



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,



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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Manny Figueiredo".

Manny Figueiredo  
Director of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Denomme".

Paul Denomme  
Superintendent of Student Achievement,  
Equity and Student Engagement