



**BOARD  
Report No. 24-054**

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**Valuing Voices - Identity Matters Student Survey Administration**

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**PURPOSE:**

1. To provide an update on the Valuing Voices Student Survey, which collects student identity-based data and school climate data.

**STRATEGIC LINKS:**

2. The OCDSB's commitment to equity is embedded throughout the strategic plan. The Board has identified the need to prioritize the dignity and well-being of all students in inclusive and caring classrooms and to remove barriers to provide equitable opportunities for all students to reach their potential. To be successful in this mission, we must recognize, understand, and validate student identity and better understand the experiences and perceptions of students who have been, and continue to be, underserved.

**CONTEXT:**

3. The OCDSB collects student demographic data in order to better understand the student population, and to facilitate disaggregation of data, including but not limited to, achievement, well-being, and suspension data. Disaggregation by demographic characteristics allows us to better understand achievement gaps and develop strategies to narrow those gaps.

The first OCDSB student demographic data collection was undertaken in 2011, as a student census. This was a single event collection which generated a series of analytical reports. In 2019, the District undertook a second student demographic survey, with the understanding that this was the start of a regular data collection cycle. The survey asked both demographic and perceptual data questions.

This spring, the District is renewing the data collection. As in 2019, the survey will include both demographic data and perceptual data questions. For this round of

collection, the perceptual questions will be those used in the bi-annual School Climate Survey.

The 2024 Valuing Voices survey will be conducted between April 11 and May 10, 2024. The survey will be completed by parents of students in Kindergarten to Grade 6. The survey will be completed by students in grades 7-12. The survey is voluntary and confidential. It is administered under the authority of the Ontario Anti-Racism Act. A key goal of the survey process this year is to increase the rate of participation.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

### 4. Identity Based Data Collection

The 2019 student demographic survey was designed using the framework introduced in Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan (2017) and the Ontario Anti-Racism Act (2017). Under this framework, identity-based information is collected with the intent to collect the data on a regular cycle, and integrate with current datasets on an ongoing basis. As early adopters of this direction, the OCDSB launched the Valuing Voices survey and has merged this data with established datasets to better understand trends in achievement and well-being, as described in recent [public reports](#). It is now time to renew the data, hence the upcoming data collection.

In our second data collection this Spring, our objectives include:

- updating our existing data;
- including younger cohorts or those new to the district since the last collection; and,
- broadening participation and representation across various identity groups to strengthen the reliability of our data and to support evidence-based decision-making.

### 5. School Climate

The OCDSB undertakes a school climate survey every two years to gather input from students, staff, and caregivers in each of our schools. The survey is required by the Ministry of Education as part of the Safe Schools initiative, and provides feedback to each school about the extent to which caregivers, students, and staff feel their school supports learning and positive behaviour and promotes a safe and inclusive environment. The data collected in this survey is used to support our efforts to create and maintain safe, inclusive and accepting schools. To reduce survey fatigue for students and operational demands associated with survey administration, we have used the school climate survey questions as the perceptual questions in the identity-based data collection.

### 6. Authority for Data Collection

The collection of identity-based data is governed by the [Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism](#). The standards were developed to support public sector organizations in fulfilling their obligations under the Anti-Racism Act (2017).

The standards establish “consistent, effective practices for producing reliable information to support evidence-based decision-making and public accountability to help eliminate systemic racism and promote racial equity. The Standards set out requirements, rationale, and guidance at every stage from planning and preparation to analysis and reporting. This includes, collecting, using, disclosing, de-identifying, and managing information, including personal information.” By adhering to the requirements and guidance outlined in the data standards, we are ensuring consistency over time and across the province.

Collection of school climate data is required by the Ministry of Education every two years to fulfill PPM No.145. The PPM outlines the importance and complexity of building and sustaining a positive school climate, and the need for a whole-school approach with data collection from students, caregivers, and staff.

In line with the principle ‘nothing about us without us’, the District has a Technical Advisory Group of community members with knowledge and experience of systemic barriers and close connections to underserved communities. This group provides an opportunity to check our biases and inform our strategies, as the members serve as both critical friends and champions of the work.

7. Survey Questions

The demographic and school climate questions have been carried forward from the previous administrations, with minor modifications to the student and/or parent school climate questions for alignment where necessary. Benefits in retaining these questions include continued collection of information that is regularly used by schools to inform improvement planning; consistency with Data Standards; consistency over time to compare to the last administration; and effective use of human and financial resources given the ability to use translations and survey setups from the previous cycle. Note that only a subset of school climate questions are being included, in order to reduce survey completion time and participation fatigue/attrition. Questions that must be retained, according to PPM 145, include questions on bullying/harassment related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, as well as questions on sexual harassment. The remaining questions were selected based on knowledge of what data is used most frequently by school administrators, questions that have high reliability ratings, and questions that cover key areas related to OCDSB strategic priorities.

**Identity-Based Survey Demographic Questions Include:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● First Language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gender Identity</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Indigenous Identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sexual Orientation (students only; Gr. 7-12)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ethnicity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Disability</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Race</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Status in Canada</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Religion, Creed, or Spiritual Affiliation</li> </ul>	

### School Climate Survey Questions Include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Engagement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Sense of Belonging and Social Connectedness</li><li>● Positive Relationships with Adults at School</li><li>● Intellectual Engagement</li><li>● School Involvement: Activities/Extracurriculars</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Environment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● School Environment</li><li>● School Discipline</li><li>● Instructional Environment</li><li>● Representation (Diversity)</li><li>● Identity</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Safety</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Sense of Safety</li><li>● Bullying</li><li>● Sexual Harassment (students only; Gr.7-12)</li><li>● Stereotyping, Prejudice and Discrimination</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Well-Being</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● General Well-Being</li><li>● Coping</li><li>● Social Emotional Skills:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Self-awareness</li><li>○ Self-regulation</li><li>○ Responsible decision-making</li><li>○ Social awareness</li></ul></li></ul>

Full surveys can be found here:

- [Student Survey \(Kindergarten to Grade 6\)](#)
- [Student Survey \(Grade 7 to 12\)](#)

## 8. Survey Administration

### *Participants*

Parents/Caregivers of children in Kindergarten through grade 6 complete the survey on behalf of their child(ren). Students in grades 7 to 12 complete the survey during class time at school.

### *Consent and Confidentiality*

The consent process from the 2019 identity-based data collection is being repeated for this collection. Passive consent processes will be followed where caregivers complete a form if they want their child to refrain from participating in the survey. Upon submission of the form, the child is removed from the distribution list. Careful attention will be paid to ensure students without consent will not be singled out during administration.

The survey is confidential but not anonymous meaning that student/caregiver names and responses will be kept private and protected. Each survey will include a unique survey identifier that will only be used by research staff at the District to link identity data to other data sets (for example, achievement outcomes,

participation rates in different programs/courses, suspension rates). This is necessary in order to identify trends and to develop programs, policies, and practices aimed at improving outcomes and services. School climate data will be separated from identity data. School climate results will include identity information, but will be stripped of the individual unique survey identifier to ensure this remains anonymous, and will only be reported at the aggregate (group) level. Individual level school climate responses will never be shared.

*Survey Distribution*

Distribution to students will be through a scheduled email to each student’s OCDSB email account, based on each school’s predetermined distribution schedule. Schools are required to provide class time for student completion of the survey. A staff point of contact has been identified for each school to assist with coordinating scheduling and access to technology. A tailored approach is being used for Special Education sites to support participation (e.g., caregiver participation in lieu of students, modifications to questions, etc.).

Distribution to caregivers will be done via email. For students with no caregiver email on file, print copies will be mailed to the home address. Print copies will also be provided as requested by the principal for those without computer and/or internet access.

*Dates for Administration*

The survey will open for participation from Thursday, April 11 to Friday, May 10, 2024, with reminders throughout. These dates were selected with the following dates (listed in the table below) in mind. We will work with schools to avoid in-class administration during Eid-al-Fitr and Passover.

<b>Important Events</b>	<b>Dates</b>
OSSLT Spring 2024	March 20 to April 24, 2024
Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics	May 29 to June 26, 2024
Ramadan 2024	March 10 to April 9/10, 2024
Eid-al-Fitr 2024	Starts at sunset on April 9 or April 10 and lasts for 1-3 days.
Passover 2024	April 22 to April 30, 2024

*Resources and Translations*

We are providing several resources to support distribution and participation, such as handouts, videos, invitation letters, and Frequently Asked Questions. Information letters and survey questions have been translated using third party translation services into English, Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, French, Urdu, Somali, Spanish, Russian, Pashto, and Inuktitut. Google translate will be available for other languages. The survey platform will translate open responses shared in another language into English.

## RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

9. As of the current school year, the funding for Demographic Data Gathering has been transferred from Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF) into the School Board Administration and Governance Grant as part of the Grants for Student Needs (GSN). This funding formula is connected to enrolment and is approximately \$40,000. Additional funding of approximately \$60,000 is provided through MISA funds, which were also built into the GSNs for this year.

These funds are used to offset costs necessary for identity-based data collection, including but not limited to survey software licensing; survey analysis software; and costs associated with translation, printing, advertising, and distribution.

## COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

10. To promote participation in the survey, we have been focusing on sharing why we collect identity-based data. Some of the ways in which the survey data has an impact includes:
  - Improving student learning and achievement;
  - Supporting Truth and Reconciliation;
  - Enhancing student well-being;
  - Removing structural and systemic barriers;
  - Increasing representation; and
  - Improving relationships.
11. As we promote the upcoming round of data collection, we reflect on how the survey data was used from past collection. The information gathered in our 2019-2020 Student Survey influenced and informed a number of decisions at the OCDSB, which had a direct impact on our schools and how we approach student learning, achievement and well-being.

### *Focus on learning, achievement and supports for students, families and staff:*

- Identification of achievement gaps for several identity groups;
- Establishment of Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) Inquiry, which aims to reduce barriers, overcome emotional and psychological hurdles, and create the right learning conditions in priority schools;
- Creation of OCDSB Family and Community Engagement (FACE) department, which focuses on improving services to families and community partners;
- Establishment of identity-based support services, including a Jewish Equity Coach and Muslim Student Support Coordinators;
- Establishment of Office of the Human Rights and Equity Advisor;
- Establishment of Sankofa Centre for Excellence for Black students;
- Development and expansion of Black studies course and Rainbow Bridges courses;
- Expansion of Indigenous Education team;
- Increase of translation and interpretation services to support parent involvement;
- Establishment of connection with employee affinity groups;

- Parent Academy, Speaker Series and Conferences, which include workshops and events to help families stay engaged with their children's academic and social success.

*Training and professional development:*

- Creation of Anti-Hate Toolkit to support staff in addressing hate and discrimination;
- Professional learning opportunities for educators on equity, anti-hate and human rights;
- Trauma-informed education training.

*Policy creation:*

- New Human Rights Policy;
- New Equitable Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion Policy;
- New Equitable Mental Health Strategy (in-progress);
- Emphasis on equity considerations to policy review process;
- Development of the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap, 2020-2023;
- Support the development of a new Strategic Plan (2023-2027).

12. Communication and consultation for the survey is a collaborative effort. This has included:

- Presentations and discussions with Advisory Committees and student groups on strategies for supporting participation (Parent Involvement Committee, Advisory Committee on Equity, Special Education Advisory Committee, Indigenous Education Council, and Student Senate).
- Communication of survey administration to federations and community partners.
- Work with school administrators, school coordinators, and Multicultural Liaison Officers on strategies for supporting participation.

13. We have also leveraged established opportunities for engagement with the community in either a formal or informal capacity, such as the Community Connection session through Family and Community Engagement (FACE), the OCDSB event for Black Excellence, and the Wabano symposium. A central project team has been established, which has been working to collaborate with community partners and tap into community resources and networks for promoting participation.

## **GUIDING QUESTIONS:**

14. The following questions are posed for discussion:

- What are some strategies we can use to build trust and increase participation?
- How will this data collection support the OCDSB is making progress on strategic priorities?

- How will the integration of identity-based and school climate data help us better understand systemic barriers for underserved populations?

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