tdsb census 2023

2023 TDSB Student Census: Consultation Summary

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Communities Engaged to Inform the Development of the 2023 TDSB Student Census

The Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) Census team spent over a year conducting 60+ community consultations to inform the development of the 2023 Student Census with students, staff, families, and community members - both within and outside the TDSB. While community needs were large and varied, the extensive consultation process helped narrow the focus, re-shape timelines, plan for implementation, and prepare a draft survey.

In the Spring of 2022, the draft survey was piloted in several classrooms across the TDSB. As part of this pilot, students, staff, and families had opportunities to review and offer feedback about the proposed question items.

Survey Pilot

In June 2022, a group of schools were invited to participate in sharing feedback on the draft Student Census items. Pilot schools either volunteered to be part of the process, or were chosen to ensure representation from different racial, religious, socio-economic, and geographic communities of the TDSB (i.e., the four Learning Centres of the TDSB roughly correlating to east, west, north, and south regions of the city). In total, the draft survey was piloted in approximately twenty classrooms with students and seven classrooms with parents/caregivers.

The consultation approach began in the Spring of 2021 and wrapped up in the summer of 2022. Table 1 provides a summary of the communities engaged in the consultation.

Final Survey Questions

The final survey questions for the 2023 Student Census for different panels in the TDSB are as follows:

- Kindergarten to Grade 3 Version
- Grade 4 to 6 Version
- Grade 7 to 8 Version
- Grade 9 to 12 Version
- DD Adapted Parent Version
- MID Adapted Grade 4 to 8 Student and Parent Version
- MID Adapted Grade 9 to 12 Student Version

- MID Adapted Grade 9 to 12 Parent Version

These surveys were also made available in about 25 different languages.

Table 1: Communities Engaged to Inform the Development of the Census	
Students	• Student Trustees • Interactive focus group with Black students in partnership with the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement/led by Black staff • Interactive focus group with 2SLGBTQIA+ students in partnership with the TDSB Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) Network/led by queer racialized staff • Participatory action research work with Indigenous students at Kapapamahchakwew – Wandering Spirit School and a summer research internship in partnership with the Urban Indigenous Education Centre • Student representative from the Indigenous Research Working Group • Session with Muslim students led by Muslim staff • Students from 20+ classrooms in the TDSB / classrooms were chosen to ensure representation from different demographic groups within the TDSB (e.g., students from different ethno-racial groups such as Black, East Asian, Jewish, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Southeast Asian backgrounds as well as students from different socioeconomic backgrounds)
Staff	• Consultations with over 50+ staff from several departments • Principal, Vice-Principal, and Educator Survey that engaged close to 500 staff • Staff representatives from TDSB Community Advisory Committees (CACs) • Teacher representatives from Teacher Leadership Collective • Staff representatives from the Indigenous Research Working Group
Parents / Caregivers / Community Members	• Focus group with Black parents in partnership with the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement/led by Black staff • Parent and community representatives from the TDSB's Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC), Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), and ten Community Advisory Committees • TDSB Model School Parent Ambassadors • Parent and community representatives from the Indigenous Research Working Group
Community Experts	• Almost 40 community experts from academic institutions and/or community organizations. Community experts came from different ethno-racial and identity groups (e.g., Black, Muslim, Indigenous, Jewish, Latinx, South Asian, East Asian, Disability Justice advocates, LGBTQ2SIA+ groups, etc.)

Identity-Based Questions

The TDSB Student Census was expected to initially launch in Fall 2022, however, further review necessitated the launch to be pushed to April 2023. During this time, requirements of the Anti-Racism Act became mandatory for school boards to follow as of January 1, 2023, which necessitated further review of identity questions related to Indigenous identity, ethnicity, race, and religion. At the same time, new data collection guidelines from the Ministry of Education regarding parental consent and alignment with the Physical Health and Education curriculum led to a review of the questions related to gender identity and sexual orientation. As a result of this review, the consent process for students in Grades 4 to 8 was modified from previous years, where parents now had to provide consent for their child to participate in the Census at school, complete the Census at home, or opt-out completely.

Student identity questions are an important part of the Census. In drafting these questions, the TDSB Census team was guided by the TDSB's Equity Policy, in particular the commitment to identity-based questions that are inclusive of all demographic groups and respond to the complexity of students' identities. The Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism from the Anti-Racism Directorate (ARD) also provided school boards with direction, but for some questions encouraged Boards to consult with local communities to identify if any of the option items or examples needed to be modified to best meet community needs.

As such, Board policy, guidance from legislation, literature reviews, other Ontario school board experiences, and consultation feedback from TDSB communities all directed revisions to previous student demographic questions. Changes and the respective rationale for each question are outlined below.

Updates to the TDSB Student Census Identity Questions

Indigenous Identity

This question aligned with Standard 13 outlined in the Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism from the ARD.

The question was similar to what was proposed by the ARD and Ministry guidelines and was in line with suggested recommendations from these documents. Modifications made were based on advice from an Indigenous Research Working Group that was established to support the Census.

Consultation feedback suggested that Two-Spirit/Indigiqueer should only be available to students identifying as Indigenous, and that Two-Spirit is broader than

the concepts of gender and sexual identity alone. In response to this feedback, only those students identifying as Indigenous through the Indigenous Identity question, were presented with the question asking if they identify as Two-Spirit.

In addition, for both the gender identity and sexual identity questions, display logic was used to present the term as an option for Indigenous students only. It was also suggested the term be revised to “Two-spirit or Indigiqueer” consistent with the Urban Indigenous Education Centre’s practice.

Ethnic and Cultural Origin

This question aligned with Standard 17 outlined in the Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism from the ARD. As recommended by the ARD, “Canadian” was listed as a potential ethnicity option in the dropdown list.

The ethnicity question in years past was an open-ended question but in 2023 as the survey was online, it was a dropdown list for Grades 7-12 and parents/caregivers with children in Junior Kindergarten-Grade 3 (students in Grades 4-6 continued to see an open-ended question).

As suggested by the ARD, the drop-down list of values was based on the Canadian Census 2016. The dropdown list also included options that were chosen by 100 or more students in the 2017 TDSB Student Census, as well as options communities suggested for inclusion (i.e., Abya Yala [Indigenous name for Latin America], Adivasi [South Asian Indigenous Community], Jewish Ashkenazi, Jewish Mizrahi, Palestinian, Roma, etc.).

Race

This question aligned with Standards 14 and 15 outlined in the Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism from the ARD. School boards must collect personal information about race using the race categories and examples outlined in the standards. Categories must be presented in alphabetical order.

In consultations to inform the 2023 TDSB Student Census, communities appreciated some aspects of the ARD question while also sharing feedback about potential changes. However, given the change in Census timelines, and new legislation that came into effect on January 1, 2023, the race question as outlined by the ARD was used. Since the new legislation also mandated this type of data collection across public school boards in Ontario, the ARD question was meant to provide consistent data across the province. As such, community feedback about the question will be shared with ARD for future iterations of the survey (see “Additional feedback related to ethno-racial identity”).

Religion

This question was aligned with Standard 16 outlined in the Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism from the ARD. Based on consultation, not all students understood the terms Agnosticism (Agnostic), Atheism (Atheist). These responses were included in the 2017 TDSB Student Census but were not included as response options for 2023. Standard 16 does not require the two response options.

School boards may include examples for the values to be responsive and inclusive and help individuals select the appropriate response. As such, response options that represent 'no religion' were adjusted to reflect language that was more accessible to students.

Gender Identity

The gender identity question asked on the Grades 7-8 and 9-12 2023 TDSB Student Census was consistent with Ministry of Education data collection guidelines regarding how to ask this question and the options to provide for students.

The gender identity question asked on the Grades 4-6 and Junior Kindergarten-Grade 3 2023 TDSB Student Census was a simpler version of the question with fewer options (girl, boy, non-binary, trans, two-spirit). The question was consistent with previous TDSB Census practice.

In Census 2023, students had an opportunity to describe their gender identity in their own words first in an open-ended question, and then by choosing the category(ies) that best represent them. Consultation participants, most importantly students, appreciated this addition to the Census.

Consultation participants suggested that the question should ask about *current* gender identity in recognition that gender identity is fluid and can change over time.

In the previous Census, the categories of "female" and "male" were listed as gender identity options for this question. These were revised to "girl or woman" and "boy or man" reflecting consultation feedback and literature indicating that male and female are terms more appropriately used to describe one's sex assigned at birth. This change was also consistent with guidance from the Ministry of Education.

Census 2023 included a new category option of "Questioning or not sure of my gender identity" based on consultation feedback and guidance from the literature suggesting this option is important for youth for whom gender identity may be fluid.

Sexuality

Sexuality was asked on the Grades 7-8 and 9-12 2023 TDSB Student Census. During consultation, there were comments from families and students about when and how to ask students about their sexual orientation. It was ultimately decided to ask students in Grades 7-12 if they identify as a member of the LGBTQ2SIA+ community rather than asking students to choose from a list of sexual orientation terms which consultation feedback suggested may be unfamiliar to students due to their age, or because the terms may not be culturally relevant. For example, we heard that gay or trans Caribbean youth may not relate to these colonial terms.

If students would like to provide further detail, this question was followed up with an option to elaborate either by choosing from a list of options or entering this information in their own words.

This list was consistent with data collection guidelines from the Ministry of Education regarding alignment with the Physical Health and Education curriculum. Students in focus groups preferred this question instead of being directly asked their sexual orientation. The grade range for this question remained the same as in 2017 and included students in Grades 7-12.

Instead of focussing on only sexual orientation, the question allowed for students who are intersex to indicate so. During consultation, staff indicated that intersex students, although a small population, are in need of support.

While the TDSB uses the acronym “2SLGBTQIA+” in all policy documents, students in the 2023 TDSB Student Census pilot found it more accessible to connect with the “LGBTQ2SIA+” acronym. For ease of student understanding, the latter acronym was used throughout the survey.

Disability

The TDSB uses Person First Language (i.e., “Person with a disability”) which attempts to put a person before their diagnosis. However, others in the Disability community have noted the importance and move towards Identity First Language that reclaims and reinforces disability as a positive cultural identifier (i.e., “Disabled Person”). To be responsive to the different dialogue we heard from individuals in the disability community, the 2023 Census question used both types of language.

On the past Student Censuses, disability was an open-ended question. As the 2023 version was online, response options were produced for students. The response options were based on the Ontario Human Rights definition of disability, Ministry of Education guidelines, consultation with stakeholder groups, and academic subject matter experts.

Parent/Caregiver Demographics

Parent/caregiver demographics that were included are parent place of birth, parent education, and country of education. It is recognized there are families from all over the world that now attend the TDSB. In the country of birth question, we have included countries that historically have 100 or more respondent answers on previous Censuses. In addition, there is a space for parents/caregivers to write in their country of birth. Country of education is an addition to previous years' Census. It was added based on consultation from families and attempts to expose potential intergenerational trauma caused by discrimination of parent/caregiver skills and education.

Removed Identity-Based Questions

Parent/Caregiver Demographics

After examining the data available in the Student Information System and external data that the Research and Development department accesses, the following demographic questions were removed: student country of birth, student first language, Canadian identity, parent/caregiver first language, and parent/caregiver occupation/household income.

New Identity-Based Questions

Black and Indigenous Identity

Communities highlighted it was jarring to see "Black" be represented as a monolithic racial group, while there were multiple options for Asian diasporic communities like South Asian, East Asian, and Southeast Asian. In consultation with Black community members and the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement, a new question was added allowing self-identifying Black students and families to choose other options such as African, Afro-Caribbean, and Black. This question was only displayed to students who self-identified as Black on the race question.

Similarly, a new question was added for individuals who self-identified as "Indigenous", offering students and families an opportunity to select from more detailed options such as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or Indigenous communities outside of what is now known as Canada (like Native Mexican, Native Alaskan, Native American, Aboriginal Person of Australia, Adivasi, Pacific Islander, Indigenous Person of Abya Yala (Latin America), etc.). This question was only displayed to students who self-identified as Indigenous on the race question.

Additional Feedback Related to Ethno-Racial Identity

The Anti-Racism Act became mandatory for school boards to follow as of January 1, 2023. As such, the 2023 TDSB Student Census question regarding race was based on the ARD guideline and the feedback below could not be included. This feedback will be shared with the ARD to inform considerations for review of the Data Standards.

Consultations with members from the Latinx community recommended the term, “Latin American or Latine/Latinx/Latina/Latino” and removal of the example “Hispanic” in brackets. Communities said “Hispanic” is a colonial recognition and label to the space that was taken over by Spanish settlers in Latin America. Communities claimed the term was hurtful and while some members of the community did identify with it, they advised it should not be specified on the survey.

They also highlighted Latinx/a/o is not a racial community, but a pan-ethnic term internationally and socially so there is a need to consider its placement in race and ethnicity sections. Communities spoke about a need to consider nuances such as school administration overlooking the students who do not ‘look’ Latinx, particularly Black Latinx students, Asian Latinx, Japanese Latinx, and Indigenous Latinx. Latinx students come from all racial identities - communities suggested the race question is conflating ethnicity with race for Latinx students. Nevertheless, for the purposes of better identifying and supporting the needs of Latinx students, the community stressed the importance of including it as an option in the race question.

Communities shared that the term “Middle Eastern” is a colonial term. However, since there are students and families who do still relate to the term Middle Eastern, they recommended the label “Middle Eastern, North African, or Southwest Asian”. Communities requested the addition of “Palestinian” as an example in this category. Communities also requested the addition of “Israeli” as an option, however, communities also said Israeli communities can identify as either Middle Eastern or White.

Communities recommended “Indo-Caribbean” should be separated out into its own category as the community wouldn’t necessarily identify as South Asian.

Communities spoke of mixed race or multiracial as a distinct identity some students associate themselves with.

New Additions to the TDSB Student Census

Questions that Speak to Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenous Sovereignty in Education

A few new questions speak to the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as recommendations made by the "Decolonizing Our Schools" report. For example, questions were added about whether students are learning about traditional territories of Indigenous communities or Treaty Lands their school is built on, Indigenous ways of knowing and being on the Land, First Nations reserves closest to their school, and opportunities to learn from Indigenous knowledge keepers (e.g., Elders, artists, writers, etc.).

Questions that Respond to Key Priorities in the Multi-Year Strategic Plan

Questions attempted to capture the key tenets of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (e.g., high expectations, honouring students' cultural capital, respecting identity, valuing students, etc.). Some new questions directly came from student suggestions (e.g., questions about reception to student activism, fatphobia, cisgenderism, feelings of exclusion, etc.).

Communities spoke to a need to explicitly capture experiences of student belonging through questions such as whether students' names are pronounced correctly, assumptions about students' English proficiency, students being asked to speak on behalf of their entire identity group, reception to students expressing their religious/cultural identity etc.

Questions that Respond to Concerns of 2SLGBTQIA+ Students and Gender-Inclusive School Spaces

Building on questions surrounding issues of equity, questions that respond to concerns of 2SLGBTQIA+ students and gender inclusive school spaces were added (i.e., whether students' preferred name and pronouns are respected in schools, access to extracurricular clubs like a Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA), comfort expressing gender identity, etc.). These questions were created based on 2SLGBTQ+CAC input and student feedback from a focus group with almost 40 2SLGBTQIA+ students in partnership with the TDSB GSA Network. Students were asked what types of issues they experience in schools, and what kinds of questions they feel should be addressed on the Census (i.e., students spoke about concerns such as lack of 2SLGBTQIA+ history, health classes, etc.).

Outdoor Learning

Members of the Environmental Sustainability Community Advisory Committee (ESCAC) and the Outdoor Learning department asked for questions related to students' participation in outdoor learning both at school and home. While questions about experiences in the outdoors outside of school were considered out of scope, a question about outdoor learning time at school was added due to its connection to student mental health and well-being.

The importance of getting children out on the Land was also raised by Indigenous community members and in consultation with the Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee (UICAC). It is recognized that Indigenous Land-Based learning is not the same as western notions of place-based or outdoor education. Indigenous Land-based education is addressed in an additional Census question.

Housing Security

Responding to feedback from various internal departments, a question exploring housing insecurity was added asking students where they sleep most nights (Grades 7 to 12). This item also incorporates responses for children in care and homestay students to indicate where they are living.

Previous 2017 TDSB Student Census Topics Revised or Reframed for 2023

Transitions and Learning Pathways

Previously, questions around pathways and transitions focused on intermediate grades (i.e., transition from elementary to secondary or secondary to post-secondary). Staff in the TDSB spoke about a need to think about transitions in the early years as well. With the move to a Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3 survey completed by parents on behalf of students, the 2023 TDSB Student Census includes new items related to early childcare, transitioning to Kindergarten, and transitioning to Grade 1.

Related to secondary students, the previous TDSB Student Census (2017) included questions about future aspirations only. Based on consultation, more detailed questions related to students' learning opportunities and pathways were added. This focuses on having the best fit learning opportunities for students, whether students have been discouraged from a particular learning pathway, and the necessary supports to consider as they move through secondary school and consider post-secondary choices.

Further related to learning pathways and moving through secondary school, students shared the importance of mentorships. Specific items related to access to a mentor and mentor support were added.

Participation in Activities Inside and Outside of School

The last Census asked questions about student participation rates in various activities inside and outside of school (e.g., arts, clubs, sports, student council, leadership) as well as how welcome students feel to take part in school activities. The questions related to participation in activities outside of school did not emerge as an important focus in the consultation sessions and were not identified as very relevant to school improvement planning by most staff. However, given the current context around student safety, the question was reframed to ask students if they have after school activities and/or spaces they can go to - either at school, or in the community.

Based on consultation feedback, questions about school activities were reframed to ask if students have opportunities to give input to school activities, join clubs related to their identities, and whether they feel unsafe or afraid in these spaces, among others.

Barriers to Participation in Learning

Expanding on the idea of classroom participation, questions related to reasons why students might not be fully participating in classroom learning or reasons why it might be hard for students to participate were added. Consultation and pilot feedback suggested items should attempt to explore ‘the reasons why’ student engagement in learning might be impacted.

Students’ Worries

The last Census asked students several questions about things they were worried about including current events, school marks, and their health and well-being, among others. These were grouped with mental health and well-being questions when educators were asked how important the questions were for school planning and were rated as very important to school planning by most staff. However, the focus on students’ worries did not emerge in consultations.

Instead, consultation participants emphasized the importance of students knowing when they need help with their mental health and where to get help. New questions were added to address this input and the questions about what students were worrying about were removed and reframed to focus on what causes students to be worried at school.

Student Belonging and Student Voice

Items related to student belonging, acceptance, respect, and student voice have always been items on the Census. However, based on consultation, the scope of belonging and student voice questions widened to include questions related to identity, feelings of exclusion, and inclusion of students' ideas in improvement planning.

Bullying

The last Census included questions about personal experiences of bullying and sexual harassment, and students' comfort reporting bullying. Bullying emerged as an important topic in the consultation sessions, with ideas for new questions about identity-based bullying, bullying perpetrated by both students and staff, and how effectively schools respond to incidents of bullying, discrimination, and sexual harassment. This area was also identified as very relevant for planning at the school level by most staff.

School Safety

The last Census included questions about feelings of safety in the classroom, other parts of the school (e.g., washrooms), outside on school property, on the way to and from school, in the area around the school, as well as in students' neighbourhoods. School safety emerged as very relevant to school improvement planning by most staff. Safety also emerged as an important topic in the consultation sessions, with suggestions for inclusion of questions addressing specific school spaces where students don't feel safe. It was also suggested that safety be considered in a broad sense to encompass not only physical safety but also emotional and psychological safety, and that questions address staff's role in creating and maintaining school environments where students feel safe, included, and accepted.

In response, the number of safety questions was increased to include new questions about school spaces where students don't feel safe, whether students feel unsafe or afraid at school because of aspects of their identity, whether it is students and/or staff contributing to students not feeling safe, and how staff respond to incidents which undermine feelings of safety.

Safety in the Community

With respect to safety in the community, exposure to community violence was a topic that Toronto Public Health requested be included in future School Climate and/or Student Census surveys. As such, their proposed questions were shared with participants during consultations (e.g., do students stay away from community spaces because of violence; personal experience of community violence; witnessing

violence; losing someone to violence; knowing someone who was the victim of a violent crime).

There were concerns expressed about the psychological, social, and emotional effects of asking these questions. Consultation participants worried the questions would be triggering and resurface trauma for students and families with lived experiences of violence. There were also concerns that the questions could lead to potential surveillance and/or cause fear for students and families who might worry if there would be follow up by police or child welfare organizations as a result of their answers to the questions. It was also felt the questions could lead to stigma and deficit portrayals of communities, particularly for racialized communities. Participants were concerned that the sharing of this data could lead to potentially harmful actions for communities, like more policing of some communities as an example.

As a result of the feedback, these questions were not included in the student consultation sessions or in the student pilot process.

However, as noted above, a series of questions do speak to issues of student safety in the school community (e.g., how safe students feel on their way to and from school, in various school spaces, outside on school grounds, in the neighbourhood around the school, etc.).

Previous 2017 TDSB Student Census Topics Removed in 2023

Physical Health

The last Census asked several questions about physical health (including physical activity, sedentary behaviour/screen time, healthy and unhealthy eating, hours of sleep, healthcare visits, etc). A few of these questions were retained due to their connection to student well-being (having breakfast, getting a good night's sleep, participating in physical activity).

The rest were removed as this topic did not emerge as a focus in the consultations, and if it was mentioned, there were concerns about lack of cultural relevancy (i.e., what healthy diets mean across different cultures) and/or deficit narratives stemming from the results particularly those findings related to mealtimes and healthy/unhealthy eating.

In addition, this topic is extensively addressed in the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) which was administered in the Winter of 2023 and provided the TDSB with information at the Toronto region level which can be used for Board level planning.

Parent/Caregiver Involvement and Engagement

The last Census asked questions about the extent to which students talk with their parents about activities in school, schoolwork, relationships, and problems. In addition, there were questions about to what extent parents attend parent/teacher interviews, meetings and events at school, volunteer at school, and communicate with teachers.

There were concerns about the lack of cultural relevancy of these items given different experiences of parent engagement and/or deficit narratives being generated with results. Although parent engagement emerged as an important focus in the consultations with ideas for new questions and was noted as very relevant for school planning by most staff; only parents of students in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3 completed the Census.

For this reason, a decision was made to remove this topic from the Census and consider the development of a Board-wide parent/caregiver engagement survey that all parents in Junior Kindergarten through Grade 12 would have the opportunity to complete.

Homework

The last Census asked questions about time spent on homework, how often help is needed with homework, and who usually helps with homework along with activities that interfere with doing homework.

This was not an area deemed very important to school level planning by most staff. In addition, consultation participants questioned the framing of these questions noting that homework help assumes students have someone to help at home and homework can be harmful for students who don't and can lead to furthering existing inequities. Staff also noted that assigning extensive homework is not encouraged and worried that the questions seemed to be implying that homework should be assigned.

The TDSB Census team removed the questions and added a new question asking if "too much homework" was a cause of stress for students.

Social Media Use

The last Census asked questions about hours spent on social media, how often social media use interferes with homework, feelings of safety when using social media, and experiences of bullying on social media. These topics were raised as important issues in the consultation.

However, as questions related to homework were removed from the Census this only left two questions related to social media use which did not capture the

problematic aspects of social media use, so the TDSB Census team removed these questions from the Census.

In addition, this topic is extensively addressed in the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) which was administered in the Winter of 2023 and provided the TDSB with information at the Toronto region level which can be used for Board level planning.

Students' Self-Perceptions of their Skills

The last Census had extensive questions where students could rate their skills in several different areas (e.g., reading, writing, math, leadership, teamwork, empathy, time management, etc).

Though most staff identified these questions as very relevant to school planning, students' self-perceptions in these areas did not emerge as important areas to focus on in the consultation sessions. The TDSB Census team also questioned if responses to these questions could lead to school or system policy change.

Due to the high number of these questions (20), the TDSB Census team made the decision to remove these questions from Census. If a school-based need emerges for this information, other avenues of local data collection can be explored.

Topic Suggestions not included in the 2023 TDSB Student Census

Climate Change

Environmental Sustainability Community Advisory Committee (ESCAC) members suggested questions related to climate change be added to the 2023 TDSB Student Census, such as what students and parents think the board should be doing about climate change, and whether the school is helping students to respond to climate change. There was also interest in questions about students' eco-anxiety.

Eco-anxiety is addressed along with extensive questions around mental health in the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) which was administered in the Winter of 2023 and provided the TDSB with information at the Toronto region level which can be used for Board level planning.

In addition, to be able to speak to issues such as climate change in a decolonial, non-Eurocentric manner, it is important to centre Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Land-Based Knowledges. A more thorough research study in partnership with the TDSB's Urban Indigenous Education Centre would be necessary to explore this.

Substance Use and Abuse (e.g., vaping, cannabis use)

This topic was raised in a few consultation sessions as an important area to include due to the impact on student safety, health, and well-being. The TDSB Census team did not include this topic as it is extensively addressed in the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) (including alcohol, vaping, tobacco, cannabis, and other drugs) which was administered in the Winter of 2023 and provided the TDSB with information at the Toronto region level which can be used for Board level planning.

Refugee Identity

Similar to how immigrant identity is a demographic variable, communities spoke about a need to have a question that can capture refugee identity in a way that is not already captured in the Student Information System. This question was not meant to ask about refugee status, but rather whether students ever had to experience escaping their home country due to war, natural disaster, etc.

This question was piloted with students, however, students reported feeling unsafe answering it. Given the Census is not anonymous, there were fears about the question potentially being harmful for undocumented students. Given the Board's commitment to being part of a sanctuary city that does not ask citizenship status as a means to access education, this question was not included in the final survey.

Experiences of Students in Section 23 Programs

In the early consultations with internal departments to understand system information needs, staff asked if the school experiences of students in Section 23 programs could be captured through the Census.

After consultation with the Education and Community Partnership Program who oversee these programs, it was determined that students in Section 23 programs would not participate in the Census.

During their time in a Section 23 classroom, students are clients of the agency providing their care (e.g., hospitals, agencies providing programs for pregnant and parenting teens), treatment (e.g., child/youth mental health centres) or corrections (e.g., open detention/custody). Having these students participate in a survey would require special permission, as their participation in these programs is private and confidential.

Teacher Evaluation

Topics related to students' perceptions on teachers' ability (e.g., how is your education going, does your teacher know their subject matter, etc.) were discussed in consultations. These questions were not included because the Census is not a teacher evaluation tool.

Clothing Insecurity

Clothing insecurity as a socioeconomic indicator was discussed in consultations. However, during the pilot, students were unsure of the question and felt uncomfortable answering.

Pandemic Related Experiences and Remote Learning

During consultations, families spoke about the need to understand the impact of remote learning these past years. The TDSB has administered multiple surveys with staff, students, and families throughout the past two years. It was felt that there is extensive information already being utilised by staff and schools related to remote learning and the pandemic learning experience. Some of the questions from these surveys are replicated on the Census and can be used for tracking purposes.