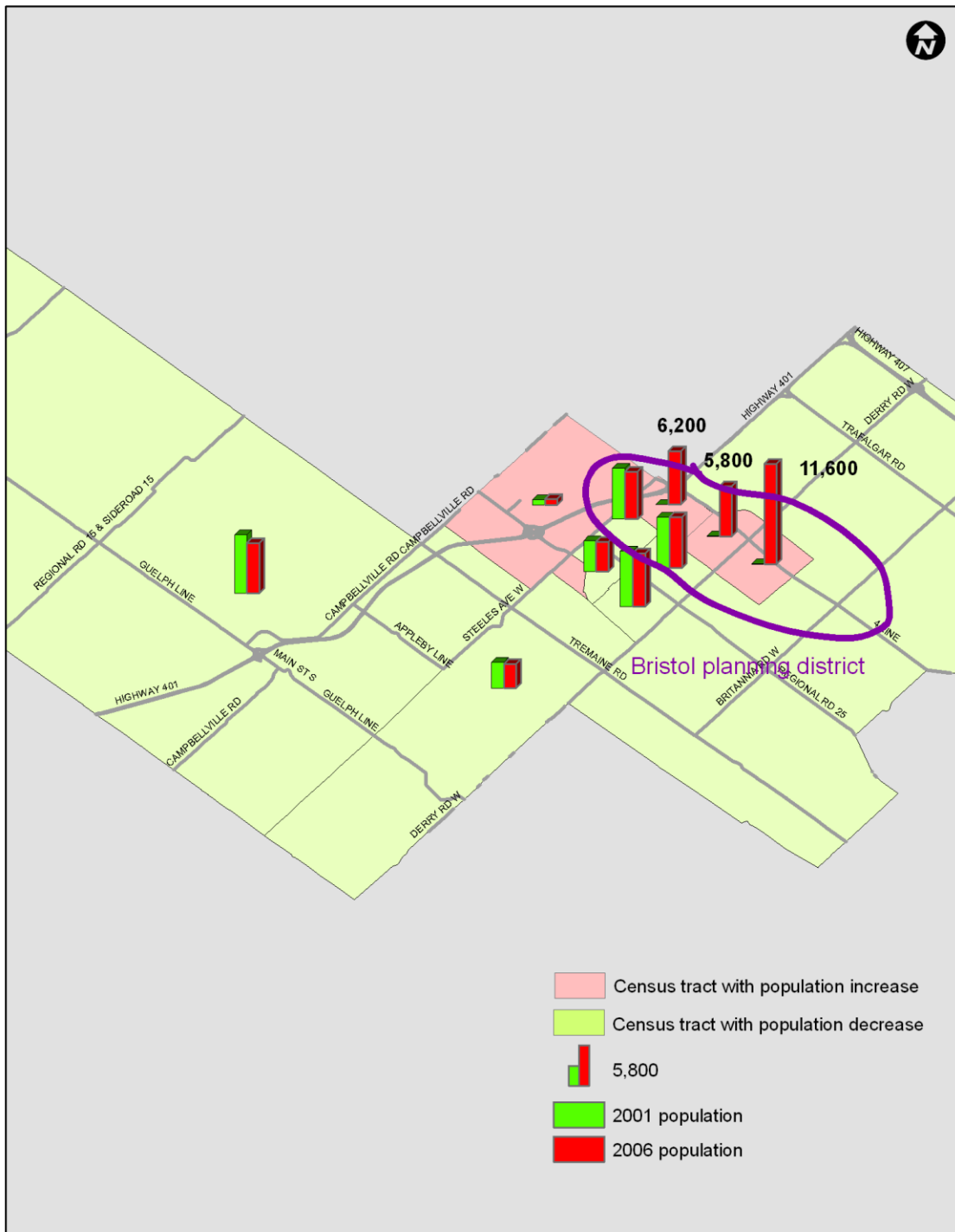
SOCIAL PROFILE OF MILTON

Community Development Halton released a report, *A Social Profile of Milton 2009: A Changing Social Landscape*, demonstrating the changing face of Milton. The report indicates that after years with no significant growth, the population of the Town of Milton soared from 31,470 to 53,900 between 2001 and 2006. The addition of 22,430 persons represents a 71% increase over a 5-year period.

This growth rate far exceeds both the national (5.4%) and provincial (6.6%) averages. In fact, the Town of Milton was the fastest growing community in Canada between 2001 and 2006. It is projected that the region's population will reach 629,000 in 2021 representing an increase of about 39%. The population of the Town of Milton will increase from 53,900 in 2006 to 147,000 in 2021 (+172%). Milton's share of the region's population will nearly double from 12% to 23%.

As shown in Map 1 on page 10, some areas of Milton significantly gained population (shaded in light red), while many experienced no growth or losses (shaded in green). Almost all the growth occurred in the newly developed area (part of the Bristol planning district). For the purpose of this document, this area is named the "new area" as shown on Map 2 on page 11.

Map 1. Population Change by census tract (2001-2006), Town of Milton

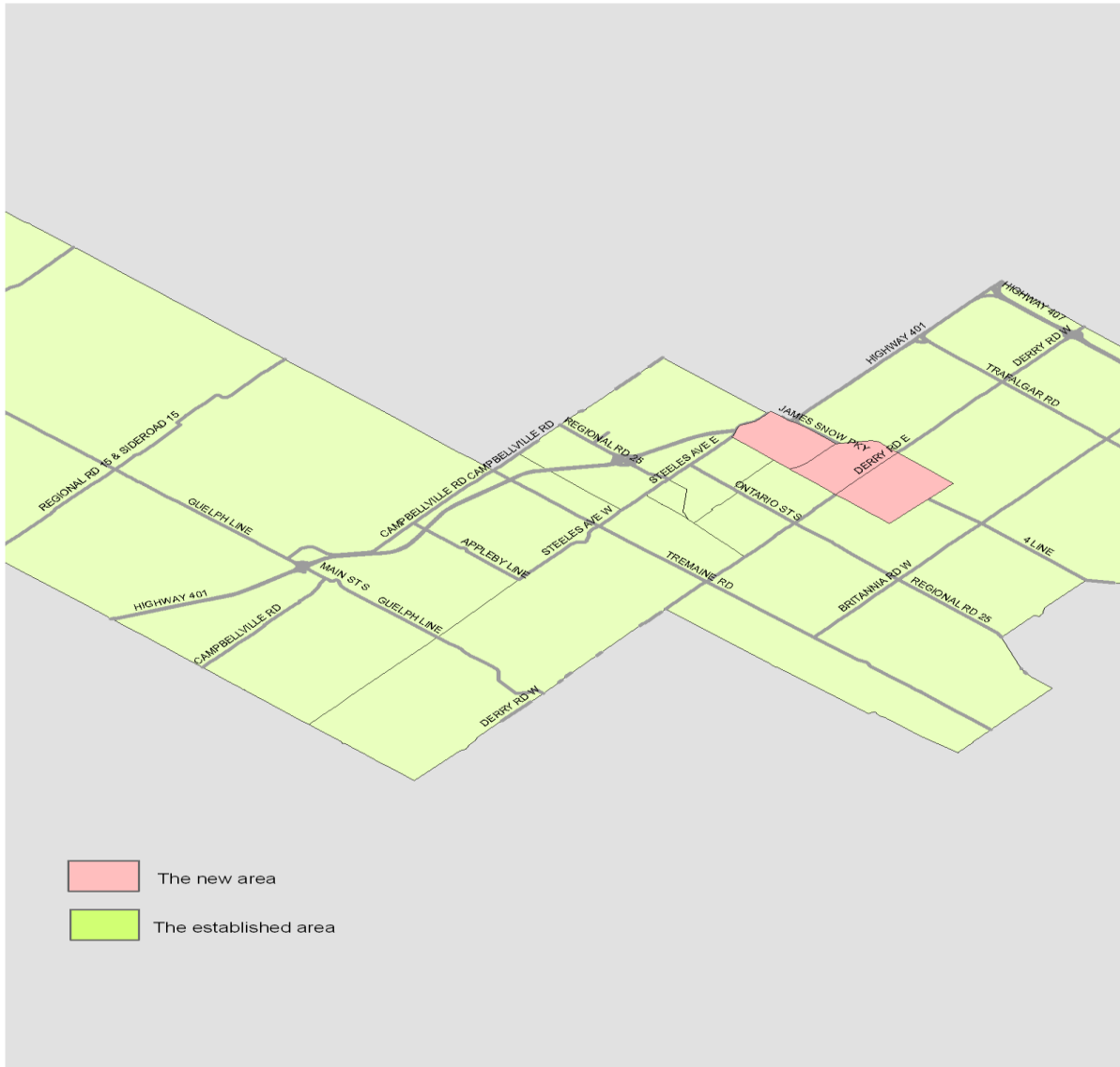


Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

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For the purpose of this discussion, the rest of the municipality is named the “established area” which includes the existing urban area and the surrounding rural areas (Map 2).

Map 2. New and Established Areas, Town of Milton



OVERVIEW OF THE YOUTH CONFIDENCE IN LEARNING AND THE FUTURE INITIATIVE

OVERALL PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Canadian Education Association led the coordination of the Provincial study and is also responsible for the development of key tools implemented to gather input from participating youth for each of the participating communities.

ENGAGEMENT OF SCHOOL BOARDS IN HALTON

In the spring of 2010, representatives of Community Development Halton initiated conversations with Halton District School Board. At the end of August of 2010, representatives of the Canadian Education Council, Community Development Halton, and the Halton District School Board solidified a partnership between the organizations for this initiative. Halton District School Board confirmed that as Community Development Halton is working in partnership with them, the standard application process (including submission to ethics committee, parent consent forms, and review process) would not apply in this circumstance. This defined partnership expedited the research team's ability to concentrate on the carrying out the required activities in a timely and efficient manner. In the fall of 2010, Community Development Halton began collaboration with the Halton District School Board and agreed on a process for rolling out the initiative.

MILTON SPECIFIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Community Development Halton identified a research team to carry out the objectives of the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future initiative, in consultation with an Advisory Committee that is comprised of representatives from: the Canadian Education Association, the Halton District School Board, and Community Development Halton. This Advisory Committee provided input on the initiative's framework and questions, reviewed the survey and debriefing session results, discussed implications of what the youth shared and will contribute to identifying opportunities for future action.

METHODOLOGY

An on-line survey was the primary tool utilized to gather information. In order to gauge how students feel about the five dimensions of confidence, the contracted research team created a series of scales based on questions that are meant to specifically target the dimensions (see Appendix A Table 1: Categories of Each Dimension on page 40 as it provides descriptive statistics for each of these dimensions (constructs) and their subscales). Prior to administering the survey to students in the selected school, the survey was pilot-tested via focus groups with students to provide them with the opportunity to influence the content and structure of the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future survey.³

The Community Development Halton research team introduced the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future study to nine separate classes of Grade 10 students and their teachers in one of Milton's public high schools, in an effort to engage and prepare them for their participation. Students were apprised of the purpose of the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future initiative; the impact their involvement would have on the findings of the study, through their completion of the survey; our invitation for them to return and participate in a debriefing session related to the experience with the on-line survey; our commitment to come back and provide them with an overview of the initial findings that came out of the on-line survey; and also to further engage them in a discussion around their impressions of these findings.

The final draft of survey was reviewed by Community Development Halton and the Halton District School Board and was subsequently uploaded onto the Canadian Education Association website for our implementation in March of 2011. The introduction of the study took place on Monday, February 28, 2011; the launch of the on-line survey for Milton took place on Tuesday, March 1, 2011. We exceeded our goal of 150 completed surveys and realized a total of 166 grade 10 students including 68 (41%) females, 96 (57.8%) males; and two students who did not identify their gender. Students who elected to attend the debriefing session came for lunch and participated in an informal discussion on Wednesday, March 2, 2011. At that time, students were made aware of opportunities for continued participation in the initiative that includes their involvement in developing an action plan.

³ Please see Appendix C for a complete list of Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future survey questions and potential responses on page 46.

The Community Development Halton research team received the preliminary results of the on-line survey for Milton at the beginning of May 2011. By mid-May, the initial findings were reviewed and shared with the Halton District School Board, the Canadian Education Association, and the students interested in the survey results. At the end of May 2011, representatives of the Canadian Education Association, the Halton District School Board, and Community Development Halton discussed the preliminary findings and established how the next steps in the process would be carried out.

SURVEY RESULTS

TESTING RELATIONSHIPS: CORRELATIONS

A correlation describes whether two variables are related. The variables in this study are the five dimensions of confidence that were developed by the Canadian Education Association and emerge out of the Four Pillars of Education. They include: *trust*, *engagement*, *efficacy* and *empowerment*, *fit* and *future*. While a number of relationships between the dimensions have been identified, for the purpose of this study Community Development Halton is reporting the stronger relationships.

For example, a strong positive relationship between two variables would realize a Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) between +.40 to +.69. It is important to note that Appendix A Table 2: Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) with Significant Level Measured Between Dimensions on page 41, specifies the strength of the relationship between each of the identified dimensions of confidence, and also includes a report on the only two survey questions that are analyzed outside the context of the dimensions: "I do well in most of my classes"; and "I try my best in most of my classes".

The results of the survey demonstrate to us that a number of strong positive relationships exist between the five dimensions of confidence. A few examples include strong positive relationships between:

- *Trust in school* and *Engagement in school*; (0.69)
- *Trust in school* and *Fit in and out of school*; (0.65)
- *Confidence in the Future* and *Future Aspirations*; (0.63)
- *Efficacy* and *Empowerment in school* and *Fit in and out of school*; (0.62)
- *Efficacy* and *Empowerment out of school* and *Fit in and out of school*; (0.62)
- *Efficacy* and *Empowerment in school* and *Efficacy* and *Empowerment out of school*; (0.61)
- *Engagement in school* and *Fit in and out of school*; (0.61)

The research team investigated specific characteristics that may influence the perceptions of the survey respondents, in an effort to explore the five dimensions of confidence further and to gain additional insights on how students feel about their learning and the future. Specific characteristics that were identified and explored in this study include: Gender, Aboriginal Status, Immigrant Status, Language Spoken in the Home, and Mother's Education. Based on this process, it was established that there are significant differences among respondent characteristics of Gender, Immigrant Status and Language Spoken in the Home.

GENDER

Findings from the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future survey demonstrate that gender differences do exist between male and female students as it relates to the following dimensions of confidence: *efficacy* and *empowerment*, and *future* (see Appendix B Figure 1: Gender, on page 43). The findings from the study also show differences between male and female students in each of the five dimensions of confidence as it relates to their *out of school* experience and/or environment; with females scoring higher in *efficacy* and *empowerment*, *future orientation*; *confidence in the future*; *future aspirations*; and *overall future*.

In contrast, when it comes to their learning experience and/or environment *in school*, both groups show that there is only a slight difference between males and females in the following dimensions of confidence: *trust*, *engagement*, *efficacy* and *empowerment*; and *fit between in and out of school learning*. Even though females show an overall higher level of *efficacy* and *empowerment*, both males and females tend to view their school environment similarly. For example, when students were asked the question “I know what I am trying to achieve at school” there was only a 3% difference between their responses in the strongly agree/agree categories with females showing 69% and males at 66%.

When reviewing the *in school* results of the survey, the researchers noted that differences seemed less apparent between males and females while they were in school. It is a well-known fact based in theories of human development that males and females share different experiences. Specifically, the work of Albert Bandura and social learning theory states that motivational and self-regulatory mechanisms rooted in cognitive activity regulate gender and development and functioning. These include perceptions of personal efficacy, aspirations, outcome expectations rooted in a value system, perceptions of sociocultural constraints and opportunities and evaluative standards (Bussey and Bandura 1999). This, in effect, prompted the researchers to ask the question “why?”

A hypothesis that may contribute to the explanation of the *in school* and *out of school* gender similarities and differences is that, perhaps, a phenomenon is occurring with the students when they enter the school. Is it plausible that males and females take on a similar identity such as ‘student’ while in school? Also, does this experience change the students’ self-perception while in that environment or having that experience?

Perhaps the students view their experiences as shared by the ‘student group’ versus how they perceive their individual experiences out of school. Although *in school* and *out of school* experiences hold an element of individuality for students, the school environment brings together a homogeneous student population.

As such, students may view themselves as part of the school as a whole and the student body as a whole, and therefore, share a common perspective on their experiences and environment as it relates to the school as an the institution.

Social learning theory suggests that interaction between internal and external influences and an appreciation of the role of symbolization in cognition forms the basis for behaviour (Bussey and Bandura 1999). In the school environment students are learners; therefore they are individuals in the role of student learners, which binds them together as a whole. It is not suggested that students do not have the opportunity to be autonomous within the school but rather, their perceptions of themselves may shift (unconsciously) once in the school. The school as an institution has established rules, norms and climate that are necessary for it to carry out its responsibility of educating students. As a result, this may impact how the students function and respond once they are in the school environment and this discovery is recommended as an area of further enquiry.

According to Trotter (2010), the central process of learning is seen to be that of imitation and observation. Behaviour is learned through observation or modelling and is then shaped by internal cognitive processes. Attention, retention, production and motivation affect the process of learning. The child must first pay attention to the behaviour, then must retain the observed behaviour, then produce the observed behaviour, and finally, motivation is necessary to sustain the efforts of these processes and the child must value the anticipated consequences of behaviour. Children can learn through observing the different performances of male and female behaviour. However, the extents to which they learn the details of the styles of behaviour and become proficient at them depend on their perceived efficacy to master the modelled activities, opportunities to put them into practice and the social reactions they produce (Bussey and Bandura 1999).

Perceived self-efficacy is concerned with people's belief in their capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action needed to exercise control over given events. Self-beliefs of efficacy can have diverse effects on psychosocial functioning (Bandura 1989). People tend to avoid activities and situations they believe exceed their coping capabilities, but they readily undertake activities and select social environments they judge themselves capable of handling (Bandura 1989; Ozer and Bandura 1990).

Research has noted that a person's *self-efficacy* is an important factor in regulating behaviour (Bussey and Bandura 1999; Robbins, et al., 2006). Specifically, confidence and self-doubt are important issues that affect a person's actions. This means that individuals who view themselves as capable are more likely to take on challenges they know they can perform and avoid challenges that they are not capable of completing (Robbins et al., 2006). Moreover, people who have high self-efficacy are more likely to "persist in the face of adversity" (Robbins et al., 2006).

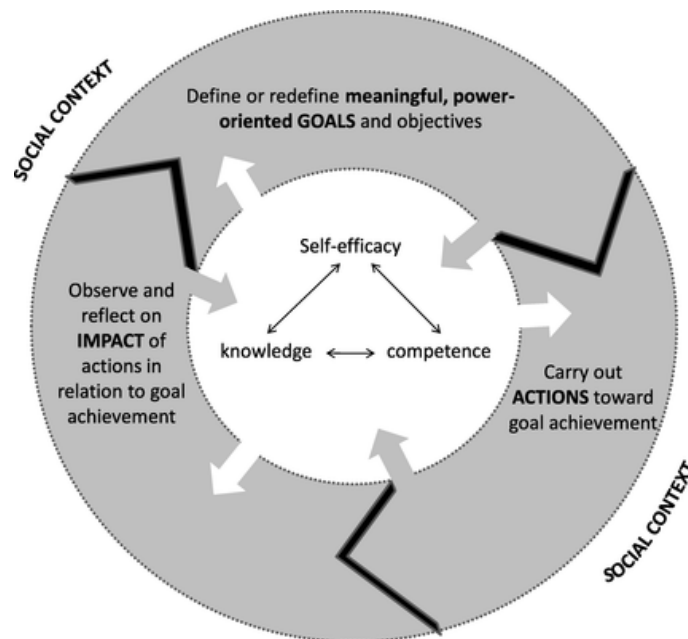
This leads to Bandura’s notion of *self-reinforcement*; when people set standards for themselves and meet them, they reward themselves through *self-reinforcement*, and when standards are not met, they impose guilt on themselves (Robbins et al., 2006). This becomes a process of self-regulation.

Self-efficacy facilitates empowerment whereby empowerment relates to “one’s perceived and actual ability to determine the course of one’s life is determined” (Evans 1992). The process of empowerment is largely concerned with power. As such, empowerment can be defined as:

... an iterative process in which a person who lacks power sets a personally meaningful goal oriented toward increasing power, takes action toward that goal, and observes and reflects on the impact of this action, drawing on his or her evolving self-efficacy, knowledge, and competence related to the goal. Social context influences all six process components and the links among them (Bennett Cattaneo and Chapman 2010).

The process of empowerment is not linear, rather, a person cycles through various aspects of empowerment (see Diagram 1, the Empowerment Process Model below) based on particular goals and their process of obtaining it. Bennett Cattaneo and Chapman (2010) state that: “the successful outcome of the process of empowerment is a personally meaningful increase in power that a person obtains through his or her own efforts”.

Diagram 1. The Empowerment Process Model



The 2007 European conference on “Learning to Live Together: Impact and Future of the Delors Report” identifies a key issue, addressed in “*Learning: The Treasure Within*” that supports the following hypothesis: a contributing factor that explains the in school and out of school gender similarities and differences is that, perhaps, a phenomenon is occurring with the students when they enter the school.

One of the two major purposes of learning is to accept that a person has multiple identities, thus fostering a forum whereby students move away from an ‘us and them’ philosophy towards a vision of belonging and participation.

The acts of observation and then imitation provide a basis for students regardless of gender to adopt behaviors that conform to social norms and encourage a generally cohesive learning environment. The manner in which the adoption of this identity affects the student’s self-perception can be observed through their: individual capabilities, ability to cope, and inclination to challenge or take risks. This in turn, feeds into the student’s resiliency in the face of adversity and empowerment, regardless of gender.

IMMIGRANT STATUS

One of the study’s most interesting findings emerges when the differences among students who were born outside of Canada (including those who arrived between 0-5 years old) and students who were born in Canada were examined. There are several differences that exist between the two groups in almost each of the five dimensions of confidence. Specifically, the results indicate that immigrant students demonstrate a higher level of confidence in learning and the future, have a more positive outlook on their learning experiences, as well as a more positive outlook on their learning environment. This insight is particularly important given the changing profile of Milton. Out of a total of 165 students who responded to the survey, 143 (86%) answered yes when they were asked “Were you born in Canada”; and 22 (13%) answered no.

TRUST

Findings also indicate significant differences between those who were born outside of Canada and those born in Canada in the dimension of *trust* and each of the sub-divided categories of *trust: in school, out of school, and overall*. Appendix B Figure 2: Immigrant Status, on page 44, shows the breakdown of the differences between Canadian born and those born abroad in the various categories of *trust*. There was no significant difference between those born outside of Canada and those born in Canada as it relates to the dimension of *efficacy* and *empowerment* in any of the sub-categories.

A higher level of *trust* is present among students born outside of Canada than students born in Canada. *Trust*, in the context of the five dimensions of confidence, refers to trust in relationships and in institutions. When students were asked to rank from strongly disagree to strongly agree the following statement “There is at least one adult at school I can discuss personal problems with”, 37% of students born in Canada strongly agree/agree compared to 50% of students born outside of Canada. Overall, students born outside of Canada scored an average of 12% higher in responses of strongly agree/agree than those born in Canada in the area of *trust*. Some examples of questions and responses relating to *trust* include:

Question: In school, students are encouraged to discuss and question things

Response: 76% born outside of Canada versus 54% born in Canada

Question: Young people are welcome and respected in my community

Response: 71% born outside of Canada versus 55% born in Canada

Question: I trust most of my people in my community

Response: 62% born outside of Canada versus 43% born in Canada

ENGAGEMENT

Students born outside of Canada are more engaged *out of school*. There is a significant difference between *engagement out of school* for those born abroad than those born in Canada. When students were asked to rank from strongly disagree to strongly agree the following statement “There are enough interesting things for young people to do in my community”, 36% of students born in Canada strongly agree/agree compared to 62% of students born outside of Canada.

A similar contrast is found with responses to the statement “I like to do things that make my community a better place” with 52% of students born in Canada indicating strongly agree/agree compared to 80% of students born outside of Canada, a 28% difference between responses. Furthermore, the results show that a significant difference exists between those born outside of Canada and those born in Canada in the category of *overall engagement*, with an average of 15% higher response of strongly agree/agree for students born outside of Canada. As a result, it is recommended that further investigations take place in the areas of community opportunities that immigrant youth are involved with; how they experience these activities; and how they are supported in their participation.

Students who were not born in Canada are significantly more likely to see a *fit between* their *in and out of school learning* than their Canadian born counterparts. This means that when responding to the statement “My teachers are interested in what I learn or do outside of school”, 38% of students born in Canada strongly agree/agree with the statement, compared to 64% of students born outside of Canada, representing a 26% difference. Other questions and responses relating to differences between students born in Canada versus those born abroad in the dimension of *fit between in and out of school learning* include:

Question: The views of students who have different backgrounds from mine make my classes more interesting

Response: 77% of students born outside of Canada versus 55% of students born in Canada

Question: I learn more important things in school than out of school

Response: 50% of students born outside of Canada versus 32% of students born in Canada

The research team for the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future study reviewed the *2000 Youth in Transition* study which examines youth experiences as they relate to education, training and work (Krahn and Taylor 2005). The *2000 Youth in Transition* study identifies a range of factors that appear to influence the educational aspirations of young people.

These include gender, parents’ socioeconomic status, investment in educational resources, work values, aspirations for their child, and involvement/supervision, family structure, community size, grades and other indicators of student performance; student self-perceptions and attitudes toward school; and social support networks (Krahn and Taylor 2005).

The authors state that “specific to the educational aspirations of immigrants and ethnic/racialized groups, refer, respectively, to ethnic identity and age at immigration as influential factors while others suggest that “ethnic resilience” or the ability to achieve unusually good adaptation in the face of severe stress and family stability may help foster personal achievement” (Krahn and Taylor 2005).

FUTURE

With the exception of future aspirations, there is a significant difference between students born outside of Canada and Canadian born in each sub-divided category of the dimension of *future* (*future orientation, confidence in the future, and overall future*).

When students responded to the following statement “I expect to achieve more than my parents did (e.g. career, income)”, 59% of students born in Canada strongly agreed/agreed compared to 80% of students born outside of Canada. In addition, only 31% of students born in Canada strongly agree/agree with the statement: “In the next five years, Canada will be a better place to live” compared to 52% of students born outside of Canada.

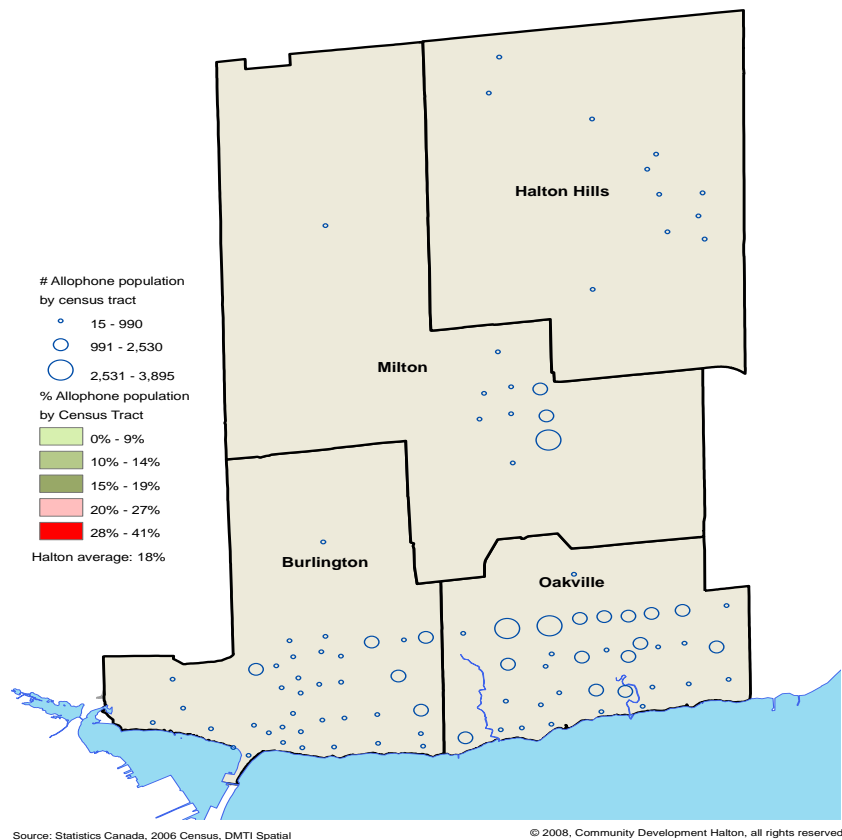
The results from the National survey data, from the *2000 Youth in Transition* survey show that 15-year old Visible Minority Immigrant Canadians have higher educational aspirations than those of their native-born non-racialized counterparts. Specifically, Over three-quarters (77%) of (first generation) immigrant youth aspired to a university education (26% one degree; 51% two or more degrees), compared to 60% of native-born youth (27% one degree; 33% two or more degrees). Canadian-born *2000 Youth in Transition* survey respondents were more likely to aspire to a college/CEGEP or technical school education.

The Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future study, in slight contrast, suggests that Canadian born students and students born outside of Canada share a similar, positive outlook on the future. For instance, 96% of Canadian born students and 90% of students born outside of Canada indicate they intend to graduate from high school when asked in the survey. Moreover, 83% of students born in Canada and 90% of those born outside of Canada intend to graduate from College or University. It is possible that as this survey does not confirm if the respondents are part of a racialized group or not, but rather simply captures their place of birth, could partially explain the variance in the findings between the two surveys.

LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN THE HOME

In Canada, people whose mother tongue (first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual) is neither English nor French are called “allophones”. They represent about 20% of the population, speaking over 200 languages. In Halton, the number of allophones increased by over 70% to 80,000 between 1996 and 2006 (Community Development Halton, 2008a).

Map 3. Allophone Population, Region of Halton, 2006



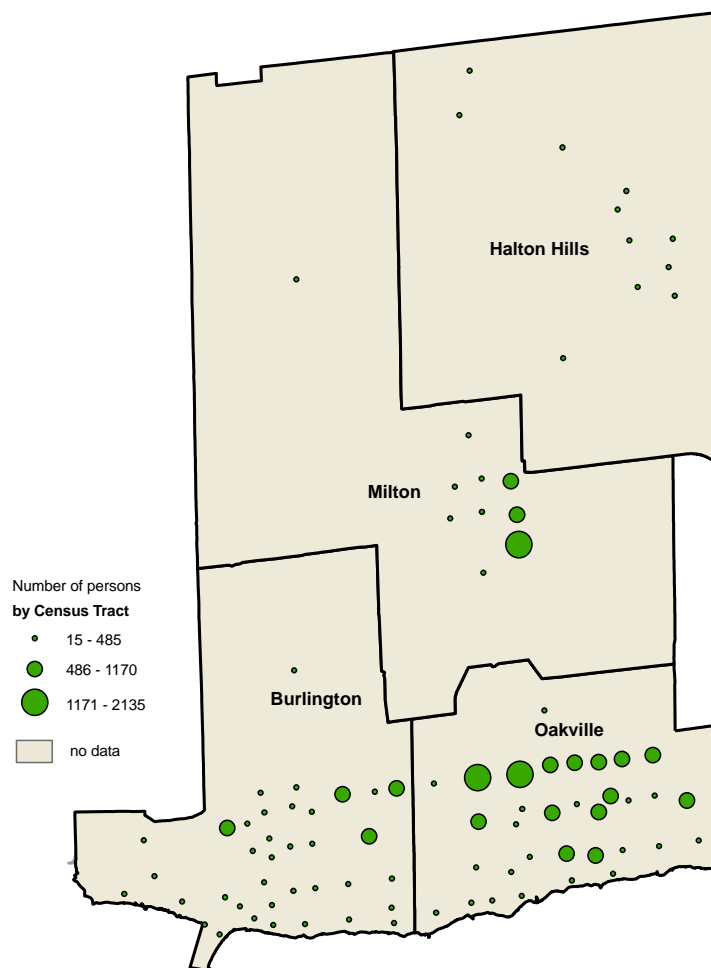
Map 3 (above) shows two census tracts in Milton with allophones representing over 25% of the population (A census tract as established by Statistics Canada is a relatively permanent area with a population range from 2,500 to 8,000 and the greatest possible social and economic homogeneity). The dominant non-official mother tongues in these two census tracts are Polish and Urdu.

The top five non-official home languages in Halton are Chinese, Polish, Spanish, Panjabi (Punjabi) and Urdu. The population speaking these five home languages represents over 40% of all the allophones in the region (Community Development Halton, 2008b).

Data from the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future survey show that a majority of the sample indicate that the language most often spoken in the home was English with 85.6%, French was 1.3% and non-official languages represent 13.8%.

The map below (Map 4) shows the distribution of non-official home language speaking population by Census Tract. As expected, the geographic distribution pattern closely mirrors that of the allophones. Over half of the non-official home language population is in the Town of Oakville. However, many of the non-official home languages population can also be found in the recent residential development areas in the Town of Milton.

Map 4. Population Speaking Non-official Home Language, Region of Halton, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, DMTI Spatial

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Results of the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future survey show significant differences exist between students whose language spoken in the home is either English or French and those who do not speak one of the Official languages at home (see Appendix B Figure 3: Language Spoken in the Home on page 45).

TRUST

Students who speak a language other than the Official languages (English or French) in the home report a higher level of trust *in school*, *out of school* and *overall trust*. Although these numbers represent differences between the two student groups, the broader context points to the percentages, as a whole, appear to be low. The question we raise is why do youth in Milton seem to have lower levels of trust in their relationships and in institutions? Some contributing factors may include the growing diversity in Milton and the need to integrate students as integral members of the town of Milton.

ENGAGEMENT

A significant difference exists between language spoken in the home and engagement, in that, students whose language spoken in the home is not English or French have higher *engagement in school*; *out of school*; and *overall engagement*.

EFFICACY AND EMPOWERMENT

There is no significant difference between language spoken in the home and *efficacy* and *empowerment*.

FIT

There is a significant difference between language spoken in the home and *fit between in and out of school learning*. Students who spoke a language other than the Official languages have a higher connection between in and out of school learning than those who speak an official language. There is an average of 20% difference in responses of strongly agree/agree between students who do not speak an Official language at home versus those who do. For example, when asked “I learn more important things in school than out of school”, 30% of those who speak one of the official languages strongly agree/agree with the statement whereas 56% of students who speak another language at home strongly agree/agree, representing a 26% difference. Additional findings include:

Question: My teachers are interested in what I learn or do outside of school

Response: 37% Official languages spoken in the home versus 59% non-Official languages spoken in the home

Question: I can see the connection between my courses and my life outside of school
Response: 51% Official languages spoken in the home versus 71% non-Official languages spoken in the home

In the 2000 *Youth in Transition* survey, only 36% of the Visible Minority Immigrant Canadian youth sample spoke English or French as their first language (according to their parents), compared to 99% of the teenagers in the Native Born and not a member of a racialized group and 70% in the non-immigrant members of racialized sub-sample (Krahn and Taylor 2005).

In their review of literature, Krahn and Taylor (2005), found that English as a second language students are more likely to encounter difficulties in the school system and may be less likely to complete high school.

Considering this, one might expect lower aspirations among 15 year olds whose first language is not one of the official languages. Krahn and Taylor (2005) found an opposite pattern; “76% of the ‘other first language’ sub-sample aspired to a university education, compared to only 59% of those with English or French as their first language”. Although this is an expected finding, the researchers noted that it is consistent with the pattern of Visible Minority Immigrant Canadian youth, whose language was not one of the official languages, having higher aspirations as outlined by Krahn and Taylor (2005).

Given the results found in the Immigrant Status group and the Language Spoken in the Home group, it is recommended that further exploration be considered in relation to the impact that culture might have on confidence.

FUTURE

With the exception of *future aspirations*, there are significant differences between language spoken in the home and *future*. A student whose language spoken in the home is not English or French score higher in *future orientation*, *confidence in the future* and *overall future*.

MOTHER’S EDUCATION

Mother’s education shows significance only in the ‘less than high school’ category as it pertains to *trust*. This means that students show a decreased *trust in school* if their mothers have less than high school education. Although the researchers anticipated finding that mother’s education would play a larger role in shaping student’s confidence in learning and the future, this may be due in part to the broad range of categories of mother’s education identified in the survey.

In the survey, students were asked to indicate the level of education their mother or caregiver has completed, with the following options: Master’s Degree or PhD, Undergraduate

Degree, College Diploma, Some College or University, High School, Did not Finish High School. Students may not be able to distinguish between the categories of some college degree to Master's Degree or PhD.

Although racialized and immigrant youth face an increased likelihood of economic disadvantage, research suggests that these youth have high educational expectations (Krahn and Taylor 2005). Specifically:

- Within households where neither parent has a university degree, 74% of the racialized Immigrant Canadian group (1st or 2nd generation, based on either parent, if applicable) youth aspire to university education, compared to only 50% of Native Born and not a member of a racialized group of 15 year olds and 60% of teenagers in the non-immigrant members of racialized groups category.
- Visible Minority Immigrant Canadian youth tend to have more highly-educated parents but are also overrepresented in lower income households. Specifically, the researchers found that 59% of racialized immigrant youth lived in households with a total annual income of less than \$60,000, compared to 46% of Native Born and not a member of a racialized youth group and 45% of the non-immigrant members of racialized sub-sample.
- Even in the very poorest households (annual incomes under \$30,000), three-quarters of the Visible Minority Immigrant Canadian youth aspired to a university education, compared to less than half (43%) of Native Born and not a member of a racialized group. Krahn and Taylor (2005) note that “rather than being held back by lower household incomes, most Visible Minority Immigrant Canadian youth continue to aspire to a university education despite this disadvantage”.

It is recommended that further investigation into the role Mother's Education and Immigrant Status has on a youth's confidence in their learning and their future be considered.

RELATED FINDINGS

While the most significant findings relate to Gender, Immigrant Status and Language Spoken in the Home, the researchers would like to highlight other findings that are of particular interest. Specifically, the findings related to community service learning, and *fit between in and out of school learning* are examined. These two areas are directly linked and impact the work Community Development Halton performs.

COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING

As a whole, students have a favourable attitude toward their community service learning requirements as outlined by the Ministry of Education. When students were asked to respond to the following statement: “I found the 40 hours of community service involvement was a useful learning experience” a slight majority (53%) strongly agree/agree. The students were then asked if they think the 40 hours of community involvement makes a useful contribution to the community of which 66% of the students strongly agreed/agreed. Although it is reassuring to realize that the majority of students responded favorably to this section of the survey, it leaves tremendous opportunity to engage even more youth in meaningful community service learning since over 40% of the students strongly disagree/disagree with the statements.

As part of its contribution to student success, the Ontario Government introduced the 40 hours of community involvement. Since 1999, students across Ontario have been completing activities to meet their community involvement hours to fulfill one of the requirements for their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. In 2011, the Ministry of Education announced a recommendation to amend the time frame at which students can begin to accumulate their hours to include the summer before they enter Grade 9 (Ministry of Education 2011). The early engagement of students will help students become involved in their community early on and hopefully will expand throughout secondary school.

Community service learning allows students to channel what they are learning in school to other situations and environments. This form of practice provides opportunities for students to draw the connection between in and out of school learning. It also creates circumstances where students can observe the positive contribution their services make to the community, enabling them to view themselves as part of the community.

The experience of the community service learning and their ability to see their contribution is a strong indicator that youth who become involved will gain more exposure to community resources. Moreover, the indication that a number of students participate in activities that are linked to their school speaks to the importance of a strong school-community connection.

Community service learning allows students to channel what they are learning in school to other situations and environments. This form of practice provides opportunities for students to draw the connection between in and out of school learning. It also creates circumstances where students can observe the positive contribution their services make to the community, enabling them to view themselves as part of the community.

While there is a large portion of students (44%) who strongly disagree/disagreed that there are enough interesting things for young people to do in their community, a number of them also indicate that they do not take part in community programs that are outside of their school (35%).

The experience of the community service learning and the ability to see their contribution is a strong indicator that students who become involved will gain more exposure to community resources. Moreover, the indication that students partake in most activities that are linked to their school speaks to the importance of after school programming and the need for school-community connection. Future studies are needed to understand what makes community service a more meaningful experience for the students and its links to increasing confidence in the learning and the future as well as the related implications for schools and community organizations.

In accordance with the Halton District School Board Strategic Plan 2009-2010, two goals reflect student engagement:

1. Raise overall student achievement on Education Quality and Accountability Office test scores by increasing student engagement and narrowing the gender gap by 6%.
2. All students will indicate a positive response on the “Belonging” and “Communications and Community” domains of the school Effectiveness Survey.

The study points to an opportunity for increasing the in and out of school connection, keeping in mind Epstein’s six types of engagement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community (Epstein 1997). An opportunity exists to improve students’ ability to connect what they learn in school to out of school learning and their view of community service learning as valuable experience. As students are engaged through their community and have opportunities to transfer their skills from the classroom to community, their level of engagement in school and out of school will increase, as will their level of efficacy and empowerment and fit between in and out of school learning. By utilizing the knowledge from the study, there is an opportunity for Community Development Halton to work collaboratively with the Halton District School Board in setting precedence for bridging community and classroom learning.

This is also not without challenges. A study completed by Community Development called *Pushing the Limits: Challenges of Halton's Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Labour Force* uncovered a dedicated, skilled and vital component of not only our local communities, but also of our local economy. It shed light on a sector pushed to the limits of its human resource capacity, and precariously balanced between sustainability and disaster. The study addressed five challenges⁴ in the sector, one of which includes engaging the workforce of the future.

ENGAGING THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

In *Pushing the Limits*, the report highlights the increase of diversity in Halton over the coming years and increased competition in the broader labour market for younger workers. There is an identified need to improve the capacity of volunteer management and coordination in the sector to support employment opportunities and career development pathways for youth, newcomers and people of colour who volunteer. Additionally, there is a need for programs that support youth and newcomers in volunteer activity (Community Development Halton 2006).

VOLUNTEERING IN HALTON

In Halton Region, over two-thirds (67%) of the population aged 15 and over volunteered their time through an agency, a group, or an organization (Community Development Halton, 2009). It is important to point out that Halton's volunteering rate is higher than both the provincial (47.3%) and national averages (46%). The volunteers in Halton collectively contributed over 38 million hours a 12 month period (September - December 2006 to September - December 2007). Volunteers are vital in contributing their time to the community; however there are also challenges in nurturing volunteers as valuable assets (also a challenge identified in *Pushing the Limits*). For students specifically, some perceived barriers related to volunteering include lack of transportation, agency hours and the type of work offered for students.

Essentially, volunteerism is changing, particularly for young people; there is a need to be innovative in how to engage young people. By bringing together community service and their education, students (in partnership with school and community) will begin to become part of an iterative process of teaching, educating and learning that informs their action and mobilization in the community.

⁴ For more information on *Pushing the Limits: Challenges of Halton's Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Labour Force* and the 5 challenges, please refer to the Community Development Halton website at www.cdhalton.ca, *Pushing the Limits: Challenges of Halton's Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Labour Force*.

FIT BETWEEN IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL LEARNING

Overall, an average of 52% of students recognize and are able to identify that a relevant link exists between their in and out of school learning. However, the large number of unsure responses may account for the split. A few specific questions and responses related to the dimension of *fit* include:

Question: I can see the connections between my courses and my life outside of school
Response: 53% strongly agree/agree; 22% are unsure; 24% strongly disagree/disagree

Question: In the last week, I learned something in school_that is useful to me outside of school
Response: 54% strongly agree/agree; 21% are unsure; 26% strongly disagree/disagree

Question: I learn more important things in school than out of school
Response: 35% strongly agree/agree; 28% are unsure; 37% strongly disagree/disagree

Although it was not included in the *fit* dimension, the statement “what I do or learn outside of school is relevant to my courses in school” was also asked. Once again, the students were almost equally divided with 52% students indicating strongly agree/agree, 25% unsure and 21% strongly disagree/disagree, with 6 students choosing to not respond to the statement.

LIMITATIONS

SAMPLE SIZE

Early in the development of the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future initiative, the project research team and Advisory Committee agreed on the sample size. It was established that only one public high school in Milton would be involved and that only the grade 10 students of that school would participate in the survey. Our goal was to obtain 150 completed surveys and we were successful in obtaining 166 completed surveys, keeping in mind that 13% of our sample includes students born outside of Canada. Grade 10 was selected as it is a pivotal time in a student’s life whereby they transition from concerning themselves with day to day needs and activities towards a more future oriented outlook on their life.

“UNSURE” RESPONSES IN THE SURVEY

The reader should note that there were several questions where students chose the ‘unsure’ response on the survey. For example, when students were asked “I feel safe in my school”,

17% of the respondents chose unsure. The researchers investigated as to why a student would not know whether they feel safe or unsafe in school.

It was discovered that students felt some of the questions were broad and that the categories of responses (strongly disagree to strongly agree) left them unable to explain their answer, and as a result they chose the option of “unsure”.

The researchers referred to the safety at school question as an example when asking the students about the unsure responses and there was a general consensus that their perception of safety varies based on where they as individuals are located in the school at a given time. For example, a student may feel safe in the main hallways but unsafe in the washrooms. While this does not fully explain the large number of unsure responses, it is a possible contributing factor.

The survey did not provide space for students to comment after each question. Although there was space at the very end of the survey for students to make additional comments, it would be unreasonable to expect students to remember all the comments they want to make from the various questions.

DIMENSIONS ASSIGNED TO QUESTIONS

A few of the survey questions could, in the researchers’ opinion, cross over into more than one dimension of confidence. For example, the statement “I feel safe in my school” is placed under the dimension of *fit*; however it could also be a measurement of *trust*. Additional survey questions that may be appropriate in another dimension of confidence include:

- “I am interested in most of the courses I am taking in school” is placed in *trust* but could also be placed in *engagement*.
- “When I am old enough, I will vote in elections” is placed in *engagement* but could be placed in *future* as well.
- “In my school, students are involved in creating school rules or policies” is placed in *trust* but could also be placed in *engagement*.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM: ABORIGINAL STATUS

A significant difference was not found between participants based on Aboriginal Status. While the researchers were perplexed with these findings, perhaps it could be attributed to the small sample size; only 7.6% of students self-identified as Aboriginal in the survey.

Furthermore, during the completion of the survey, the research team was available to answer any questions students may have and the most frequently asked question was:

“What does ‘Aboriginal’ mean”? It appears that some students are unsure of the definition which could also contribute to the findings.

FIT BETWEEN IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL LEARNING

Since students were not able to explain themselves due to the survey design, it is possible they feel the same about the fit between what they are learning in school and out of school.

This may mean that students see the connection between in and out of school learning based on what they are learning taking only into consideration their current and past courses. It might also mean that, based on what the students are experiencing in the school environment and how they are experiencing it may influence how they view its application to the world outside of the classroom. It might also point to a possibility that fit between in and out of school varies at different points in time in that sometimes students see the connection and other times they do not.

PLACE OF BIRTH

It is important to note and acknowledge that students who were born outside of Canada and moved to Canada between the ages of 0 to 5 years old, are included in these results by virtue of how the question “were you born in Canada?” was posed.

An interesting question one may ask is: “Should anyone who comes to Canada between the ages of 0 to 5 identify with Canadian-born children, or do they maintain perceptions more closely resembling youth born outside of Canada?” Also, would the age that these students arrived in Canada have affected their responses to the survey? Would their answers to this survey be different than youth who came here after age 5? Particularly, what has shaped their views, ideals and perceptions? It could be assumed that the longer one has been in Canada, (i.e. the younger you were when you came here) the more integrated in Western ideologies one would become.

CONCLUSION

The Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future study set out to explore and respond to questions such as:

1. Do young people have confidence in learning (in and out of school) and the future?
2. Based on the five dimensions of confidence, how do young people feel about their learning experiences and their learning environments?

The Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future initiative has revealed that the more confident a youth feels about the future, the more likely they will feel confident about their future aspirations. There are strong relationships between *efficacy* and *empowerment*, and *fit in* and *out of school*. It appears that, the more empowered and efficacious a youth feels about what they are learning; the more likely they will be able to see the connection between what they are learning in school and what they are experiencing in the world. When youth feel confident about their future and have a high sense of empowerment and efficacy in their learning in and out of school, it can be inferred that they will have higher confidence in learning and the future.

The survey findings confirm that youth in this Milton school feel confident in learning (in and out of school) and in the future. Additionally, youth who share certain characteristics and conditions are predisposed to score more positively than others. A few specific examples include:

- Female students hold a more positive outlook on the future, including: future orientation, confidence in the future, future aspirations, and overall future.
- Immigrant students demonstrate a higher level of confidence in learning and the future and have a more positive outlook on their learning experiences as well as their learning environment than their peers who were born in Canada.
- Youth whose primary language spoken in the home is not English or French demonstrate a higher level of understanding of how to connect their in and out of school learning experiences than those who speak an Official language.

In reference to the question “Based on the five dimensions of confidence, how do youth feel about their learning experiences and their learning environments?”, the study points out that when *trust*, *efficacy*, *empowerment*, and *confidence* are present, youth have a stronger sense of self, a higher level of engagement in and out of school and, also make the connection between what they are learning in and out of school.

Additionally, youth who share certain characteristics and conditions are predisposed to score more positively than others. A few specific examples include:

- Female youth report a higher level of *efficacy* and *empowerment* out of school, as well as overall *efficacy* and *empowerment* than their male counterparts.
- Female youth score higher than male youth in each of the four categories of future: *future orientation*; *confidence in the future*; *future aspirations*; *overall future*.
- Male and female youth born outside of Canada demonstrate higher levels of *trust*, are more *engaged* out of school and overall, are significantly more likely to see *a fit between* their *in school* and *out of school* learning.
- Youth whose language spoken in the home is not English or French report a higher level of: *trust* – *in school*, *out of school*, and overall; *engagement* – *in school*, *out of school* and overall; *future orientation*; and *fit between* *in* and *out of school* learning than those who speak English or French.
- Students whose mothers have less than high school education show a decrease in *trust in school*.

While these may not be new insights, they reaffirm that students need to feel empowered, engaged in their learning and have a sense of trust in their school to have positive learning outcomes as well as a strong learning environment.

With this in mind, the study has also revealed that an opportunity to advance the foundational purpose of the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future initiative exists, and thereby, is presented as the key recommendation for future action. The basis for this key recommendation is rooted in empowering youth as they develop their awareness and understanding of civic responsibility and how they individually and collectively enhance community life in Milton.

KEY RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE ACTION

Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future is a research and youth engagement initiative that involves students as partners in school and in community change. It consists of three components: research, student engagement, and school and community development. The research study has successfully examined how youth's confidence in their learning affects their aspirations, their confidence in the future, and their belief that they can impact the world in a positive way.

Our interest in continuing the work of the Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future study grows out of our desire to: inspire youth and support their learning; create safe, healthy and engaging environments; and provide them with opportunities for challenge and choice. We believe the *Youth Leaders in Community* movement will create the conditions for youth to: participate meaningfully to community in areas they are passionate about, incrementally gain experiences that will enable them to connect the relevance of their learnings in and out of school, and to acquire transferable skills that will prepare them as they confidently advance into their future.

Youth Leaders in Community will assist in the creation of a broader learning environment that allows the voice and energy of youth to be channeled into a vibrant and inclusive community. We are committed to the continuance of this work, recognizing that it is organic in nature and will be primarily shaped by the youth who participate in the initiative. The past two years have provided a strong foundation from which to progress. We are motivated to empower youth in shaping their community and influencing the direction of their future in an effort to achieve positive social change. As the *Youth Leaders in Community* movement progresses, the following supporting recommendations will be considered as appropriate:

- 1) To explore further, how different aspects of gender influence youth's confidence in learning and the future and integrate practices that effectively support male youth in realizing meaningful out of school learning experiences.
- 2) To review community involvement opportunities that immigrant youth are involved with; obtain an understanding of how they experience these activities; how they are supported in their participation; and consider these as potential models.
- 3) To create opportunities for the positive influence that culture has on youth confidence to thrive in the model that will be implemented.
- 4) To understand how mothers' education and the (immigrant) status influence the youth's level of confidence in learning and the future.

- 5) To obtain a clear understanding of: what civic engagement means to youth, how to make community service learning a meaningful experience for the youth, the impact it would have on improving confidence in their learning and the future and, the related implications for schools and community organizations including the use of social media.
- 6) To incorporate factors that influence effective learning out of school and acquire a clear understanding of the implications related to community service learning.

The outcome of the *Youth Leaders in Community* movement will provide further insight on and practical examples of how to effectively foster confidence within youth in their learning, academic success, social well-being, transition to employment, as well as civic engagement and citizenship.

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APPENDIX A - TABLES

TABLE 1: CATEGORIES OF EACH DIMENSION OF CONFIDENCE

Dimension	Experience/Environment	N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range*
TRUST	In school	162	6	3.56	0.67	1 - 5
	Out of school	157	4	3.32	0.74	1.25 - 5
	Overall	154	10	3.47	0.61	1.5 - 5
EFFICACY/ EMPOWERMENT	In school	162	7	3.43	0.57	2 - 5
	Out of school	154	8	3.49	0.70	1 - 5
	Overall	152	15	3.47	0.58	1.8 - 4.9
ENGAGEMENT	In school	162	4	3.37	0.71	1 - 5
	Out of school	159	4	3.31	0.73	1.25 - 5
	Overall	156	8	3.35	0.58	1.75 - 5
FUTURE	Orientation	156	6	4.19	0.77	1 - 5
	Confidence	156	4	3.47	0.72	1 - 5
	Aspirations	154	4	3.82	0.81	1 - 5
	Overall	153	14	3.88	0.64	1 - 5
FIT	Between in and out of school	160	6	3.29	0.73	1 - 5

*Note that while these scales are computed by taking the sum of each item linked to that construct, all scales have been reduced back to a 1 to 5 range so as to facilitate the interpretation of the scores.

TABLE 2: PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENT (R) WITH SIGNIFICANT LEVEL MEASURED BETWEEN DIMENSIONS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8	10	11	12
I do well in most of my classes	-											
I try my best in most of my classes	0.48***	-										
Trust in school	0.45***	0.42***	-									
Trust out of school	0.16**	0.30***	0.53***	-								
Engagement in school	0.54***	0.74***	0.69***	0.48***	-							
Engagement out of school	0.18**	0.21***	0.33***	0.36***	0.31***	-						
Efficacy/Empowerment in school	0.29***	0.42***	0.56***	0.53***	0.54***	0.36***	-					
Efficacy/Empowerment out of school	0.20**	0.38***	0.50***	0.51***	0.53***	0.48***	0.61***	-				
Future Orientation	0.25***	0.35***	0.27***	0.17**	0.33***	0.31***	0.30***	0.53***	-			
Confidence in the future	0.27***	0.32***	0.31***	0.36***	0.40***	0.23***	0.23***	0.42***	0.52***	-		
Future aspirations	0.20**	0.42***	0.25***	0.22***	0.42***	0.33***	0.26***	0.48***	0.63***	0.31***	-	
Fit	0.26***	0.40***	0.65***	0.54***	0.61***	0.30***	0.62***	0.62***	0.35***	0.32***	0.26***	-

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Interpreting Pearson (r) Scores

When interpreting the test scores, the general rule of thumb is as follows:

If $r = +.70$ or higher, there is a Very strong positive relationship between the two variables.

+.40 to +.69 indicates a **Strong positive relationship;**

+.30 to +.39 indicates a **Moderate positive relationship;**

+.20 to +.29 indicates a **Weak positive relationship;**

+.10 to +.19 indicates **No or negligible relationship;**

-.10 to -.19 indicates **No or negligible relationship;**

-.20 to -.29 indicates a **Weak negative relationship;**

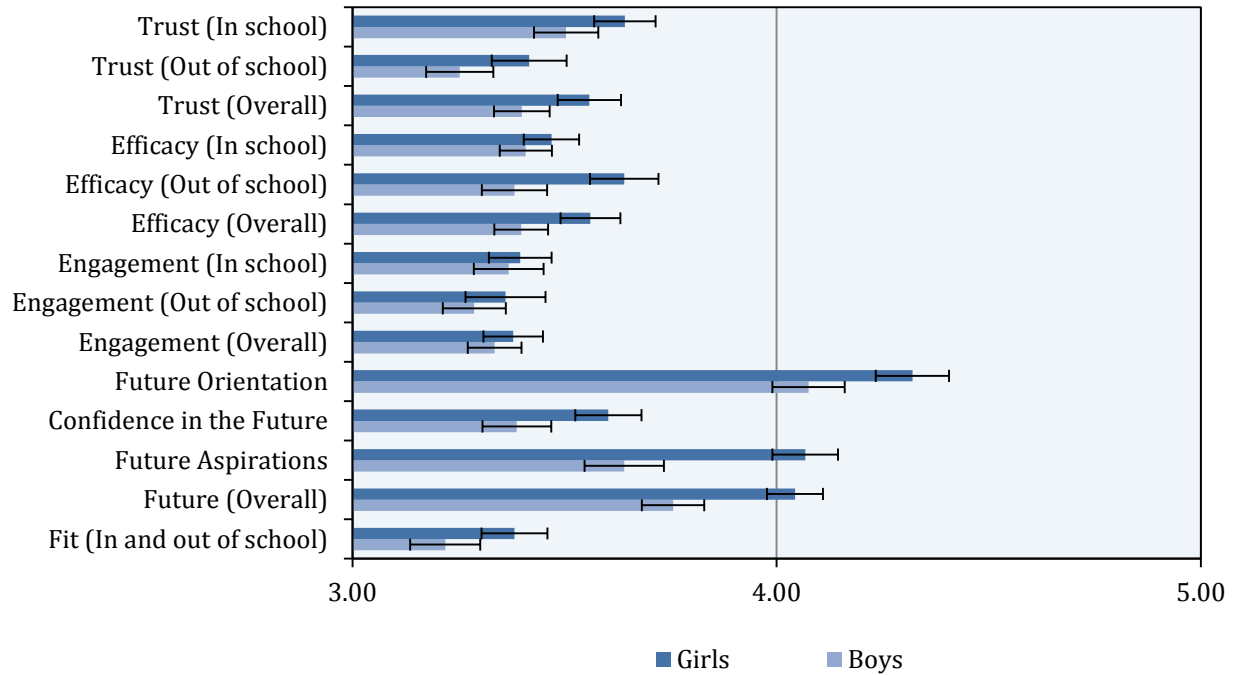
-.30 to -.39 indicates a **Moderate negative relationship;**

-.40 to -.69 indicates a **Strong negative relationship;**

-.70 or higher indicates a **Very strong negative relationship**

APPENDIX B - FIGURES

FIGURE 1: GENDER⁵



⁵ On the graph, the numbers 3.00, 4.00 and 5.00 are reflective of the 5 Point Likert scale whereby (3 = unsure, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree). The responses are mapped out to reflect the distance between the responses from unsure to strongly agree.

FIGURE 2: IMMIGRANT STATUS (BORN IN CANADA/BORN OUTSIDE OF CANADA)

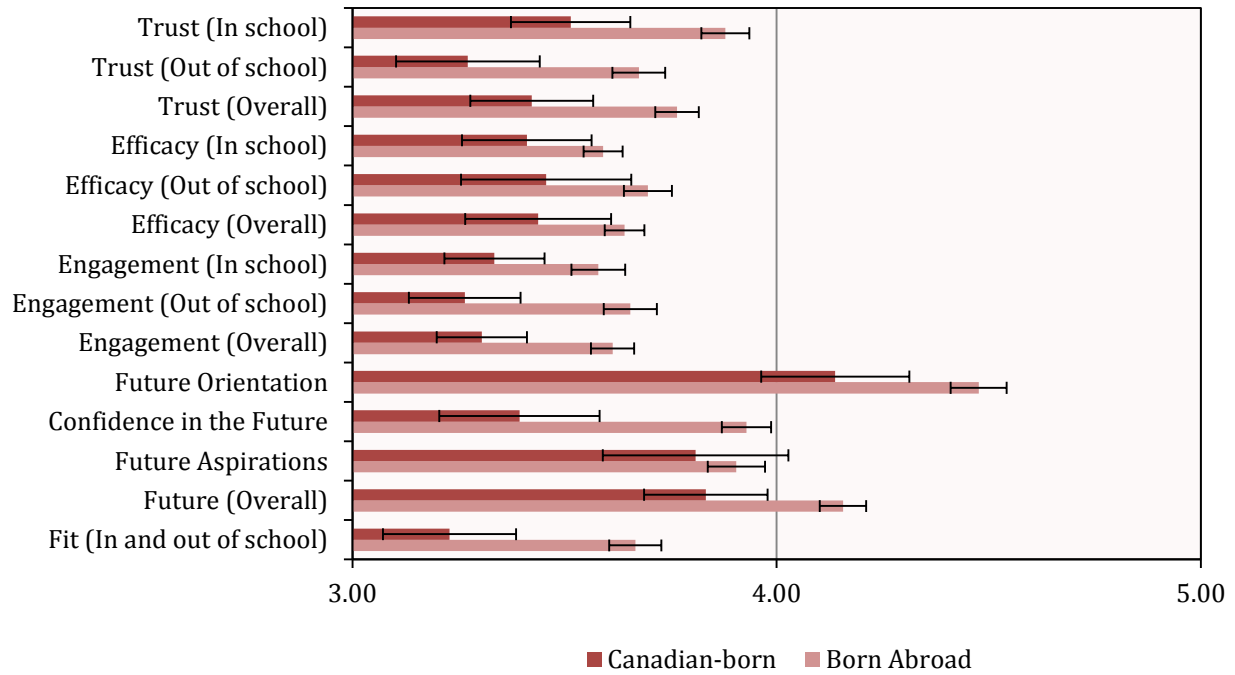
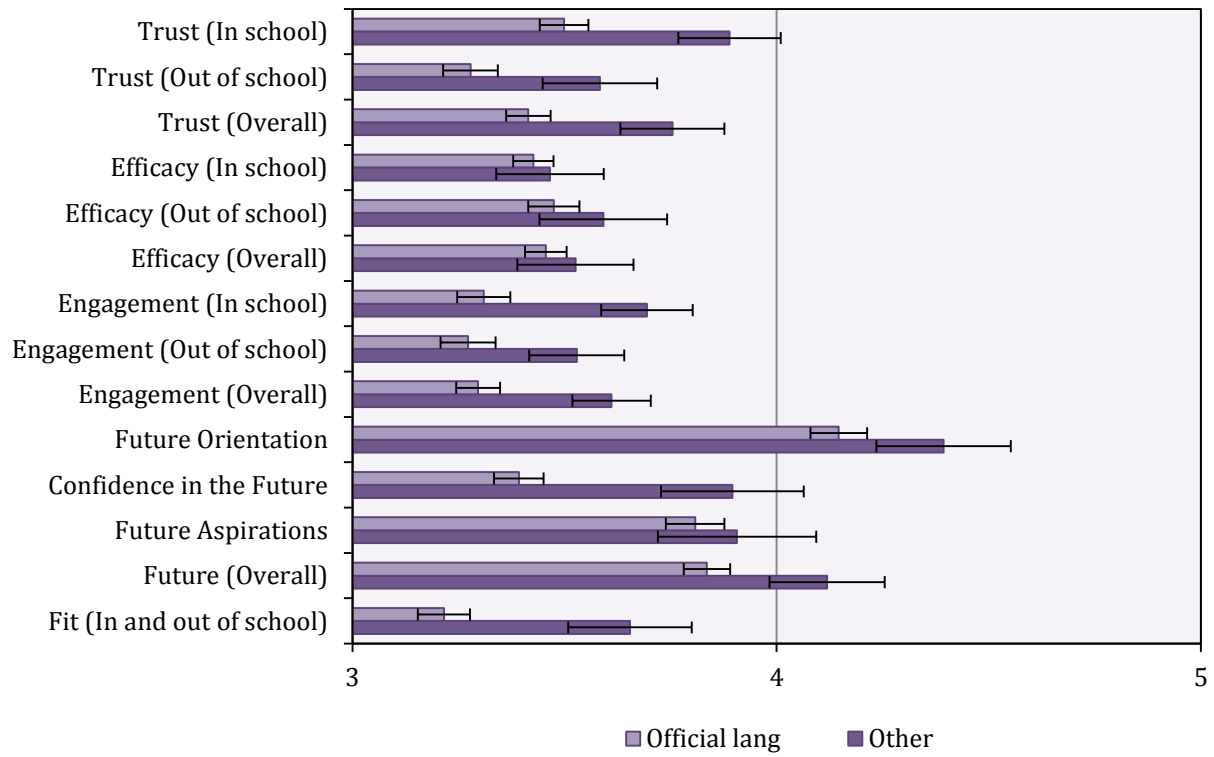


FIGURE 3: LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN THE HOME



APPENDIX C – YOUTH CONFIDENCE IN LEARNING AND THE FUTURE SURVEY QUESTIONS AND POTENTIAL RESPONSES (ACCORDING TO THE 5 DIMENSIONS OF CONFIDENCE)

TRUST (IN SCHOOL)

- There is at least one adult at school I can discuss personal problems with.
- There is at least one adult at school I can discuss school problems with.
- Most of my teachers treat me as a unique person.
- In my school, students are encouraged to discuss and question things.
- My school thinks that student voice and participation are important.
- I am interested in most of the courses I am taking in school.

TRUST (OUT-OF-SCHOOL)

- I have at least one adult who I can discuss personal or school problems with.
- Young people are welcome and respected in my community.
- I trust most of the people in my community.
- I think most of the news in mainstream media is true (i.e. newspapers; TV; radio).

ENGAGEMENT (IN SCHOOL)

- I often learn something so interesting that I can't stop thinking about it.
- I try my best in most of my classes.
- I receive the support I need to get the most out of each course.
- My teachers encourage me to talk about my own ideas.

ENGAGEMENT (OUT-OF-SCHOOL)

- There are enough interesting things for young people to do in my community.
- I take part in at least one program or activity in my community that is not part of my school (i.e. youth club).
- When I am old enough, I will vote in elections.
- I like to do things that make my community a better place.

EMPOWERMENT (IN SCHOOL)

- In my school, students are involved in creating school rules or policies.
- Teachers at this school value students' opinions about their classes.
- I have opportunities to make my school a better place.
- I know what I am trying to achieve at school.
- I feel comfortable standing up for myself.
- I know how to stand up for myself without hurting others (physically or emotionally)
- I sometimes stand up for others who are being put down or bullied.

EMPOWERMENT (OUT-OF-SCHOOL)

- I can make a difference to solving issues such as poverty, pollution, crime.
- I have to understand the reason why a problem exists before I can make a difference.
- Neighbourhoods are more interesting when people with different interests and backgrounds live there.
- I have opportunities to make my community a better place (i.e. safe, more environmentally friendly, more welcoming).
- I believe that I can make a difference in the world through my own actions.
- My rights are usually respected.
- I feel comfortable standing up for myself.

FIT (IN AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL)

- I feel safe in my school.
- The views of students who have different backgrounds from mine make my classes more interesting.
- I can see the connections between my courses and my life outside of school.
- In the last week, I learned something in school that is useful to me outside of school.
- My teachers are interested in what I learn or do outside of school.
- I learn more important things in school than out of school.

OUTLOOK ON THE FUTURE

FUTURE ORIENTATION:

- I intend to graduate from high school.
- I intend to graduate from college or university.

- Planning ahead makes things turn out better than leaving things to chance.
- I have dreams for the future.
- I know what I have to do to make those dreams come true.
- I think a lot about what I want to do with my life.

FUTURE CONFIDENCE:

- I expect to achieve more than my parents did (i.e. career, income).
- In the next five years, opportunities will open up in my life.
- In the next five years, my town or city will be a better place to live.
- In the next five years, Canada will be a better place to live.

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:

- I hope someday to start a family and be a good parent.
- It is important to me to have a job that makes a contribution to society.
- Pursuing my passions is the most important thing to me.
- To me, a job is about more than money.

IN ADDITION, THE SURVEY CONTAINED THE FOLLOWING OTHER QUESTIONS:

DEMOGRAPHICS:

- Year of Birth
- Sex
- What grade are you in?
- What Town is your school in?
- What language is most often spoken in the home?
- Were you born in Canada?
- Are you of Aboriginal background?
- What of the following best describes your racial identity? Are there other ways that you identify yourself?
- What level of education has your mother or caregiver completed?
- I do well in most of my classes.

REASONS WHY SCHOOL IS IMPORTANT TO ME:

- Helps me to discover what really interests me.
- Helps me to understand the larger world we live in.
- Allows me to spend time with friends.
- Prepares me for life after graduation.
- Allows me to better understand who I am.

INTERNET ACCESS:

At Home

At School

Library in Community

Community Centre

COMMUNITY SERVICE:

- What I do or learn outside of school is relevant to my courses in school.
- If you have completed or are currently completing your 40 hours of community involvement, in which sector did you volunteer?
- I found the 40 hours of community involvement was a useful learning experience.
- I think the 40 hours of community involvement makes a useful contribution to the community.