STUDENT CENSUS REPORT:

Demographic Overview of the Student Population

September 2023

INTRODUCTION

The Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB, the Board) is committed to ensuring the success of all students. The GECDSB conducted its first Student Census in April and May 2023 to understand the unique experiences of the student population with the goal of reducing inequities among students and better serving their varied needs.

The Board partnered with Turner Consulting Group to develop and administer the Student Census and to analyze the findings.

This first report summarizes the data on the diversity of the student population. It will be followed by additional reports that analyze the academic achievement and school experiences of students from specific demographic groups.

Why conduct the Student Census

The Student Census is mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education and is guided by the Anti-Racism Data Standards. Ontario school boards are authorized to collect personal information from students by the *Anti-Racism Act* (ARA s.6[2]), *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA s. 28[2]), and the *Education Act* (265[1][d], 169.1[1]).

The Student Census also supports the Board's implementation of its Equity Action Plan, which includes the Staff Census and Employment Systems Review.

The results of the Student Census will help the GECDSB understand the diversity of its student population and identify any disparities and disproportionalities in academic achievement and student experiences. These findings will help the Board focus its efforts to ensure that all students are able to benefit equitably from public education.

How the survey questions were developed

Broad community consultation was undertaken with community groups and organizations to finalize the questions asked on the Census. These consultations enabled students, parents, and staff from Indigenous, Black, Mennonite, 2SLGBTQ+, newcomer, and other diverse communities to provide input into the survey questions and answer options.

The Student Census is voluntary

Participation in the Student Census was completely voluntary. Every student and parent/guardian was able to choose whether to participate in the census. Those who chose to participate in

the census also had the option of skipping questions or exiting the survey at any time.

Students and parents/guardians were informed that choosing not to participate in the census would have no negative impact on them. No program, service, or benefit would be withheld because a student or parent/guardian did not participate in the Student Census.

Census results are confidential, but not anonymous

The Student Census was not anonymous because students in Grades 9–12 or parents/guardians of students in Grades JK–8 were required to enter their or their child's student number to login and begin the census.

The use of the student number ensured that students are able to complete the survey only once. It also allows the Board to match responses to the survey questions with information on the student's academic achievement and other student data in order to analyze outcomes for various groups of students.

No personal information for any individual student will be accessible by any Board staff or be publicly released. Instead, the information will be grouped together to conduct an analysis of overall student success and well-being. This approach ensures that the information provided by students and parents/guardians remains confidential.

How the Student Census was administered

All parents/guardians of students in Grades JK–8 and STEPS were able to complete the survey at home with their children. They had the option of choosing not to answer any question.

Teachers were asked to provide students in Grades 9–12 with class time to complete the survey. Parents/guardians of secondary students under 18 years of age were given the opportunity to opt their children out of the survey. Secondary students were still free to choose not to participate in the Student Census. If they chose to participate, they were still free to decide which individual questions to answer.

How the data will be used

The demographic data from the Student Census will be combined with other information about students, such as program of study, special education identification, and suspensions. The data will be analyzed to better understand student success and well-being. This will allow the Board to develop effective programs and allocate resources where they are needed the most.

How data security will be maintained

Access and maintenance of this data will comply with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA).

The Student Census survey was hosted by Qualtrics. Qualtrics uses Transport Layer Security (TLS) encryption for all transmitted data. Qualtrics uses trusted data centres that are independently audited using the industry standard SSAE-18 method.

Responses to the Student Census will be kept in a confidential database that will be password protected.

Only the consultant and the Superintendent of Human Resources will have access to the confidential Student Census database.

THIS REPORT

This report includes quantitative summaries (number and percentage of respondents) for each demographic survey question. The data shared in this report summarizes the combined results from both the parent/guardian survey and the student survey and includes data on over 10,000 GECDSB students from junior kindergarten to Grade 12.

Because students and parents/guardians were able to exit the survey at any time, the number of people who answered each question is different. Each table includes the total number who responded to the question as well as their responses to the question. Percentages are calculated based on the total number of responses to each question.

For some questions, parents/guardians and students could select more than one answer option. In these cases, the sum of the percentages may total more than 100%.

This report is the first step in the analysis of the Student Census results and gives the GECDSB an overview of the diversity of the student population. The next step is combining this data with information about academic achievement in order to conduct an analysis that will identify any disparities and disproportionalities various groups may experience. This work will be conducted in collaboration with members of the GECDSB's diverse school communities over the coming year.

RESPONSE RATE

Table 1. **Response Rate.**

Grade	Total # of Students	# of Student Census Respondents	Response Rate %
Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8	25,264	4,660	18%
Grades 9–12	10,779	6,199	58%
Total JK to Grade 12	**36,043**	**10,859**	**30%**

In total, demographic information was collected on 10,859 of the 36,043 students, representing an overall response rate of 30%

STATUS IN CANADA

The survey asked whether the student was born in Canada.

Table 2. Born in Canada.

	#	%
Yes	7,864	79%
No	1,983	20%
Not sure	39	0.4%
I prefer not to answer	118	1%
TOTAL RESPONSES	**10,004**	**100%**

The majority of GECDSB students were born in Canada (79%), with 20% born outside of Canada.

79% of GECDSB students were born in Canada
88% are Canadian citizens

The survey also asked about the student's current status in Canada.

Table 3. Status in Canada.

	#	%
Canadian citizen	9,032	88%
International student / visa student	214	2%
Landed immigrant / permanent resident	557	5%
Refugee claimant / asylum seeker	84	1%
Not sure	164	2%
I don't understand this question	49	0.5%
I prefer not to answer	181	2%
TOTAL RESPONSES	**10,281**	**100%**

The majority of students are Canadian citizens (88%). With 5% of students being landed immigrants or permanent residents, 2% being international students or visa students, and 1% of students indicating they are refugee claimants or asylum seekers.

CANADIAN IDENTITY

The survey asked whether the student considers themselves to be Canadian. Students do not have to be born in Canada to think of themselves as Canadian.

Table 4. Canadian Identity.

	#	%
Yes	9,280	87%
No	536	5%
Not sure	586	6%
I prefer not to answer	250	2%
TOTAL RESPONSES	**10,652**	**100%**

87% of GECDSB students consider themselves to be Canadian.

The vast majority of students (87%) indicated that they consider themselves to be Canadian. Only 5% indicated that they don't consider themselves to be Canadian, and 6% were not sure.

ETHNIC ORIGIN/TRIBAL AFFILIATIONS

The survey asked about students' ethnic groups and/or tribal affiliations. Of the 9,968 respondents to this question, 40% replied that Canadian was part of their ethnicity or in addition to their tribal affiliation.

The next 10 ethnic origins identified most often were English (14%), Irish (8%), French (7%), Scottish (7%), Italian (6%), German (6%), Lebanese (4%), French Canadian (4%), Chinese (4%), and Syrian (4%).

At least 3% of students identified with each of the following four ethnicities: American, Pakistani, Hindu, and Punjabi.

At least 2% identified with eight additional ethnicities. In addition, 37% of students indicated that 168 other ethnic origins were part of their ethnic identity.

In addition, students identified with 14 Indigenous identities or tribal affiliations: Algonquin, Anishinaabe, Blackfoot, Cree, Dene, Haudenosaunee, Huron/Wendat, Inuit, Mi'kmaq, Mohawk, Odawa, and Potawatomi.

Students identified with 191 ethnicities or tribal affiliations other than, or in addition to, Canadian.

Table 5. Ethnic Origin or Tribal Affiliation.

	#	%
Canadian	3,985	40%
English	1,353	14%
Irish	836	8%
French	743	7%
Scottish	697	7%
Italian	596	6%
German	563	6%
Lebanese	417	4%
French Canadian	415	4%
Chinese	411	4%
Syrian	396	4%
American	332	3%
Pakistani	315	3%
Hindu	298	3%
Punjabi	285	3%
Black/African Canadian	238	2%
Iraqi	238	2%
Polish	234	2%
Ukrainian	222	2%
Palestinian	220	2%
Dutch	207	2%
Serbian	172	2%
Portuguese	158	2%
Other	3,730	37%
Not sure	329	3%
I prefer not to answer	363	4%
TOTAL RESPONSES	**9,968**	**100%**

*Percentages total more than 100% owing to multiple responses.

Note: Only ethnicities with percentages >1% are shown.

FIRST LANGUAGES SPOKEN

The survey asked about the languages the student first learned to speak as a child. They were able to identify more than one language.

The vast majority (77%) indicated that English was one of the first languages they learned to speak as a child.

In addition, 1% or more of GECDSB students indicated that the following 16 languages were one of their first languages:

- American Sign Language
- Arabic
- Bengali
- Cantonese
- French
- German
- Gujarati
- Hindi
- Mandarin
- Nepali
- Punjabi
- Serbian
- Spanish
- Turkish
- Urdu
- Vietnamese

GECDSB students learned to speak 106 languages as a child other than, or in addition to, English and French.

Table 6. First Languages Spoken.

	#	%
English	8,345	77%
Arabic	1,148	11%
French	376	3%
Punjabi	335	3%
Urdu	288	3%
Mandarin	253	2%
Spanish	197	2%
Hindi	116	1%
Serbian	89	1%
American Sign Language	81	1%
Nepali	74	1%
Turkish	71	1%
German	70	1%
Cantonese	68	1%
Vietnamese	68	1%
Gujarati	62	1%
Bengali	57	1%
Other	1,008	9%
Not sure	21	0.2%
I prefer not to answer	144	1%
TOTAL RESPONSES	**10,859**	**100%**

*Percentages total more than 100% owing to multiple responses.

RELIGION/FAITH

The census asked about the religion, creed, spiritual affiliation, or belief of the student.

The largest proportion of students (32%) reported that they have no religion or faith or that they identify as agnostic, atheist, or spiritual but not religious.

The next largest group (2,938, or 28%) identified as Christian.

The remaining students (2,834, or 27%) identified as non-Christian, including Muslim (18%), Sikh (3%), and Hindu (3%).

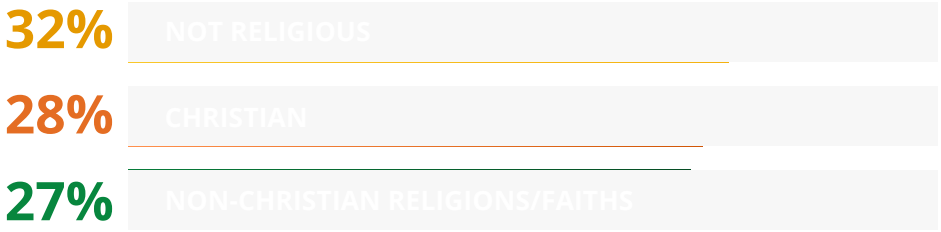

Table 7. Religion/Faith.

	#	%
Not religious	**3,386**	**32%**
Agnostic	407	4%
Atheist	776	7%
Spiritual but not religious	652	6%
No religious or spiritual affiliation	1,983	19%
Christian	**2,938**	**28%**
Non-Christian religions/faiths	**2,834**	**27%**
Buddhist	140	1%
Hindu	322	3%
Indigenous spirituality	47	0.4%
Jewish	68	1%
Muslim	1,938	18%
Sikh	315	3%
Other	16	0.2%
Not sure	**658**	**6%**
I do not understand this question	**109**	**1%**
I prefer not to answer	**701**	**7%**
TOTAL RESPONSES	**10,563**	**100%**

*Percentages total more than 100% owing to multiple responses.

INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

Indigenous identity was reported by 4% (418) of all students. Of these students, 179 identified as First Nations (Status or Non-Status), 123 as Métis, and 18 as Inuit.

Indigenous students identified with 14 Indigenous identities or tribal affiliations:

Métis	100
Ojibwe	60
Cree	19
Inuit	16
Haudenosaunee	13
Mi'kmaq	8
Odawa	7

Potawatomi	4
Huron/Wendat	3
Algonquin	2
Blackfoot	2
Dene	2
Mohawk	2
Anishinaabe	1

4% of GECDSB students identify as Indigenous.

Table 8. Indigenous Identity.

	#	%
Yes	**418**	**4%**
First Nations (Status)	105	1%
First Nations (Non-Status)	74	1%
Métis	123	1%
Inuit	18	0.2%
Not Sure	84	1%
I prefer not to answer	39	0.4%
No	**9,850**	**91%**
I prefer not to answer	**551**	**5%**
TOTAL RESPONSES	**10,819**	**100%**

RACIAL IDENTITY

The census asked about the student's racial identity.

4% identify as North American Indigenous.

A slight majority of students (51%) identify as White.

In addition, 41% also identify with a racialized identity—14% as Middle Eastern, 10% as South Asian, 8% as Black, 5% as East Asian, 3% as Southeast Asian, and 3% as Latino/Latina/Latinx.

6% chose not to answer this question.

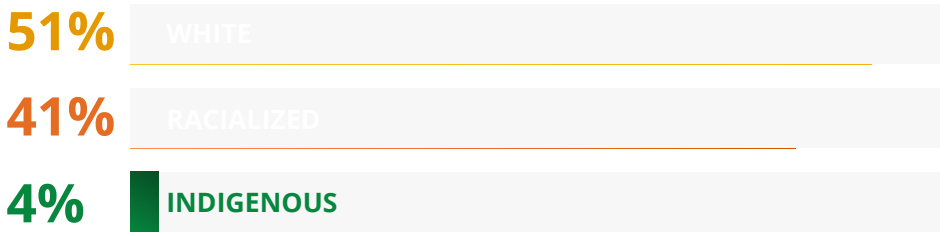

Table 9. Indigenous and Racial Identity.

	#	%
North American Indigenous	**418**	**4%**
Racialized People	**4,354**	**41%**
Middle Eastern	1,466	14%
South Asian	1,081	10%
Black	820	8%
East Asian	527	5%
Latino/Latina/Latinx	329	3%
Southeast Asian	342	3%
White	**5,375**	**51%**
I prefer not to answer	**652**	**6%**
TOTAL RESPONSES	**10,585**	**100%**

*Percentages total more than 100% owing to multiple responses.

GENDER IDENTITY

Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense or feeling of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere on the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may differ from their sex assigned at birth. At birth, a person is assigned female, male, or intersex (individuals born with any of several variations in sex characteristics that do not fit with typical conceptions of "male" or "female" bodies). Gender identity is different from sexual orientation

Of the 10,503 responses to this question, 47% selected boy/man and 41% selected girl/woman as part of their gender identity.

16% also identified as cisgender, and 4% identified as gender diverse—that is, gender-fluid, gender nonconforming, non-binary, questioning, trans, and/or Two-Spirit.

4% of GECDSB students identify as gender diverse.

Table 10. Gender Identity.

	#	%
Boy/man	4,910	47%
Girl/woman	4,358	41%
Cisgender	1,669	16%
Non-binary	133	1%
Trans	123	1%
Gender-fluid	102	1%
Questioning	78	1%
Gender nonconforming	60	1%
Genderqueer	50	0.5%
Indigiqueer/Two-Spirit	15	0.2%
Not sure	60	1%
I do not understand this question	98	1%
I prefer not to answer	324	3%
TOTAL RESPONSES	**10,503**	**100%**

*Percentages total more than 100% owing to multiple responses.

SEXUAL/ROMANTIC ORIENTATION

Sexual/romantic orientation refers to a person's sense of sexual or romantic interest and/or attraction to people. It covers the range of human sexuality and is different from gender identity.

Only students in Grades 9–12 were asked about their sexual orientation on the Student Census.

The majority of secondary students, 72% identified as straight/ heterosexual.

An additional 1,043 students, or 17%, identified as asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, Indigiqueer/Two-Spirit, and/or questioning.

17% of students identify as asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, Indigiqueer/Two-Spirit, and/or questioning.

Table 11. Sexual/Romantic Orientation (Grades 9–12).

	#	%
Straight / heterosexual	4,438	72%
Bisexual	460	8%
Queer	168	3%
Asexual	166	3%
Pansexual	161	3%
Lesbian	117	2%
Questioning	110	2%
Gay	72	1%
Indigiqueer/Two-Spirit	15	0.2%
Other	16	0.3%
Not sure	107	2%
I do not understand this question	98	2%
I prefer not to answer	442	7%
TOTAL RESPONSES	**6,128**	**100%**

*Percentages total more than 100% owing to multiple responses.

DISABILITY, CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITION, AND EXCEPTIONALITY

Some people identify as having a disability because of a permanent or long-term condition that makes it difficult for them to function in an environment that is not fully inclusive and accessible. A person's disability may be diagnosed or not diagnosed. It may be hidden or visible. Some students who have disabilities may have an Individual Education Plan (or IEP) at school to support them, but some do not.

12% (1,204) of GECDSB students reported that they have a disability, chronic health condition, and/or an exceptionality (not including giftedness).

12% of GECDSB students reported that they have a disability, chronic health condition, and/or an exceptionality (not including giftedness).

Table 12. Disability, Chronic Health Condition, and Exceptionality.

	#	%
Yes	1,204	12%
No	7,888	75%
Not sure	798	8%
I do not understand this question	168	2%
I prefer not to answer	405	4%
TOTAL RESPONSES	**10,463**	**100%**

Of the students with a disability, chronic health condition, or exceptionality, the largest proportion identified as living with ADHD (representing 5% of all students), mental health disabilities (4%), learning disabilities (3%), and autism spectrum disorder (2%).

Table 13. Type of Disability, Chronic Health Condition or Exceptionality.

If yes, select all that apply.	#	%
Addiction(s)	61	1%
Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)	538	5%
Autism spectrum disorder	232	2%
Blind or low vision	33	0.3%
Brain injury	29	0.3%
Chronic health condition	204	2%
Deaf or hard of hearing	49	0.5%
Development disability	74	1%
Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)	3	0.03%
Learning disability	332	3%
Mental health disability	439	4%
Mobility disability	38	0.4%
Neurodivergent	157	2%
Chronic or episodic pain	49	0.5%
Severe allergies	57	1%
Speech impairment	66	1%
Other physical disability(ies)	60	1%
I prefer not to answer	51	0.4%
TOTAL RESPONSES	**10,463**	**100%**

*Percentages total more than 100% owing to multiple responses.

NEXT STEPS

This report provides a snaphot of the rich diversity of the GECDSB student population as of May/June 2023.

Over the coming year, the GECDSB will work with various members of the school community to analyze the census data to gain a deeper understanding of the academic achievement and well-being of various groups of students. This data provides an opportunity for the Board to identify differences in student experiences and develop programs and supports to ensure that all students benefit equitably from the public school system.