

Halton Children's **WATER** FESTIVAL

Creating climate-wise kids



Planning Guide for Elementary School Teachers

hcwf.ca

Land Acknowledgement

This region is rich in the history and modern traditions of many First Nations and the Métis. From the Wendat and the Anishinaabe to the Neutral, the Haudenosaunee, and the Métis and other nations whose names have been lost - the lands surrounding the Great Lakes are steeped in Indigenous history.

As we work on the land in Halton Region and in Conservation Halton Parks, we have the responsibility to honour and respect the four directions, land, waters, plants, animals, and the people who shared their knowledge with us. We acknowledge that this land was not only inhabited by human beings, but by non-human beings as well and we extend our thanks. We acknowledge and thank the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation on whose treaty lands we stand.

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About the Festival

The Halton Children's Water Festival (HCWF) is a multi-day educational event held annually for children in grades two to five.

Water festivals are an essential learning experience for elementary school students across the province. These community-based festivals draw on the expertise of conservation authorities as watershed managers and environmental educators who bring together government and institutional partners to inspire learning and community action, for the health of people and our planet.

Since its launch in 2006, HCWF has engaged over 50,000 children and has quickly grown into one of the largest festivals of its kind in Ontario. Through 60 curriculum-linked activity stations, students spend each day outdoors, immersed in fun, hands-on learning that helps them understand the importance of water as our most precious natural resource---and how to protect it.

The HCWF is co-hosted by Conservation Halton and Halton Region in partnership with the Halton Catholic District School Board, the Halton District School Board, the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, and the Town of Oakville. In 2023, the committee expanded to include a partnership with Wilfrid Laurier University.

Curriculum-linked learning

With 60 unique activity stations, the Halton Children's Water Festival encourages students to practice creative problem-solving and team-building skills, as part of fun, outdoor learning in the following curriculum-linked areas:

Water and Society: Topics include the history of water and its relationship to community, the uses of water, and how to steward water locally and globally.

Water Science and Technology: Topics include the water cycle, the physical science of ground and surface water, water treatment and distribution systems, and more.

Water Health and Safety: Topics include safety around watercourses and the role of water in community health.

Water Conservation and Protection: Topics include the impacts of human activity on water systems, how to conserve water at home, at school and in the community, and how to protect local water sources.

Leadership Development

Volunteer Experience for Teens

HCWF not only engages thousands of elementary school students each year, but also it generates 2,000+ volunteer hours annually.

Over 400 secondary school students volunteer with us as activity providers, with many having participated in the festival as children. These students learn important communication and time management skills while acting as positive environmental stewards and role models to the younger cohort.

Festival Outcomes

Students build the knowledge and skills to champion water stewardship at home, at school, and in the community.



In-Person Student Engagement

3,000+ children will take part in fun, hands-on environmental education that inspires action



Virtual Engagement

1,000+ students will access the festival's virtual module, bringing learning into the classroom.



School Participation

More than 40 HDSB and HCDSB schools will participate in the festival.



Youth Volunteerism

Close to 400 high school students will gain volunteer experience and develop leadership skills

Festival Dates & Location

Elementary School Registration

Registration: Friday, June 6, 2025

Registration Time: 10 a.m.

Link: www.hcwf.ca

Event

Event Dates: Tuesday September 23 to Friday, September 26, 2025

Grade five French immersion programming is available on September 23

Event Time: 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Venue: Kelso Conservation Area, 5234 Kelso Rd., Milton, ON L9E 0C6

Fee: \$12/student (including HST).

The fee covers a full day of programming and busing

Preparing for the Festival

- ◆ Read, review and commit to the Halton Children's Water Festival Code of Conduct, found in Appendix A
- ◆ Divide your students evenly into groups using the number of schedules you are assigned. For example one schedule equals one group
 - The number of schedules is also the number of adults who must be present. We request a 10:1, student to adult ratio. There is no charge for adult chaperones to attend the festival.
 - Students requiring additional accommodations should be in a group where they can be supported by their teacher or educational assistant.
- ◆ Ensure all attending parents, supervisors and teachers have a copy of their group's schedule before the event.
 - Area leads are on-site at the event to assist, but you should bring your own schedule with you for each group.

- 💧 The festival runs rain or shine. Please prepare for any weather as all activities are outside.
 - Sunscreen and bug repellent are recommended to help protect against sun exposure and insects including mosquitos and ticks.
 - Extra layers and a pair of waterproof shoes in your backpack or car is highly recommended. The grounds are nearly always covered in dew in the morning, having a change of shoes or something waterproof for the morning is encouraged.
- 💧 Food and drink are not available for purchase onsite.
 - Please pack a litterless, peanut free lunch
 - Bring a refillable water bottle. Water refill stations available on site.
- 💧 Unfortunately not all buses have a side bin for storage. Coolers are permitted if it fits in the bus seat, and not in the aisle. Please contact the festival in advance if you have questions about specific items.
 - The following list of items, but is not limited to, are prohibited:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-collapsible wagons ▪ Skis/Ski Poles/Snowboards ▪ Hover-boards ▪ Hockey Equipment and some sports (including hockey/lacrosse sticks /golf clubs/ curling brooms/ Javelins) ▪ Long-boards/Scooters/e-Scooters/Roller Blades ▪ Animals (service animals excepted) ▪ Large Musical Instruments (maximum size of 18 inches by 10 inches by 10 inches (46 cm by 26 cm by 26 cm)) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alcohol, tobacco, vaping products, illegal drugs and cannabis (unless medically prescribed) ▪ Ammunition ▪ Explosives/Firecrackers or any flammable object or substance ▪ Firearms or any weapons, including pocket knives ▪ Laser pointers ▪ Lighters ▪ Matches ▪ Toboggans
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In event of significant weather occurrences, the HCWF coordinator will determine if the event needs to be cancelled or shut down early. There are no make-up days. Notice will be posted at 6 a.m. daily at .

- 💧 In case of cancellation, the school's organizing teacher will receive a phone call and email indicating the festival has been cancelled.

- 💧 If severe weather arises during the event, students, teachers, and supervisors will be directed to safe shelter (the on-site school buses), and the festival may undergo an early closure. Early closure at the event will be indicated to festival participants by a megaphone siren.

Virtual Orientation

An orientation session is held a week before the festival. The orientation is one hour in length. Festival organizers run through what's to be expected of the event and how to prepare your students. There is time available at the end of the session for questions.

The orientation session will be recorded and made available to teachers unable to attend.

Teacher's Checklist

Before the Festival

- ☐ Complete pre-festival form
- ☐ Attend festival orientation session
- ☐ Distribute Conservation Halton photo release form
- ☐ Divide students into even groups based on the number of assigned schedules
- ☐ Recruit and assign at least one adult supervisor for each group of students, ensure adult to student ratio of 10:1.
- ☐ Have students with special needs or those requiring medical attention be in a group supervised by their teacher, an education assistant or parent.
- ☐ Advise all adult supervisors that they are responsible for the conduct of students in their group at all times during the visit.
- ☐ Contact festival coordinators in advance if you want to bring any large items on the bus to ensure it is permitted

During the Festival

- ☐ Check festival website for cancellation notice
- ☐ Ensure students and adult supervisors are dressed appropriately
- ☐ Upon arrival listen to the instructions provided by festival volunteers.
- ☐ Complete a head count after every activity rotation

After the Festival

- ☐ Complete festival feedback form
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- ☐ Complete payment – registering teachers and school administrators will receive a copy of the invoice via email.
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A Typical Day

10 a.m.	Elementary school buses arrive at Kelso
10:30 a.m.	Morning activity rotations begin
11:30 a.m.	Lunch time
Noon	Afternoon activity rotations begin
1:30 p.m.	Activities conclude and elementary school buses depart

Please refer to Appendix B for a sample of the daily schedule you will from festival coordinators

On Your Arrival

School groups are to remain on the bus until greeted by a festival volunteer. They will provide more information about the day's activities before disembarking the bus. Schools proceed to the lunch tent to leave their belongs and assemble groups.

Teachers, Chaperones & Students

- ◆ Teachers and chaperones must be always present with their assigned groups as they are responsible for student conduct.
- ◆ Take a head count after every activity rotation to reduce the risk of lost children.
- ◆ During lunch, please remind your students to use the green and recycling bins.
 - Encourage students to use the washrooms
 - Ensure students pack their belongings so they are ready to go at the end of the day
- ◆ Leave valuables at home as there is no secure area for storage.
- ◆ Lost and found is located at the Area Lead tent.
- ◆ No smoking or vaping on site.

Festival Volunteers

Festival volunteers will be identifiable by their attire. Activity providers (community, corporate and secondary school volunteers) will wear Halton Children Water Festival blue aprons. Bus and Site Patrol volunteers will be wearing safety vests. Festival organizers and area lead will

be wearing bright orange t-shirts and hats. Please don't hesitate to approach patrol or organizers if you have any questions or concerns.

Lunch

- 💧 Safety first! Advise your area lead of any safety concerns.
- 💧 Kelso Patrol First Aid and Halton EMS are on-site.
- 💧 If a student goes missing, please advise an area lead immediately.
- 💧 Ensure festival organizers are aware medical conditions and allergies
 - Students, teachers, and adult supervisors should be aware of the risks of West Nile Virus and ticks as the festival is outdoors. Students should be prepared for exposure to mosquitoes and ticks. Tick exposure should be brought to the attention of a festival staff person or area lead.
- 💧 Participants are asked not to bring two-way radios if possible as they can interfere with the festival emergency communications.
- 💧 It is important to ensure students do not leave their grade area. The adjacent park, lake and forest are out-of-bounds and not part of the festival.

Safety

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Festival Feedback

Following the festival, a feedback form will be emailed to participating teachers. Please complete the form at your earliest convenience as it provides valuable information for future planning.

Appendix A – Code of Conduct

The Halton Children's Water Festival is committed to creating a safe, equitable and inclusive environment for all. Staff, volunteers, vendors and school representatives are required to familiarize themselves with the code of conduct and comply.

The Halton Children's Water Festival expects all participants share its commitment to:

- Creating a festival free of harassment and discrimination, including the use of any inappropriate language, offensive behavior, or any form of aggression or hostile behavior directed at any festival staff, volunteers or participants;
- Treating everyone fairly and acting responsibly in the performance of their duties;
- Promoting the health and safety of others;
- Acting professional and courteous, and resolve any disagreements in a respectful manner; and
- Creating positive experiences for our students.

Any act of harassment or violence will not be tolerated and should be reported immediately. Violations of the code of conduct, will be addressed accordingly, and may result in the removal from the Halton Children's Water Festival and Kelso Conservation Area for the duration of the event without a refund and banning from future events.

Appendix B – Sample Schedule

Date: Tuesday, September 23, 2025
School Name: YOUR SCHOOL HERE
Organizing Teacher: ORGANIZING TEACHER’S NAME HERE
Grade Area Assigned: 2
Group: A

TIME	ACTIVITY	TENT	DURATION
10:30 a.m.	The Earth's Water	3	15 mins
10:45 a.m.	Stream In Audio	4	15 mins
11:00 a.m.	Eagle Survivor	5	15 mins
11:15 a.m.	Build A Bug	6	15 mins
11:30 a.m.	LUNCH (30 mins)	Lunch Tent	30 mins
12 p.m.	Wildlife And Water	7	30 mins
12:15 p.m.			
12:30 p.m.	What Not To Flush	8	15 mins
12:45 p.m.	Molecules In Motion	9	15 mins
1 p.m.	What do You Know About H ₂ O?	10	15 mins
1:15p.m.	The Power of Water	11	15 mins