How well did we do?

Our Kids Network Report
Card 2011 community forums (April 2012)

Acton High School Civics Team Wins $5000 for the Hub (June 2011)

Our Kids Network Annual Meeting Day (November 2011)

Our Kids Network 2008 to 2012
Evaluating our progress
About Our Kids Network

Our Kids Network (OKN) is a Halton-wide partnership of organizations who embrace the vision: All children thrive! Our mission is to promote the healthy development, security, and safety of all children, youth, and families through neighbourhood collaboration, service integration, and measuring results.

OKN turns research into practice – creating a direct link between the results of our research and the programs and services mobilizing the community to help children and youth thrive.

The importance of working together

From the beginning, OKN had a vision that more could be accomplished by finding ways of combining and sharing resources, and working in a more integrated and coordinated fashion. We acknowledged that no single group or individual could address all the needs of any one family or one child. Children need to be seen within the context of their family and their family within the context of their community.

Recognizing the demands on government and community resources, it is critical to explore ways to support neighbourhoods, families and children and avoid duplication of effort. An integrated approach, achieved through collaboration, ensures that gaps in service are addressed and overlaps reduced.
Our framework for working together

The mission of Our Kids Network is carried out by agencies and numerous individuals working in early learning and care across Halton: library systems; child, youth and family services; faith-based organizations; and the public, education, mental health and children’s services sectors. To provide participating agencies with an approach to collectively and uniformly understand, promote, and measure positive child and youth development, OKN adopted the Developmental Assets® framework created by the Search Institute®. It is a research-based framework that recognizes that children are the product of the interaction between the individual and the environment. Developmental Assets are the positive experiences and personal qualities that children and youth need to grow up healthy, caring and responsible.

The PSAT was developed by The Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health (2002). It was originally developed for the National Study of Partnership Functioning and, in 2002, it was tested on 63 collaboratives or networks in the United States. To help understand the results from the PSAT better, we can compare OKN to the 63 community-based networks studied under the National Study of Partnership Functioning. On each of the 2012 measures described in this report, OKN performed significantly better than the 63 comparison sites.

For evaluation purposes, OKN completed the PSAT in 2008, 2010 and 2012. Results from all three PSAT cycles are included in this report and we compare those results across years to evaluate our progress over time. OKN has grown since 2008. New members have joined the partnership, and new committees have developed. For each evaluation cycle, we ask all members from each of our committees to participate to ensure the results are representative of our entire committee membership. Some OKN members sit on multiple committees and may have participated based on different perspectives associated with each of their committee roles. The results show very good representation across committees.

The National Study of Partnership Functioning identified four factors that are related to a partnership’s ability to achieve high levels of effective collaboration and partnership:

1. Effectiveness of the partnership’s leadership
2. Efficiency of the partnership
3. Effectiveness of the partnership’s administration and management
4. Sufficiency of the partnership’s resources

Examining how we are doing on each of these dimensions shows us the strengths and challenges of the partnership so we can identify what we are doing well and what we need to focus on to improve.

1 Division of Public Health at the New York Academy of Medicine.
2 Data collection for the 2012 cycle took place from December, 2012 to February, 2013.
3 The number of committees participating in each evaluation cycle is as follows: 2008 = six committees; 2010 = 11 committees; 2012 = 13 committees.

In May 2012, Halton service providers attended community forums to learn about the “New Kind of Parenting: Raising Kids 10 to 16-years-old” resource. Each attendee received a DVD resource and materials to use in educating and supporting families of teens.

Evaluating our progress

Every two years, we use the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool (PSAT) to gather information from our members. The PSAT measures how OKN is functioning and whether we’re making the most of the collaborative process. In other words, the PSAT measures the factors that are known to strengthen our capacity to function in an integrated manner.
Effectiveness of the partnership’s leadership

The PSAT defines effective leadership as the ability of the partnership to promote productive interactions among diverse people and organizations. In terms of the percentage of people who reported high levels of effective leadership, OKN shows steady improvements across the three cycles of the PSAT.

The largest gains in leadership have been made over the last cycle, and the results show a statistical improvement, from 63% in 2010 to 79% in 2012. This increase means that most of our members believe OKN’s leadership is effectively taking responsibility, inspiring and motivating people, and communicating the vision of OKN.

Efficiency of partnership

Partnership efficiency is a measure of how well a partnership optimizes the involvement of its partners. An efficient partnership keeps its partners engaged by:

- Matching the roles and responsibilities of its participants with their particular interests and skills
- Making good use of its participants’ financial and in-kind resources
- Running a collaborative process—including meetings—that makes good use of its participants’ time

It is evident from the PSAT results that OKN does very well in terms of partnership efficiency. The results show steady improvements in efficiency over time. In 2012, 74% of OKN members report high levels of efficiency, compared to just 51% in 2008.
Effectiveness of the partnership’s administration and management

The administration and management of a partnership is the “glue” that makes it possible for multiple, independent people and organizations to combine their knowledge, skills, and resources. Partnerships that make the most of collaboration effectively carry out the following kinds of administration and management activities:

- Facilitating timely communication
- Coordinating meetings, projects, and other partnership activities
- Supporting partnership participants in applying for grants and managing funds
- Providing the partnership with analytic support
- Providing orientation to new participants as they join the partnership
- Minimizing barriers that can prevent certain people from participating in the partnership’s meetings and activities (for example, by providing transportation, child care, and translation services and by holding meetings at convenient places and times)

The PSAT findings show that 83% of OKN members report effective partnership administration and management in 2012. The results have steadily improved over time, with more members reporting high levels of effective administration and management each cycle.

Sufficiency of the partnership’s resources

The knowledge, skills, and other resources that participants contribute to a partnership are the basic building blocks of collaboration. It is by combining these resources in different ways that participants create something new and valuable that transcends what they can accomplish on their own.

The PSAT findings show that OKN continues to have excellent contribution and use of partnership resources. OKN has shown a very large improvement in this area, with an increase from 46% of respondents reporting good sufficiency of resources in 2008, to 82% in 2012.
Partnership synergy
Synergy is the key indicator of a successful collaborative process because it reflects the extent to which the partnership can do more than individuals can do alone. Partnerships are made up of many different people from different organizations with different interests, skills and resources. Synergy is about the way the network functions as a whole. The PSAT results for 2012 show that OKN continues to function at a highly collaborative level; synergy has remained relatively stable since the last cycle, with 69% of OKN members reporting high synergy.

Benefits and drawbacks of participation
Collaborative partnerships yield numerous benefits, but members may also experience certain drawbacks. The figure below shows the growing percentage of OKN members reporting that the benefits of participating in OKN greatly exceed the drawbacks.

Overall, 93% feel the benefits exceed or greatly exceed the drawbacks, suggesting that members are feeling that it is beneficial to participate in the network.
The following tables show the percentage of OKN members reporting that they experienced the specified benefit or drawback.

Table 1. Summary of Benefits, by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of Benefits</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced ability to address important issues</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of new skills</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heightened public profile</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of my expertise and services</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition of useful knowledge</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced ability to affect public policy</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of valuable relationships</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced ability to serve my clients</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater impact than on my own</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a contribution to the community</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Summary of Drawbacks, by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of Drawbacks</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversion of my time and resources</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient influence in partnership activities</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewed negatively due to association with other partners or partnership</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration and aggravation</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient credit given to me for contributions</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict between my job and the partnership’s work</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What has OKN done to improve since 2010?

- Developed more infrastructure, such as a larger staff, a formal partnership agreement, and terms of reference to support our work.
- Provided committees with their PSAT results so that they can improve at the committee level. All committees are required to identify areas of improvement in their work plans.
- Developed a strategic priority work plan for children’s mental health and developmental services to advocate for children, youth and families’ rights to comprehensive services and funding.
- Been involved in activities that increase awareness and participation in OKN, including:
  - Created and launched an interactive, community Data Portal to make our research more accessible
  - Formed a Bullying Prevention Task Force that completed an environmental scan of community bullying services, hosted forums with service professionals and parents, and developed a strategic plan
  - Released parenting videos to help parents learn new ways to nurture and maintain positive, supportive relationships with their teenagers
  - Facilitated localized, community events (coordinated by our Hubs) to increase service integration, access, and programs and services for families and service providers
  - Created a youth-led youth engagement strategy that included a literature review, a youth engagement model, and a report
  - Formed a Developmental Assets strategy table, which initiated a strategic work plan, trained over 2,000 individuals, and coordinated community activities to promote asset-building in our community.

Teens created a colourful mural to celebrate the new location for the OKN Aldershot Community Hub in Holy Rosary School. The mural was unveiled on Wednesday, October 24, 2012.
Summary of findings

- OKN demonstrates high overall levels of partnership functioning. We have seen steady improvement in our functioning scores over the last four years.

- OKN’s leadership has strengthened considerably over the past two years. Members report that the leadership is building trust, empowering members and effectively combining the skills and resources of its members.

- OKN members view participation in the partnership as highly beneficial, particularly for developing valuable relationships and making an impact in the community.

- The percentage of OKN members reporting that the benefits of participation exceed or greatly exceed the drawbacks has increased steadily over the last four years.

- OKN’s resources are seeing impressive gains. The largest improvement in ratings since 2008 is in the category related to sufficiency of resources.

OKN is a successful collaborative. We realize the importance of working together and the benefits and challenges of bringing so many diverse partners together. One reason for our success is our focus on research and evaluation. It is important to continue to use the PSAT every two years to evaluate our progress and identify areas for improvement. It is also important to identify ways to understand our work and our reach in the community.

Celebrating partnership

The “Partnership Agreement” provides a structure and protocol for the eight sector partners to work together and share information and resources, regardless of staff turnover. The original six partners: Halton Children’s Aid Society, Regional Municipality of Halton, Halton Regional Police Services, Halton District School Board, Halton Catholic District School Board, ROCK Reach Out Centre for Kids – grew to eight in early 2011 when OKN welcomed Halton Multicultural Council and ErinoakKids, Centre for Treatment and Development.

On November 15, 2012, Our Kids Network rededicated the partnership and welcomed ErinoakKids, Centre for Treatment and Development and Halton Multicultural Council as partners. Each partner received a commemorative artwork to mark the occasion.

Back row (l to r):
Don Vrooman, Former Chair, Board of Trustees, Halton District School Board
Brad Saunders, Board member, Halton Children’s Aid Society
Alice Anne LeMay, Chair, Board of Trustees, Halton Catholic District School Board
Steve Bishop, Board Chair, ErinoakKids, Centre for Treatment and Development
Pat Gaughan, Board Chair, ROCK Reach Out Centre for Kids

Front row (l to r):
Trivi Mehendale, Board Chair, Halton Multicultural Centre
Steve Cranna, Board member, Halton Children’s Aid Society
Gary Carr, Regional Chair, Regional Municipality of Halton
Bob Maich, Chair, Halton Regional Police Service Board

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