

## **How We Collect, Use and Disclose Your Personal Information**

### **Dear Parent/Guardian and Student,**

The purpose of this communication is to explain to you how the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) and your school use the personal information you provide to us. The *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA) and the *Education Act* set guidelines that schools and school boards must follow when collecting, using and disclosing students' personal information.

These Acts give school boards and schools the legal authority to collect personal information for the purpose of planning and delivering educational programs and services which best meet students' needs, for operating schools and for reporting to the Ministry of Education as required. Accordingly, HWDSB collects the personal information it needs to fully meet its obligations as a public school board.

### **What is personal information?**

Any recorded information about an individual is considered personal when the individual can be identified. In other words, when information used alone or in combination with other information makes it possible for us to know who the individual is then the information is considered personal. For example, the information: *female, grade 6, Level 3 in Language* is not considered personal information because we have no idea who is being described. But the information: *female, grade 6, Level 3 in Language, and Ontario Education Number (OEN) 783 677 093* is considered personal information because we can figure out the student's identity using their OEN.

### **How do boards and schools decide what information to collect or disclose?**

The *Education Act* requires schools to maintain an Ontario Student Record (OSR) for each student. The OSR is a record of a student's educational progress through school and follows students when they move between schools within Ontario. The Ministry of Education's Ontario Student Record Guideline sets out what information must go into the OSR and how it is to be managed. Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board follows this guideline. You can see it here:

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/osr/osr.html>

MFIPPA specifies how boards and schools handle information. It states that personal information may be used or disclosed by Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board:

- In order for HWDSB employees to each have access to the specific information (s)he needs in order to perform his/her duties;
- only for the purpose for which it was collected or for a reason that is consistent with that purpose;
- to comply with a court order or subpoena or to aid in an investigation conducted by a law enforcement agency;
- to meet legislated requirements such as reporting to the Ministry of Education.
- with the consent of parents/guardians, and students (if 18+ yrs old or 16-17 yrs old and have withdrawn from parental control) if the proposed use or disclosure of personal information does not fall under any of the above uses.

The *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) requires the board to report to child protection services when there is reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk. You can learn more about this by reading our [Safe and Caring Schools Parent Brochure](#) (not hyperlinked yet)

## What do boards and schools use personal information for?

Boards collect, generate, use, and disclose student personal information in many different ways for many different reasons. To help you understand how we routinely use student personal information, see below for some examples:

### Administrative Uses and Disclosures

*See how we collect, use and disclose personal information to keep schools operating smoothly*

1. Student personal information such as home address, photo, life-threatening medical emergency information, accessibility and safety needs may be shared with Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services, contracted bus company operators and bus drivers for the purpose of administering the board's contracted bus program and for the safety of students.
2. Student information that is collected at registration as well as other data such as attendance, timetables, and achievement is stored in an electronic database called a Student Information System where school and board staff can access the information they need to perform their duties and report to the Ministry of Education. To learn more about what information the Ministry uses to improve educational outcomes across the province, see <http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/misa/index.html>
3. Personal information such as a child's name, birth date, grade, name of parents/guardians, home address and phone numbers will be shared with the Hamilton Public Health Unit in accordance with the *Immunization of School Pupils Act*. Communicable diseases (e.g., Measles, Tuberculosis) are reported in accordance with the *Health Promotion and Protection Act* and the *Education Act*.
4. Student medical health information provided by parents/guardians or adult students is used by school staff to address student medical needs, plan for medical emergencies at school or during school activities. Medical emergency plans for students with life-threatening medical conditions are posted in identified areas of the school for emergency response purposes.
5. In the event of an injury or other health emergency, student medical information will be turned over to emergency first responders as required. In compliance with the *Personal Health Information Protection Act* (PHIPA), Ontario Health Numbers will not be collected except for school trips outside of Ontario; however parents/guardians/students may be invited to volunteer such information if they want us to keep it on file in the event that it can be used to facilitate medical services should the need arise.
6. Student accidents that take place during school or on a school-sponsored activity are reported to the board's insurer. Reports include the name of the injured student and details of the incident as well as the name and contact information of witnesses to the accident.

7. Phone numbers may be used on telephone lists. Examples include:
  - a. emergency contact lists to connect with parents during emergencies (e.g. inclement weather);
  - b. safe arrival programs, which may be staffed by parent volunteers, to contact parents where a student is absent and the parent/guardian has not notified the school of the absence;
  - c. volunteers, authorized by the Principal, to contact parents regarding school-related activities which benefit the student and the school community and require parent involvement.
8. The board releases student information that is requested by the Ontario Ministry of Education and by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) for their development, planning, and resource allocation.
9. School boards use third party service providers for many purposes. Sometimes, personal information is required by the service providers in order to fulfil their duties. For example, student names, school, and classroom designations may be required by school picture companies so that they can organize their photos and get the proofs back to individuals as well as prepare files for uploading student pictures into their profiles in the board's Student Information System. Student work may be stored on board approved web app providers' servers for the purposes of online student collaboration, creation and presentation. Anonymous student written work may also be submitted to Turn It In ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)) to check originality and get feedback.
10. School pictures are used for administrative and archival purposes, for student cards, in school yearbooks, and are also offered to parents for purchase. Examples of "administrative purposes" include: on severe allergy alerts posted in staff areas throughout schools, in student profiles in our electronic student information system, for supply teachers when they enter a classroom for the first time, by principals and vice-principals when they are dealing with incidents in and around the school.
11. Library staff have access to student and parent contact information and addresses in order to send or mail reminders regarding overdue books.

### **Instructional Uses and Disclosures**

*See how we collect, use and disclose personal information to meet the individual needs of all learners*

1. Information in the OSR and in the Student Information System is used by school and board staff to support classroom teachers and early childhood educators to develop educational programs that best meet each student's needs. Staff working with the classroom teacher or directly with the student may be from Special Education, Guidance, or Student Success, to name a few.
2. Students, supported by teachers, will upload written and creative work as well as evidence of their learning when using digital platforms for learning, e.g., Google Drive, The Commons, Online Courses, tv.hwdsb.on.ca. One specific example is the "All About Me" and "Individual Pathways Plan", a Ministry of Education Initiative involving electronic portfolios that follow the student throughout

their career in HWDSB. These portfolios are for tracking learning and development. You can learn more about it in this document:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/cps/creatingpathwayssuccess.pdf>

3. Student learning profiles, assessment results and achievement levels are shared among staff within a school in order to best address student needs as they progress through grade levels. Similarly, student information is shared from elementary schools to secondary schools as students and teachers prepare for the transition from grade 8 to grade 9. In turn, secondary schools share information and feedback about student progress back to elementary schools to support continuous improvement of the elementary school program.
4. Secondary schools will send information of potential graduates (contact information, marks and transcripts) to the application centres for Ontario colleges and universities to support the student's postsecondary applications.
5. Teachers may record or photograph students as part of their educational program for the purpose of assessment and evaluation. These are sometimes shared with students and parents as appropriate. Sometimes teams of teachers share this evidence of student learning amongst themselves in order to improve instructional strategies.
6. School boards continually conduct research to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and programs in an effort to continuously improve educational outcomes for all learners. What this means at HWDSB is that the researchers from the board's Evidence-Based Education and Services Team (E-BEST) will analyze different types of student data (e.g., test scores, marks, bullying survey data, etc.) and support educators as well as managers and superintendents to understand and use the best available research evidence to make decisions.
7. From time to time, E-BEST collaborates with university researchers to enhance the research potential within the board. When student personal information is shared with university researchers so that they can assist with board research, all identifiers are removed from the data (i.e., names, OENs) so that the data is anonymous. University researchers make use of the findings (e.g., patterns, trends, correlations) from our research by sharing them with the larger education community, and by contributing to education knowledge in journal publications and conference presentations.
8. Sometimes the Ministry of Education works with university partners and independent researchers to conduct research in Ontario schools in order to inform provincial education strategies. When this happens, parents/guardians are notified before any data is collected from students.
9. When research is conducted by external researchers (e.g., universities, graduate students working on university degrees, community agencies, and provincial agencies) for their own research purposes, parents will always be given the choice of whether or not to allow their child to participate.
10. First Nation, Métis and Inuit students are given an opportunity to voluntarily identify themselves. This data is used by the Ministry, by the Education Quality Accountability Office (EQAO) and also in the school board for allocating program resources and supports. This is a Ministry of Education

initiative designed to assess progress toward supporting Aboriginal students to reach their full potential

11. In keeping with the requirements of the *Education Act* and the *Personal Health Information Protection Act* (PHIPA), parental/guardian consent will be sought prior to conducting intelligence or behavioural tests, or prior to the involvement of psychological or speech and language staff.
12. The HWDSB follows the legislative requirements of the *Child and Family Services Act* for students accessing social work and/or child and youth work services. As such, we inform parents/guardians for students 12 years of age and under prior to providing these services.

### **The Learning Environment Uses and Disclosures**

*See how we use personal information to create safe schools where students are valued and their accomplishments celebrated*

1. Student work on paper, including student names, may be displayed in the classroom or in school hallways, and at the board office. It may also be shared publicly at community events such as science fairs, writing/poster contests or similar events outside the school setting.
2. Photos or recordings of student accomplishments and activities may be shared with students and parents for the purpose of celebrating and memorializing the student's accomplishments at school.
3. Class lists with student first names and last initial may be distributed to other parents for the purpose of addressing greeting cards or invitations in connection with holidays, birthday parties, etc.
4. Birthday congratulations may be announced over the PA system and/or in the classrooms.
5. School events and activities may be reported in school and board newsletters and on school and board websites and social media sites for our parents and communities. This may include non-identifying photos and news or, with parent/guardian permission, identifying information including photos, videos and names.
6. Student names and/or photographs will be included in school yearbooks, school programs (e.g., commencement or graduation programs, school plays and musical productions) on student awards lists, honour rolls, on class assignment lists that are posted throughout the school at the beginning of the year/semester.
7. The names of graduates are shared with the offices of our elected officials (e.g., mayor, MP, MPP) when requested for printing congratulatory certificates.
8. Surveillance equipment is sometimes used in schools and on buses to enhance the safety of students and staff, to protect property from theft or vandalism, and to aid in the identification of intruders or persons who endanger the health, well-being or safety of school community members. Signs informing students and guests that surveillance cameras are in use are posted in the areas under surveillance.

## **Preparing for the Future with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning**

*See how personal information is used to equip students with digital knowledge and skills*

1. Similar to the use and disclosure of student personal information on paper, digital personal information that students create (e.g., their work, their group projects, submissions to student discussion forums) sometimes goes beyond the classroom walls when using approved internet tools and is visible online within the school or throughout other schools across the board. Parent/guardian permission will be sought for student personal information (e.g., their name attached to their written work, photos they take, videos and presentations they create) to appear on sites that are public, i.e., visible outside of the school board.
2. Students may participate in video conferencing (a technology that allows for two or more locations to interact via simultaneous two-way video and audio transmissions) to support the classroom program. Students may see and be seen, as well as speak with students from other HWDSB schools, students in other countries, and subject area experts from around the globe.
3. Student names, school, and classroom designations may be shared with board-approved third party web application or online tool providers for the purpose of registration and authentication so that students have their own accounts to use the applications.
4. Student work may be stored on board approved third party servers for the purpose of on-line student collaboration, creation and presentations.
5. HWDB educators promote a safe, online workspace for students by selecting web app service providers that protect the information of their users and do not use it for other purposes, and that don't target students for advertising. In addition, students are taught safe online practices, how to manage their online presence and to be good digital citizens. When students share their personal information online, it is in the context of this reduced risk as well as under educational guidance regarding digital citizenship and positive online presence.

## **Media Uses and Disclosures**

*See what media exposure to expect and how we protect student personal information*

1. Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is cautious about contributing to student digital "footprints" or information that students leave online. To that end, only anonymous student work and non-identifying photos of groups of students (without names) at events will appear on board-related websites, in electronic newsletters and on social media. Identifying information such as photos of individuals, small groups, and names will be posted only if there is parental consent on the *Media Consent Agreement*.
2. The media, such as newspapers, web-based news services, television and radio, may be invited to the school to take photos of students and write articles about newsworthy events or activities such as student achievements/awards, and current events. Their reports may include group photos of

students. Individual students would only be photographed or identified with appropriate consent. This consent may be given on the *Media Consent Agreement*, or in the case of more in-depth media coverage, a separate consent form will be sent home to parents before the event.

3. Students participating in extra-curricular activities or school events that are open to the public or that take place in public places such as on field trips and fairs, may be photographed by the school community, news media or general public. This may result in photos or videos being posted on social media sites and in electronic or print news media sites. The school has no control over how and where these images will be posted. However, parents and students are asked to practice good digital citizenship by being respectful when they post photos of others, which means making sure they ask those they photograph/record for consent before posting.
4. Events inside the school, such as performances, awards assemblies, and commencement that are typically attended by family members are often photographed and video recorded by family members. We ask those in attendance to respect the privacy rights of all students and their families by getting consent before images and videos are shared or posted online.

***We hope that these examples provide a better understanding of the ways in which HWDSB collects, uses, and discloses personal information in order to function as a school board.***

***If there are special circumstances that cause you concern over how we collect, use and disclose personal information please ask your school principal about it. We will do our best to work out a reasonable alternative to satisfy your specific needs.***