



March 7, 2011

Dear Parents and/or Guardians:

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) will be undertaking a demographic survey of our student population between **April 18 and May 20, 2011**. The purpose of this letter is to share some detailed information with you about the student survey.

This survey was originally planned for the fall of 2010. The district delayed the survey in order to work with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC) on privacy issues. The IPC conducted a privacy investigation to ensure the survey was compliant with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I am very pleased to advise you that the investigation is complete and the IPC has confirmed the survey is in compliance with the Act. A copy of the IPC report can be found at www.ocdsb.ca

What's changed?

The IPC report did not recommend any changes to the survey. However, the school district has made some improvements to the privacy and information management aspects of the survey. These changes include:

- More detail in the "Notice of Collection" statement on the survey;
- The creation of a form for parents to notify the school if they do not want their child to complete the survey or if they wish to complete the survey on paper at home;
- Students who do not have consent to complete the survey will not be brought to the computer lab while the other students complete the survey;
- Improvements to the survey data analysis process, including a six phase analysis process and the removal of student identifiers from the research data;
- Expanded instruction on the survey return envelope.

Why is the district doing the survey?

The district is undertaking this survey for several reasons:

- We believe that a comprehensive demographic survey will give us a better understanding of our student population and will help us to better meet student needs;
- We are required to complete a bi-annual school climate survey; and
- We are required to complete an Aboriginal self-identification survey.

School districts are responsible for promoting student achievement and student well-being. Research tells us that student achievement is influenced by many factors. This survey asks a number of questions related to those factors, including such things as ethnicity, socioeconomics, gender, sexual orientation, student engagement, sense of belonging, school climate, student health, extracurricular activities and special accommodations.

How will the survey data be used?

The survey data will help us make decisions about the programs and services that are available to students. For example, if the survey data suggests a higher experience of bullying within a specific student population (such as ethnic minority/religion/sexual orientation), we can develop or enhance educational strategies that are designed to help address some of the root causes of bullying.

How will the survey be administered?

The survey will be sent home with students in **grades K-6** to be completed by their parent/guardian. For those who prefer, the K-6 survey can also be completed on-line. Completed surveys should be returned to the school, sealed in the envelope provided.

Students in **grades 7-12** will complete the survey on-line at school. However, parents may request a paper copy for completion at home. Parents are encouraged to discuss the survey with their child(ren). Parents who do not want their child(ren) in grades 7-12 to complete the survey must **advise the school in writing by the end of the school day on March 31, 2011**. A form is attached for your use.

Voluntary and Confidential Nature of Survey

We recognize the sensitivity associated with this survey which is why it is **voluntary**. Parents and students can decide whether or not to complete the survey and can also skip question(s) they do not want to answer. The survey is **confidential**; it does not include student names or student numbers.

Analysis of Survey Data

Each survey will contain a unique survey number. This number will allow us to separate the survey data by school and where appropriate by student population (for example, gender). I want to assure you that the survey data will only be used at an aggregate level and NOT at an individual student level. Results will not be reported where there are fewer than 15 respondents. Attached to this letter is a summary of the data analysis that will be done on the student survey, including information about the linking of survey data with student data.

Looking for More Information?

As we draw nearer to the date of the survey, you will receive additional information with respect to survey distribution and completion. Information will be provided via school newsletter or communication home, voice messaging, and our district website - www.ocdsb.ca.

If you have questions about the survey, please do not hesitate to contact your school principal. You may also contact our Student Survey Information Line at 613-596-8258 or via email at inclusivetimes@ocdsb.ca.

If you have questions about the privacy investigation, you may contact Michele Giroux, Freedom of Information Coordinator at 613-596-8211 x 8607 at michele.giroux@ocdsb.ca

This is an important initiative and I appreciate the thoughtfulness of everyone in our community who has participated in the development and discussion about the survey. I am confident that this survey will provide us with important information which will be extremely useful in helping us better meet the needs of our students.

Sincerely,



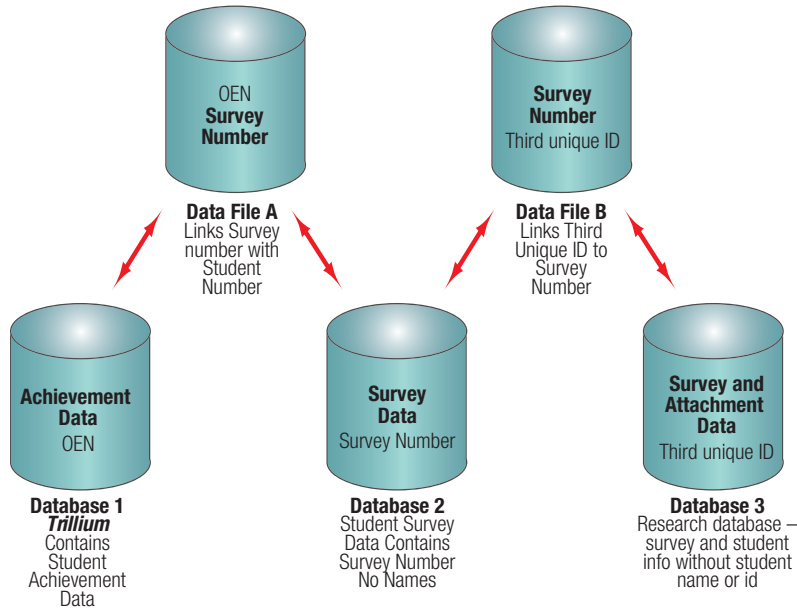
Barrie Hammond
Director of Education/Secretary to the Board

Student Survey Data Analysis

Linking survey data and student achievement data

Many questions have been raised about the linking of student data and survey data. In order to analyze the survey data, the district will need to link different data sets. This includes the creation of a database that contains survey data and student data, including achievement data. The district has worked with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commission to develop a data management structure which seeks to protect and secure sensitive information.

The following diagram provides an overview of the data management:



There are three databases that support the survey analysis. All three databases are separately secured and have restricted access to appropriate staff based on designated permissions.

- Database 1 is our student database, Trillium. It contains student information and achievement data.
- Database 2 is the student survey data. It contains the survey responses and the survey numbers. It does not include any student data or identifiers.
- Database 3 is the research database. It contains the survey data and student achievement data, but strips all identifying student information from the data and uses a third unique identifier.

There are two separate data files that are required to support the databases. Both of these data files have extremely restricted access to a limited number of staff in the district and are not accessible to anyone outside of the district.

- Data file A maps the student number to the survey number. The survey firm does not have access to this or any other data file that links the survey number to student data.
- Data file B includes the information that maps the survey number to the third unique identifier. This ensures that Database 3 can be used for research purposes without any identifying student information in the dataset.

Phase One: District Wide Demographic Report on Student Survey

This item analysis of the survey data will be used to generate a district wide profile of the student population. It will provide a statistical representation of the answers to the survey questions (for example, 32% of students reported participation in extra-curricular activities). This report will not require linking of the survey data with any student data.

Phase Two: Aboriginal Self-Identification Summary Report

The school district is required to undertake an annual voluntary self-identification survey of Aboriginal students and to report the number of Aboriginal students to the Ministry of Education. The second phase of the survey analysis is the generation of this report. To generate this report it will be necessary to link the survey data (surveys where students self-identified as Aboriginal) and student data (Ontario Education Number) for the purposes of reporting to the Ministry.

Phase Three: School Level Demographic Reports on Student Survey

This item analysis of the survey data will be used to generate a school profile of the student population for each one of our elementary and secondary schools. It will provide a statistical representation of the answers to the survey questions by school (for example, 3% of students reported yes to question #3). This report will require linking of the survey data with student data for the purpose of separating the data by school. The survey data will not be linked to student achievement results and will not report on any individual students.

Phase Four: Sub-group student population analysis

In the fourth phase of the survey analysis, research staff will begin to analyze information obtained from the student survey in order to get a better understanding of the learning needs of particular sub-groups of students. The sub-groups identified for further analysis are aligned with our Board Improvement Plan. At this time, the identified sub-groups are English Language Learners, Gender, Special Education Students, and Aboriginal Students. Additional sub-groups may be identified in future. In this phase, survey data will be linked with student achievement data at an aggregate level.

Phase Five: Thematic Research Analysis

The fifth phase of the survey analysis will examine key themes that merit further study. At the present time, three key themes have been identified; School climate/School safety, Student engagement, and Parental Involvement/Engagement. These three initial themes were chosen based on research evidence that links student outcomes to these areas. In this phase, the data linking will include cross-tabulation analyses of survey data with student achievement data.

Phase Six: Research Arising out of the Survey Data

The sixth phase of the survey analysis will consider other factors that impact on student achievement. These factors will be determined based on evidence of trends or factors that arise in the district wide demographic profile. The data linking in this phase will include cross-tabulation analyses of survey data with student achievement data.



OCDSB Student Survey 2010-2011

Questions and Answers

Q: What is the student survey?

A: The survey is a set of questions that will be asked of every student. The survey asks questions about:

- your child (place of birth, age, gender, exceptionalities)
- your child's family (ethnic background, religion, education)
- learning environment (experience at school, sense of belonging)
- safety (at school and in community, experience with bullying)
- learning supports (parental engagement, homework, community programs)

Q: What is the purpose of the student survey?

A: The purpose of the survey is to collect data that will help us better understand our student population. School districts are responsible for promoting student achievement and student well-being. Research tells us that student achievement is influenced by many factors, including ethnic and cultural background, gender, socio-economics, parental education and engagement, and safety and sense of belonging. The survey will help us to understand how these factors affect our students. We will use this information to make decisions about instructional practice, programs, and services that are available to students. For example, if the survey data suggests a higher incidence of bullying within a specific student population (ethnic minority/religion/sexual orientation), we can develop educational strategies that are designed to help address some of the root causes of bullying.

Q: Why is the district doing this survey?

A: The district is undertaking this survey for several reasons:

- we believe that a comprehensive demographic survey will give us a better understanding of our student population and will help us to better meet student needs
- we are required to complete a bi-annual school climate survey; and
- we are required to complete an Aboriginal self-identification survey;

Q: Who will complete the survey?

A: All students will be invited to complete the survey. Parents will complete the survey for students in junior kindergarten to grade 6. Students in grades 7-12 will complete the survey independently at school.

Q: How will the survey be completed?

A: A paper copy of the survey will be sent home with students from junior kindergarten to grade 6. Parents will complete the survey and return it to school in the envelope provided. Parents of JK-6 students can complete the survey online if preferred.

Students in grades 7 to 12 will complete the survey online at school during a scheduled learning period. Parents of grades 7-12 students can request a paper copy of the survey be sent home instead.

Q: When will the survey be done?

A: The survey will be done between April 20th and May 18th. During that period, a paper copy will be sent home to parents of students in junior kindergarten to grade 6. During that same period, students in grades 7-12 will be scheduled to complete the survey confidentially on-line in a supervised school computer lab.

Q: Is the survey confidential?

A: Yes. The survey is confidential. Paper surveys will be returned to school in a sealed envelope marked confidential. The envelope will not be opened at the school. On-line surveys will be submitted electronically with no residual data being left on any machine. Individual survey responses will not be seen at the school. Survey results will only be reported in aggregate numbers and will not be reported where the number of respondents is fewer than 15*. Appropriate security measures are in place to protect the survey data.

Q: Is the survey anonymous?

A: No. The survey is not anonymous. Although the survey does not include a student's name or student number, it does include a unique survey number. This number is required in order for us to analyze the survey data. The survey number does correspond to a student number; however access to this information is extremely restricted and every effort will be made to protect sensitive information. See the information on data management for more detail.

Q: Do I need to provide consent?

A: The survey is voluntary, so parents of students in grades K-6 will provide consent through participation in the survey. For students in grades 7-12, the survey will be completed in class and students may choose not to participate. Parents of students in grades 7-12 who do not want their child to participate in the survey or who prefer their child complete a paper copy at home must complete the form provided and return it to the school by March 31, 2011.

Q: What if I don't want to answer certain questions?

A: Completing the survey is voluntary. You can skip questions if you wish. However, the more accurate and complete the data, the more valuable and useful the survey results will be in helping us to improve student achievement.

Q: Does the survey ask questions about sexual orientation?

A: There is a question about sexual orientation on the survey for students in grades 7-12. Research shows that sexual orientation can affect student achievement and student well-being. The purpose of this question is not to identify individual students, but rather to understand what percentage of the student population self-identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer or questioning (GLBTQ). This would allow us to consider whether there are program supports, resources or partnerships that could help us to better support the learning needs of these students. Studies have shown that students who feel connected to their school do better academically.

Q: Why was the survey delayed?

A: The school district decided to delay the survey in order to work with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC). The IPC conducted an investigation into the survey to assess whether the Board's implementation of the survey was in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Q: What is the outcome of this investigation?

A: The IPC has finished their investigation and concluded that based the student survey is in compliance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The full report (MI10-5) of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario can be found at www.ipc.on.ca (<http://www.ipc.on.ca/english/Home-Page/>) Paul link to this...

Q: Did the IPC make any recommendations for changes to the student survey?

A: The IPC made no recommendations for change to the survey. During the course of the investigation, the school district did make some changes to the survey administration, including:

- More detail in the "Notice of Collection" statement on the survey;
- The creation of a form for parents to notify the school if they do not want their child to complete the survey or if they wish to complete the survey on paper at home;
- Students who do not have consent to complete the survey will not be brought to the computer lab while the other students complete the survey;
- Improvements to the survey data analysis process, including a six phase analysis process and the removal of student identifiers from the research data;
- Expanded instructions on the survey return envelope.



**2011 OCDSB STUDENT SURVEY
Notice of Non-Consent
or
Request for Paper Survey Completion at Home
Grades 7 - 12
(Please return to your child's school by March 31, 2011)**

Name of Student _____ Class _____

Name of Parent/Guardian _____

_____ I want my child to complete the survey at home. Please send a paper copy of the student survey home with my child;

or

_____ I do **NOT** want my child to participate in the completion of the student survey.

Signature of Parents/Guardians

Date

Note: Parents of students in junior kindergarten to grade 6 are not required to complete this form.

Please return to your child's school by March 31, 2011
