

Census Portrait

South Asian 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 10% (1081) of all G.E.C.D.S.B students identify as South Asian. 39% of these students were born outside of Canada.

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

Demographic data

Ethnic Origins

The top 10 ethnic origins for South Asian students are:

- Pakistani 27%
- Hindu 25%
- Punjabi 22%
- Sikh 12%
- Canadian 10%
- Bangladeshi 5%
- Gujarati 5%
- Indian 4%
- Tamil 4%
- American 2%

Language first spoken

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

- English 51%
- Punjabi 26%
- Urdu 24%
- Hindi 9%
- Nepali 5%
- Bengali 5%
- Gujarati 5%
- Tamil 4%
- Telugu 2%
- French 2%

Disability

The breakdown for disability among South Asian students is as follows:

- Yes 5%
- No 87%
- Not sure / I don't understand this question / Prefer not to answer 8%

Religious identity

The breakdown for religious identity for South Asian students is as follows:

- Christian 4%

- Non-Christian religions 89%
 - Muslim 37%
 - Hindu 27%
 - Sikh 25%
- No religious affiliation 5%
- Not sure / I don't understand this question / Prefer not to answer 3%

Sexual Orientation

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

- Straight / Cisgender 82%
- 2SLGBTQ+ 11%
- Not sure / I don't understand this question / Prefer not to answer 7%

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 South Asian students 89% were on track for graduation, while 11% 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, South Asian students 84%, all students 69%
- Grade 3 EQAO Writing, South Asian students 86%, all students 67%
- Grade 6 EQAO Reading, South Asian students 95%, all students 80%
- Grade 6 EQAO Writing, South Asian students 95%, all students 78%
- O.S.S.L.T, South Asian students 91%, all students 74%

SUSPENSIONS (Grades 4-12)

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

For South Asian students 93% had no suspensions while 7% 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, South Asian students 95%, all students 69%
- For Math, South Asian students 91%, all students 63%
- For science, South Asian students 94%, 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 South Asian students, always and often 78%, sometimes 15%, rarely and never 7%
 - 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 South Asian students, always and often 80%, sometimes 15%, rarely and never 6%
 - Of all students, always and often 69%, sometimes 22%, rarely and never 9%

- When asked if students feel accepted by adults at school
 - Of South Asian students, always and often 82%, sometimes 13%, rarely and never 5%
 - 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 South Asian students, always and often 8%, sometimes 12%, rarely and never 80%
 - 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 65% of South Asian students felt they had one or more trusted adults they could go to, while 35% 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 South Asian students is as follows:

- Bullied physically by being physically hurt 14%
- Bullied physically by having their things damaged or stolen 14%
- Bullied verbally 31%
- Bullied socially 27%
- Bullied electronically 12%
- Bullied racially / ethnically 24%
- Bullied by being called racial slurs 15%
- Bullied because of their appearance 19%
- Bullied because of their weight 13%
- Bullied because of their gender expression or perceived gender presentation 5%
- Bullied because they are out, or have been outed, as being 2SLGBTQIA+ 3%

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:** Those consulted with were concerned that the Census data did not reflect the full experience of South Asian students. They shared that students and their parents/guardians may be reluctant to share information about poor experiences. There may also be language barriers keeping them from understanding and completing the Student Census.
- **Academic supports outside of school:** Many felt that the high academic achievement evident in the data reflected the supports they receive from parents/guardians and private tutors rather than the supports they receive in school.
- **Barriers for newcomer parents:** Newcomer parents may not have the information about the education system or the language skills necessary to navigate the school system and effectively advocate for their children. Many 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.
- **Biases of educators and staff:** Concern was also raised about the conscious and unconscious biases of staff, school administrators, and system administrators, which impact expectations of South Asian students. In addition, there was concern shared that the academic or mental health supports needed may be overlooked because South Asian students are seen as “model minorities.”

Recommendations

- Set clear goals to increase the number of South Asian 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-Asian racism.
- Better equip all staff to foster inclusive learning environments and address Anti-Asian racism when it occurs.
- Reflect Asian people and cultures in the curriculum, including celebrating Asian Heritage Month.
- Better communicate and engage with South Asian families.
- Provide opportunities for South Asian students, parents/guardians, and staff to share concerns anonymously.