

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)
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Student Achievement: Focus on Grade 10 Credit Accumulation

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PURPOSE:

1. To present a report on student achievement which includes analysis using demographic data from the *Valuing Voices – Identity Matters! Student Survey* conducted in 2019-2020 to identify:
 - student success based on grade 10 credit accumulation;
 - groups of students who may be over/underrepresented in the credit accumulation data based on their Indigenous identity, race, gender identity, and disability; and
 - differences in credit accumulation rates across groups of students (disparity) based on these same demographic characteristics.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. Credit accumulation data is an important indicator of student achievement and is reviewed annually. The examination of credit accumulation data in combination with identity data allows for the establishment of key strategies for how we move forward as a District to improve achievement outcomes for all students as it relates to graduation. The identification of strategies targeted at increasing the percentage of students who attain the required credits for graduation is an important factor in contributing to a Culture of Innovation and Culture of Caring through increased graduation success for all students in all programs.

CONTEXT:

3. Research has shown that the successful completion of 16 credits by the end of grade 10 keeps students on track to graduate with their peers and less likely to drop out of school (King et al., 2005). As such, credit accumulation has served as a key indicator of the Ministry of Education's Student Success/Learning to 18 initiative since its inception in 2003. A student is deemed to be "on track" to graduate with their peers within five years of commencing secondary school if they have accumulated at least: eight (8) credits by the end of grade 9, 16 credits

by the end of grade 10, and 23 credits by the end of grade 11. A minimum of 30 credits is required for graduation from Grade 12.

4. Historically, as part of the *Annual Student Achievement Report (ASAR)*, the OCDSB reports credit accumulation rates for students completing grades 9, 10, and 11. For several years, this data has been disaggregated for specific groups of students including English Language Learners (ELL), students who identify as Indigenous (INDG), students with special education needs (SPED) and students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods (SES). This year, for the first time, the credit accumulation data has been analyzed using District-level identity data, collected during the 2019-2020 school year. Reporting this data in alignment with the requirements under the *Anti-Racism Act* and accompanying *Data Standards* allows for a deeper analysis of additional groups of students based on self-reported Indigenous identity, race, gender identity, and disability from the *Valuing Voices – Identity Matters! Student Survey*.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

Analysis & Reporting of Credit Accumulation Data

5. This year marks the first opportunity to be reporting on identity-based data in relation to student outcomes using the Data Standards. With each report that is generated, and through the discussions with the Technical Advisory Group, staff continue to learn through this process and to adapt our approach to analysis and reporting, as necessary. In this report, for example, there has been a shift from reporting results based on exclusive groups of students (as was the case in the suspension report) to inclusive groups.

Collection and Reporting of Identity Based Data

6. The OCDSB has a commitment to improving equity of access and opportunity for all students. The collection of identity-based data that resulted from this commitment serves the following purposes:
 - (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; and
 - (iii) to enhance the District's capacity to serve its increasingly diverse student population and client communities.

This is the second in a series of reports that begins to look at barriers to student achievement and well-being with a view to effecting change that will result in greater support and more equitable outcomes for students who have been minoritized.

7. Data collection, analysis and reporting of identity data is governed by the *Ontario Anti-Racism Act* (2017), and the [*Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of System Racism*](#) (2018).

Bringing Together the Data Sets

8. A QuantCrit framework (Gillborn, Warmington & Demack, 2018) has continued to guide the approach to the analysis and reporting of this data. Despite the multidimensional nature of identity, this initial phase of reporting focuses only on single aspects of identity – Indigenous, race, gender, and disability – and does not yet take into account intersectionality (e.g., race x gender).
9. Three years of pooled data (2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020) have been used to maximize reporting for as many aspects of identity as possible. The total number of students in the merged grade 10 credit accumulation data file was 16,472, 9,654 (59%) of whom also participated in the Valuing Voices student survey.

Calculating Disproportionality and/or Disparity Indices

10. This phase of reporting requires the calculation of disproportionality and/or disparity indices for each unit of analysis (Standard 29). In the case of credit accumulation, both have been calculated where suppression thresholds have been met. Meaningful interpretation of disproportionality and disparity requires the selection of appropriate benchmarks and reference groups, respectively (Standards 30 and 31), as well as the establishment of thresholds (Standard 32) to support monitoring of progress over time.

Measuring Equity: Overview of Findings

11. For the benefit of the reader, Appendix A presents more detailed results and explains some of the more detailed technical/methodological elements of analysis that are requirements under the provincial Data Standards. Highlights for the full grade 10 student population include pooled over a three-year period (2017-2018 through 2019-2020) include:
 - grade 10 credit accumulation rates have been relatively stable, with slight fluctuations ranging from a low of 79% in 2017-2018 to a high of 83% in 2019-2020 (cohort sizes are approximately 5,500 students in any given year);
 - closer attention needs to be paid to progression towards graduation for specific groups of students. Specifically, students with special education needs, ELLs, students residing in lower income neighbourhoods, and Indigenous students have a lower likelihood of earning 16 credits by the end of grade 10 compared to their peers.
12. For the first time, credit accumulation data combined with Valuing Voices Identity Matters data was disaggregated by Indigenous identity, race, gender identity and disability. This disaggregated credit accumulation data forms a baseline against which progress can be measured over time. Results of this analysis yielded the following:
 - Grade 10 students who self-identified as Indigenous on the *Valuing Voices* survey were 0.77 times less likely to earn 16 credits by the end of grade 10 compared to their peers; students from First Nation, Métis, and Inuit

communities were all underrepresented in the data relative to their representation in the population of grade 10 students;

- Grade 10 Indigenous, Black, Middle Eastern, and Latino students were underrepresented in the credit accumulation data given their relative size in the overall grade 10 student population (disproportionality rates ranging from 0.85 to 0.92, respectively). They were also less likely than other students to earn 16 credits by the end of grade 10 (disparity rates ranging from 0.85 to 0.88);
- Compared to their representation in the grade 10 student population, students who identified as trans girl/woman, not sure, gender fluid, non-binary, and gender non-conforming were less likely to attain 16 credits by the end of grade 10 (disproportionality rates ranging from 0.83 to 0.91, respectively);
- Student who self-identified as having a disability(ies) are slightly under-represented in the credit accumulation data with a disproportionality rate of 0.97 compared to students who did not identify as having any form of disability. Disparity ratios for students with specific disabilities ranged from 0.77 for students who identified as having an (undisclosed) disability to 1.10 for students who self-identified having mobility issues.

13. Next Steps

Promoting Engagement and Connectedness to Learning

As part of the Ministry of Education's Student Success/Learning to 18 initiative, students who do not successfully complete 16 credits by the end of grade 10 are at risk of leaving school prior to graduation and becoming disengaged in learning. Student re-engagement is a key strategy of the initiative and coordinated through the District's Student Success Lead whereby Student Success Teachers (SSTs) provide direct intervention support to students who are behind in credit attainment through credit intervention and credit rescue.

To foster a school culture where students' sense of belonging is promoted through a strong partnership between students, staff, and community, the District has recently implemented the following:

- Indigenous and Black Students Graduation coaches program which are showing early indications of having a positive impact on student success through increased credit accumulation and overall well-being;
- a Summer Learning Program was introduced in 2020 to support Indigenous students in the attainment of credits. The success of this program has led to an expanded focus to support Black students – this initiative will be implemented in the summer of 2021; and
- the Student Achievement Through Inquiry (S.A.T.E) project which brings children, families and communities together into the educational environment as participants and partners in the learning process, with the school becoming the "Heart of the Community."

In addition, both the OCDSB *Strategic Plan 2019-2023* and the *Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap* outline some of the key strategies that will be undertaken to foster these environments, including the:

- establishment of targets for all students to increase graduation success in all pathways;
- release of Annual Equity Report to identify and document progress made in eliminating disparity of outcomes for Indigenous, Black and minoritized students, including 2SLGBTQ+ and students with disabilities in graduation;
- establishment of an Annual Equity Accountability Report (to be included in the Annual Director's Report) that reports on some of the key accountability measures including graduation rates, disaggregated by grade, Indigeneity, race, language, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and socio-economic status.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

14. Over the past two years, the District has received \$153,000 in one-time funding through Transfer Payment Agreements to support this work up to August 2020. These funds were used to hire research staff and consultant services for the facilitation of focus groups and community partner meetings. Approximately \$200,000 was allocated through the annual budget process for the 2020-2021 school year to support the governance work (e.g., establishment of data sharing agreements with First Nations communities, development of an open data policy) and extension of contract staff in the *Research, Evaluation and Analytics Division*.
15. The District receives annual funding from the Ministry of Education to support student success. Much of the funding is targeted for staffing (i.e., Student Success Lead, Student Success Teachers in each secondary school, and intermediate Student Success Teachers in sites offering grades 7 and 8), however, a portion of the funds is distributed to schools. The initiative involves ongoing monitoring of student achievement and progress towards successful completion of high school (e.g., pass rates in key subject areas and courses, credit accumulation, and completion of the compulsory community service hours and literacy requirements).
16. A Technical Advisory Group has been established to support ongoing work on reporting with identity based data to ensure alignment with the Data Standards. To date, TAG has met twice - prior to the release of the suspension report in November and prior to the release of this report. This group provides a forum for engaging community organizations in ongoing input/dialogue regarding research methodology and statistical analysis of identity data.
17. Ongoing communication about the use of the survey data 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.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

The following questions are provided for discussion purposes:

- What stands out for you in the data/information that is presented?
- What questions does the data/information raise?
- What actions/next steps should be considered?

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Appendix A - Detailed Results of Findings-Student Achievement Focus on Grade 10
Credit Accumulation