



First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy

Policy Directive: Voluntary, Confidential First Nation, Métis and Inuit Self-Identification

Date Approved: January 2012

Projected Review Date: January 2015

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In June 2005, the Ontario government released a report, *Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs*, which committed the government to working with First Nation, Métis and Inuit leaders and educational institutions to improve the education outcomes among Aboriginal students by 2016. As such, the Ministry of Education has identified the following goals to address the objective of improved student achievement and engagement for all students and to meet the expectations for Ontario's diverse society for a quality public education system under the 2007 *First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*:

1. High level of student achievement.
2. Reduce gaps in student achievement.
3. High levels of public confidence.

In 2007, the Aboriginal Education Office of the Ministry of Education released the document *Building Bridges to Success for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Students 2007* which encourages school boards to develop effective policies and practices for voluntary, confidential Aboriginal student self-identification. It was articulated that "...availability of data on Aboriginal student achievement in provincially funded school system is a critical foundation for the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs to support the needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students" (Ministry of Education, 2007).

In accordance with the Ministry of Education's Ontario *First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (2007), Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) will begin collecting information such as student enrolment, course and achievement information using the Ontario Education Number (OEN) and may report on 10 performance measures (ranging from results of provincial standards on province-wide assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics, to graduation rates, to improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement. All student data will inform the effectiveness of the programming, services, and resources on First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students enrolled in HWDSB.

2.0 RATIONALE

The Policy Directive for Voluntary, Confidential First Nation, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) Self-Identification will support the implementation process of HWDSB's First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy. The intent of the Voluntary, Confidential First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Self-Identification Policy Directive is to establish accurate and reliable student-specific data on the achievement and success of First Nation (Status and Non-Status), Métis, and Inuit students enrolled in Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. The data is critical to support school and system improvement planning and accountability, and to inform policy and funding decisions, measurement and reporting. The data will support approaches to increase the capacity of the school board and schools to equitably respond to the learning and cultural needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. HWDSB school board staff and the Ontario Ministry of Education will make use of the self-identification data to plan culturally relevant programming, services, and resources that supports First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement and success.

Through HWDSB's strategic directions of Achievement matters, Engagement matters and Equity matters, the Voluntary, Confidential First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Self-Identification Policy Directive would inform the following indicators of performance under *HWDSB's FNMI Education Policy*:

- Improve achievement and success among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.
- Promote educational equity of access, opportunity and outcome for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students in the following areas:
 - strength-based learning to promote self-esteem
 - literacy and numeracy
 - retention of students in school
 - graduation rates
 - engagement
 - advancement to postsecondary studies that reflects all pathways.

3.0 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Aboriginal: The term 'Aboriginal' includes First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples as noted under the *Canadian Constitution Act, 1982*, sections 25 and 35.

First Nation, Métis, and Inuit: For the purpose of this Policy Directive, 'First Nation, Métis, and Inuit' are the options for self-identification and data collection within the policy for voluntary, confidential FNMI self-identification.

Community: The term '*community*' refers to the participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and locals, Aboriginal families, as well as extended community support networks ranging from Aboriginal community service agencies to Elders/Senators.

Strength-based learning: The terms '*strength-based learning*' seeks to nurture, acknowledge, and empower Aboriginal learners to develop their own talents based on their individual strengths through differentiated teaching, learning, and assessment practices.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITY

The Superintendent Responsible for Equity, Engagement and System Programs will implement the Policy Directive for Voluntary, Confidential First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Self-Identification.

5.0 METHODS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The following methods required for implementation are aligned with the recommendations put forward by the Aboriginal Education Office of the Ministry of Education in the 2007 *Building Bridges to Success for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Students* document, in addition to information collected from community consultations and best practices:

- 1) Consultations with legal counsel to ensure legal obligations are understood and met (i.e. Ontario Human Rights Codes, the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Education Act). For example, the Aboriginal Education Office of the Ministry of Education (2007) states the following recommendations:
 - a. "...under the self-identification policy, a school board must understand its legal obligation with respect to the disclosing the personal information to the Ministry of Education and EQAO" (p. 12).
 - b. "Section 8.1 of the Education Act gives the Minister authority to collect personal information indirectly and to require a school board to disclose personal information that is reasonable and necessary for the purposes set out in section 8.1(1), including administering the Education Act and its regulations, implementing policies and guidelines made under the act, planning services, allocating resources to the services, and evaluating or monitoring the services" (p. 12).

- c. Clause 4(1)(b) of the Education Quality and Accountability Act gives the EQAO the authority to require a school board to provide personal information to it to allow to carry out its obligations" (p. 12).
- 2) Work collaboratively to strategically assess the implementation process for the Voluntary, Confidential First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Self-Identification Policy Directive with various school, family, and community groups to support the ways in which school boards, the EQAO, and the Ministry of Education intend to use the data.
 - a. Develop an HWDSB Aboriginal Advisory Committee.
 - i. Consultation will involve representation from HWDSB school board staff, including but not limited to, board/school administration, the Office Clerical and Technical Unit (OCTU) staff, and trustees.
 - ii. Aboriginal families and communities, as well as local service delivery organizations (i.e. Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, Niwasa Aboriginal Education Programs, etc.) that are committed to supporting Aboriginal educational programs or may be affected by the policy directive will be invited to participate.
- 3) Develop a culturally appropriate implementation plan to include processes for articulating the uses of the data, providing information about disclosure, and giving notice of collection, defining staff roles and responsibilities, as well as monitoring, securing, and evaluating FNMI student self-identification data and progress measures.
 - a. Make considerations for involving school board staff (i.e. Office Clerical and Technical Unit (OCTU) staff, Management Information for Student Achievement (MISA) leaders, information technology staff, and the EQAO).
 - b. Define roles and responsibilities.
 - c. Recognize and address the four cohorts of Aboriginal students attending provincially funded schools in Ontario:
 - i. "First Nation students who live in First Nation communities but attend provincially funded elementary or secondary schools under tuition agreements.
 - ii. First Nation Students who live in the jurisdictions of school boards and attend provincially funded elementary or secondary schools.
 - iii. Métis students who attend provincially funded elementary or secondary schools.
 - iv. Inuit students who attend provincially funded elementary or secondary schools" (Aboriginal Education Office, 2007, p. 9).
 - d. Make revisions to the student registrations forms. In accordance with section, 29(2) of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act ensure notice of collection states the uses of the personal information.
 - e. Update eSIS in order to correspond to Management Information for Student Achievement (MISA) data collection and OnSIS for FNMI self-identification.
 - f. Determine how data will be securely stored. Information should be stored in the same manner as the Ontario Student Records and protected and governed by the Freedom of Information Act.
 - g. Determine how data will be reported to enhance Aboriginal education programs. It should be noted that individual data will not be reported. Information will be used in the

