

TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
2017 STUDENT & PARENT CENSUS: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the purpose of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB's) *Census*?

The purpose of the *Student and Parent Census* is to collect student data that will help the TDSB and its schools to meet the goal of equity, achievement and well-being for all students regardless of background. For example, the analysis of the data allows us to:

- Identify and eliminate systemic barriers to student achievement and well-being
- Reallocate resources to where they are most needed
- Establish effective programs and interventions to help our most vulnerable students
- Advocate for resources and funding from external partners to support students and schools who require such support

2. How many rounds of the *Census* has the TDSB conducted?

The TDSB has so far conducted two rounds of *Student and Parent Census* with the first Grade 7-12 *Student Census* administered in November 2006 and the first JK-Grade 6 *Parent Census* in April 2008. After considering the value of the first *Census*, the Board decided that the *Student and Parent Census* should be implemented on a five-year cycle with the second *Census* conducted in the 2011-12 school year.

This school year (2016-17), the TDSB will administer its third *Student and Parent Census* in April 2017. For the first time, Grade 4-6 students will also participate in the *Census* along with the Grade 7-12 students.

3. How have *Census* results been used?

This data has offered the Board and local schools hard evidence for:

- Needs assessment – identifying achievement, opportunity and well-being gaps among their students, and determining barriers to close the identified gaps
- Programming and intervention – providing data to determine or develop and implement appropriate programs, supports or initiatives to better meet the needs of students
- Accountability – establishing a baseline of data to measure improvement over time

4. Why is the *Student Census* not conducted online?

Due to the limited technological and internet infrastructure at most TDSB schools, not only does surveying all students online cause significant disruption to many schools, it may also affect the data quality and return rates of the *Census* – both of which determine the usability of the data collected. Currently, a whole school can easily complete the paper version of the *Census* during one class period with minimal interruptions to students and staff.

5. How long will it take to complete the *Census*?

The *Student Census* can be completed within one class period; for most students, it takes between 20 and 25 minutes. The *Parent Census* form can be filled out in about 10 minutes. Of course, extra time may be needed for students or parents who require additional support.

6. Is completing the *Census* mandatory?

No. A student or parent can skip a particular question if he or she does not wish to answer it or choose not to participate in the *Census*. However, the higher the completion rate, the richer and more reliable the information will be for school and Board improvement planning and programming.

7. Is parental consent required before students complete the *Census*?

No. Formal consent from parents or guardians is not required under relevant legislation regarding participation of students in a Board initiated survey intended for planning and programming purposes. However, all parents or guardians will be informed about the purpose of the *Census*, the collection procedures, and access and disclosure safeguards. In the event that a parent or guardian does not wish to have their child complete the *Census*, the parent has an opportunity to fill out a form that will exempt their child (i.e., the tear-off section of the Parent Information letter).

8. Is the *Census* anonymous?

The *Student and Parent Census* is confidential but not anonymous. No student names or student ID numbers will appear on the completed forms. Each form will have a random code which allows the TDSB's Research department to link the data electronically to track responses for research purposes.

9. What security procedures are in place to ensure confidentiality of the data and who will have access to it?

The *Census* forms are not identifiable by student name or student ID number. After the forms are returned to the TDSB's Research department, they will be scanned and processed electronically into a database, which will be stored, maintained and kept confidential. The raw data can be accessed by the Board's Research department only for analysis and research purposes.

These steps comply with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), which requires the TDSB to protect the privacy of an individual student's personal information existing in the TDSB's records. By law the TDSB cannot reveal individualized information for any student/parent who completes the *Census*.

10. Does the collection of personal information (such as racial and ethnic background) violate the Human Rights Code?

No. It is the position of the Ontario Human Rights Commission that the Ontario Human Rights Code permits the collection and analysis of data based on enumerated grounds such as race, disability or gender as long as it is for legitimate purposes and not contrary to the Code. Legitimate purposes under the Code include identifying and removing systemic barriers, preventing disadvantage or promoting substantive equality.