



Living in Niagara – 2020 Report Learning and Education Sector

Having access to inclusive, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities is essential for people to grow, participate and prosper.

Happening Now

- Progress toward the Niagara Children’s Planning Council Community Goal is being measured by Early Development Instrument (EDI) scores. The EDI is a questionnaire completed, every 3 years, by Ontario kindergarten teachers, measuring children’s ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations in five key domains:
 - Physical Health & Well-Being
 - Social Competence
 - Emotional Maturity
 - Language & Cognitive Development
 - Communication Skills & General Knowledge.
- In 2018 in Niagara, EDI data was collected for 3,606 Senior Kindergarten students. The 2018 EDI results for Niagara show that:
 - Vulnerability in the Physical Health and Wellbeing Subdomain increased.
 - Vulnerability in the Social Competence Subdomain is higher than the provincial average.
 - Vulnerability in the Emotional Maturity Subdomain remains of concern; it is higher than the provincial average for the third time in a row.
- Educators, students, families and education institutions at all levels are adjusting to the challenges being presented by the COVID-19 pandemic
- A range of initiatives exist for older adults in Niagara to engage in community-based learning. Examples include: Third Age Learning Niagara; Lifelong Learning Niagara; Public Library programs; local municipal recreation programs; Cyber Seniors; and the TECH CONNECT project.
- A total of 22 EarlyON Family Centres in 16 zones across Niagara offer high-quality drop-in programs for children from birth to six years of age, their parents and caregivers.

What’s Emerging

- Concerns around student mental health and well-being have been on the rise for 2 or 3 years, and are being exacerbated by COVID-19. Educators are anticipating challenges in this regard upon return to in-person school attendance.



- The Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) Working Group of the Niagara Children's Planning Council is working with school board partners to pilot the MDI tool with grade 4 and 7 students. Gathering data for children ages 7 to 12 will allow for improved measurement of impact and focused decision-making.
- Addressing students' food security is the focus of a range of initiatives. Evidence shows that 15.1% of households in Niagara are food insecure, above the 12.7% rate for Canada. Food insecurity is more prevalent among households with children than those without children. It is cited as one of the "top ten threats to the well-being of children in Canada". The Niagara Food Security Network emphasizes: "to effectively and equitably address food insecurity is to address inadequate income for individuals and families".
- An assessment is being made of the economic impact of COVID-19 on post-secondary institutions in Niagara. Factors include having to shift many programs to a virtual model, a decline in enrolment, and students having the ability to stay at home while studying virtually. For the 2020-21 school year, the impact on the Niagara economy is estimated to be between \$94.7 and \$117.6 million. The calculation includes effects on the Niagara rental market, public transit ridership revenue, student spending in Niagara, and available labour supply.

Suggested Community Action Steps

- Continue to raise awareness of Early Development Instrument (EDI) testing results for Niagara, to guide decision-making about design of programs and services. Investment in early childhood development is an investment in health equity, and the overall well-being of our community.
- Strengthen equitable access to the internet; to technology; and to digital skills and confidence, across Niagara's school boards, post-secondary institutions, and community learning hubs, such as public libraries.
- Pay close attention to the impact of pandemic-related loss of presence of international students in Niagara; and lost opportunities for learners to participate in school boards' continuing education programs.

Indicators

- **EQAO Scores**
- **Early Years Learning**
- **Levels of Educational Attainment**
- **Literacy and Essential Skills**
- **School Enrolment Trends and Presence of International Students**
- **Technology Use and its Influence on Education and Learning**
- **Student Mental Wellness**

Indicator: EQAO Scores

About EQAO

EQAO is an arm's length provincial government agency that contributes to the quality and accountability of Ontario's publicly-funded education system for K-12 and post-secondary institutions. The agency provides results to each student who writes an assessment, to help support individual student learning. EQAO also provides schools and school boards with detailed reports about their student's achievement, as well as contextual, attitudinal and behavioural information from questionnaires, in an interactive online reporting tool. Data gathered is used to improve school programming and classroom instruction. EQAO also reports the results of the provincial assessments publicly.

Some changes have been made to the way tests are being administered, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Information about EQAO administration dates is available at:

<https://www.eqao.com/the-assessments/administration-dates/> .

EQAO Profiles for the two largest School Boards in Niagara (2019)

- District School Board of Niagara (118 schools) – <https://www.eqao.com/report/?id=83>
 - DSBN media release about most recent EQAO scores, September 25, 2019 is available at <https://dsbn.org/news-release/2019/09/25/dsbn-students-continue-strong-performance-on-eqao>
- Niagara Catholic District School Board (59 schools) - <https://www.eqao.com/report/?id=29>
 - NCDSB media release about EQAO Assessments, September 25, 2019 is available at: <https://niagaracatholic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Media-Release-Niagara-Catholic-releases-2018-2019-EQAO-results.pdf>

Indicator: Early Years Learning

EarlyON Child and Family Centres across Niagara

EarlyON Child and Family Centres provide free, high-quality drop-in programs for children from birth to six years of age, their parents and caregivers. Niagara Region lists a total of 22 EarlyON Centres that operate in Niagara:

Number of EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Niagara's local municipalities	
Municipality	Number of EarlyON Centres
Fort Erie	3
Grimsby	1
Lincoln	1
Niagara Falls	3
Niagara-on-the-Lake	2
Pelham	1
Port Colborne	1
St. Catharines	5
Thorold	1
Wainfleet	0
Welland	3
West Lincoln	1
Total	22

Source: Niagara Region, EarlyON Child and Family Centres

Retrieved From: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/living/childcare/early-years/default.aspx>
<https://www.niagararegion.ca/living/childcare/early-years/>

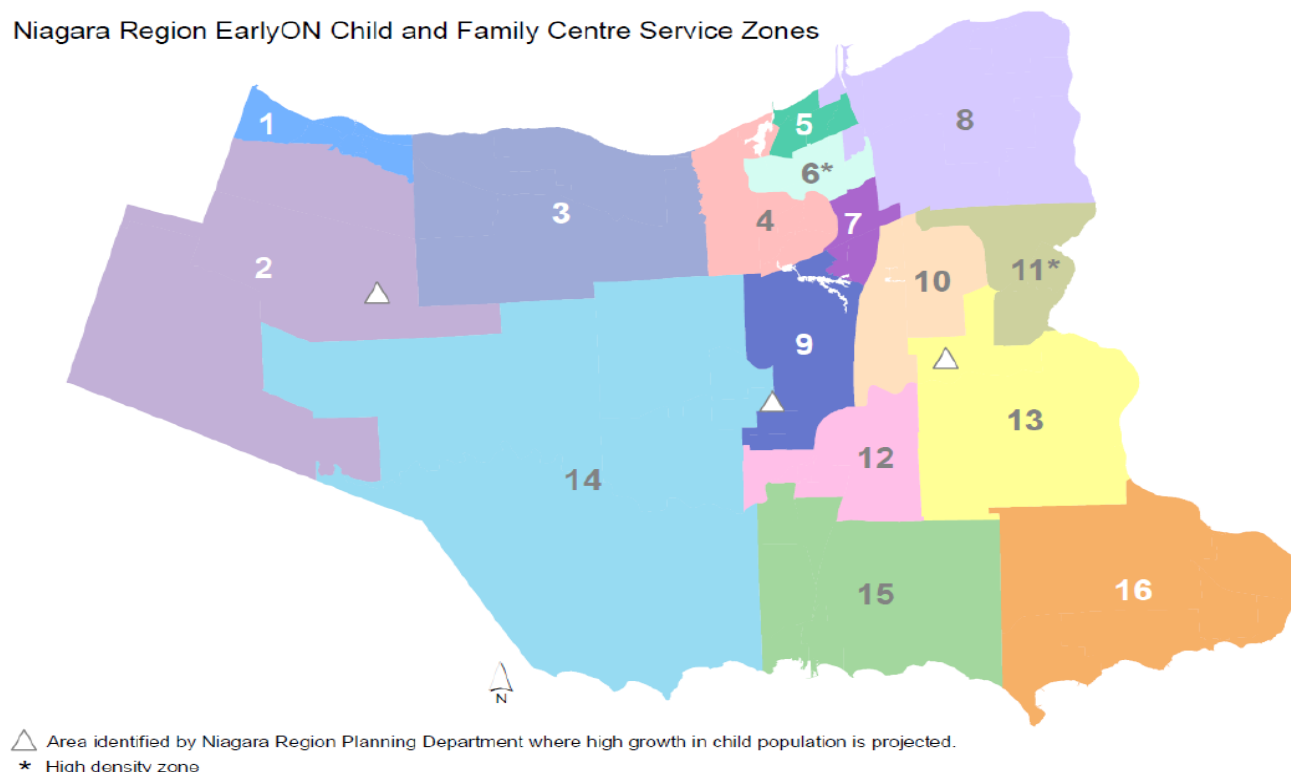
Niagara Region Children's Services (NRCS) was mandated to take on the responsibility of service system management of all EarlyON Child and Family Centres across Niagara as of January, 2018. This new responsibility was in addition to the responsibility of service system management of the local early learning and licensed child care system. These changes arose from provincial transformation toward an integrated early years system, with seamless transitions between programs and services that support early learning and healthy child development.

Sixteen (16) service zones in Niagara were identified for EarlyON Family Centres, in order to support and provide consistent and accessible core services throughout the region. The zones were developed based on detailed analysis of population data; density and distribution of children ages 0-4 years; areas identified for population growth for young families; and

feedback from parents/caregivers, service providers, and community service agencies. Identification of the zones supported 2019 contract negotiations with proponents to operate an EarlyON Child and Family Centre in one or more of the zones.

Appendix C – Map of Service Zones

Niagara Region EarlyON Child and Family Centre Service Zones



Source: Niagara Region, Report to Public Health and Social Services Committee: Actions to Inform Procurement Process of EarlyON Child and Family Centres, April 16, 2019. Retrieved From: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=2853>

Ontario Early Years and Child Care Annual Report

The Province of Ontario Early Years and Child Care Annual Report provides an annual snapshot and year-over-year trends of Ontario's early years and child care sector. It supports the Ontario government's commitment under the Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement 2017-2020, which can be accessed at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/ontario-2017.html>

Ontario Early Years and Child Care Annual Reports for 2018, 2019 and 2020 are available at:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/annual-report-2018.html>
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/annual-report-2019.html>
<http://edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/annual-report-2020.html>

Children's Services

On the Niagara Region website, Niagara Region Children's Services provides information about:

- The five licensed child care centres operated by the Region, which are staffed by Registered Early Childhood Educators, and located in Niagara Falls; Fort Erie; Port Colborne; St. Catharines; and Welland.
- Independent operators contracted by the Region to provide child care services in their homes, for children between birth and 12 years of age.
- Financial assistance for eligible families to assist with child care costs
- Resources for child care service providers
- EarlyON Child and Family Centres (22 sites across Niagara)
- Placements for students requiring academic credit through on-the-job experience before entering the workforce in the child care service sector.

Source: Niagara Region

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/living/childcare/default.aspx>

Parent Direct Niagara

Parent Direct Niagara is an online tool that aims to help parents find information and links to early learning and care programs, services and resources in Niagara. Operated by the Early Childhood Community Development Centre, the Parent Direct Niagara site provides an online directory that offers information about:

- Interactive Learning Programs
- Health, Wellness and Special Needs
- Child Care Information (directory of licensed child care centres and links to licensed home child care agencies)
- Schools (links to kindergarten programs offered in Niagara)
- Parenting (resources to build skills and confidence)
- Recreation and Leisure (early learning programs).

Source: Parent Direct Niagara

Retrieved from: <http://www.parentdirectniagara.ca/>

Niagara Region Public Health Parenting Support Programs

Niagara Region Public Health Parenting Support programs are presented on the Niagara Parents webpage. Information categories include: Clinics and Classes; Becoming a Parent/Pregnancy; Feeding your Baby; Babies/Toddlers 0-3; Kids/Children 4-12; Youth/Teens 13-18; Community Resources; Healthy Schools; and Dental Health.

Source: Niagara Region Public Health

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/parents/>

Licensed Child Care Spaces and Investment in Child Care in Niagara

The following 4 tables are drawn from the Municipal Benchmarking Network Canada 2019 Performance Report. The report includes measures of community impact, service level, efficiency and customer service.

Regulated Child Care Spaces in Municipality per 1,000 Children (12 and under)

This measure reflects the number of licensed spaces in child care centres, preschools and home child care agencies. It is important to note that municipalities do not independently direct or drive growth of licensed spaces

	Durham	Halton	Hamilton	London	Niagara	Sudbury	Toronto	Waterloo	Windsor	York	Median
2017	242	301	245	225	207	271	214	208	196	319	234
2018	251	318	260	227	208	276	223	216	205	326	239
2019	262	322	264	241	212	285	237	226	210	336	252

Per Cent of Child Care Spaces that are Subsidized

For this table, the results illustrate that high demand can be indicative of the number of lower-income families requiring child care. Other contributing factors include total funding and the growth in total number of spaces created. This measure reflects the number of full day equivalents (FDE) as opposed to the actual number of children served.

	Durham	Halton	Hamilton	London	Niagara	Sudbury	Toronto	Waterloo	Windsor	York	Median
2017	10%	7%	17%	17%	14%	15%	37%	11%	16%	11%	15%
2018	12%	6%	19%	18%	15%	16%	38%	12%	16%	12%	16%
2019	10%	7%	19%	16%	15%	17%	37%	12%	16%	12%	16%

Per Cent of Children (12 and under) in the Municipality that are from Lower Income Families

This measure provides the percent of children in the municipality (12 and under) that are from lower income families, as measured by the Statistics Canada LICO (Low Income Cut-Offs) guideline. A LICO** is an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family.

	Durham	Halton	Hamilton	London	Niagara	Sudbury	Toronto	Waterloo	Windsor*	York	Median
2017	12%	9%	24%	22%	14%	20%	28%	12%	12%	15%	15%
2018	12%	9%	23%	22%	14%	20%	28%	12%	12%	15%	15%
2019	12%	9%	23%	22%	14%	20%	28%	12%	15%	15%	15%

*Windsor: 2019 LICO Data is Before Tax. Previous years used Census Data After Tax.

** Statistics Canada provides information about LICO at:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/2009002/s2-eng.htm>

Total Cost to Provide Child Care Services per Child (12 and under) in the Municipality

This measure reports the total cost to provide child care services for children 12 years and under and includes all funding sources. Increases to the 2018 'cost per child' reflect increased 2018 Provincial funding, a portion of which was one-time funding.

	Durham	Halton	Hamilton	London	Niagara	Sudbury	Toronto	Waterloo	Windsor	York	Median
2017	\$637	\$635	\$878	\$820	\$839	\$1,025	\$1,383	\$621	\$793	\$716	\$807
2018	\$803	\$742	\$1,168	\$1,130	\$1,065	\$1,357	\$1,708	\$847	\$1,099	\$983	\$1,082
2019	\$794	\$752	\$1,072	\$1,130	\$1,074	\$1,343	\$1,763	\$826	\$999	\$940	\$1,036

Source: Municipal Benchmarking Network Canada 2019 Performance Report
Retrieved From: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/2019-mbncanada-performance-measurement-report/>

School Based Child Care Capital Projects in Niagara

In June 2017, the Ontario Ministry of Education (MEDU) announced the Early Years Capital Program, to provide school boards with capital funding to support school-based licensed child care centre builds and retrofits, with the goal to create new licensed child care spaces for children ages 0-4 years. In Niagara, three local school boards each submitted a capital build proposal and all were approved by the MEDU. The capital funding was allocated to help the school boards create 100 new licensed child care spaces within schools in Niagara; 30 infant spaces, 30 toddler spaces, and 40 preschool age spaces. The builds were scheduled for completion in 2020.

Municipality	School Board	Infant spaces	Toddler spaces	Preschool spaces	Total # of new spaces
St. Catharines	Conseil scolaire Viamonde	10	15	16	41
St. Catharines	DSBN	10	-	-	10
Niagara Falls	NCDSB	10	15	24	49

Source: Niagara Region Public Health and Social Services Committee, July 9, 2019.
Retrieved from: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=4373#page=109>

Niagara Children's Planning Council

The mission of the Niagara Children's Planning Council (NCPC) is to ensure children in Niagara receive the best start in life. The vision of the NCPC is:

- Niagara – a community that ensures every child will reach optimal potential through cooperative investment in the Early Years.
- All children in the Niagara region are safe, healthy and respected
- All families in Niagara are supported to provide children with the best possible opportunities early in their lives.

The NCPC structure is organized around four results statements:

- Children are Healthy
- Children are Learning
- Children are Safe
- Families are Strong, Stable and Connected

These four result statements are the NCPC community goals. They reflect the council's desire to focus attention on children by:

- Improving overall health and well-being
- Providing rich learning opportunities and creating life-long learners
- Supporting safe environments at home, school and in their community at large, and
- Supporting families in the rewarding but oftentimes challenging work of caring for their children.

With this focused attention, the Niagara community can engage in thoughtful planning that purposely examines the support necessary for children to learn, be healthy, be safe and live in strong, stable and connected families. The four result statements are 'what' NCPC and community partners are working towards, and cooperative investment is 'how' they intend to do so.

Source: Niagara Children's Planning Council, Niagara Knowledge Exchange, 2020

Retrieved From: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/partners-projects/niagara-childrens-planning-council/>

Early Development Instrument (EDI)

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) measures children's ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations at school entry. EDI is a questionnaire completed by Ontario kindergarten teachers, measuring children's ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations in five key domains:

- Physical Health & Well-Being
- Social Competence



- Emotional Maturity
- Language & Cognitive Development
- Communication Skills & General Knowledge.

“Vulnerable” describes the children who score below a standard EDI score in any domain of their development. Children who are vulnerable in kindergarten are more likely to have later difficulties academically, emotionally, and in their relationships with peers.

Source: EDI, Offord Centre for Child Studies, McMaster University & Hamilton Health Sciences
Retrieved From: <https://edi.offordcentre.com/partners/canada/edi-in-ontario/>

EDI tracking tells internal and external partners where children are not meeting developmental expectations. This supports design of programs and services, recognizing that investment in early childhood development benefits health equity, vibrant communities and economic growth. An EDI Fact Sheet is available at: <https://edi-offordcentre.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2019/01/EDI-fact-sheet-2018.pdf>

The most recent (2018) EDI results for Niagara were presented to the Niagara Region Public Health and Social Services Committee on February 11, 2020. Epidemiologist Shailee Tama, and Children’s Services Data Analyst Amy Romagnoli made the presentation, including:

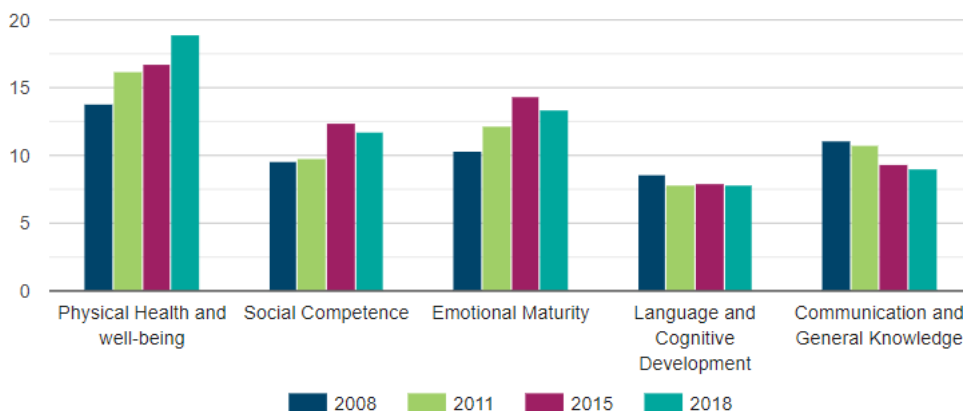
- In Ontario, EDI results are tracked every 3 years.
- Since 2005, Niagara Region has participated in EDI tracking.
- Data is collected by Sr. Kindergarten teachers. They have to know a student for at least one month, to be able to include that student in the data collection process.
- In 2018 in Niagara, data was collected for 3,606 Senior Kindergarten students.
- 2018 results for Niagara show that:
 - Vulnerability in the Physical Health and Wellbeing Subdomain increased.
 - Vulnerability in the Social Competence Subdomain is higher than the provincial average.
 - Vulnerability in the Emotional Maturity Subdomain remains of concern; it is higher than the provincial average for the third time in a row.

Source: Niagara Region Public Health and Social Services Agenda Package, pages 3 – 19; and: Niagara Region Public Health & Social Services Committee 02-11-2020, video archive
Retrieved From: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=7732> ; and <https://www.youtube.com/embed/OhWn0vGbBxw?rel=0&autoplay=1>

Information about EDI in Niagara (as well as Child Oral Health) is provided by Niagara Region Public Health, on the Niagara Region website (see graph on next page). This information is cross-referenced in the Early Years Learning Indicator area of the Learning and Education Sector of this Living in Niagara-2020 report.



Percent of kindergarten children vulnerable on 5 domains of the Early Development Instrument, by year



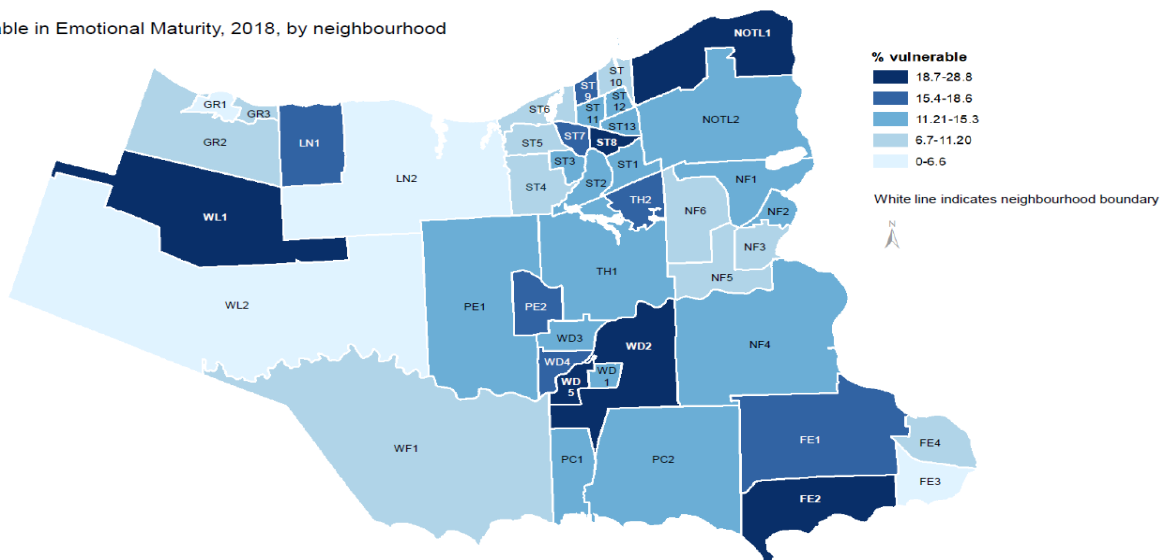
Source: Early Development Instrument, Niagara Region, 2008-2018

Note: data is collected from publicly funded school boards only (English Public, English Catholic, French Public, French Catholic). Children who have identified/diagnosed special needs are not included in the data used for this analysis.

Source: Child Health - Statistics in Niagara. Niagara Region Public Health.
Retrieved From: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/statistics/Child-Health/>

The following map shows 2018 EDI testing results for all of the Niagara region, by neighbourhood. The map is based on new neighbourhood classifications developed by Niagara Region Public Health (NRPH) in 2020. The dark blue shading indicates the highest concentration of children who are vulnerable in the EDI domains.

% vulnerable in Emotional Maturity, 2018, by neighbourhood



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Middle Years Development Instrument

The Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) Working Group of the Niagara Children's Planning Council is working with school board partners to pilot the MDI tool with grade 4 and 7 students. The intent is that gathering data for children ages 7 to 12 will allow for improved measurement of impact.

The MDI is a self-report questionnaire completed by children in grades 4 through 8. It asks them how they think and feel about their experiences both inside and outside of school. Both the Grade 4/5 questionnaire and the Grade 6/7/8 questionnaire include questions related to the five areas of development that are strongly linked to wellbeing, health and academic achievement:

- Physical Health and Well-Being
- Connectedness
- Social and Emotional Development
- School Experiences
- Use of After-School Time.

The MDI is not an assessment for individual children. Instead, it is a unique and comprehensive population-based measure that helps us gain a deeper understanding of children's health and well-being during middle childhood.

Through the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), based at the University of British Columbia, use of the MDI survey is being expanded across Canada and internationally. Since 2015, six school boards in Ontario have used the survey. For example, both the public and Catholic school boards in Hamilton-Wentworth have used it.

Source: Early Learning, University of British Columbia
Retrieved from: <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdi/> and <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdi/national-scale-out/>

Presence of School Nutrition Programs in Niagara

Building healthy eating habits in students can help them stay on the path to health for years to come, according to the 2017 Health Behaviours and Perceptions of Niagara Students report published by Niagara Region Public Health. The report is based on 2015 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey data.

See pages 69 to 72 of the report, at the link below, for information about "Eating Habits Among Niagara Students", which is summarized in the infographic on the next page.



Eating Habits Among Niagara Students

16% of grade 7 and 8 students meet the daily recommended servings of vegetables and fruits each day



5% of secondary students meet the daily recommended servings of vegetables and fruits each day

17% of grade 7 and 8 students have had 5 or more sugar-sweetened beverages in the past week



26% of secondary students have had 5 or more sugar-sweetened beverages in the past week

Eating more vegetables and fruit and drinking fewer sugar-sweetened beverages can help improve the diet quality of Niagara students

62% of grade 7 and 8 students had breakfast on all 5 school days in the past week



44% of secondary students had breakfast on all 5 school days in the past week

Eating a nutritious breakfast can help improve students concentration in the classroom

Building healthy eating habits in students can help them stay on the path to health for years to come

niagararegion.ca/health

Niagara  Region

The data used in this publication came from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (2015) conducted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and administered by the Institute of Social Research, York University. Its contents and interpretation are solely the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the official view of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Source: Niagara Region Public Health, 2017.

Retrieved from: <http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/07/OSDUHS-Report.pdf>



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Niagara Nutrition Partners

Niagara Nutrition Partners (NNP) is a region-wide initiative providing coordinated nutrition programs in elementary and secondary schools, as well as community-based programs. Provincial grant programs and local fundraising efforts make this possible. NNP has more than 200 school and community-based programs in place, serving 17,000 children and youth each day. NNP provides a searchable map: <https://www.niagaranutritionpartners.ca/programs>

For the 2020-2021 school year, 115 schools throughout Niagara are enrolled with NNP and are serving their students daily. To meet COVID-19 safety guidelines, schools have pivoted from their usual serving style to a bin-delivered grab and go program. For many, this means a bin filled with pre-packaged snacks, fruits and veggies in each classroom, or in a central location in a hallway. School staff members volunteer their time to place orders, sanitize and fill bins and distribute snack items to students. With community partners' support, NNP has been able to provide infrastructure, including bus bins, tongs, and carts to schools.

In late 2020, NNP distributed grocery gift cards to students learning from home. With help from both the District School Board of Niagara and the Niagara Catholic District School Board, NNP was able to provide over \$50,000 in cards to assist families during the 2020 Christmas holidays. Funds to support this initiative came from NNP and the Grocery Foundation.

Source: Niagara Nutrition Partners

Retrieved From: <https://www.niagaranutritionpartners.ca/>

Food4Kids

Food4kids distributes healthy food packages to 3050 children in Hamilton, Halton, Mississauga, Niagara and Guelph each week throughout the year. A total of 301 healthy food packages each week are distributed to children in 17 schools in Niagara. Programs include:

- Weekends Without Hunger – Participants up to 14 years of age are referred by schools aware of students with limited access to food in their homes. The schools submit a referral and parental permission form. Food items are packed by volunteers and delivered to schools each Friday morning.
- Summer Food Program - Schools refer children with limited access to food during the summer months. Volunteers package healthy food bins, including 2 recipes per week with all the ingredients to make a healthy, delicious family meal.

Source: Food4Kids Niagara

Retrieved from: <https://www.food4kidsniagara.ca/>

Community Crew

Community Crew provides nutritious lunches to feed over 1200 children each week in 24 different schools throughout the Niagara region.

Source: Community Crew

Retrieved from: <https://www.communitycrew.ca/>



Indicator: Levels of Educational Attainment

The Niagara Workforce Planning Board (NWPB) provides Tables 4-1 and 4-2 in its 2019-2020 Labour Market Report. The data is presented at a regional level, including all local municipal areas in Niagara.

TABLE 4-1: NIAGARA REGION AND ONTARIO LABOUR FORCE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT³⁰

Level of Educational Attainment	2016 Niagara Workforce	% of Niagara Workforce	2016 Ontario Workforce	% of Ontario Workforce
No certificate, diploma or degree	22,965	10.1%	693,730	9.7%
Secondary (high) school diploma or equivalency certificate	71,520	31.6%	1,896,455	26.6%
Post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree	132,110	58.3%	4,551,495	63.7%

³⁰ Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016365.

Table 4-1 presents a breakdown of the highest level of educational attainment for Niagara's and Ontario's labour forces. A majority of Niagara's labour force have a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree. Compared to Ontario, Niagara's labour force has a larger percentage of people with a secondary or high school diploma as their highest level of educational attainment. At the same time, Ontario's labour force has a slightly higher proportion of individuals with a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree. The percentage of individuals in the labour force with no certificate, diploma or degree is similar.

Source: Niagara Workforce Planning Board (NWPB), 2019-2020 Labour Market Report, pg. 30
Retrieved from: <https://nwpb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NWPB2019LabourMarketReport-English-1.pdf>

Table 4.2, on page 31 of the same NWPB report is shown on the next page. NWPB states:

Table 4-2 provides additional detail on the types of post-secondary training that are found in Niagara's labour force and offers provincial data for comparison. Again, these

data represent only the segment of the labour force that holds some form of post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree. Note: these data indicate an individual's highest level of educational attainment.

TABLE 4-2: NIAGARA REGION AND ONTARIO LABOUR FORCE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT³¹

Level of Post-Secondary Training	2016 Niagara Workforce	Niagara Percentage	Ontario Percentage
College certificate or diploma	63,675	48.2%	37.9%
Bachelor's degree	32,775	24.8%	33.0%
Certificate of Apprenticeship or Certificate of Qualification	9,525	7.2%	4.8%
Master's degree	8,475	6.4%	10.2%
Trades certificate or diploma	8,190	6.2%	4.4%
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	3,865	2.9%	3.6%
University certificate or diploma above bachelor level	3,045	2.3%	3.1%
Degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry	1,345	1.0%	1.3%
Earned doctorate	1,205	0.9%	1.6%

31 Statistics Canada. 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016365.

Niagara Regional Council 2019-2022 Strategic Plan Priorities & Learning and Education

In 2018, Niagara Region engaged the community to gather feedback on what Niagara Regional Council should focus on in the development of their 2019-2022 strategic plan. Input was collected through in-person engagement events and an online survey. The resulting strategic plan was released in 2019. Of the five priorities that were identified, two are directly relevant to the Learning and Education Sector:

Priority 1: Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth – a coordinated approach to fostering economic growth in Niagara

Objective 1.1: Economic Growth and Development

- Enhance integration with local area municipalities' economic development and planning departments to provide supports and improve interactions with businesses to expedite and navigate development processes
- Forward thinking approach to economic development in Niagara through long term strategic planning and leveraging partnerships with post-secondary institutions

Objective 1.2: Support Retention and Development of a Skilled Labour Force

- Partner with all levels of education, private sector businesses and industry associations to advocate for skilled trade labour to address the workforce gap
- Explore the development of a regional talent network, and develop an advanced manufacturing workforce strategy for Niagara

Objective 1.3: Collaborative Approach to Business Growth and Retention

- Work collaboratively with local area municipalities to connect with existing businesses proactively to achieve long term economic success
- Work collaboratively with community organizations, post-secondary institutions and businesses to support research and technology facilities in the region that foster new business start-up opportunities

Priority 2: Healthy and Vibrant Community – foster a high quality of life through safe, inclusive neighbourhoods and delivery of quality, affordable and accessible human services

Objective 2.1: Enhance Community Wellbeing

- Foster safe and inclusive neighbourhoods and communities tied to a larger strategic Community Safety and Wellbeing strategy
- Drive positive and healthy early childhood education and experiences through the delivery of high quality and affordable child care services
- Increase the capacity of long-term care across the region to meet the needs of the aging population

Source: Niagara Region

Retrieved from: <http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/niagara-region-strategic-plan-2019-2022/>

Indicator: Literacy and Essential Skills

Adult Literacy Organizations

Literacy Link Niagara (LLN) is a regional coalition of literacy programs committed to adult basic education. LLN provides Canadian Literacy Facts:

- Almost 50% of Canadian adults can't work well with words and numbers
- Learning disabilities affect at least 10% of Canadians
- Children of parents who have not graduated from high school are twice as likely to live in poverty as those whose parents graduated
- People with literacy problems have only 2/3 of the income of other adults
- 48% of all Canadian adults fall into the lowest two reading levels
- The unemployment rate for people at the lowest literacy level is 26%, compared with 4% for those at the highest literacy levels

Source: Literacy Link Niagara

Retrieved from: <https://www.literacylinkniagara.ca/>

The INCommunities/211 Niagara Community Information database includes 18 records for organizations that provide Literacy and Basic Skills services across the Niagara region. A record for Literacy Link Niagara is also included.

Source: Niagara Community Information Database, INCommunities

Retrieved From:

<https://niagara.cioc.ca/results.asp?STerms=%22Literacy+and+Basic+Skills%22&SType=A&CMType=L&CMID=587&GeoLocatedNearAddress=&GeoLocatedNearLatitude=&GeoLocatedNearLongitude=>

Indicator: School Enrolment Trends and Presence of International Students

Elementary and Secondary Schools

The District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) operates 79 elementary schools and 20 secondary schools across Niagara, serving over 36,000 students from JK to Grade 12 each year. Projected enrolment for the 2020-2021 school year is 26,605 elementary and 11,875 secondary students, for a total of 38,480.

Source: District School Board of Niagara

Retrieved from: <https://dsbn.org/about/about-dsbn>

The Niagara Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) operates 49 elementary schools and 8 secondary schools, serving 14,086 elementary; 6,418 secondary students, for a total of 20,504. Adult education and summer school enrolment totals 7,500.

Source: Niagara Catholic District School Board

Retrieved from: <https://niagaracatholic.ca/about-us/>

Conseil scolaire Viamonde is a public French language school board operating 4 elementary schools and 1 secondary school in the Niagara region. The elementary schools are located in Welland (2), Niagara Falls, and St. Catharines. The secondary school includes grades 7 to 12 and is located in Welland.

Source: Conseil scolaire Viamonde

Retrieved from: <https://csviamonde.ca/english/>

Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir is a French language Catholic school board which operates 7 elementary schools and 1 secondary school in Niagara. Elementary schools are located in Welland; St. Catharines (2); Niagara Falls (3); and Port Colborne. The secondary school is located in Welland.

Source: Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir

Retrieved from: <https://www.cscmonavenir.ca/>

Post-Secondary Institutions

Brock University enrollment for the 2019-2020 school year totaled 19,681 students.

Of those, 2,584 were International Students, originating from: Africa (11%); Asia (75%); Central and South American and the Caribbean (5%); Europe (7%); and North America (2%).

Source: Brock Fact Sheet 2019-2020, Brock University Institutional Analysis and Planning Retrieved From: https://brocku.ca/institutional-analysis/wp-content/uploads/sites/90/Brock-Facts-2019-2020_WithOSAP_2020.09.18.pdf

Additional information is provided in the Brock University 2019-2020 Annual Report, at: https://brocku.ca/about/wp-content/uploads/primary-site/sites/8/2019_20-AR_Inside-Pages_SCREEN.pdf

Niagara College fall 2020 full-time post-secondary enrollment totaled 8,766 students.

Of those, 2,657 were International Students. The top 10 countries of citizenship of International Students were: India (58.2%); Vietnam 6.5%; Philippines (5.1%); China (5.1%); South Korea (3.9%); Brazil (2.5%); Nigeria (1.9%); Colombia (1.6%); Bahamas (1.4%); Mexico (1.1%); and all other countries (12.5%).

Source: Niagara College at a Glance, November, 2020, Niagara College Institutional Research and Planning

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagaracollege.ca/about/administration/plans-reports/at-a-glance/>

Additional information is provided in the Niagara College 2019-2020 Annual Report, at: <https://www.niagaracollege.ca/about/administration/plans-reports/annual-report/>

Indicator: Technology Use and Its Influence on Education and Learning

iHub, the Educational Research and Innovation Hub, is a dynamic incubation entity focused in the Educational Technology sector. iHub facilitates collaboration amongst educators, students, parents, researchers, industry leaders, and iHub Portfolio Companies to enhance and innovate the modern education experience and foster local economic development and growth. iHub is located at the DSNB Academy school in west St. Catharines.

Source: iHub Niagara

Retrieved from: <https://ihubniagara.ca/>

Canada Learning Code – Niagara is one of 38 local chapters across Canada. The organization is a national team of educators and community builders whose mission is to deliver free, hands-on and interactive technology education to youth, teens, teachers and adults.

Source: Canada Learning Code

Retrieved from: <https://www.canadalearningcode.ca/chapters/niagara/>

Geospatial Niagara aims to promote geo-literacy and community participation through geography. The organization engages students, citizens and organizations to educate and facilitate geospatial projects and outreach. Projects include the Niagara Region Minecraft Project; Treeocode Niagara; Day of Geography; and Ohnia:kara Aspiring Global Geopark.

Source: Geospatial Niagara

Retrieved from: <http://www.geospatialniagara.com/>

SWIFT (South Western Integrated Fibre Technology) is a project aiming to provide access to fibre-optic high-speed Internet for 3.5 million Ontarians living in rural areas. Niagara Region has signed on as a partner to the SWIFT project.

In January, 2021, SWIFT announced \$21.2 million in funding for broadband upgrades to support four fibre-to-the-home projects. Bell Canada was awarded funding for two of the projects; Cogeco Communications and Niagara Regional Broadband Network were awarded the other two contracts. Collectively these projects will service 396 kilometers of underserved roadway within the region, to bring better broadband connectivity to 5,629 households and businesses. Areas of Niagara Falls, Port Colborne, Fort Erie, Lincoln, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Wainfleet, West Lincoln and Grimsby will all benefit from this investment in broadband expansion.

Source: Niagara Region, South Western Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) Initiative.

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/government/initiatives/swift/> and <https://swiftruralbroadband.ca/> and <https://swiftruralbroadband.ca/swift-announces-21m-broadband-expansion-plan-for-niagara-region/>

CONNECT, Canada's largest educational technology conference, brings together nearly 2,000 K-12, college and university educators; business and government leaders; and technology specialists, in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Four streams explore best practices and initiatives that create positive growth in Ed Tech:

- Educator – varied presentations and workshops from integrating technology with arts and music, math, animation and 3D printing, to virtual learning and learning communities
- Executive - broader public sector IT, business and economic development; school to workplace learning; libraries and learning commons
- Technologist – Ed Tech updates for workers supporting IT in education systems, such as chief information officers, computer and information systems managers, database administrators, IT managers, network systems administrators, security specialists
- Library – innovative technological approaches for Canadian librarian leaders

Due to COVID-19 the conference was not held in 2020. The intent is to host it again in 2022.

Source: CONNECT, Canada's Learning and Technology Conference

Retrieved from: <https://www.canconnected.com/about-connect/>

Public Libraries in Niagara

Niagara has 12 Public Library systems, with a total of 27 branch locations. The Community Belonging Sector of this Living in Niagara-2020 report states: *“Public libraries in Niagara are increasingly recognized for being welcoming community hubs that offer comprehensive access to information and digital resources. They help citizens to bridge the technology divide; provide reliable access to the internet, computers and technology; and they partner with human service agencies to offer opportunities for satellite outreach.”* The Work and Employment Sector of this report calls for our community to *“recognize that having digital skills is essential for modern workplace competency”*. Public libraries play a strong role in supporting this work. More detailed information, including library use statistics, is included in the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector of this Living in Niagara-2020 report. For example, see the following table:

Quick Facts – St. Catharines Public Library 2019 Annual Report	
1,020,542	Items borrowed and used in-library
331,753	Patron questions answered
435,000	Library visits (in person and online)
198,496	Uses of online resources
52,087	Internet workstation and wireless sessions
14,169	Children and Teens attended 770 library programs and class visits
5,874	Adults attended 525 library programs and class visits
3,655	New user registrations
59,499	Library cardholders

Retrieved from: <https://www.myscpl.ca/images/files/board/report/2019.AnnualReport.pdf>

Indicator: Student Mental Wellness

School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) is a provincial implementation support team that helps school districts enhance student mental health through the use of evidence-based strategies and services. Since 2011, SMHO has worked alongside the Ministry of Education, English and French school districts and school authorities, and a number of provincial education and health organizations to develop a systematic and comprehensive approach to school mental health.

SMHO provides a Student Mental Health Action Kit – practical resources to support student mental health during COVID-19. The resources are classified according to the reader's role (School and System Leaders; Educators; Students; Parents and Families; School Mental Health Professionals; Other School Roles).

Source: School Mental Health Ontario
Retrieved From: <https://smho-smsso.ca/>

The District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) believes that mental health and well-being play a critical role in student success. The DSBN vision for the mental health climate at all of its schools is to create an environment where:

- School staff works together with parents, mental health partners and other schools to become stronger together by sharing responsibilities and resources
- Staff serve as mental health and well-being partners in the classroom and work with families and community agencies to mobilize support and access to service
- Students understand and respect mental health and well-being and feel comfortable advocating for their own needs
- Family members are empowered to support the mental health and well-being of their children
- The voices of students, staff, parents and community partners contribute to an on-going mental health conservation that builds understanding

Retrieved From: <https://www.dsbni.org/programs-services/well-being/home>

The Niagara Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) hired a Mental Health Lead in 2013; and approved their Mental Health and Addictions Strategy in 2015. The NCDSB works in partnership with Pathstone Mental Health, Niagara Health, Contact Niagara and other agencies supporting student mental wellness.

Retrieved From: <https://niagaracatholic.ca/programs-and-services/mental-health-and-addictions/>



Pathstone Mental Health School-Based Programs

Pathstone Mental Health is the only accredited provider of children's mental health treatment in the Niagara region. Pathstone serves all children and youth from birth through to their eighteenth birthday; and offers a broad spectrum of treatment services and programs, delivered by highly qualified staff, to strengthen children and families.

Pathstone's School-Based Program is a student focused therapy service that assists children who are exhibiting difficulties at school due to social, emotional or behavioural problems. This program is unique because it brings Pathstone Therapists into the school and is able to deliver services to where children spend most of their day.

Many clients served by this program are trying to cope with one or more mental health disorders or challenges such as: Conduct Disorder, Anxiety Disorder/s (Phobias, Panic Attacks, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders), Psychiatric Disorder/s (Depression, Psychosis, Bipolar are the most common), Tourette's Syndrome, Post Traumatic Stress and Sexual Behaviour Problems.

A Pathstone Social therapist is assigned to a student once the referral has been received from [Contact Niagara](#). Referrals for School-based Services are initiated by the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) and Niagara Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) Mental Health Leads according to the process delineated within each board.

The Pathstone School-based therapist will assist the individual and family in setting realistic goals to work on in therapy, and together they will develop a treatment plan outlining how the work will be undertaken. The treatment plan may include referrals to other Pathstone or community services as required. It may also include referrals to Pathstone Consultants i.e Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist(s) or Psychologist. The school-based therapist will also liaise with the client's school or other professionals to develop interventions across all domains.

Source: Pathstone Mental Health

Retrieved From: <https://pathstonementalhealth.ca/programs-services/counselling-and-therapy/school-based/>

Post-Secondary Student Mental Health

In 2020, the Mental Health Commission of Canada released the National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students. The Standard supports key outcomes:

- raise awareness about mental health and decrease mental illness-related stigma;
- provide healthier and safer institutional environments;
- improve opportunities for student success and flourishing; and
- promote life and resiliency skills that students can use at school, work, and in daily life.

Source: Mental Health Commission of Canada, National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students

Retrieved from: <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/studentstandard>



Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health

Both Brock University and Niagara College are affiliated with The Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental health (CICMH).

CICMH involves Colleges Ontario, the Council of Ontario Universities, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, the College Student Alliance and Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division.

CICMH works with Ontario's post-secondary mental health service providers, specifically student services, counselling, accessibility, health, faculty, administration, student leaders and community partners, to:

- Build the knowledge and skills of front-line staff and student leaders in post-secondary institutions to increase their capacity to address the mental health needs of students.
- Foster innovation in collaboration that promotes systemic responses in the post-secondary system to address the mental health needs of students.
- Develop strategic partnerships to leverage external knowledge, resources and relationships that address the needs the mental health needs of students

In August, 2021, CIMCH will host a virtual Canadian Post-Secondary Mental Health Conference: Collaborations for Change: Connecting Research and Practice in Post-Secondary Mental Health. Four discussion streams include:

- Technological supports available to support post-secondary students' mental health
- Evaluation, research, assessment in the post-secondary student mental health context
- Healthy campus and upstream approaches within the context of the National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students
- Service and program delivery models supporting post-secondary student mental health.

Source: Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health

Retrieved from: <https://campusmentalhealth.ca/> and

<https://campusmentalhealth.ca/event/collaborations-for-change-connecting-research-and-practice-in-post-secondary-mental-health-conference/>

Niagara College

Health, Wellness and Accessibility Services at Niagara College connects students to Campus Mental Health and Crisis Services, including:

- Health, Wellness & Accessibility Services counsellors who provide confidential supportive guidance, crisis-intervention services, referrals and supports
- Niagara College Indigenous Education Services
- Canadian Mental Health Association, Niagara Branch - Urgent Support Services
- COAST Niagara/Mental Health & Addiction Access Line
- Distress Centre Niagara telephone support, crisis intervention, suicide prevention
- good2Talk.ca mental health line for Post-Secondary Education (PSE) students in Ontario and Nova Scotia
- keep.meSAFE International Student Support Program
- Niagara Wholistic Wellness Portal - <https://mycircleofwellness.ca/main.php>

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagaracollege.ca/counselling-services/mental-health-and-crisis-support/> and <https://www.niagaracollege.ca/counselling-services/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/08/Campus-Mental-Health-Resources-and-Crisis-Services-08202020.pdf>

Brock University

The Student Wellness and Accessibility Centre at Brock offers mental health information and resources to support students experiencing mental health challenges; and to support faculty and staff; as well as family and friends who may be concerned about ways they can help.

Resources include:

- Student Health and Wellness Hub – a space where students can drop in to chat with a Peer Health Educator about ways to improve their overall health and wellness
- Personal Counselling Services
- Important contact numbers
- More Feet on the Ground – a website to help students better understand mental health on campus and help fellow students
- good2Talk.ca mental health line for Post-Secondary Education (PSE) students in Ontario and Nova Scotia
- Niagara Wholistic Wellness Portal - <https://mycircleofwellness.ca/main.php>

Source: Brock University Student Wellness and Accessibility Centre

Retrieved from: <https://brocku.ca/health-wellness-accessibility/student-health-services> and <https://brocku.ca/mental-health/>