



Dear families,

At Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB), we are committed to identifying and removing barriers so we can offer all students supportive, inclusive, and respectful learning environments.

To learn more about our students, we will conduct a voluntary and confidential census. In April 2021, *We All Count: HWDSB Student Census 2021* was opened and asked questions about student identities (race, gender, etc.) to identify and address systemic barriers. Due to the pandemic and low response rate, we are opening the Student Census again to provide all students the opportunity to complete the census. This will occur from November 29, 2021 to December 16, 2021.

Many school boards have conducted a student census. In fact, the Anti-Racism Act, 2017 and Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan require school boards to gather and report this data. It is also a priority project in HWDSB's Equity Action Plan.

We know that asking about a person's identity can be uncomfortable, and we will do so with sensitivity. We consulted students, families, staff, and community members so that this census helps HWDSB make evidence-informed decisions to support equity, student achievement and well-being.

How will it occur?

Kindergarten to Grade 4 Students: A form will be added to the Parent Portal. Parents and Guardians can go to the Portal, open the form, and complete the Student Censuses at this location. Print copies are available by request to your child's teacher. Please only complete one census form per student (online or print).

Grades 5 to 12 - In-person and remote learners: We will, once again, email a secure link to students in grades 5 to 12, so they can complete the census form online during class time, with teacher support. Students whose parents/guardians previously requested that they NOT participate in the census will not receive the email.

What does it ask?

Depending on a student's age, questions on the census may ask about a student's languages, Indigenous identity, ethnicity, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, (dis)abilities, place of birth and citizenship/immigration status.

How will HWDSB protect students' personal information?

HWDSB is committed to the highest levels of privacy and confidentiality when collecting information about students and families. Student census data is collected under the authority of the Anti-Racism Act,

HWDSB



2017, S.O. 2017, c. 15, the Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2, and complies with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56.

The student census is confidential, but it is not anonymous. Individual student responses will be grouped together for analysis so that no individual student information is ever identifiable. Collected responses will be stored in a secure, confidential database and will only be accessed by authorized HWDSB Research & Analytics staff to identify and summarize trends among HWDSB students.

Is it mandatory?

Completing the census is voluntary. However, we ask students to participate so we get an accurate picture of our student population. A high response rate will help us identify barriers, create strategies, and address barriers to student achievement and well-being through our programs and resources. Students who have already opted out will not receive a survey link when it re-opens. Families that do not want their child to participate and have not previously opted out can email research@hwdsb.on.ca.

Questions?

We are inviting and answering questions as we prepare for the census. Please learn more on our website www.hwdsb.on.ca/weallcount, where you will find Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the census. You can also contact our student census team at census@hwdsb.on.ca.

Thank you for helping HWDSB collect data in a responsible way, so that we can create more equitable outcomes in the education system.

Sincerely,

Manny Figueiredo
Director of Education

Paul Denomme
Superintendent of Student Achievement,
Equity and Student Engagement

RE: Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI)

Dear Families,

At Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB), we are committed to identifying and removing barriers, so all students learn in supportive, inclusive and respectful environments. We also support student well-being with programs, supports and services that foster healthy development and healing from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In November, students in grades 4 to 12 will complete the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI). Students in grades 4 to 8 completed this survey in 2018 and some students in both elementary and secondary completed a shortened version of MDI this past spring. In November, students will do this online survey during school time with school staff supervision. Your child's answers will be private, confidential and will not be identified by name.

What is the purpose of the study?

HWDSB wants to better understand aspects of child development in the middle years that affect well-being, health and school success. The survey will ask students about their thoughts, feelings and experiences in school and in the community. HWDSB will use the study results to make important decisions about programs and services that make a difference for children.

The survey asks students questions about:

- 1) Social and emotional development, such as self-esteem, optimism, happiness and empathy;
- 2) Feelings of connectedness to school, family, friends, and communities;
- 3) School experiences;
- 4) Physical health and well-being; and
- 5) Time use after school hours, as well as children's wishes for after-school time.

How is my child's privacy protected?

Your child will not be identified by name in this study. Your child's answers will not be available to you or any school or school board staff. This is to ensure that each child's answers are private and confidential. No information is added to your child's school record from the study.

If MDI information is used in research publications or in public documents, your child and your child's school will not be identified in any way. If at any time your child does not wish to participate in the survey, their teacher will provide an alternate school activity.

HWDSB

Research and Analytics Department
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
20 Education Court, P.O. Box 2558
Hamilton, ON L8N 3L1

Personal information on the MDI is collected in compliance with Section 28(2) of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) which states that organizations engaged in lawfully authorized activities may collect personal information from individuals when necessary. The MDI helps to meet the Ministry of Education requirement for school boards to survey students every 2 years about their school climate.

How will the school and community benefit?

The MDI study helps educators, program planners and community members learn about the lives of children through the voices of the children themselves. Your school and community can use the results to improve the lives of children. We believe the study offers many positive benefits to local children and families. HWDSB will work with partners including the City of Hamilton to ensure that we meet student needs in our community. We will share de-identified data from the survey with the City of Hamilton to inform and enrich its programming and services for children and youth.

Where can I get more information?

Please learn more about the MDI, which is used in other Canadian jurisdictions, online at www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdi.

You can also find information and resources about the Middle Years Development survey on our website at <https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/elementary/supports/mental-health-and-well-being/mdi/>
If you have any questions or concerns about your child's participation, please contact the Research and Analytics Department at research@hwdsb.on.ca 905-527-5092.

Sincerely,

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
Research and Analytics Department