

## STUDENT CENSUS and PILOT STUDY

### What is the purpose of the Student Census?

The HCDSB Student Census is an online survey that collects information about our student population. Specifically, it collects student identity-based data (e.g., racial/ethnic background, religion, Indigenous identity etc.) so that the HCDSB can know more about our student population. For some items, students will choose from a predetermined list while for other items, they will type their response. This data will help our schools, and the board overall, create and promote a more equitable and inclusive learning environment, where all students can achieve, believe, and belong.

### Why does the Census ask about identity-based information?

Identity-based data (e.g., racial/ethnic background, religion, Indigenous identity etc.) is crucial for school boards to better understand their students' identities and experiences. This type of data will help the Board address barriers to student success and inclusion, as well as foster a more welcoming, positive learning environment for all. Without understanding how our students see themselves, we will not be able to make the necessary changes to better serve all HCDSB students, such as resource allocations, programs, supports, and policies. The Ontario Ministry of Education also acknowledges the importance of this data collection and requires that all school boards collect identity-based data to comply with [Ontario's Anti-Racism Data Standards](#) (ARDS) under the 2017 Anti-Racism Act by 2023.

### What is the Student Census pilot study?

Our pilot study will help us determine how best to collect identity-based information from HCDSB students and/or their parents using a survey. The survey will be completed by students in grades 4 through 12, and by parents for students in K through grade 3. We have pre-selected schools and classrooms to participate in this pilot project. These students will complete the survey during class time.

Parents will be asked to complete the survey on behalf of their K-3 child. The survey will also contain various feedback questions about your experience filling out the survey, as we are interested in your opinions about the clarity and/or difficulty of the survey items. Parents will also be asked if they would be interested in participating in a follow-up focus group. If interested and selected to participate, parents will receive more information at a later date.

Ultimately, our pilot study will allow us to ensure that this type of information is being collected efficiently and effectively, so that we are prepared for the upcoming mandated board-wide Census.

### How is this done?

To complete this survey, participants will receive the survey link via email. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You are asked to complete the survey on behalf of your child; you will select the answer(s) that best represent your child.

### What if I've been asked to complete the student census on behalf of more than one child?

Parents with more than one child in the selected grades are asked to complete one survey per child. You will receive one email per child who has been selected to participate in the study.

### Do I have to participate?

**Participation in the pilot study is voluntary.** You are encouraged to complete the survey, on behalf of your child, to help us test the process of administering, storing, analyzing, and reporting on identity-based data. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer (aside from the items at the beginning of the survey that will be used to confirm our collection process), or you may choose not to complete the survey altogether without penalty. Please note that any information you provide will be used for educational and research purposes only.

Note that since only select grades from each participating school will be invited to participate in the pilot study, you may have other children enrolled at the same school whose grade was not selected to participate.

### Are there benefits or risks to participating?

There are no direct benefits, aside from helping the HCDSB understand how to best collect and analyze identity-based data. There are no expected risks to participating, although you may experience confusion or discomfort when responding to some questions. Note that you can select "Not sure", "I do not understand this question", skip the question, or you can stop taking the survey at any time.

### Is the survey anonymous and confidential?

The survey is not anonymous, but individual student data will remain confidential. In order to effectively use this data to identify potential barrier to student success and inclusion, we need to be able to link the data collected by this census survey to previously collected school-based data (e.g., program enrolment, attendance).

For the pilot study only, to verify our collection process we will ask you to confirm the name of your child at the start of the survey. However, your child's identifying information will be separated from their identity-based data, and no individual student will be identified in any public reports.

### Will my information be kept private?

The data will be stored on a secure database that can be accessed only by authorized HCDSB Research and Development Services staff. All information will be used, disclosed, and retained in accordance with the Municipal Freedom and Protection of Privacy Act, is collected under the authority of the Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2, and Bill 114, Anti-Racism Act, 2017, and aligns with the Ontario Education Equity Action Plan, with funding from the Equity Secretariat.

### Where can I find more information about the pilot study?

We have shared a recording of the parent information session on the pilot study to watch at your convenience.

### Other Questions?

If you have further questions, please contact your School Principal or Dr. Lisa Collimore, Chief Officer, Research and Development Services, [research@hcdsb.org](mailto:research@hcdsb.org)