

# Census Portrait

## Black Students

### Academic Achievement and Well-being

As required by the Ministry of Education and the Anti-Racism Act, the Greater Essex County District School Board (G.E.C.D.S.B) conducted its first Student Census in the 2023-2024 school year. The analysis of the data will help the Board understand the experiences of students who have been historically underserved by the education system and put programs in place to close any gaps in academic achievement and well-being.

Of the almost 36,000 students in the G.E.C.D.S.B in 2023-2024, parents/guardians completed the Student Census for 18% of students in JK-Grade 8, while 58% of students in Grades 9-12 completed the Student Census.

The data shows that 8% (820) of all G.E.C.D.S.B students identify as Black. 30% of these students were born outside of Canada.

There is a great deal of diversity among students who identify as Black.

#### Demographic data

##### *Ethnic Origins*

The top 10 ethnic origins for Black students are:

- Black/African Canadian 25%
- Canadian 25%
- African American 16%
- Jamaican 13%
- Nigerian 9%
- English 8%
- Somali 6%
- Sudanese 5%
- American 5%
- Irish 5%

##### *Language first spoken*

The top 10 languages first spoken as a child for Black students are:

- English 81%
- Arabic 7%
- French 6%
- Somali 5%
- Yoruba 3%
- Swahili 2%
- American Sign Language 1%
- Nuer 1%
- Portuguese 0.5%

##### *Disability*

The breakdown for disability among Black students is as follows:

- Yes 12%
- No 72%
- Not sure / I don't understand this question / Prefer not to answer 16%

##### *Religious identity*

The breakdown for religious identity for Black students is as follows:

- Christian 44%
- Non-Christian religions 24%

- No religious affiliation 20%
- Not sure / I don't understand this question / Prefer not to answer 13%

### **Sexual Orientation**

The breakdown for 2SLGBTQ+ identity for Black students is as follows:

- Straight / Cisgender 72%
- 2SLGBTQ+ 18%
- Not sure / I don't understand this question / Prefer not to answer 11%

## **Academic Achievement**

### **CREDIT ACCUMULATION**

A student is considered to be on track to graduate within four years if they have accumulated at least 16 credits by the end of Grade 10.

For Black students 69% were on track for graduation, while 31% were not on track. This is compared to all students, of which 72% were on track for graduation, while 28% were not.

### **LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT**

EQAO scores assess a student's reading and writing skills against provincial standards. The breakdown provides the percentage of students who met or exceeded the provincial standard on the Grade 3 and 6 EQAO reading and writing tests as well as the O.S.S.L.T.

The breakdown is as follows:

- Grade 3 EQAO Reading, Black students 69%, all students 69%
- Grade 3 EQAO Writing, Black students 65%, all students 67%
- Grade 6 EQAO Reading, Black students 77%, all students 80%
- Grade 6 EQAO Writing, Black students 74%, all students 78%
- O.S.S.L.T, Black students 66%, all students 74%

### **SUSPENSIONS (Grades 4-12)**

Percentage of students who have been suspended at least once between Grades 4 and 12.

For Black students 72% had no suspensions while 28% had at least one suspension. This is compared to all student, of which 80% had no suspensions while 20% had at least one.

### **ACADEMIC COURSES IN GRADE 10**

Percentage of students who have taken academic level English, Math, and Science, which allows them to go on to university.

- For English, Black students 63%, all students 69%
- For Math, Black students 51%, all students 63%
- For science, Black students 58%, all students 68%

## **Well-Being**

### **Sense of belonging at school**

Students were asked questions about their well-being in school. They could answer always and often, sometimes or, rarely and never. The breakdown is as follows:

- When asked if students feel like they belong at school
  - Of Black students, always and often 61%, sometimes 22%, rarely and never 16%
  - Of all students, always and often 67%, sometimes 22%, rarely and never 11%
- When asked if students feel accepted by other students at school
  - Of Black students, always and often 68%, sometimes 23%, rarely and never 10%
  - Of all students, always and often 69%, sometimes 22%, rarely and never 9%
- When asked if students feel accepted by adults at school
  - Of Black students, always and often 69%, sometimes 19%, rarely and never 11%
  - Of all students, always and often 75%, sometimes 17%, rarely and never 7%
- When asked if students felt that adults at school treat them differently (worse than) other students
  - Of Black students, always and often 15%, sometimes 19%, rarely and never 67%

- Of all students, always and often 10%, sometimes 16%, rarely and never 74%

### **Trusted School Adult (Grades 4-12)**

Students were asked, do you feel that there is an adult at school who they feel comfortable to go to for personal support, advice, or help?

In response 68% of Black students felt they had one or more trusted adults they could go to, while 32% said there were no trusted adults at school. In comparison 70% of all students said they had one or more trusted adults they could go to, while 30% said there were no trusted adults at school.

### **Experiences of Bullying (Grades 4-12)**

Students were asked since September have you experienced bullying? The breakdown gives the percentage of students who indicated any level of bullying to the categories provided.

The breakdown for Black students is as follows:

- Bullied physically by being physically hurt 21%
- Bullied physically by having their things damaged or stolen 21%
- Bullied verbally 46%
- Bullied socially 39%
- Bullied electronically 22%
- Bullied racially / ethnically 40%
- Bullied by being called racial slurs 36%
- Bullied because of their appearance 31%
- Bullied because of their weight 17%
- Bullied because of their gender expression or perceived gender presentation 10%
- Bullied because they are out, or have been outed, as being 2SLGBTQIA+ 8%

## **Input From Consultations**

To help understand the data, input was sought from students, parents/guardians, staff, and community members. The following summarizes the main themes from these consultations and the recommendations made.

- **Data from the Student Census tells only part of the story:** Many consultation participants felt that the Student Census data did not reflect the full experience of Black students. They shared their concern that Black students who are most disengaged or isolated at school may not have completed the Census or may not have honestly described their experiences. In addition, language may have been a barrier to parents/guardians' knowledge of the Census and their ability to accurately complete it.
- **Anti-Black racism:** Participants were concerned that educators, staff, and school leaders are not equipped to foster inclusive learning environments or effectively address incidents of anti-Black racism when they do occur, which contributes to anti-Black racism becoming normalized in some schools. In addition, because these issues have been ignored or not effectively addressed in the past, Black students and their parents/guardians may not report issues when they occur.

***“When your feelings/concerns have been ignored for so long, students and parents don’t see a point in reporting incidents of racism or discrimination.”***

- **Barriers for newcomer parents:** Concern was expressed that newcomer parents may not have information about the education system or the language skills needed to navigate the school system and effectively advocate for their children. Many newcomers also place a great deal of trust in the education system and may not understand the importance of engaging with the school system. Many families also experience other barriers to engaging with the education system including poverty, immigration status, and mental health.

***“Newcomers have incredible trust in the education system and may not understand they need to advocate for their Black child.”***

- **Biases of educators and staff:** Concern was also raised about the conscious and unconscious biases of staff, school leaders, and system leaders, which impact interactions with Black students and their families. There was also concern that these biases are embedded within the development and implementation of board policies.

These biases also result in the streaming of Black students into courses below their level of ability.

- ***Issues begin in elementary school:*** Participants shared concern that streaming and poor treatment of Black students begins in elementary school. This includes the lack of inclusion among students, the use of the N-word, and low expectations from educators.
- ***Lack of representation:*** Black students don't see themselves reflected among educators and staff or in the curriculum. This undermines their academic achievement, engagement, and well-being.

## Recommendations

- Set clear goals to increase the number of Black educators and staff.
- Provide more information to parents/guardians to help them understand and navigate the G.E.C.D.S.B.
- Provide ongoing professional learning for educators, staff, school administrators, and system leaders regarding anti-Black racism, equity, mental health, and trauma-informed education.
- Better equip staff to interrupt and address anti-Black racism when it does occur.
- Support Black and other racialized staff who experience racism in the workplace.
- Increase the knowledge of Black students and parents/guardians regarding the various pathways open to them.
- Better communicate and engage with Black families.
- Provide opportunities for Black students, parents/guardians, and staff to share concerns anonymously.
- Ensure interventions, supports, and role models are in place in elementary school for Black students.
- Collect and report on incidents of anti-Black racism to understand the extent of the issue and where the Board should focus its efforts.
- Provide additional opportunities for Black students in elementary schools to gather with other Black students, particularly for students in schools with a small number of Black students.