

TDSB Students (Grades 7-12): Relationships at School

- This Fact Sheet highlights the TDSB's 2011 Student Census findings on students' relationships with adults and peers at school, and how these relationships were associated with their sense of belonging and engagement in school.
- Comparisons are made for items common to the TDSB's 2006 Student Census, and areas of significant change are indicated.
- One of the key findings in the TDSB's 2011 Student Census is the overall positive shift in students' perceptions of their teachers and other school adults. Yet, there are areas for improvement especially in terms of student-teacher relationships at the secondary school level.

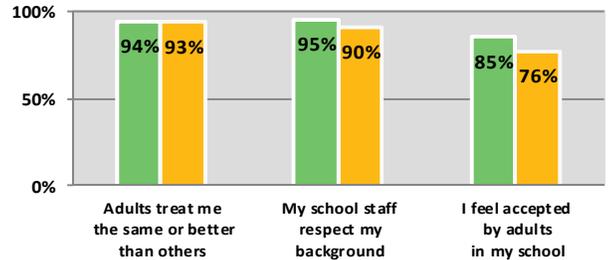
Overall Relationships with School Adults

General Population

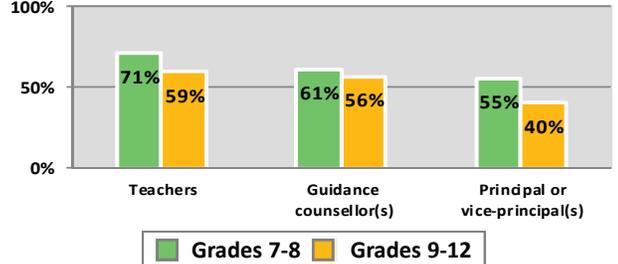
Most Grade 7-12 students felt positive about their relationships with school adults, and since 2006 more students felt accepted and comfortable discussing problems with school adults.

- Most Grade 7-12 students reported that school adults treated them the same as or better than others (93%), and that most of their school staff respected their background (92%). Since 2006 growing proportions of Grade 7-8 (+8%) and Grade 9-12 (+6%) students felt accepted by school adults all the time or often.
- Also, compared to the TDSB's 2006 Student Census, more Grade 7-12 students felt comfortable discussing problems with their teachers (+15%), guidance counselors (+13%), and principals/vice-principals (+13%) all the time, often or sometimes. Despite the increase, secondary school students still generally felt less comfortable than their younger counterparts discussing problems with their teachers and school administrators (see graph at right).

Relationships with School Adults by Grade Grouping (2011)
(% reporting "all the time" or "often")



Feeling Comfortable Discussing Problems with School Adults by Grade Grouping (2011)



Differences by Demographic Groupings

While most students, regardless of gender or socio-economic status (SES), felt positive about their relationships with school adults. Black, Latino, and LGBTQ students felt somewhat less positive.

- The only gender difference in how students perceived their school adults was that female students felt less comfortable than male students discussing problems with school administrators (61% versus 51% who rarely/never felt comfortable).
- There was not much variance in how students from different SES backgrounds perceived or related to school adults.
- Black students were somewhat less likely than the general population to feel that school adults accept them (72% versus 79%), or respect their background (86% versus 92%) all the time or often. They, as well as Latino students, also felt less comfortable discussing problems with teachers (54% and 58% versus 63%) and guidance counsellors (49% and 52% versus 58%).
- At the secondary school level, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or queer) students were less likely than other students to feel that school adults accept them (66% versus 78%) or respect their background (83% versus 91%), and less likely to feel comfortable discussing problems with school administrators (33% versus 40%).



TDSB Students (Grades 7-12): Relationships at School

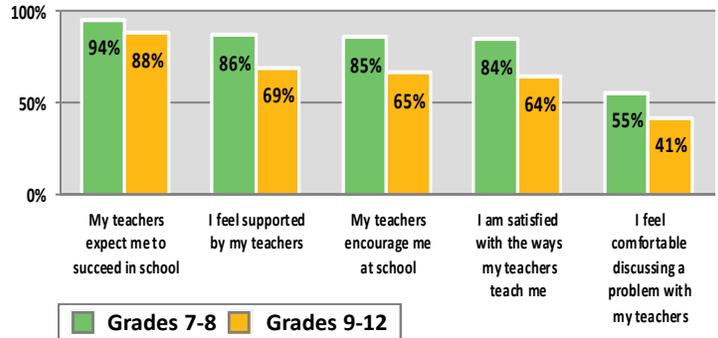
Students' Perceptions of Their Teachers

General Population

Since 2006, growing proportions of Grade 7-12 students felt positive about their teachers. These positive feelings were, however, more prevalent among the Grade 7-8 than the Grade 9-12 students.

- Grade 7-8 students held more positive perceptions of their teachers than Grade 9-12 students (see graph at right). Since 2006, growing proportions of Grade 7-8 students reported feeling supported (+9%) or encouraged (+8%) by all or most of their teachers, being satisfied with the teaching (+5%), and feeling comfortable discussing problems with their teachers (+7%).
- Although Grade 9-12 students' perceptions of their teachers were not generally as favourable as their younger counterparts, since 2006 higher proportions of Grade 9-12 students reported feeling supported (+9%) or encouraged (+5%) by all or most of their teachers, and also feeling comfortable discussing problems (+4%) with them.

Student Perceptions of Teachers by Grade Grouping (2011)
(% reporting "all" or "most" of their teachers)

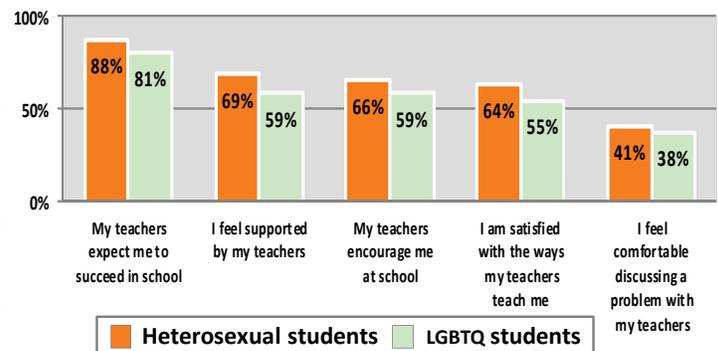


Differences by Demographic Groupings

Students, regardless of gender or SES, perceived and related to their teachers similarly. There were, however, differences among students from some ethno-racial groups and LGBTQ students.

- Female and male students held similar perceptions about their teachers, except that fewer female than male students felt comfortable discussing problems with all or most of their teachers (42% versus 49%).
- No significant differences were found in how students from various SES backgrounds perceived their teachers.
- Compared to all other racialized groups, South Asian students were consistently the most positive about their perceptions of and relationships with teachers.
- On items related to feeling supported by all or most of their teachers, and being satisfied with the ways their teachers teach, Aboriginal students were more likely than others to agree (80% versus 74%, and 75% versus 70% respectively).
- Black and Southeast Asian students, however, felt less comfortable than other students to discuss problems with all or most of their teachers (38% and 40% versus 46%).
- In general, LGBTQ students felt less positive than other high school students about their relationships with teachers (see graph at right).

Student Perceptions of Teachers by Sexual Orientation (2011)
(% Grade 9-12 students reporting "all" or "most" of their teachers)



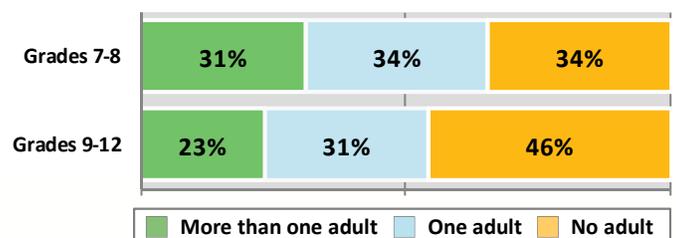
Turning to School Adults for Personal Support, Advice, or Help

General Population

A significant proportion of Grade 7-12 students had not yet met a school adult whom they felt comfortable to turn to for personal support, advice, or help. This was especially true at the secondary school level.

- A new question was asked in the TDSB's 2011 Student Census about whether students had an adult(s) that they felt comfortable to go to for personal support, advice, or help.
- Less than a third (31%) of the Grade 7-8 and less than a quarter (23%) of the Grade 9-12 students reported that they had more than one school adult that they felt comfortable to turn to. However, more students, especially those at secondary schools, reported having not met one yet (see graph at right).

Relationships with School Adults by Grade Grouping (2011)
(% reporting "all the time" or "often")



TDSB Students (Grades 7-12): Relationships at School

Turning to School Adults for Personal Support, Advice or Help (Cont'd.)

Differences by Demographic Groupings

The proportion of students who had not yet met a school adult for personal support, advice, or help were higher among East Asian and Aboriginal students, but slightly lower among LGBTQ students.

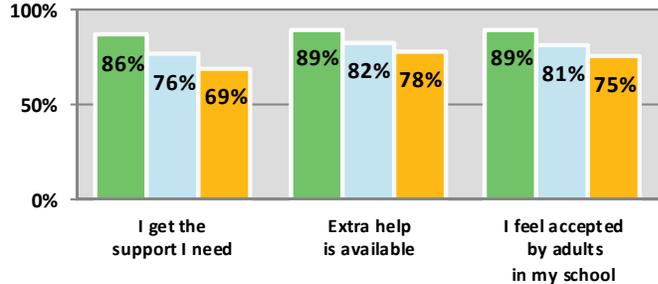
- The proportion of Grade 7-12 students who had not yet met a school adult for personal support, advice, or help were similar between females and males, and among students from different SES backgrounds (about 42%).
- Compared to other racialized groups, East Asian and Aboriginal students had larger proportions to have not yet met a school adult that they felt comfortable to turn to (49% and 47% respectively).
- On the other hand, LGBTQ students were somewhat more likely than other high school students to have at least one school adult for personal support, advice, or help (57% versus 52%).

Some Further Analysis

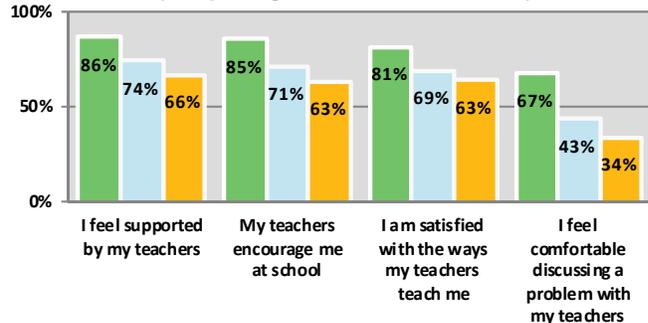
Students who had two or more school adults that they felt comfortable to turn to were mostly likely to have a positive experience in school.

- Students with two or more school adults that they felt comfortable to go to for personal support, advice or help had more positive feelings about their school than those with only one school adult. On the other hand, students who did not yet have a school adult that they could turn to were much less likely to feel supported or accepted by adults at school, especially in terms of getting the support they need (see graph at right).
- These discrepancies were more evident in their relationships with teachers. Those with more than one school adult seemed much more connected with their teachers, especially in terms of feeling supported or encouraged by their teachers, being satisfied with the teaching, and feeling comfortable discussing problems with their teachers. For other students, especially those who had not met one yet, their relationships with teachers were much weaker (see graph at right).
- Furthermore, students with more than one school adult that they could turn to were much more likely than others to enjoy school, to feel they belonged in school, and to find their school a friendly and welcoming place. On the other hand, students who had not yet met a school adult that they could turn to were much less likely to feel a sense of belonging or feel engaged in school (see graph at right).

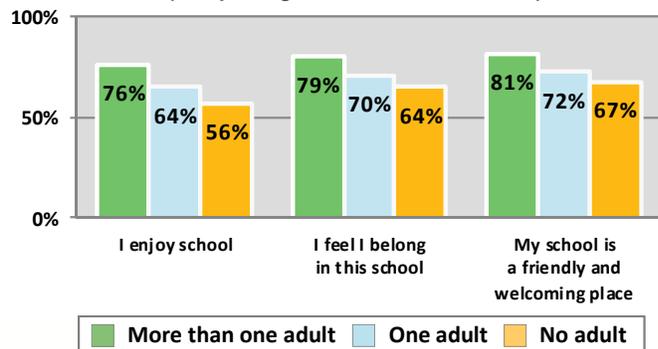
Student Perceptions of Teachers / Relationships with School Adults (2011)
(% reporting "all the time" or "often")



Student Perceptions of Teachers / Relationships with Teachers (2011)
(% reporting "all the time" or "often")



Student Overall Experience / Relationships with School Adults (2011)
(% reporting "all the time" or "often")



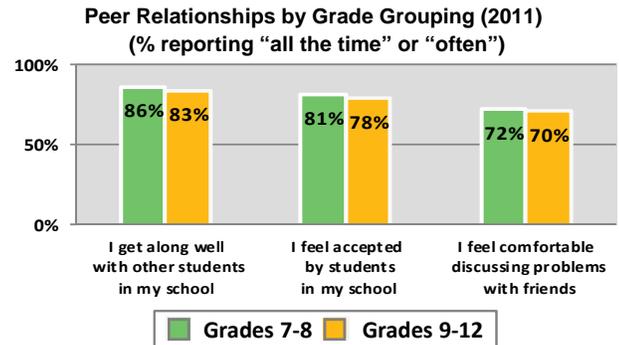
TDSB Students (Grades 7-12): Relationships at School

Relationships with Peers

General Population

Most students felt good about their relationships with peers; however, students from a few ethno-racial groups and LGBTQ students reported a less positive experience in this area.

- Most Grade 7-8 and Grade 9-12 students indicated that they got along well with other students (86% and 83%), felt accepted by other students (81% and 78%), and were comfortable discussing problems with their friends all the time or often (72% and 70%).
- Compared to the TDSB's 2006 Student Census, there was an increase by 5-8% among the Grade 7-8 students (but not among students in Grades 9-12) who felt they had positive relationships with peers.



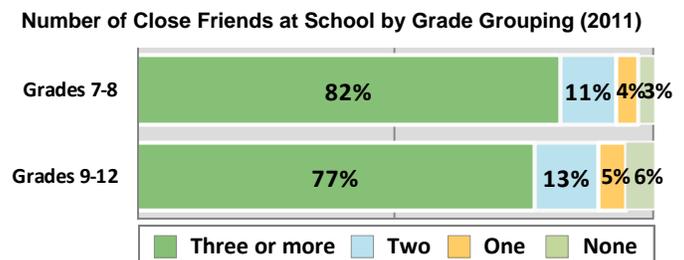
Differences by Demographic Groupings

- Both female and male students felt similarly about getting along well with other students and about feeling accepted by their peers; but females felt more comfortable than males discussing problems with friends (76% versus 65%).
- Students from different SES backgrounds felt about the same in terms of their relationships with peers.
- Aboriginal students were less likely than others to feel they get along with (77% versus 84%) or feel accepted by other students (73% versus 79%). Black students were also less likely to feel they get along with other students (78% versus 84%), or to feel comfortable discussing problems with friends (62% versus 71%). Latino students were also less likely to feel comfortable discussing problems with friends (65% versus 71%).
- At the secondary school level, LGBTQ students were much less likely to feel they get along well with other students compared to the general population (70% versus 83%), to feel accepted by students (62% versus 78%), and to feel comfortable discussing problems with friends all the time or often (63% versus 70%).

Number of Close Friends at School

The majority of Grade 7-12 students had three or more close friends at school; but 22% had fewer or none, and they tended to feel a lower sense of belonging and be less engaged and connected in school.

- Another new question included in the TDSB's 2011 Student Census was how many close friends students had at school. The majority of middle-school (82%) and secondary-school (77%) students reported having three or more friends.
- On the other hand, about one in five of the Grade 7-8 and one in four of the Grade 9-12 students had fewer or no close friends at school.
- Aboriginal and Latino students were somewhat less likely (both 71%) than the general population (78%) to have three or more close friends at school, and LGBTQ students in Grades 9-12 were much less likely (62%).



Some Further Analysis

- Students with fewer or no close friends at school were less likely to enjoy school, to feel they belonged in school, or to find their school a friendly and welcoming place. They were also less likely to report getting along well with and feeling accepted by other students, or feeling comfortable discussing problems with friends (see graph below).

