COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)   **22 June 2020**
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Summary of Results from Student Survey (2019-2020): *Valuing Voices – Identity Matters!*

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PURPOSE:

1.   To provide a summary of the responses received through the Student Survey*: Valuing Voices – Identity Matters!* This equips us with knowledge of the characteristics and the diversity of our student population.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2.   This is essential and foundational work, which future reports will build upon to identify and remove barriers to equity of access, opportunity, and outcomes, and to create a safe and caring community for all students. This work aims to advance equity and contribute to a Culture of Social Responsibility and a Culture of Caring.

CONTEXT:

3.   The OCDSB has a commitment to improving equity of access and opportunity for all students. Our community and the Board of Trustees are dedicated to understanding our student population and removing barriers to equity of access, opportunity, and outcomes at the OCDSB. This has resulted in a formalized process for the collection of identity-based data, which will serve as a tool to better understand and eliminate systemic barriers.

        The collection of identity-based data builds on our 2011 Student Survey and our collaboration with other Districts through a working group with the Education Equity Secretariat at the Ontario Ministry of Education. Data collection was informed by the *Ontario Education Equity Action Plan* (2017), the *Ontario Anti-Racism Act* (2017), and the *Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of System Racism* (2018).

        The Data Standards, which apply to public sector institutions in Ontario, 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."

While the Data Standards have guided our approach to the survey, the OCDSB survey actually goes beyond the framework of the Anti-Racism Act. Recognizing that many groups experience systemic bias and barriers, the District included survey questions which aligned with the Ontario Human Rights Code. This meant including questions related not only to race and religion, but also ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status and disability.

Focus groups with community partners, parents, and students were conducted by the District in 2018-2019. Through these conversations, we were able to better understand lived experiences and how the collection of identity-based data might help to identify strategies to overcome systemic barriers (as summarized in Report 19-081). This understanding was instrumental in developing the *Valuing Voices – Identity Matters!* student survey to collect demographic and perceptual data for all students in the system. Despite ongoing labour disruption, the survey was administered between 26 November 2019 through 19 January 2020.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

Setting the Foundation
4.   As identified at the outset of administration, the purpose of the student survey was:
   (i)   to gather demographic information about the unique and diverse characteristics of the OCDSB's student population;
   (ii) to identify and respond to barriers to student learning and well-being;
   (iii) to enhance the District's capacity to serve its increasingly diverse student population and client communities.
   Each of these goals must be carried out with clear intent, careful attention to the validity and accuracy of the data, and thoughtful consideration of the input shared by the community. We heard from parents, students and community partners that identity is important, it matters. This report is the story of identity at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, and is critical for setting the foundation for analyses that follow.

Recognizing the Current Environment
5.   The need for and the importance of this work has been well documented for many years, but never more so than in the face of recent events and examples of racism and in particular anti-Black racism. Within the Data Standards, anti-Black racism is defined as "*prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and its legacy. Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies and practices, to the extent that anti-*

Black racism is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger White society. Anti-Black racism is manifest in the current social, economic, and political marginalization of African Canadians, which includes unequal opportunities, lower socioeconomic status, higher unemployment, significant poverty rates and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system." This definition, the perspective gained following recent events, and the insights and experiences shared during focus groups, all provide important context for our work supporting student learning and well-being for all students.

Process of Data Collection

6. The survey was designed to gather information about the OCDSB student population. For students in Kindergarten through Grade 6, parents/guardians were invited to complete a survey on behalf of each child. Students in grades 7-12 were invited to complete the survey in school during class time. The survey was distributed electronically using a direct email link through the Qualtrics research platform; hard copies were made available upon request and sent via Canada Post to those families without an email contact on file. Supports for translation and accessibility were provided, as outlined on pages 7 and 8 of the attached summary report (Appendix A). Participation in the survey was voluntary, which means that individuals were able to opt out of survey completion entirely or opt out of specific questions. Full details on implementation are provided in Appendix A.

7. A total of 74,975 parents/guardians (JK to grade 6) and students in grades 7-12 were invited to complete the survey; 34,888 individuals responded to the survey representing an overall response rate of 46.5% for the District, as shown in the following table:

Survey	Total Distributed	Total Returned	Response Rate
Parents (JK-6)	39,604	12,751	32.2%
Students (7-12)	35,371	22,137	62.5%
Overall (JK-12)	**74,975**	**34,888**	**46.5%**

8. Individual responses to the survey are confidential, but not anonymous. School staff does not have access to the individual student responses and the data is stored in a separate database from the Student Information System. There is a unique identifier on the survey data that allows research staff undertaking the analysis to link and analyze the survey data with other datasets (e.g., achievement data, suspension data, course participation rates, etc.). Results are reported for groups of students, not individuals.

Survey Content

9. The following demographic items for the survey were developed in accordance with the *Anti-Racism Act (2017)* and its associated *Data Standards for the*

Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism, and modified based on feedback provided by community partners:

- First language;
- Indigenous identity;
- Ethnicity;
- Race;
- Religion, creed, or spiritual affiliation;
- Gender identity;

- Sexual orientation;
- Disability;
- Status in Canada;
- Income range and number of persons in household (parents JK-6 only).

Perceptual questions were also included to help gain further insight into potential systemic barriers and biases that may impact student learning and well-being. Questions included such things as:

- Experience in school;
- Emotional well-being;
- OCDSB exit outcomes;
- Sense of belonging;
- Participation in extra-curricular activities;

- Representation of self in activities, curriculum, etc.;
- Expression & exploration of identity;
- Experience of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination;
- Safety.

Reporting

10. A QuantCrit framework (Gillborn, Warmington & Demack, 2018), as outlined on page 9 of Appendix A, guided the approach to analysis and reporting of identity. This was done to not influence the meaning that is ascribed to the data, but rather to ensure critical analyses is informed by the experiential knowledge of marginalized groups. To honour the specific input gathered through the data collection, data was retained even in circumstances where responses may otherwise have been suppressed or rolled up to broader categories.

11. In addition to the detailed technical report (Appendix A), a data set containing the numbers and percentages for each item on the survey has been made available on the District website. Standard 35 of the Data Standards sets out this requirement for the release of data collected under the Act. Given that this collection also included perceptual data from respondents, the District has also included data for those items on the survey as part of the public release data set.

12. Most survey questions allowed for the selection of multiple responses that honours the multidimensionality of identity. Understanding and recognizing the multidimensionality of identity is important in creating a sense of community and belonging, but also in maintaining uniqueness as an individual.

From an analysis and reporting perspective, this adds complexity. Analysis must be sensitive to commonalities and differences in experience and treatment among persons reporting multiple responses. As an organization, we will have to

work with the community to consider how to address the dimensions and the intersectionality of identity. The Data Standards describe the following considerations in terms of multiple race categories. *"In some cases, it may make sense to count persons who report White and some other race according to the other race category selected. In other circumstances, it may be necessary and appropriate to aggregate or construct socially meaningful mixed-race categories. For example, a generic mixed-race category may be appropriate if there are insufficient or small numbers of individuals (fewer than 15) who select multiple race categories. If a generic mixed-race category might obscure significant differences, and sample sizes are sufficient, consider using specific combinations of race categories."*

Results

13.   The results from the survey highlight the diversity of the OCDSB student population, as evidenced by:

- There were more than 150 languages that students were reported to have first learned to speak as a child. Amongst the most common were English, Arabic, French and Chinese.
- Approximately 3.5% of survey respondents identified as being First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit. Diversity within this population of students was reflected in the many communities, regions, or territories from which they came.
- Most survey respondents considered themselves to be Canadian, despite more than 300 ethnic/cultural backgrounds being reported. Aside from Canadian, more than 5% of survey respondents reported being of Arab, Chinese, English, Irish, or Scottish descent.
- While the majority of respondents identified as White, there was student representation from all response options provided to the question about race. Black, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and South Asian were amongst those most frequently reported.
- The OCDSB student population is reflective of a multi-faith community; Christian and Muslim faiths were amongst those most frequently reported. Many students reported having no religious or spiritual affiliation.
- Just over 1% of students in JK to grade 6, and more than 5% of students in grades 7 to 12, reported diverse gender identities.
- Approximately 40% of parents/guardians of children in JK to grade 6 were uncertain or preferred not to answer the question about their child's sexual orientation; the balance of respondents reported that their child was straight/heterosexual (55%), LGBTQ2S+ (1.5%), or that it was too soon to know (3.5%). Just over 16% of survey respondents in grades 7 to 12 identified as LGBTQ2S+.
- Approximately 9% of survey respondents (parents/guardians of students in JK to grade 6, and students in grades 7 to 12) reported having a disability at the time of the survey. Learning disability was the most commonly reported disability for both groups of respondents. Close to one-third of students in JK to grade 6 were reported as having Autism, while a similar percentage of students in grades 7 to 12 reported having a mental health disability.

- Over three-quarters of survey respondents were born in Canada. Of those not born in Canada, most reported being a Canadian Citizen or landed immigrant/ permanent resident at the time of the survey. Ten percent of JK to grade 6 students, and 13% of students in grades 7 to 12, were enrolled through a study permit as an international student.
- Nearly 50% of parents/guardians of JK to grade 6 students reported an annual household income that was more than $100,000; another 19% preferred not to disclose.

14. Responses to the perceptual questions shed further light on the student experience:
- Although most survey respondents reported positive school experiences, parents/guardians of children in JK to grade 6 tended to rate their child's experiences more positively compared to students in grades 7 to 12. For both groups, results suggest that an area of focus should be on respect. For younger students, acceptance was another area that warrants further attention, while older students need to be made to feel like they are part of the school community.
- The majority of survey respondents reported positive moods and attitudes towards school. More than 75% of students in grades 7 to 12, however, reported being tired in the morning.
- The majority of survey respondents described themselves as having "excellent" or "good" attainment of the characteristics and skills identified in the OCDSB Exit Outcomes. For the younger cohort of students, Creativity was a particular area of strength, and for the older cohort of students it was Digital Fluency. Areas that require further support include Goal Setting (both cohorts), Resiliency (younger cohort), and Communication and Global Awareness (older cohort).
- A sense of belonging at school was stronger for the younger cohort of students compared to those in the older cohort. Five percent of students in JK to grade 6, and 11% of students in grades 7 to 12, reported a low sense of belonging.
- Between 30% and 50% of survey respondents reported participating in Arts, Music, School Clubs, School Special Events, and Team Sports in school. These activities, with the exception of School Clubs and School Special Events, also tended to be the most common out-of-school activities. More than 25% of survey respondents reported an interest in participating in extracurricular activities, but an inability to do so. Time, cost, distance/location, and transportation were amongst the most frequently cited barriers.
- Most survey respondents saw their identity reflected positively within the school. For students in JK to grade 6, this was particularly true with respect to pictures, posters, and displays, whereas extracurricular activities was the area in which students in grades 7 to 12 felt it the most.

- Survey respondents were more likely to report having opportunities to express their identity and learn about the identity of others, than they were to have opportunities to learn about their own identity.
- Students who have experienced stereotyping and/or acts of prejudice or discrimination within the school system, were most likely to report that it is associated with their appearance, clothing, or grades/achievement.
- For the most part, students reported feeling safe at school, in the area around the school, and on the way to and from school. Feelings of safety on the school bus, however, is an area that warrants further investigation.
- The majority of respondents do not worry about being bullied and have not been subjected to bullying. Of those students who had been the victim of bullying in the four weeks leading up to the survey, verbal bullying was the most common form for students in JK to grade 6, whereas verbal and social bullying were most common amongst students in grades 7 to 12.

Next Steps

15. The next phase of reporting will require the linking of survey data to other administrative datasets to help identify patterns and trends. The Data Standards require us to produce racial disproportionality and/or racial disparity indices for each unit of analysis. For example:
    - disparity in student outcomes (e.g., achievement, suspension rates, graduation rates) and experiences in school (e.g., sense of belonging, safety, etc.); and
    - disproportionate representation of different groups across programs and services (e.g., academic/applied/locally developed level courses; English with core French/French immersion programs).
    The calculation of disparity and disproportionality indices is complex and an area that requires further discussion with community partners.

16. Our reporting plan has been to incorporate the use of this data into other regular reports (ASAR, suspension data, school climate, etcetera) ensuring alignment with the Data Standards. We also recognize that the availability of this data allows for and generates interest in a range of additional reports. As we consider our path forward, we are guided by these principles:
    i. the collection of race-based data must lead to reliable and high-quality race-based statistics which contribute to informed strategies and evidence-based decision-making; and
    ii. information collected may only be used for the purpose of eliminating systemic racism and advancing racial equity as defined in subsection 7(2) of the Data Standards.

17. There are many ways to approach future reporting. In addition to our regular reports, other examples include census portraits, thematic reports, outcome analysis, mapping, etcetera. Recognizing the complexity of the data and the significant interest in using the data to effect change, we must be very thoughtful about our expectations and approach to reporting. It is not possible to generate

all of these types of reports at once. A phased approach to analysis and reporting which ensures timely and useable information, and informs decision making will be critical.

18.   Community organizations and stakeholders will continue to play a key role moving forward both in terms of data usage and reporting and our plans and next steps in our equity and indigenous education framework. Working together we can better understand the underlying systemic issues that contribute to these outcomes, and as we develop strategies to remove barriers. Dialogue with communities will also be required for the development of data sharing protocols/agreements (e.g., the rights of First Nations communities to have ownership, control, access, and possession of their data). This will form part of the governance work to be undertaken, along with the development of a District policy and/or procedure that establishes parameters for Open Data more broadly.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

19.   The District received $103,000 in one-time funding through a Transfer Payment Agreement to support this work up until the survey was launched. These funds were used to hire research staff, with the balance allocated towards meeting costs associated with the conduct of focus groups. The Ministry of Education provided an additional allocation of $50,000 to support costs associated with the analysis and reporting of data, and facilitation of community partner meetings through August 2020. The current workplan and project timelines.are aligned with the current and projected budget allocations.

20.   The District has also invested in the software that was used to support the data collection for this project. The software also offers capabilities to generate reports and dashboards, making it a versatile tool for other initiatives within the District. Annual licensing fees are approximately $120,000 and have been absorbed by the READ operating budget, which includes approximately $60,000 from the MISA Local Capacity Building budget allocation in the GSNs.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

21.   The survey results report is a very comprehensive report which appeals to a particular audience. The structure of the report was determined based on the feedback from focus groups about representing all voices – as such there is no suppression of data. The report is rich with information and does not meet the needs of all readers. To ensure more fulsome community access to this information, an infographic summary report is also being generated. This shorter and more visual presentation of the data will be of interest to many audiences. As we move forward, our focus is to build a communication and awareness campaign that is respectful, culturally sensitive, transparent and done in an accessible way.

22.   Communicating the survey results to the community, particularly to participants, is a vital part of the process. Sharing the process and results, both in report

format, infographic and through an open data set for public use, increases credibility, usability and impact. It is important for participants to see how the data is treated, how their responses are being used, and the impact that their participation has on the future work of the organization.

23. Our collaboration with community organizations has been critical to informing our practice. Going forward, we are planning meetings with community organizations for the week of June 22 to share the data and discuss next steps. These meetings will also be an opportunity for us to discuss how to engage the broader community in discussions about the data, the identification of patterns and trends and the strategies and actions planned in response. We are also looking to establish a community based data advisory panel with whom we can engage in ongoing discussions regarding the data, the application of the provincial Data Standards and the format and structure of reporting.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

The following questions are provided for discussion purposes:
- What stands out for you in the data/information that is presented?
- How does the data support what we heard during the focus groups?
- What questions does the data/information raise?
- What actions/next steps should be considered?

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