



**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)**  
**Report No. 19-080**

**17 September 2019**

**Update on the OECD Study for the Development of Social and Emotional Skills**

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**PURPOSE:**

1. To provide an update on the status and next steps regarding the OCDSB's participation in the OECD Study for the Development of Social and Emotional Skills.

**CONTEXT:**

2. Over the past three years, the OCDSB has been participating in an international study on the Development of Social and Emotional Skills organised by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.  
<http://www.oecd.org/education/cei/thestudyonsocialandemotionalskills.htm>

Participation in this study has been an excellent opportunity for leadership and prestige for OCDSB both nationally and internationally.

The study is “one of the first international efforts to develop a comprehensive set of metrics around social and emotional skills designed to enhance policies to improve the development and well-being of children and young people”. The OCDSB and the other three area school boards form the Canadian contingent participating in the study. The study was initiated in 2016 and both Item Trials and Field Tests have now been completed. The Main Study is scheduled for the fall of 2019. The implementation of the Main Study will have workload implications for schools and the Research, Evaluation, and Analytics Division (READ) in the fall. However, the output of the study, including international and national reports, and most importantly an ongoing measurement tool, will put the District at the leading edge of international efforts to better understand and support the development of social and emotional skills.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

### The Study

3. The Study on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) originated as a result of a growing interest in better understanding how educational systems can intentionally foster stronger social and emotional skills in children. A number of OECD member countries asked the OECD to undertake a comprehensive research study. After completing a number of literature reviews and conceptual analyses, the OECD designed a cross-sectional study which looks at the development of skills in children aged 10 and 15 years (participants are determined by age rather than grade to account for variances in grade structures across participating countries).

*“The purpose of the study is to:*

- 1. Provide participating cities and countries with information on the social and emotional skills of their students;*
- 2. Provide insights on how to support students to develop social and emotional skills;*
- 3. Demonstrate that valid, reliable, and comparable information on social and emotional skills can be produced across diverse populations and settings”.*

The study was designed using the “Big Five” model – a well-known framework in the field of social and emotional skills which includes Task Performance, Emotional Regulation, Collaboration, Open-Mindedness, and Engaging with Others. The initial study framework included the assessment of 19 skills across these five domains, in addition to three compound skills (critical thinking, meta-cognition, and self-efficacy). The Main Study will examine 15 skills within these five areas, plus two additional indices (achievement motivation and self-efficacy). The Big Five and the specific 15 skills are well aligned with the areas of focus of the OCDSB, including our Exit Outcomes, Community of Character and Well-Being Frameworks. Appendix A includes a figure summarizing the five domains and two indices.

### Participation in the Study

4. There are ten cities and nine countries participating in the study, including Ottawa, Houston, Manizales (Columbia), Bogota (Columbia), Sintra (Portugal), Helsinki (Finland), Moscow (Russia), Daegu (South Korea), Suzhou (China), and Turkey.

The Ottawa site includes the OCDSB, the OCSB, Conseil des écoles publiques de l’Est de l’Ontario (CEPEO), and the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE). The OCDSB is the lead board and co-chairs the National Steering Committee for Canada. The Steering Committee also includes our partners from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Ministry of Education, and the Educational Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). In addition to the National Steering Committee, there is a Research sub-committee and a Communications sub-committee, each comprised of staff from the local boards.

## Research Methodology

5. The study is overseen by the OECD which is supported by a technical advisory committee (research experts) and an informal advisory group (participating members). In addition, a third party contractor manages the survey data collection process and liaises with the Site Project Manager for each participating city/country.

The study will assess students' social and emotional skills using direct assessments of students and indirect assessment through parent and teacher questionnaires. The study will also gather a range of information on the student's family, school, and community environments through teachers, parents, school principals, and the students themselves.

*"The research objectives of the study seek to understand:*

- *The level and spread of students' social and emotional skills at two important points of students' lives;*
- *The individual and contextual factors that influence the development of these skills in students;*
- *The differences in the level and spread of social and emotional skills of students aged 10 and 15;*
- *The similarities and differences in the effects of contextual factors on students at two different age groups."*

Appendix B provides an overview of the study methodology.

## Study Outputs

6. The study is designed to help better understand the development of social and emotional skills, but will also help to address questions that are important to the development of policy and pedagogical frameworks.

The Main Study publication will be an international report summarizing the results of the study. This will include both the conceptual framework and the assessment framework for the study, as well as a technical report. In addition, the OECD has advised that they intend to release individual reports for each participating city/country that summarizes data for that specific site.

The OECD will generate an international dataset and each participating city/country will receive a local dataset which can be used for further analysis. Most importantly, the OECD has advised that they expect to be able to release the study tool to participants for future use – meaning that locally the OCDSB could undertake this study in future years, allowing for either cyclical and/or longitudinal monitoring.

## Final Design - Main Study

7. The OECD is currently in the final design stages for the Main Study. Having completed the Item Trials and Field Testing, there was an opportunity to refine the study parameters based on the experience to date. During the Field Test, participants were asked to self-assess based on 19 skills, with the understanding that the number of skills to be assessed would be reduced to 15 in the Main Study. This will ensure greater reliability of the study results and will reduce the

time required for completion. This is particularly important with respect to the 10 year olds as their completion time was considered too long (over 60 minutes, on average).

The selection of the final 15 skills was based on reliability analyses, as well as predictive and analytical value of the skills as determined in the Field Testing, as well as discussions with the Informal Advisory Group and the Technical Advisory Group. The final 15 skills consist of eight (8) items per scale for both cohorts (see Appendix A), resulting in a 37% reduction in the social and emotional skills assessment items for the older cohort, and a 21% reduction for the younger cohort. This will make the assessment easier to administer.

In addition to the reduction in assessment items for the social and emotional skills, all other study measures have been significantly reduced, including contextual questionnaires (20 to 50% reduction), anchoring vignettes (80% reduction), and behavioural indicators (50 to 60% reduction) in order to minimize the response burden for all participants (students, parents, teachers, principals).

#### Experience to Date

8. To date, our experience in the Item Trials and the Field Tests has been positive. The appointment of a Site Project Manager has been critical to the success of the project. The Site Project Manager coordinates the administration of the survey for all four boards and provides support to the local research staff who are responsible for the survey administration at their respective board. The workload has been heavy for the Site Project Manager, the researchers and the participating schools. Up to now, the impact in schools has primarily been in coordinating the testing. There is work associated with the teacher and principal assessment components of the study, but given the small number of participants per school in the Field Tests this hasn't proven too burdensome. Participating teachers were able to access release time for the Field Tests, but very few did. Consideration of workload issues going forward is addressed later in this report.

#### School and Student Participation in the Study

9. The Main Study requires 3,000 students in each of the two age groups (6,000 students total). With oversampling, the actual number will likely be approximately 7,500 students. This will require a minimum of 75 schools per age cohort (at least 150 to 200 schools total) and approximately 20 to 50 students per school. The sampling is proportional relative to the size of each participating school board. However, since both French and English instruments are being administered, there is a need to have a minimum number of students sampled by language within each cohort. Thus, it is necessary to slightly oversample from the French schools.

For the OCDSB this means *approximately*:

<b>Student Age</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Number of Schools</b>	<b>Number of Students/School</b>
10 year olds	~ 1,200-1,400	~ 40-50 elementary schools ( <i>estimated</i> )	~ 50 (no less than 20, may be more than 50, <i>if needed</i> )
15 year olds	~ 1,200-1,400	27 ( <i>all secondary</i> )	~ 50-75 ( <i>estimated</i> )

For the other school boards, the *estimated* sampling will include:

Student Age	Number of Students	Number of Schools	Number of Students/School
<b>OCSB</b>			
10 year olds	~ 1,000-1,200	~ 25-30 elementary schools ( <i>estimated</i> )	~ 50 (no less than 20, may be more than 50, <i>if needed</i> )
15 year olds	~ 1,000-1,200	15 ( <i>all</i> secondary)	~ 50-75 ( <i>estimated</i> )
<b>CECCE</b>			
10 year olds	~ 750-1,000	~ 20-25 elementary schools ( <i>estimated</i> )	~ 50 (no less than 20, may be more than 50, <i>if needed</i> )
15 year olds	~ 750-1,000	12 ( <i>all</i> secondary)	~ 50-100 ( <i>estimated</i> )
<b>CEPEO</b>			
10 year olds	~ 500-700	~ 10-15 elementary schools ( <i>estimated</i> )	~ 50 (no less than 20, may be more than 50, <i>if needed</i> )
15 year olds	~ 500-700	5 ( <i>all</i> secondary)	~ 50-100 ( <i>estimated</i> )

Final sampling took place in May 2019 and communication with schools across all four boards is currently in progress. The timeframe for administration of the Main Study is October 1, 2019 to November 30, 2019.

10. The Study will use a two-stage stratified sampling model:

- In the first stage, a random sample of schools is selected;
- The second stage will select a random sample of individual students within the selected schools.

There are two qualifications to this sampling model:

- a. All schools that participated in the Field Test (32 schools) will also be sampled to participate in the Main Study.
- b. While the target is a random selection of 50 students within each school, there may be *more* or *less* students sampled in a given school depending on the number of schools available and the sampling requirements. As such, in smaller schools, *all* students may be selected for sampling.

All students *within the eligible date of birth range* may participate in the study. In other words, students may only be excluded from the study if they are not within the eligible dates of birth for the two cohorts. Students will not be excluded for having a special education need (SEN) or language limitation. All efforts will be made at the school level to accommodate the way assessments are administered to students with Special Education Needs and English Language Learners, as with provincial assessments (i.e., EQAO).

#### Workplan

11. Appendix C is a summary of key activities and dates for the implementation of the project.

## RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

12. There are costs associated with participation in the study, including OECD study fees, salary costs for Site Project Manager, Test Administrators, Site Coordinators, release time for teachers, translation costs, printing and supplies, and participation in project meetings. The OCDSB has been fortunate to have secured funding from federal and provincial governments for both the Item Trials and the Field Tests. The estimated costs of the Main Study are approximately \$425,000. Staff has submitted an application for funding to the Ministry of Education to offset the investment and is awaiting confirmation. The Board has allocated \$500,000 for this study in the 2019-2020 budget, and we are exploring other funding options as well to ensure that the study can proceed. These costs do not include the fees to the OECD which are paid directly by the federal government and are approximately \$300,000 per installment for two installments.

## COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

13. The key communications objectives:

This fall, the district will be communicating information about the study to parents.

To ensure consistency in practice and communication materials across all four Ottawa school boards, the study coordinator develops common communication materials for all 4 Boards.

All study materials are provided in both English and French.

<b>Key Timelines and Communications Activities</b>	
June 2019	Communication of sampled schools to districts/boards
June 2019	Sharing of sampled schools with senior staff at districts/boards
June 2019	District wide memo to all principals about OECD study and potential participation
June 2019	Follow-up with Field Test participants thanking them for their participation and sharing study information
July 2019	Communication to Principals of sampled schools
July 31, 2019	Deadline for schools to confirm participation in the Fall administration
August 2019	Prepare communications regarding parental consent and "opt-out" deadline
Early September 2019	Finalize and distribute communications regarding parental consent and "opt-out" deadline
Late September 2019	Reminder communications sent home to parents, students, teachers, and principals
October to November 2019	Data Collection
January 2020	Follow-up with Main Study participants thanking them for their participation

## **STRATEGIC LINKS:**

14. There is a strong connection between the social and emotional skills that will be assessed in the study and those established in the OCDSB Exit Outcomes which reflect the strategies students can be using to develop these skills. Looking forward, we will be examining how this study could be used on a cyclical basis to measure the development of social and emotional skills in our students.

## **GUIDING QUESTIONS:**

15. In addition to the questions contained in the report above, the following questions are provided to support the discussion of this item by the Board:

- How does this study inform our understanding of social and emotional skills?
- How can this study be linked to our new strategic objectives?
- How might the OCDSB use the data going forward?
- How does this information support our long term planning for the District?

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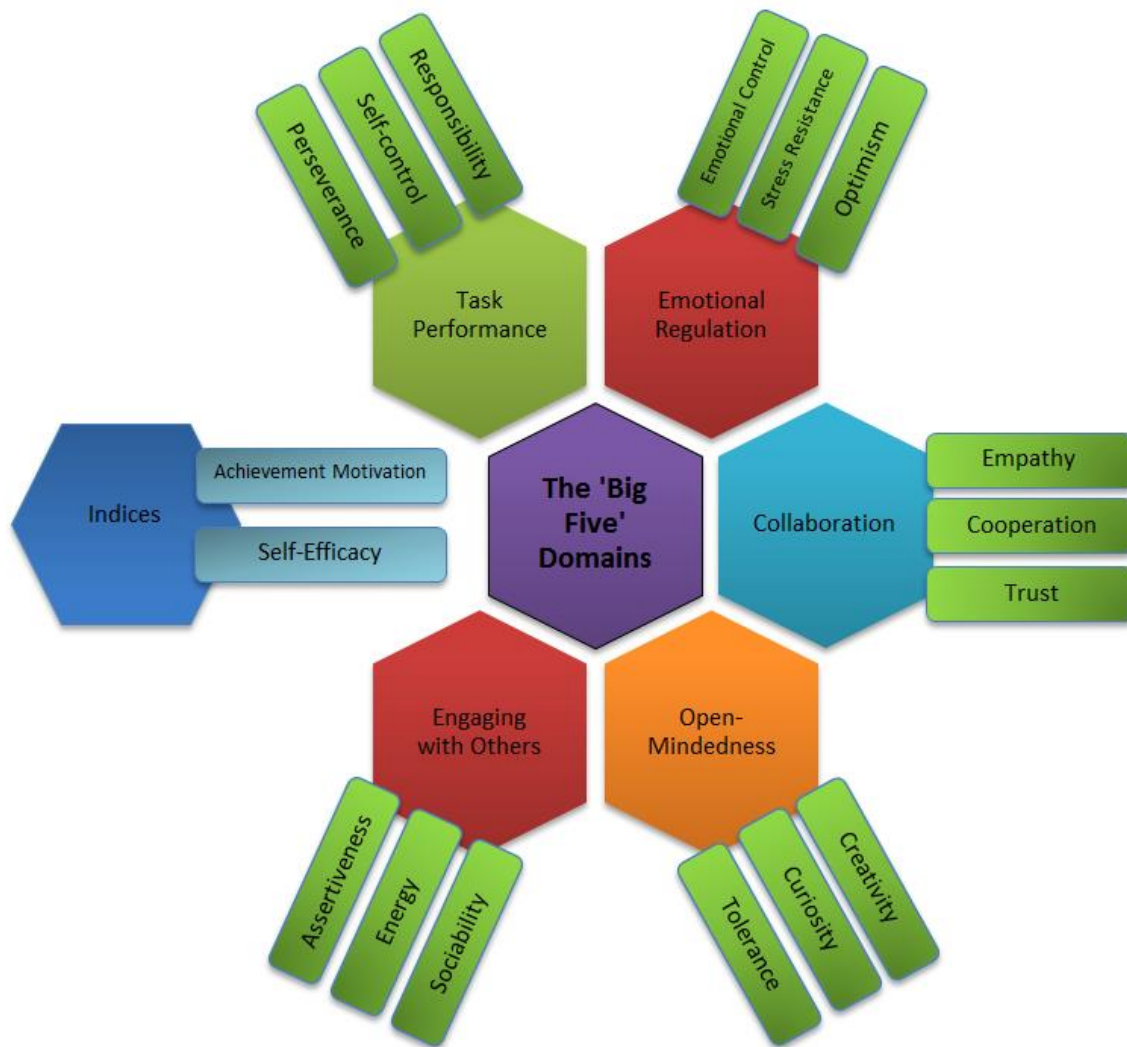
Michele Giroux  
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Camille Williams-Taylor  
Director of Education and  
Secretary of the Board

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Social and Emotional Skills based on the 'Big Five' Domains





## Appendix B: Overview of Study Methodology

**Objective:** To take a snapshot of two cohorts of primary and secondary school students, ages 10-11 and 15-16. The study will assess students' social and emotional skills directly but also get information from their parents, teachers, and school principals. This will allow us to understand the home and school contexts in which these skills develop.

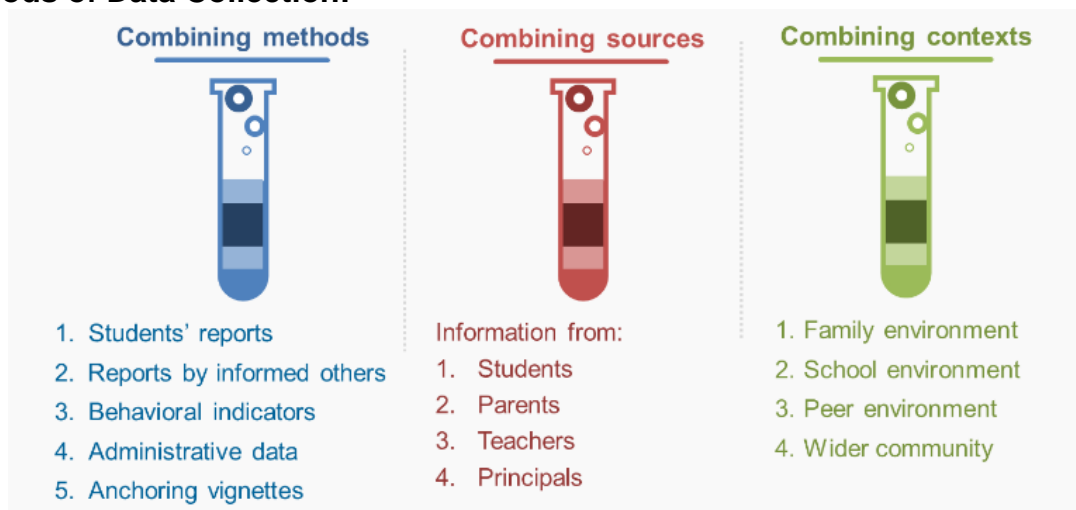
### Sample Design:

1. *Target population:* Two age groups of students aged 10-11 and 15-16
2. *Sample size:* 3,000 students for each of the two age groups in each participating city or country
3. *Sample design:*
  1. Initial random selection of schools
  2. A follow-up random selection of students within selected schools

### Study Participants:

1. *Students:* Students will provide reports on their social and emotional skills and their home and school environment.
2. *Parents:* Parents or legal guardians of each of the selected students will provide a report on the social and emotional skills of their child and on their home environment.
3. *Teachers:* A teacher that knows a student the best or that has spent the most time with a student will also assess the social and emotional skills for each sampled student and provide a report on the characteristics of their school environment.
4. *Principals:* School principals will also participate in the Study by providing information on the relevant characteristics of each sampled school.

### Methods of Data Collection:



## Mode of Data Collection:

Default mode (for all participants):



Alternative mode (if needed or preferred):



## Appendix C: Workplan/Timelines

Key Timelines and Major Project Tasks	
May 2019	Submission of school sampling to international contractor
May 2019	Local site adaptations to finalized study instruments
May 2019	Translations of all manuals to French (manuals for School Coordinators and Study Administrators)
June 2019	Completion of school sampling by international contractor
June 2019	Notification to schools of selection for participation in Main Study
June 2019	Appointment of School Coordinators at participating schools
June 30, 2019	Distribution of manuals to School Coordinators
June 2019	Translation of all study instruments
June/July 2019	Hiring of Study Administrators
July 2019	Preparation of paper instruments (as needed)
July 2019	Hiring of Quality Monitor
August/September 2019	Training for study administrators and school coordinators
August 2019	Collection of eligible student information for within school sampling
August 2019	Begin communications regarding parental consent and “opt-out” deadline
August/September 2019	Completion of within school (student) sampling
August/September 2019	Sharing of study implementation plan and timeline with principals and school coordinators at participating schools
September 2019	Finalize communications regarding parental consent and “opt-out” deadline
September 2019	Reminder communications sent home to parents, students, teachers, and principals
September 2019	Completion of User Accessibility Test of online surveys
September 2019	Completion of Technical Readiness Tests within participating schools
September 2019	Completion of student-teacher linkage for all participating students
September 2019	Generating and distributing login information to all participating schools
September 2019	Scheduling administration dates at participating schools
September 2019	Coordination of Study Administrator visits based on administration dates
September 2019	Scheduling Quality Monitor visits
1 Oct to 30 Nov 2019	Testing window - Data Collection at participating schools (survey administration in schools)

<b>Key Timelines and Major Project Tasks (continued)</b>	
October/November 2019	Monitoring of participation, scheduling follow-up sessions at schools (as needed)
October/November 2019	Collection of student grades information
November/December 2019	Review and validation of data
November/December 2019	Completion of occupational coding
January 2020	Submission of data to OECD and international contractor