

Unlocking Student Potential Through Data

Final Report
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Submitted to:

Bruce Rodrigues
Deputy Minister of Education
and
Lyndon Martin
Dean - Faculty of Education
York University

Submitted by:

Donna Quan
Senior Advisor, Student & Educator Data
Ministry of Education

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AUTHOR: Donna Quan

In collaboration with Dr. Carl James, York University

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900 Bay Street

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Executive Summary

In December 2015, the Ontario Ministry of Education (hereinafter referred to as the “Ministry”) announced a partnership with York University to support a joint research project aimed at improving the future of students across the province. The project explored the feasibility of the Ministry and school boards collecting additional student and educator data to gain a better understanding of Ontario student populations and school communities and to identify and address barriers to student success. These goals help support *Achieving Excellence*,¹ the Ministry’s vision for publicly funded education in Ontario (see Appendix A). A report was provided to the Ministry and York University in February 2017.

To meet this objective, a phased work plan was established, which involved an environmental scan and stakeholder consultation (see Appendix B). The environmental scan included a review of the latest research and information on promising practices in other jurisdictions in Canada and abroad, as well as a review of current Ministry data collection practices. In consultation and collaboration with York University, relevant branches within the Ministry, and other ministries and government agencies, in particular the Ministry’s Education Statistics and Analysis Branch, the Anti-Racism Directorate, and Ministry of Children and Youth Services, this report was prepared. The report provides background context to several current issues in education, which can be further ameliorated with additional collection and analysis of demographic data (e.g., streaming, student discipline, systemic racism, professional development and pre-service training for teachers and educational staff, school climate, human rights, social inequality, cross-sectoral relationships, and Indigenous students – Truth and Reconciliation).

Through the environmental scan and consultative work undertaken as part of this study, three major themes emerged. First, the Ministry has opportunities to more fully leverage the data that is currently available in its web-based Ontario School Information System (OnSIS) and other sources. The Ministry already collects and can access extensive demographic and program data that can be used to produce important investigations into various equity-related areas across the province. However, there are limitations to this data. In response, the second theme to emerge from this study is that the Ministry’s equity agenda could be further advanced through collecting additional data, demographic as well as perceptual, program/process, and student learning data. Three

¹ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). *Achieving excellence: A renewed vision for education in Ontario*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Queen’s Printer.

case examples are included within the report, demonstrating how the Ministry can leverage and enhance its data collection and analyses. In the context of equity and post-secondary access, these case studies explore key areas of public schooling such as academic streaming, special education, and student suspensions.

The final theme to emerge is that the Ministry must focus on ensuring an expanded scope in its student population to include children and youth from birth to post-secondary. In addition, the Ministry must enhance its focus on the use of OnSIS data to monitor and publicly report identified indicators to promote equity, achievement, well-being and public confidence in Ontario's education system. Doing so will support its equity policy directions and the use of this data for internal Ministry and school board decision-making, program planning and instruction, resource allocation, and public reporting.

To support the Ministry in its move to leverage, enhance, and focus its data strategy, this report explores the most critical aspects of data collection and analyses. According to Bernhardt (1998), it is essential that four different types of data be collected to create a full picture of schools and school districts.² She writes, "Any definition of multiple measures should include four major measures of data – not just student learning, but also demographics, perceptions, and school processes" (p. 1). This report discusses how best to employ these data strategies to identify specific barriers to student achievement and determine more precise responses and resource allocation, as well as strengthen infrastructure and governance, support internal Ministry and school board decision-making, and increase accountability through public reporting and open data sharing.

In the end, we hope this report will serve as a tool to guide Ministry data directions and initiatives and encourage more transparent collaboration between ministries, the public sector, and school boards to ensure improved success for all students in Ontario.

² Bernhardt, V. (1998). Multiple measures. Invited Monograph No. 4. California Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (CASCD). Retrieved from http://www.edl420.org/multiple_measures.pdf

Recommendations

Leveraging the Existing Data in OnSIS

Unintended Outcomes: Student Discipline

1. The Ministry places priority in working with educational partners and the Ontario Human Rights Commission in the provision of training and application of the guide *Supporting Bias Free Progressive Discipline in Schools: A Resource Guide for School and System Leaders*.
2. The Ministry reviews Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145, Promoting Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour, to determine if the parameters for the application of mitigating factors need to be adjusted.
3. Seeking input from educational partners, the Ministry examines how the process to exclude a student from school, Education Act, Section 265(1)(m), is applied by school boards; this review should examine who is excluded, length of exclusions, reasons for exclusions, steps taken to ensure timely return to school, and the academic programming provided throughout the duration of an exclusion. A process to track and report on board-by-board exclusion rates should be developed for the purposes of accountability, transparency, and service alignment.
4. Seeking input from educational partners, the Ministry examines how to further provide and/or redirect investments in professional learning and program supports to ensure that students and staff are learning and working in safe and caring environments.
5. As per the results of our provincial analysis of suspension data, adverse impacts to specific groups of students, specifically those with special education needs, have been identified. Therefore, the Ministry places priority on engaging an external third party to conduct a systemic review of student discipline (suspensions and expulsions) across the province to identify concerns of systemic barriers and discrimination. This review is to include the following: numerical data to identify significant disproportionate outcomes; policies, practices, and decision-making processes; and organizational culture.³ This review should include voices from affected communities and educational partners, and be completed by December 2017.

³ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2005). *Policy and guidelines on racism and racial discrimination*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Government of Ontario. Retrieved from http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/Policy_and_guidelines_on_racism_and_racial_discrimination.pdf

Unintended Impacts: Choices or Streaming?

6. The Ministry identifies the relationship between streaming and student outcomes as an immediate area for monitoring and research to determine whether certain socio-demographic groups are unintentionally being disadvantaged.
7. The Ministry conducts, reports on, and responds to the results of analyses using the data already available in the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS), with specific use of data on special education, disciplinary, specialized programs, and program pathways.
8. Given the results of the provincial analysis undertaken for this study, the Ministry and local school boards review in-school processes through which students are streamed.
9. The Minister of Education places a priority on convening an Expert Panel to review streaming in Ontario schools. The Panel should consider recommendations for de-streaming. The Ministry publicly reports on this review by December 2018.

Enhancing Data Collections

Responding to Student Needs through Demographic Data

10. The Ministry takes a leadership role in mandating and supporting additional province-wide demographic data collection, and ensures that this data is collected in a way that can be reported to OnSIS.
11. The Ministry identifies for school boards the data to be collected through the registration process. The additional data to be collected is to include: race, ethnicity, religion, and creed and gender identity.
12. The Ministry and its school boards look at additional demographic data that can be collected through perceptual surveys that will not be part of registration processes. This should include but is not limited to sexual orientation, family status, socio-economic status, and disability.
13. The process to initiate additional collections should commence by no later than the 2018-19 school year; this would include Ministry review and development of any necessary legislation and policies requiring school boards to begin collecting additional demographic data.
14. The Ministry supports school boards to engage in community consultations that are required to develop and/or extend board voluntary self-identification policies and other demographic collections of data.

15. Workforces should be representative of the populations they serve. In consultation with educational partners, the Ministry provides direction to school boards on collecting human rights-based demographic data on their workforce; this is part of creating representative, equitable, and healthy work and learning environments.

Hearing Student and Community Voice through Perceptual Data

16. In collaboration with educational partners, the Ministry identifies key perceptual questions related to school climate and learning conditions that are required at the Ministry level to inform policy, funding, and programs.

17. For the 2018-19 school year, the Ministry collaborates with EQAO to include key school climate questions of interest to the Ministry; this may include questions related to well-being, programs, processes, and school climate.

18. For the 2018-19 school year, the Ministry revises Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145 (PPM 145) and removes the stipulation that school climate surveys be anonymous so that the information can be correlated with other data at the school board level to improve data use; the Ministry also amends the requirement in PPM No. 145 to permit completion of school climate surveys every two to four years, from at least once every two years.

19. The Ministry reports on the development of well-being indicators that are drawn on the expertise in the sector and the work currently undertaken in school boards to inform next steps.

20. In collaboration with educational partners, the Ministry ensures perception data on well-being is collected for students; the collection of well-being data on staff should be encouraged.

Examining Opportunity and Access through Program and Process Data

21. The Ministry determines key program and process data for analysis, collection, and integration with OnSIS. This data could include student participation in specialized programs, intervention and instructional processes intersected with achievement information to identify achievement trends in relation to program type and/or process applications.

22. In collaboration with educational partners, the Ministry examines processes through which students are identified with disabilities, exceptionalities, and special education needs (e.g., behaviour, communication, intellectual, physical, multiple exceptionalities). Identifications, placement recommendations, exclusions from school, and provision of support should be tracked using an intersectional framework of analysis (e.g., exploring the disproportionate representation of racialized students

in special education programs). It is also important to identify additional data collections that may be used to improve student outcomes.

23. In collaboration with educational partners, the Ministry places priority on the recognition, development, and measurement of competencies and skills beyond academic outcomes. This should be a parallel area of discussion, and not an “add on.”

Focusing the Use of Data

Improving Knowledge to Better Serve Students: Early Years to Workforce

Early Years

24. As part of its public plan for modernizing programs and services for Ontario Early Years and Family Centres, the Ministry works with its partners in the early years sectors to build the infrastructure for extending the Ontario Education Number (OEN) in all Ontario Early Years and Family Centres (OEYCFCs). This should be considered as a priority direction and investment.
25. In collaboration with educational partners, the Ministry explores the collection of early years provincial baseline data through the implementation of Kindergarten entry assessments, especially for foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

Post-Secondary Education

26. The Ministry publicly reports the number of Ontario secondary school students from a Grade 9 cohort who are reported as registering directly in a university or college in Ontario within four years and within five years from Grade 9 as one of its success indicators.
27. The Ministry continues to work with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) to extend the OEN to all government-sponsored employment training programs and apprenticeships to gain a more complete picture of post-secondary student outcomes.
28. The Ministry undertakes and reports on sub-group analyses by demographic factors to identify any disparate outcomes using currently available demographic and program information available in OnSIS (e.g., gender, language, special education needs, and program of study).
29. The Ministry establishes structures and processes to ensure that data on post-secondary registration and completion is made available to others both inside and outside of the original institution.

30. The Ministry and MAESD identify and implement mechanisms by which the collection of demographic data could be extended to post-secondary institutions.

Strengthening Evidence Informed Decision-Making, Analysis, and Reporting

31. The Ministry positions the Education Statistics Analysis Branch (ESAB) as the authoritative source for the collection, analysis, and reporting of elemental level education data. Wherever possible, the use of elemental-level data is critical.

32. The Ministry strengthens the Education Research and Evaluation Strategy Branch's (ERESB) role in conducting and using research to support policy and program decisions and practices. In addition, ERESB supports the development of individual and divisional capacity to assess, conduct, and use research that specifically emphasizes multiple identity-based approaches to data analyses.

33. As a result of recurring themes on the challenges of accessing data by institutions with education-related mandates, in collaboration with educational partners, the Ministry identifies and addresses any barriers to sharing data with its school boards and partners, specifically data already collected and verified through OnSIS.

34. Through Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA), the Ministry strengthens the capacity of school boards to receive and critically use data sets created by ESAB.

Improving Accountability and Public Reporting

35. To further build on transparency and accountability, the Ministry works with school boards and educational partners to identify additional student outcomes for school improvement planning and public reporting; reported outcomes should employ a multiple-identity-based analysis to uncover often hidden barriers facing certain student groups (e.g., reporting suspension data alone is insufficient unless explored across racial, class, and disability demographics).

Increasing Precision: Funding

36. The Ministry develops and implements a cross-divisional plan to document and measure the progress and impact of Ministry-funded programs and initiatives using the further analysis of existing and, in the future, additional data within OnSIS, and redirect funding decisions based on results.

37. The Ministry immediately works with existing data within OnSIS to recognize key areas that require intervention and, where possible, factor supports for school boards in the 2017-18 Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) and Education Program Other (EPOs) process. Disparities identified from this analysis should also be addressed in funding decisions for 2018-19 and subsequent years.

38. The Ministry reviews the Education Opportunities Index (EOI) and its suitability to allocating the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG). The Ministry considers extending the use of the EOI to distribute grants in the GSN where appropriate.

Working Better Together

39. Working together, identify and address barriers for appropriate sharing of data between the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), child and youth service providers, Ministry of Education, and local school boards for the purpose of improving seamless support and services for children and youth in a timely manner.

40. To inform policy, programs, and funding, the Ministry works with the MCYS to collect data on the educational outcomes of children and youth currently in care. Summaries should be publicly reported with follow-up responses to address any troubling findings.

41. The Ministry works with its partner ministries to align the definition, collection, and analysis of demographic and other data, including on well-being, to ensure comparability across sectors and service systems to provide a comprehensive view of Ontario students.

42. The Ministry supports the work of the Anti-Racism Directorate through providing education-related data and information needed to address societal inequities arising from systemic racism. The Anti-Racism Directorate defines racism as including forms of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

43. Working with educational partners, the Ministry enables, supports, and implements population specific anti-racism initiatives to reduce disparities in student achievement, including those faced by Black and Indigenous students. Potential initial focus areas to reduce such disparities include program streaming and student discipline (suspension and expulsion) practices.

44. Working with school board associations and school boards, the Ministry supports ongoing training in human rights principles for school board elected officials and staff at all levels.

45. The Government of Ontario mandates development and implementation of a Racial Equity Impact Assessment Framework in the education sector, and considers developing and requiring other such frameworks to advance equity, including those based on creed and disabilities. Data identified to be collected from implementing the framework will be made public and used to inform Ministry decisions and funding as appropriate.

46. Effective data governance is mandatory. Working with its partner ministries and educational partners, the Ministry places priority on developing an Early Years through to Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Data Governance structure that has the expertise and clearly established authority to enable the extension of data collection and removal of barriers to data sharing and longitudinal tracking. This tracking should begin in the early years, continue from Kindergarten to Grade 12, and through to post-secondary education and the workforce.

47. Given the patterns of concern raised about the schooling and education of Black students, working with community representatives and educational partners, the Ministry establishes a task force to review systemic concerns experienced and faced by Black students. The *Task Force to Ensure Success for Students of African Descent* should identify systemic issues faced by these students and develop an action plan to address these issues. The plan should be submitted to the Ministers responsible for Education and Children and Youth Services.

1. Context

“There can be no keener revelations of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.” – Nelson Mandela⁴

1.1 Ontario’s Children and Youth

Children (aged 0 to 14) and youth (aged 15 to 24) currently make up 30% of Ontario’s population. The 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) identified 2,178,125 children and 1,702,342 youth in Ontario, making up 17% and 13%, respectively, of the provincial population. This generation of children and youth are more diverse than previous generations.

One key contributing factor to this diversity is Canada’s increasing reliance on immigration for population and labour market growth. As the Baby Boom generation ages (representing one-third of the population) and birth rates remain low, Canada is relying on immigration for population growth and to meet labour market needs. Recently released data from the 2016 Census show that between 2011 and 2016, the country’s population increased by 1.7 million people. Two-thirds of this growth was the result of migratory increase, which is the difference between the number of immigrants and emigrants.⁵

This data show that Ontario grew by 4.6% during this time, to 13,448,494. The City of Toronto continues to be the largest city in the country, growing by 4.5% to 2,731,571 between 2011 and 2016. The data show that areas outside of the City of Toronto are growing at a faster rate. For example, Milton grew by 30.5%, Bradford West Gwillimbury by 25.6%, King by 23.2%, Whitchurch-Stouffville by 21.8%, and Brampton by 13.3%. Some of this growth is fuelled by second-generation Canadians moving further into the 905. But as these areas become more diverse, they are also becoming primary settlement areas for new immigrants who tend to settle near family and friends. While immigration is diversifying the City of Toronto, it is also increasingly impacting communities not just next door to Toronto, but deeper within the 905 region. This diversity is challenging school boards to understand and respond to the needs of the increasingly diverse student population.

⁴ From speech by President Nelson Mandela, May 8, 1995, at the launch of the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund, Mahlamba Ndlopfu, Pretoria, South Africa.

⁵ Statistics Canada. (2017). *Population size and growth in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census*. Last modified February 8, 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170208/dq170208a-eng.htm>

Canada's need for immigrants is reflected in the large number of immigrants Canada accepts each year. Immigration targets ranged from 240,000 to 265,000 between 2007 and 2011. The immigration target was increased to 250,000 in 2011 and increased again to 300,000 in 2016. Included in these immigration targets are targets for refugees. The 2016 target for refugees was raised to 55,800 to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis, and then lowered to 40,000 in 2017. With the removal of restrictions in Canada's immigration policy in the 1960s that limited immigration from non-European countries, the proportion of immigrants from outside of Europe has increased steadily and is increasingly made up of people from diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. For example, the top 10 source countries of immigrants to Canada in 2013 were China, India, Philippines, Pakistan, Iran, United States, France, Iraq, Korea, and Algeria.⁶

Canada welcomes a large number of immigrant children each year, and its history of immigration from countries outside Europe since the 1960s indicates that while a large proportion of racialized children are born outside of Canada, an increasing proportion are born in Canada. The 2011 NHS data show that 8% of Ontario's children under age 15 and 18% of youth aged 15 to 24 were born outside of Canada.⁷ By comparison, 20% of racialized children and 47% of racialized youth were born outside of Canada.

In addition to an increasingly racially and ethnically diverse population, immigration has resulted in an increasingly religiously diverse provincial population. The 2011 NHS found that 65% of the population identified as Christian and 23% indicated they had no religious affiliation. The remaining 12% identify as: Muslim (4.6%), Hindu (2.9%), Jewish (1.5%), Sikh (1.4%), and various other religions. Compared to the 2001 Census, the 2011 results show that the proportion of the population that do not identify with a religion is increasing along with those practising non-Christian religions.

Another factor contributing to the diversity of Ontario's children and youth is the growing Aboriginal population and their increased urbanization. Statistics Canada has noted that the Aboriginal population is the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population and has a younger age profile than non-Aboriginals. The 2011 NHS showed that between

⁶ Government of Canada. (2013). *Facts and figures 2013 – Immigration overview: Permanent residents*. Last modified April 23, 2015. Retrieved from

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/permanent/10.asp>

⁷ Statistics Canada. (2011). National Household Survey Data Tables. Catalogue No. 99-010-X2011030.

Retrieved from [http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/Ap-](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/Ap-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=0&PID=1053)

[eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=0&PID=105392&PRID=0&PTYPE=105277&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2013&THEME=95&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/Ap-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=0&PID=105392&PRID=0&PTYPE=105277&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2013&THEME=95&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF)

2006 and 2011, the Aboriginal population grew by 20%, compared to 5% for the non-Aboriginal population. (Note that the Aboriginal growth rate is the result of multiple factors including a higher than average birth rate, better enumeration by Statistics Canada, and an increasing desire to self-identify as Aboriginal.)

The younger age profile of the Aboriginal population means that children make up a larger proportion of the Aboriginal population. Statistics Canada data show that while children aged 14 and under make up 17% of the non-Aboriginal population, they make up 28% of the Aboriginal population. In addition, there are more than 254,515 Aboriginal youth aged 15 to 24, representing 18% of the total Aboriginal population. By comparison, youth make up 13% of the non-Aboriginal population.⁸ So while children and youth (aged 24 and under) make up 30% of the non-Aboriginal population, they represent almost half (46%) of the Aboriginal population.

The 2011 NHS enumerated 301,425 Aboriginals in Ontario, representing 2.4% of the provincial population. This is the largest number of Aboriginal people in any province or territory, representing 22% of Canada's total Aboriginal population.⁹

The Aboriginal population in Canada is increasingly living off-reserve. This is particularly true in Ontario, where only 37% of First Nations people with registered Indian status lived on a reserve. This means that the province has responsibility for the education of the majority of Aboriginal children and youth in the province.

Statistics Canada data also show that Ontario's racialized and Aboriginal populations have grown at rates significantly higher than that of the overall provincial population. As Table 1 shows, Ontario's racialized population grew by 66%, while the Aboriginal population grew by 85% between 2001 and 2011. By contrast, Ontario's population grew by 11% during this time.

⁸ Statistics Canada. (2011). Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit. Last modified September 15, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>

⁹ Ibid.

Table 1: Rate of Growth of Racialized, Aboriginal Populations, and Overall Population, 2001 to 2011

Year	Racialized Population			Aboriginal Population			Ontario Population	
	#	% of Ontario Population	Rate of Growth Since 2001	#	% of Ontario Population	Rate of Growth Since 2001	#	Rate of Growth Since 2001
2001	2,153,045	19%	--	188,315	1.7%	--	11,410,046	--
2006	2,745,200	23%	28%	242,490	2.0%	29%	12,160,282	7%
2011	3,279,565	26%	66%	301,430	2.4%	85%	12,651,790	11%

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Canada, 2001, 2006; and National Household Survey, 2011.

Projections by Statistics Canada¹⁰ show that Canada's racialized population will more than double between 2006 and 2031, while the rest of the population will grow by only 12%. Given the younger age profile of the racialized population, these projections estimate that by 2031, nearly 40% of children under age one will be racialized. For Ontario, this means that the racialized population is projected to grow from 26% of the population in 2006 to 40% in 2031.

In 2006, Statistics Canada also conducted the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS), which provided insight into the prevalence and type of disabilities faced by the population, including children.¹¹ The rate of identified disability among young children is lower than the rate among older children and adults. This is due in part to the difficulty of identifying disabilities among young children and also because the majority of disabilities are acquired after childhood, often through illness or accident.¹² In 2006, the disability rate for children under age 5 was 1.7%, among children aged 5 to 14 it was 4.6%, and 16.6% for those aged 15 and over.¹³

Statistics Canada's analysis of the data showed that it is sometimes difficult to identify certain types of disabilities in children under age 5. As such, there were differences in the type of disabilities identified in children under age 5 and in children aged 5 and over. For children under age 5, the most frequently identified disabilities were hearing

¹⁰ Statistics Canada. (2010). *Projections of the diversity of the Canadian population: 2006-2031*. Cat 91-551-X. Ottawa, Ontario. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2010001-eng.pdf>

¹¹ Statistics Canada. (2006). Profile of Disability for Children. In *Participation and activity limitation survey 2006: Analytical report*. Last modified February 7, 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-628-x/2007002/4125020-eng.htm>

¹² Government of Canada. (2011). Early Childhood Development. In *The well-being of Canada's young children: Government of Canada report 2011*. Last modified May 28, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.dpe-agje-ecc-elcc.ca/eng/ecc/well-being/page11.shtml>

¹³ Ibid.

impairments, visual impairments, chronic health conditions, and developmental delay. The most widely reported disability for children under age 5 were related to a chronic health condition or a developmental delay. Given the difficulty in identifying disabilities in young children, many are described as a developmental delay, whether it be physical, intellectual, or another type of disability.

Among children aged 5 and over, developmental delays are replaced with more specific types of disability, including those related to speech, mobility, agility, and psychological conditions, as well as learning and developmental disabilities. Learning disabilities are often not apparent until the child begins school and are often diagnosed within the school setting. The most frequently reported disability among school-aged children aged 5 to 14 are learning disabilities, chronic health conditions, and speech disabilities.

Gender identity and sexual orientation add to the diversity among the population of children and youth. While Statistics Canada does not collect data on these characteristics, community organizations continue to use the estimate of 10% of the population belonging to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities. With expanded human rights protections and an increased acceptance in society, various experts report that more children are identifying as LGBTQ at younger ages.¹⁴

The Ministry of Education acknowledges that “the world is changing rapidly” and that there is a need to “transform to meet the expectations of today and build the vibrant, prosperous province of tomorrow.”¹⁵

The Ministry’s preliminary Education Facts for 2015-2016 indicates there were 1,993,433 students enrolled in Ontario (see Appendix C). This number represents the headcounts of students in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) students attending school in 10 school authorities and 31 English Public, 29 English Catholic, 4 French Public, and 8 French Catholic boards across Ontario. As part of a step to “transform,” the Ministry should recognize their responsibility to provide services and education for 3.9 million children and youth (aged 0 to 24 years, as per the 2011 NHS), which represents an increasingly racialized and diverse group of learners from the early years to post-secondary and the workforce. Understanding and responding to the changing

¹⁴ CBC. (2016, October 25). Transgender kids coming out younger, experts say after judges ordered 4-year-old to dress like a boy. CBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/trans-coming-out-earlier-1.3820013>

¹⁵ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). *Achieving excellence: A renewed vision for education in Ontario*. Last modified July 18, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/excellent.html>

portrait of Ontario's students will assist in addressing current and emerging issues in education.

1.2 Current Issues in Education

Among the many issues facing the field of education, research demonstrates several critical areas of concern that demand attention in order to address issues of educational equity.

Streaming

Compelling evidence in Ontario illustrates the class, race, and gender inequities prevalent in the education system. In *Restacking the Deck: Streaming by Class, Race and Gender in Ontario's Schools*, the authors note:

Children from working-class and some minority families continue to be pejoratively labelled with exceptionalities and special needs in elementary school, streamed into dead-end programs that encourage many of them to drop out of secondary school, and excluded from post-secondary education. (p. 2)¹⁶

Noting that streaming occurs in different forms – from different types of schools, to specialty programs, to apprenticeship and workplace programs, to how students are treated and organized in classrooms – the authors highlight that overall, a key part of this streaming process is the constitution of distinctive identities, in many cases racial and religious, which become the basis for differential treatment within the school system.

While the practice of streaming (i.e., grouping students based on ability) was to have ended in Ontario in 1999, many reports since have concluded that the practice continues and has a disproportionately negative impact on low-income students.^{17,18} The 2015 study released by People for Education¹⁹ as well as King et al. (2009)²⁰ also

¹⁶ Clandfield, D., Curtis, B., Galabuzi, G., Gaymes San Vincente, A., Livingstone, D.W., & Smaller, H. (2014). *Restacking the deck: Streaming by class, race and gender in Ontario's schools*. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

¹⁷ Parekh, G., Killoran, I., & Crawford, C. (2011). The Toronto connection: Poverty, perceived ability, and access to education equity. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 34(3), 249–279.

¹⁸ Hamlin, D. & Cameron, D. (2015). *Applied or academic: High impact decisions for Ontario students*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: People for Education. Retrieved from <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/People-for-Education-Applied-or-Academic-Report-2015.pdf>

¹⁹ Ibid.

reference academic studies that have found that “streaming students or grouping students by ability is likely to reproduce and even exacerbate patterns of disadvantage based on family backgrounds, including socio-economic status and race.”²¹

The 2015 People for Education Report found that more than half of students with family incomes below \$60,000 are enrolled in Applied Math, compared to only 10% of students with a family income of over \$110,000. The report discusses the connection between taking applied courses with lower graduation rates, as well as lower rates of attendance at post-secondary educational institutions. The report warns of the impact of these findings:

Unless we assume that wealthier students are inherently more academically capable, this correlation (between family income and academic streaming) is disturbing, all the more so given the evidence that suggests that taking applied courses itself may not merely reproduce disadvantage but actively exacerbate the risk of problematic academic outcomes.²²

Because the data are not available, the People for Education study focuses on the impact of streaming on low-income students and does not explicitly address the impact of streaming on racialized students. Studies that point to the racialization of poverty²³ and data from the Toronto District School Board indicate that racialized students, particularly Black students, are over-represented among students in applied courses. The African Canadian Legal Clinic also cites data showing how streaming has adverse impacts on racialized youth.²⁴

Streaming remains a key equity issue today²⁵ with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recommending that the practice be delayed until

²⁰ King, A., Warren, W. King, M., Brook, J., & Kocher, P. (2009). *Who doesn't go to postsecondary?* Colleges Ontario. Retrieved from <http://www.collegesontario.org/research/who-doesnt-go-to-pse.pdf>

²¹ People for Education (2013). *The trouble with course choices in Ontario high schools*. Last modified April 25, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/trouble-with-course-choices-in-high-school-2013.pdf>

²² Hamlin, D. & Cameron, D. (2015). *Applied or academic: High impact decisions for Ontario students*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: People for Education.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Morgan, A. (2016). *The blackening margins of multiculturalism: The African Canadian experience of exclusion from the economic, social and cultural promise and prosperity of Canada*. A Report on the Canadian Government's Compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the 57th Session of the Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (February 22 to March 4 of 2016). Submitted by African Canadian Legal Clinic.

²⁵ Hamlin, D. & Cameron, D. (2015). *Applied or academic: High impact decisions for Ontario students*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: People for Education.

later in secondary school.²⁶ If the education system aspires to be characterized by high expectations and success for all students, the Ministry must examine its policies and programs through a bolder and more critical equity lens. Many believe that generations of students have not been well served, and political will and attention to addressing concerns and removing barriers have been insufficient.

Student Discipline

Parents and community advocates throughout the Greater Toronto Area have also raised concerns that Black students experience more frequent and harsher suspensions than their White and other racialized peers.²⁷ Further, they connect more frequent and harsher suspensions to disengagement from school, an increased likelihood of dropping out of school, and lower academic achievement overall. They further identify the important role that school suspensions and expulsions play in creating and maintaining the school-to-prison pipeline.²⁸

While there is limited information or data on racial differences in school suspensions in Ontario, Toronto District School Board (TDSB) data and similar data from the United States can help us understand the impact of suspension on the schooling performance and educational outcomes of students. For instance, TDSB data show that by the time Black students graduate from high school, 42% have been suspended at least once, compared to only 18% of White students.²⁹ One 2016 American study blames school suspensions for about one-fifth of the achievement gap between White and Black students. The authors of this study call disparities in suspensions “one of the most important factors hindering academic progress and maintaining the racial gap in achievement.”³⁰

Various school boards in Ontario, such as York Region District School Board and the Durham Public and Catholic District School Boards, are facing criticism on reported

²⁶ OECD (2012). *Equity and quality in education: Supporting disadvantaged students and schools*. OECD Publishing. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/50293148.pdf>

²⁷ James, C.E., & Turner T. (2017, March). *Addressing education inequality for black students in GTA schools*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: York University.

²⁸ Rankin, J. & Contenta, S. (2009, June 6). Suspended sentences: Forging a school-to-prison pipeline? *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2009/06/06/suspended_sentences_forging_a_schooltoprison_pipeline.html

²⁹ James, C. E., Brown, R. S., Parekh, G., & Turner, T. (2016). *Black student achievement in TDSB: Fact sheet*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: York Centre for Education and Community, and Toronto District School Board.

³⁰ Morris, E.W., & Perry, B.L. (2016). The punishment gap: School suspension and racial disparities in achievement. *Social Problems*, 63 (1): 68-86.

incidences of racial disparity in discipline. Concerns include inequitable treatment of racialized students by educators and administrators, particularly in response to conflict between students. They argue that, in these situations, racialized students (in particular Black students) experience more severe discipline than their White counterparts. A number of such cases have been brought before the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal.³¹ Parents of Black youth across Durham region boards report that their children experience racially motivated bullying and, when their children react, they are punished more severely than their White peers.³² These criticisms represent the perceptions and experiences of some racialized students and their families.

Students identified as having special education needs are also at an increased risk for suspension, often experiencing suspensions at higher rates and for longer periods than their peers.³³ In addition, students identified with special education needs are also vulnerable to exclusion from school under the Education Act, Section 265(1)(m).³⁴ According to a 2014 survey by People for Education, close to 50% of elementary and 40% of secondary school principals have asked parents to keep their children at home.³⁵ Identified reasons range from behaviour outbursts to lack of support. Although these exclusions are sometimes interpreted as punitive, many school boards do not appear to have formal reporting procedures in place. Exclusions can be indeterminate, and there is often no educational programming provided (even to be conducted at home) throughout the duration of the exclusion.³⁶

While students identified as having special education needs are at increased risk for these forms of exclusions, it is also important to consider the demographics of the special education needs population. Scholars cite the extensive over-representation of

³¹ Szekely, R. & Pessian, P. (2015, Aug. 6). Ontario Human Rights Tribunal finds there is a 'racial disparity' in Durham. Metroland Media, DurhamRegion.com

³² Haines, A. (2016, Oct. 31). Mom of teen banned from all schools files human rights complaint. *City News*

³³ Brown, R. S., & Parekh, G. (2013). *The intersection of disability, achievement, and equity: A system review of special education in the TDSB* (Research Report No. 12/13-12). (Section on suspension). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/6606833/The_intersection_of_disability_achievement_and_equity_A_system_review_of_special_education_in_the_TDSB

³⁴ Robinson, M. (2016, Feb. 15). School exclusions can give special-needs students the boot – indefinitely. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com/yourtoronto/education/2016/02/15/school-exclusions-can-give-special-needs-students-the-boot-indefinitely.html>

³⁵ Gallagher-Mackay, K., & Kidder, A. (2014). *Special education: A People for Education report*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: People for Education. Retrieved from <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/special-education-2014-WEB.pdf>

³⁶ Lattanzio, R. (2017). *Presentation to TDSB Special Education Advisory Committee*. Presentation to Toronto District School Board.

racialized and poor children identified as having a special education need.³⁷ The incidence of disproportionate representation points to larger systemic issues that query how concepts of ability and disability are constructed and enacted in schools.³⁸ It is illegal to exclude children from school on the basis of race and class; however, by using disability or lack of special education support as a rationale, increased proportions of racialized and poor children are disadvantaged through this process.³⁹

Systemic Racism

A school system and curriculum that may have been effective previously is coming under increased criticism for failing to meet the needs of Ontario's increasingly diverse student population. Various issues of concern have been raised about Ontario's public education system through research studies, community consultations, and media reports.

Systemic racism is becoming a focus of attention for communities outside of Toronto. While these communities have anecdotal evidence to suggest that Black students experience discrimination in the school system, they do not have the data to advocate for systemic change. Community consultations were held in 2016 and early 2017 by Dr. Carl James at York University to explore the ongoing challenge that Black students face in Ontario's education system. Black students, parents, and community organizations who attended the consultations were able to reflect on data from TDSB and provide insights into whether their experiences in school boards outside of Toronto were different and what factors contributed to this difference.⁴⁰ TDSB data show poor outcomes for Black students as compared to their White counterparts in the following areas: higher rates of suspensions, lower graduation rates, higher drop-out rates, higher rates of special education identification (non-gifted), higher representation in Applied and Essentials programs of study, and lower rates of confirmation in an Ontario university.

In the consultations, students, parents, and community advocates indicated that the data reflected their experience in or with school boards outside of Toronto (i.e., Peel, Durham, and York regions). Many attributed the issues that lead to poor academic

³⁷ Artiles, A., Kozleski, E., Trent, S., Osher, D., & Ortiz, A. (2010). Justifying and explaining disproportionality, 1968–2008: A critique of underlying views of culture. *Exceptional Children*, 76(3), 279–299.

³⁸ Brantlinger, E. (2006). (Ed) *Who benefits from special education? Remediating (Fixing) Other People's Children*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

³⁹ Reid, D. K. & Knight, M. G. (2006). Disability justifies exclusion of minority students: A critical history grounded in disability studies. *Educational Researcher*, 35(6), 18-23.

⁴⁰ James, C.E., & Turner, T. (2017, February). *Addressing education inequality for black students in GTA schools*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: York University.

achievement to systemic racism in Ontario's education system. Some felt that while the TDSB was collecting the data and working to understand and address the issues, the lack of data for other school boards meant that the issues for Black students were going unacknowledged and unaddressed. Furthermore, they felt the lack of data has left each student and parent to fight systemic issues at the individual level. Even if an individual complaint is addressed, systemic change is not made, and parents and advocates reported that it is a constant battle to ensure that Black students are treated equitably within the school system. They were concerned that the lack of data only serves to hide the issues and requires a constant investment of time, money, and emotional energy to prove that racism exists.

A recent study by researchers at York University examined how differences in race and class in particular, intersect with educational opportunities and outcomes. Analysis of the 2006 and 2011 TDSB data revealed that later-life post-secondary transition rates of students varied significantly by race and class. Specifically, Black males and other demographic sub-groups were far less likely to have the academic requirements to go on to post-secondary compared to other groups (i.e., lower grades, higher rates for special education numbers, and less likely to be in academic streams).⁴¹

Teachers and Educational Staff: Pre-service and Professional Development

Critical to outcomes for students from diverse communities, backgrounds, and identities is the diversity and understanding of their teachers. Several studies point to the impacts of teacher bias on academic perceptions and outcomes of diverse student populations. For example, Lavy & Sand (2015) have identified the effects of gender bias on student experiences and trajectories through school.⁴²

In 2015, a collaborative report that investigated the social experiences and well-being of Black youth living in the Peel Region identified low teacher expectations, lack of Black teachers, academic streaming processes, and inequitable discipline approaches as key areas in which Black students are disadvantaged.⁴³ A follow-up report from

⁴¹ Robson, K. Brown, R.S., Anisef, P. & George, R. (2016, April). *Have post-secondary access policies helped marginalized youth?* Presentation to session organized by the Toronto Region MISA PNC.

⁴² Lavy, V. & Sand, E. (2015). On the origins of gender human capital gaps: Short and long term consequences of teachers' stereotypical biases. NBER Working Paper No. 20909. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w20909>

⁴³ Major themes in the report address the impacts of anti-Black racism across various areas such as employment, police, community services, and economic status. However, one critical focus is on the education system and includes key findings and recommendations on how to better the education experience for Black students. See: James, C.E., & Turner, T. (2015). *Fighting an uphill battle: Report on the consultations into the well-being of black youth in Peel Region*. Mississauga, Ontario, Canada: F.A.C.E.S. of Peel Collaborative. Retrieved from <http://www.unitedwaypeel.org/faces/images/fighting-an-uphill-battle-sm.pdf>

consultations with the Black community in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) also identified teacher perceptions of, and biases about, Black students as a key issue impacting poor educational outcomes for Black students.⁴⁴

In a study of pre-service teachers' attitudes towards students, Riley and Ungerleider (2008) revealed that there is a relationship between students' Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal identity and pre-service teachers' perceptions of students' ability and recommendations for their future academic pursuits. Despite reviewing the same student records, coded as either an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal student, the researchers were able to determine that pre-service teachers held lower expectations of students identified as Aboriginal in terms of potential academic achievement.⁴⁵

Special education is also often taught through a medicalized or deficit lens.⁴⁶ Through this approach, disability is rarely viewed as an identity characteristic or cultural membership within an oppressed group. However, according to a report released by the Ministry of Education, “[d]isability is now defined as the interaction between the individual and their environment; it is not solely a characteristic of the child.”⁴⁷ Through a medicalized model, the focus is on remediating the student. However, through a social model of disability, the focus is on the environment and ensuring barriers to access and participation are removed. To advance equity for all students, teacher training and professional development centralizing equity would be remiss not to include instruction on the social construction of disability, accessibility, differentiated instruction, and removing barriers in access to curriculum and academic opportunities.

These studies point to the need for greater anti-racism, anti-oppression, and anti-bias courses in Ontario's teacher training programs, as well as ongoing training and professional development in human rights principles for all who serve students in educational settings. This would increase awareness of how racism and oppression occurs and is perpetuated in schools, as well as provide the opportunity to learn more about issues of equity and how to support the educational success of racialized and Indigenous students.

⁴⁴ James, C.E., & Turner T. (2017, March). *Addressing education inequality for black students in GTA schools*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: York University.

⁴⁵ Riley, T., & Ungerleider, C. (2008). Preservice teachers' discriminatory judgments. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 378-387.

⁴⁶ Brantlinger, E.A. (2006). The big glossies: How textbooks structure (special) education. In E.A. Brantlinger (Ed). *Who benefits from special education? Remediating (fixing) other people's children*. (pp. 45-76). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

⁴⁷ Underwood, K. (2013). *Everyone is welcome: Inclusive early childhood education and care*. (p. 5) Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

In addition to the understanding of race and racism that teachers bring to the classroom, various studies recommend hiring a more diverse teacher workforce that reflects the diversity of the student population. The Teacher Diversity Gap is a value that compares the diversity of the student population with the diversity of the teacher workforce. The Teacher Diversity Gap is calculated by dividing the percentage of racialized teachers by the percentage of the general population that is racialized.⁴⁸ A value of 1.0 indicates that the teacher workforce reflects the diversity of the student population and that there is no gap. One report⁴⁹ calculated the Teacher Diversity Gap for Ontario and Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and compared it to various American states. It found that 26% of Ontario's population and only 13% of the teacher workforce is racialized, resulting in a Teacher Diversity Gap of .50. The gap in the Toronto CMA is not much different. While 47% of the population in the Toronto CMA is racialized, only 25% of the teacher workforce is racialized, resulting in a teacher diversity gap of .53. While Ontario and the Toronto CMA take pride in diversity, these jurisdictions have gaps similar to Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and New York. This report concludes:

Without significant increases in the number of racialized teachers, the Teacher Diversity Gap will likely widen as the provincial population becomes increasingly racially diverse.

These demographic and societal changes create a compelling business case for the provincial government and Ontario's school boards to focus their efforts on hiring more racialized educators and on creating an inclusive organization in which they can contribute their best to their students.

School Climate

Some American studies have connected school climate to education outcomes for LGBTQ youth. They point out that a negative school climate puts LGBTQ students at risk of increased bullying and harassment, contributing to lowered self-esteem, school attendance, and education outcomes.⁵⁰ A comprehensive analysis of research published since 2000 also found evidence that a positive school climate can help

⁴⁸ ONABSE. (2015). *Voices of Ontario Black educators: An experiential report*. Retrieved from: http://onabse.org/ONABSE_VOICES_OF_BLACK_EDUCATORS_Final_Report.pdf

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Kosciw, J.G. et al. (2013). The effect of negative school climate on academic outcomes for LGBT youth and the role of in-school supports. *Journal of School Violence*, 12,; 45-63

improve outcomes for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and between students with stronger and weaker academic abilities.⁵¹

Various studies and news reports also point to increasing Islamophobia within the school system and highlight the need to address Islamophobia in schools. They suggest that the recent U.S. election and world events have resulted in a spike in Islamophobia in Ontario. A recently released report by the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants and the advocacy group Mass Minority found that “[t]here is an epidemic of Islamophobia in Ontario. Only a third of Ontarians have a positive impression of the religion and more than half feel its mainstream doctrines promote violence (an anomaly compared to other religions).”⁵²

One study, *Examining Islamophobia in Ontario Public Schools*,⁵³ identified three themes from Muslim students’ experiences in Ontario public schools:

- feelings of isolation and alienation
- lack of awareness about Islam and Muslims among peers and teachers
- lack of representation of Muslims in teaching and curriculum

The report recognized the Ministry of Education’s objective of creating a public education system that is “the most inclusive in the world” as articulated in a policy document entitled *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*.⁵⁴ It also recognizes that Ministry policies do not always translate into board policies. As such, it makes a number of recommendations, including more research to understand the experiences of Muslim students in Ontario’s public schools.

⁵¹ Berkowitz, R., Moore, H., Astor, R.A., & Benbenishty, R. (2016). A research synthesis of the associations between socioeconomic background, inequality, school climate, and academic achievement. *Review of Educational Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.aera.net/Newsroom/Recent-AERA-Research/A-Research-Synthesis-of-the-Associations-Between-Socioeconomic-Background-Inequality-School-Climate-and-Academic-Achievement>

⁵² Keung, N. (2016, July 4). Ontario facing 'epidemic of Islamophobia' survey finds. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com/news/immigration/2016/07/04/ontario-facing-epidemic-of-islamophobia-survey-finds.html>

⁵³ Hindy, N. (2016). *Examining Islamophobia in Ontario public schools*. Retrieved from <http://tessellateinstitute.com/publications/examining-islamophobia-in-ontario-public-schools/>

⁵⁴ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2009). *Ontario’s equity and inclusive education strategy*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Queen’s Printer.

Human Rights

Without the data to identify and assess the extent of issues facing students from diverse communities, backgrounds, and identities, the issues go unacknowledged and unaddressed. While parents and advocates may repeatedly raise issues with their school board, without the data to identify patterns throughout the board, they may be seen as individual issues rather than systemic ones. Furthermore, without province-wide data, the Ministry may see issues as particular to a specific board, rather than systemic throughout the public school system.

The lack of data also leaves individual students and parents to seek remedy through the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO). While their individual issues may be addressed, the systemic issues are not identified due to the lack of data. This also puts the onus on individual parents and students to invest the time, money, and emotional energy to go through the HRTO, while absolving school boards of the responsibility to examine and address the systemic nature of many of these issues. It may also lead to an increasing number of human rights complaints as different individuals try to have the same issue addressed.

Some lawyers have used creative ways to gather the data to support human rights complaints. In 2008, as part of a complaint involving the Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) to the HRTO, an education expert compared names of suspended students at one school to their yearbook photos to identify their race, in order to assess whether Black students experienced disproportionate suspensions. Again, this is costly and puts the onus on parents to pursue the issue through the human rights complaints process and pay for an expert to conduct the analysis.

In this case, while the HRTO did not find any racial discrimination in the specific case before the tribunal, the vice chair did comment on the data in his ruling and point to the need for further data collection and systemic analysis of the issue:

In my view, the racial disparity is so glaring as to cry out for further investigation and review by the respondent school board. It may be that this was an anomaly in the context of the specific disciplinable offence of fighting and/or bullying or in the context of the specific school year. On the other hand, the sheer extent of the racial disparity may point towards a deeper problem that needs to be identified

and addressed by the respondent school board. One will never know unless the issue is further reviewed and examined.⁵⁵

Social Inequality: Opportunity and Achievement Gaps

The achievement gap is the difference in educational outcomes between groups of students. It is generally accepted that achievement gaps are the result of gaps in opportunity and don't necessarily reflect gaps in underlying ability. As Welner and Carter (2013) suggest, we need to change our language and focus if we are to address the underlying causes: "Thinking in terms of 'achievement gaps' emphasizes the symptoms; thinking about unequal opportunity highlights the causes" (p. 3).⁵⁶

Students with lower levels of academic achievement also tend to be those whose families are marginalized in society and tend to be underserved outside of school. Key out-of-school factors such as health, housing, and access to enriching experiences outside of school impact learning and are highly dependent on socio-economic status.⁵⁷ While schools do not have control over students' out-of-school experiences, all service providers and educators can and do have a voice in advocating for broader social and economic equality. Effectively collecting and utilizing data about opportunities within and outside of school can support this effort.

As Rothstein (2013) notes, "No educator or policy-maker should be forced to choose between advocating for better schools or speaking out for greater social and economic equality. Both are essential. Each depends on the others. Educators cannot be effective if they make excuses for poor student performance. But they will have little chance for success unless they also join with advocates of social and economic reform to improve the conditions from which children come to school" (p. 74).⁵⁸

Reducing opportunity gaps will involve more intentional examination of the decisions made and services provided to students both within and outside of school. With existing and additional data, the Ministry and school boards can identify the gaps between

⁵⁵ Szekely, R. & Pessian, P. (2015, Aug. 6). Ontario Human Rights Tribunal finds there is a 'racial disparity' in Durham. Metroland Media, DurhamRegion.com. Retrieved from <http://www.durhamregion.com/community-story/5787114-ontario-human-rights-tribunal-finds-there-is-a-racial-disparity-in-durham/>

⁵⁶ Welner, K.G. & Carter, P.L. (2013). Achievement gaps arise from opportunity gaps. In P.L. Carter & K.G. Welner (Eds.). *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance* (pp. 1-10). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Rothstein, R. (2013). Why children from lower socioeconomic classes, on average, have lower academic achievement than middle-class children. In P.L. Carter & K.G. Welner (Eds.). *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance* (pp. 61-74). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

groups of students in opportunities and/or outcomes. Due to historical economic and social inequalities across racial and cultural groups, observed gaps in achievement are often related to demographic factors.

Cross-Sectoral Relationships

Unequal educational outcomes in Ontario's education system are impacted by students' out-of-school experiences. For example, children involved with the child welfare system have poorer educational outcomes, which could be linked to trauma, frequent moves, and other issues.

Further, the insufficiency of Ontario's education system to educate all children equitably goes beyond the school walls. Failure to complete high school is connected to an increase in the likelihood of involvement with the criminal justice system, thereby increasing costs of policing and time in the criminal justice system. Studies connect education to better life outcomes and identify the social costs of failure to complete high school connected to social programs and healthcare. There is also the societal cost of lost revenue from educated and employed individuals and the contributions they can make to the economy, tax revenues, and overall engagement in society. Conversely, an investment in education equity impacts outcomes for students across all aspects of their lives and impacts the budgets of other ministries and public sector organizations. For example, the Ministry of Education's investment in mental health supports may result in cost savings to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

A coordinated effort to collect demographic data across sectors (e.g., Early Years, Child Welfare, Correction/Justice Services, Indigenous Affairs, Health/Mental Health, Post-Secondary and Workforce) will allow for understanding of these issues across multiple sectors (see Appendix G). It will allow the provincial government to examine and address the interconnectedness of the various sectors on outcomes for Ontario's children and youth. Consistent and complete data across these systems would also help the provincial government target limited resources to affect maximum change in outcomes for Ontario's children and youth.

The lack of data across systems and data by consistent demographic groups leave large gaps in our knowledge and understanding of how various groups of children and youth fare across these systems. As a result, we have a fuzzy, unfocused, and incomplete picture of the issues, which many attempt to fill in using a patchwork of Canadian, American, and international data. As such, a full picture of the Ontario situation, along with the uniqueness of the situation in the province, is being missed.

Indigenous Students – Truth and Reconciliation

Many of the current issues in education discussed in this section impact the educational experiences and outcomes of Indigenous students, impacting their life outcomes. These issues interact with the issues arising from Canada’s historical legacy of residential schools, explored through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The final report of the commission identifies 94 calls to action, which are intended to address the structural and systemic racism experienced by Indigenous people, seven of which relate to education.⁵⁹

In light of these recommendations, the Province of Ontario has committed to make meaningful change and to report publicly on progress in the areas of health, employment, education, and justice. The Ministry of Education has committed to “working with Indigenous partners to ensure that the impact of residential schools, the history of colonization and the importance of treaties are incorporated into mandatory learning expectations in Ontario’s public education system curriculum.”⁶⁰

To meet these commitments, the province must give consistent and cross-sectoral attention to improving outcomes for Indigenous students in Ontario’s public education and child and youth systems. Reporting on outcomes related to early childhood education through to post-secondary access and employment will require robust data analysis.

1.3 Addressing Educational Issues: Policies, Programs, and Data Collection

Mandates for Education

The current premier’s Mandate Letters 2016 demonstrate a commitment to transparent accountability and expectation on behalf of Ontario’s students.⁶¹ Specifically, noted in Table 2 are some education-related key priorities listed in the Mandate Letters to the ministers responsible for Advanced Education and Skills Development, the Anti-Racism Directorate, Children and Youth Services, Education, Education – Early Years and Child

⁵⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). Calls to action. *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. (p. 5).

Retrieved from

http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf

⁶⁰ Mandate Letter to Education Minister (2016, September 23). Retrieved from

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-education>

⁶¹ Mandate Letter to Education Minister. (2016, September 23). Retrieved from

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-education>

Care, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. Leveraging and enhancing the Ministry’s data collection and capacity for analysis will strengthen these priority areas. It also must involve a balance between prescribed policy and program directives and latitude for community-based, locally driven innovation and solutions for educating students. The need for both standardized and unique need funding allocations must also exist.

Table 2: Education-Related Mandate Instructions to Ministers (September 2016)

Mandate Area	Specific Cross-Collaboration Priorities
Advanced Education and Skills Development	<i>“In close partnership with the Minister of Education, and with advice from the Minister of Children and Youth Services, postsecondary institutions, education leaders, students, parents and researchers, develop an access strategy to address the non-financial barriers to postsecondary education for underrepresented groups, including students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities and mature students.”⁶²</i>
Anti-Racism Directorate	<i>“Working with other ministers to provide an anti-racism perspective that will inform policies and programs, particularly in key sectors such as justice, children and youth services, education and immigration.”⁶³</i>
Children and Youth Services	<i>“Developing a Middle Years Strategy by working with the Minister of Education, Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care), and Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sports and other partners, to support children between six and 12 years old to successfully transition into their teen years by summer 2017.”⁶⁴</i>
Education	<i>“Collaborate with partners on strengthening data collection, performance measurement, evaluation and public reporting on education in Ontario. As part of this work, continue to partner with York University on a feasibility study into collecting additional province wide data, such as students’ race or parental education, to further inform understanding of student populations and school communities and address the needs of students. This work should be aligned with the work of the Anti-Racism Directorate and other government partners.”⁶⁵</i>

⁶² Mandate Letter to Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development. (2016, September 23). Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-advanced-education-and-skills-development>

⁶³ Mandate Letter to Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism. (2016, September 23). Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-anti-racism-directorate>

⁶⁴ Mandate Letter to Minister of Children and Youth Services. (2016, September 23). Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-children-and-youth-services>

⁶⁵ Mandate Letter to Education Minister. (2016, September 23). Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-education>

Education – Early Years and Child Care	“Building on efforts in the education system, establish ways to engage families on the continuum of early years and child care programs in Ontario informed by their wants, needs and experiences.” ⁶⁶
Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation	“Supporting the Minister of Education’s work to improve educational outcomes, closing the achievement gap for Indigenous learners by 2020 and significantly increasing graduation rates for Indigenous learners.” ⁶⁷

Provincial Strategies

The Ministry has long attempted to address issues of inequity by producing and implementing policies that maximize success for all students. The policy and program requirements for the education of students in today’s schools are outlined in *Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2016 (OS)*.⁶⁸ However, despite creating and implementing policies to support student learning, few policies have targeted the structural issues that continue to impact equity of academic outcomes, and none have required the routine collection of student demographic data on race, disability, and sexual orientation to identify inequities in education.

Released in 2009, the Ministry’s *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*⁶⁹ envisions an education system where every student has the opportunity to succeed regardless of their background or demographic characteristics. As such, the strategy aims to identify and address the barriers that limit students’ potential. The strategy notes that:

Barriers may be related to the following dimensions of diversity and/or their intersection: ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical ability, intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and others. (p. 12)⁷⁰

While the strategy helped establish equity as a priority for school boards, the strategy did not include the collection of additional student demographic data such as self-identified race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The 2014 *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* outlines the Ministry’s

⁶⁶ Mandate Letter to Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care). (2016, September 23). Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-education-early-years-and-child-care>

⁶⁷ Mandate Letter to Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. (2016, September 23). Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-indigenous-relations-and-reconciliation>

⁶⁸ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2016). *Ontario schools, kindergarten to grade 12: Policy and program requirements, 2016 (OS)*. p. 7. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/index.html>

⁶⁹ Ontario Ministry of Education (2009). *Ontario’s equity and inclusive education strategy*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Queen’s Printer.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

commitment to promoting equity and notes that one way to achieve this goal is to “[b]roaden the measures of success and the use of perceptual and demographic data (e.g., perceptual surveys) so that program and service enhancements address the specific needs of students who continue to struggle” (p. 19).⁷¹ The goal is to use this data to identify inequities in access, opportunity, and/or achievement for different groups of students. With the disparities identified, intentional interventions and proactive services can target underserved student populations and communities. While the renewed vision identifies the importance of using perceptual and demographic data, it does not mandate the collection of additional student demographic data.

A discussion paper was recently prepared by Ontario academics and school board researchers who have interest and expertise in student equity and demographic data collection.⁷² They state that the goals of the provincial *Equity and Inclusive Education* strategy cannot be achieved without a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that is informed and supported by data and that will allow bias and systemic barriers to be identified.⁷³

Board-Specific Initiatives

School boards across Ontario have encountered increasing scrutiny over their approaches to addressing systemic racism and marginalization. While staff, students, and parents across Ontario have echoed concerns around recurring incidents of racism and discrimination, such as Islamophobia,⁷⁴ few school boards have committed to collecting demographic data in their school communities.

Prior to the amalgamation of the six Toronto area school boards in 1998, the former Toronto Board of Education had regularly collected disaggregated race-based data through its Every Student Survey. The first Every Student Survey was administered in 1970 in response to community concerns that children living in poverty and of immigrant backgrounds were overrepresented in special education classes, similar to concerns being raised today. The surveys were conducted periodically over the next three decades, but were discontinued at the time of amalgamation. In 2004, as a result of a

⁷¹ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). *Achieving excellence: A renewed vision for education in Ontario*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Queen’s Printer.

⁷² York Centre for Education and Community. (2012). *Demographic data and student equity: Draft discussion paper*. (KNAER)

⁷³ Gormley L., Brown R., James C., Basu R., Favaro P., Oracheski J., & Turner C. (2013, June). *Re-thinking demographic data in terms of student equity*. Paper presented to the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE), Victoria, BC.

⁷⁴ Javed, N. & Rushowy, K. (2016, February 23). Racial incidents ignored by York board, families say. *Toronto Star*.

Board motion, the TDSB underwent a two-year process of community consultation and planning, and in fall 2006 it launched its first Student Census – a system-wide survey for students in Grades 7 to 12. In 2008 it launched its first Parent Census – a system-wide survey of parents of students in Kindergarten to Grade 6 students.^{75,76} The board continued with a system-wide census of both students and parents again in 2011-12 and will be executing the third iteration of the Student and Parent Census this coming year (2016-17). In 2014, the board also initiated its first Adult Education Census. An Adult Education Census is an example of school boards eager to include the entirety of their student population so as to best inform program and resource allocation in a more precise way.

What made the TDSB Student Census unique was that it was, and continues to be, confidential but not anonymous, in that student identification numbers are used to link census data to other centrally available data sources (e.g., TDSB Student School Information System, EQAO, and student report cards), allowing for disparities in access, opportunity, and achievement to be identified by demographic factors.

The census asks questions relating to students' demographics, family background, self-perceptions, and in- and out-of-school experiences. Demographic-related questions included: gender, student place of birth, language(s) spoken, parent place of birth, student racial background and ethnic identity, Aboriginal background, student sexual orientation, disabilities, and family characteristics (e.g., parental presence, parent educational and employment status, and family socio-economic status). For the first time in 2017, the census will include a question about religious background.

A few years later, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) followed suit, initiating a web- and paper-based student survey in the 2010-11 school year.⁷⁷ The board chose to work with an external organization to conduct the survey, which included critical demographic data on students and their families as well as perceptual information from students and parents. The board's main purpose was to develop a demographic profile of the student population by district and by school; allow for the

⁷⁵ Yau, M. & O'Reilly, J. (2007). *2006 student census, grades 7-12 system overview*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.

⁷⁶ O'Reilly, J. & Yau, M. (2009). *2008 parent census, kindergarten – grade 6: System overview and detailed findings*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.

⁷⁷ Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. (2012, September). *2010-2011 OCDSB student survey: JK to 6*. Retrieved from

<http://www.ocdsb.ca/calendar/AGENDA%20DOCS/2012%20DOCS/October%202012/COW%2016%20Oct%202012/07aiAA%20OCDSB%20Student%20Census%20Report%20JK%20to%206.pdf>

self-identification of Aboriginal students; and better understand the learning needs of particular sub-groups of students.

All OCDSB students (Grades 7 to 12) and parents (K-Grade 6) enrolled in the district were invited to participate in the survey. The survey asked multiple demographic questions about students and their families, which included: place of birth, race and ethnicity, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, and home life arrangement/family characteristics (e.g., parental education, employment status).

With reference to the situation of Black male students, both the Peel District School Board (PDSB) and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB) have begun to plan and implement their own student surveys, targeting a launch in the fall of 2018. The PDSB recently announced their plans to conduct a student census to collect broader demographic data - including race – for the purposes of better understanding and supporting their diverse student population.⁷⁸ The public board’s counterpart, the DPCDSB is also planning to conduct a student survey later this school year.⁷⁹ The survey will focus on equity and inclusion and will gather demographic data including race, gender, and cultural background.

Other boards, while interested in proceeding with broader demographic data collections, are looking to the Ministry to provide direction and support. For example, York Region District School Board (YRDSB) has been advocating that the Ministry improve its collection of student demographic data since August 2014. While the Board appears committed to collecting broader demographic data, they have been grappling with how to address the myriad of issues raised by data collection (e.g., accountability, data security, information use, cost).

The YRDSB recently decided that it would only proceed with additional collections when the Ministry mandates the collection and “provides clear parameters and guidelines for its implementation.”⁸⁰ The “Every Student Counts” survey was intended to collect students’ demographic and perceptual data and because it was to be connected to a unique student identifier, had the potential to correlate students’ demographic,

⁷⁸ Gordon, A. (2016, November 25). Peel school board plans to collect race-based data on students. *Toronto Star*

⁷⁹ Spencer, J. (2016, December 14). Student survey to drill down into equity issues in Catholic board. *MetrolandMedia*, Mississauga.com.

⁸⁰ York Region District School Board (2015, December 8). Collection of student demographic data: YRDSB staff response to the Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee (EIAC) Motion on the feasibility of conducting the Every Student Census Survey. Retrieved from <https://yrdsb.civicweb.net/document/55359>

perceptual, and achievement data^{81,82}. Similarly, the Durham District School Board (DDSB) recently issued a media release stating that it is “looking forward to collecting race-based data to further improve how it responds to student issues” once the province has provided criteria, timelines, and financial support.⁸³

The Ministry and its school boards have grappled with how best to ensure the success of all students within their care. From an updated vision and renewed goals and mandates, policies and data collections, to mandatory local school improvement plans and programs, the Ministry needs to do more to address continuing systemic inequity. Furthermore, school boards would benefit from greater provincial direction and support to address ongoing systemic issues.

⁸¹ Spencer, J. (2016, December 14). Student survey to drill down into equity issues in Catholic board. MetrolandMedia, Mississauga.com

⁸² Javed, N. & Rushowy, K. (2017, February 9). York board investigators ‘overwhelmed’ with complainants. *Toronto Star*.

⁸³ Durham District School Board. (2016 November 2). DDSB welcomes announcement that all school boards will collect race-based data. [News Release] Retrieved from <http://www.ddsb.ca/MediaDesk/MediaReleases/MR%2020152016%20%2020162017/2016-2017/DDSB%20Welcomes%20Announcement%20that%20all%20School%20Boards%20Will%20Collect%20Race-Based%20Data.pdf>

2. What Further Response Is Required from the Ministry?

Through the environmental scan and consultative work undertaken as part of this study, three major themes emerged: leveraging, enhancing, and focusing on data.

First, the Ministry has opportunities to more fully leverage the data that are currently available in the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS) and other sources. Doing so will support its equity policy directions and the more immediate use of this data for determining funding allocations, supporting internal Ministry and school board decision-making, school improvement and public reporting. Second, the Ministry's equity agenda could be further enhanced through collecting additional data, demographic as well as perceptual, program/process, and student learning data. Finally, the Ministry must also have an expanded focus and precisely use existing and additional OnSIS data to monitor and publicly report indicators to promote equity, achievement, well-being, and public confidence in Ontario's education system.

These three themes are discussed in greater detail in this section, and serve to inform and frame many of the recommendations. Some of the successful work that the Ministry and its school boards are already accomplishing in these three areas is highlighted, and the recommendations made are intended to leverage and further build on this good work.

2.1 Leveraging the Data and Identifying Limitations

Demographic Data Currently Collected

Schools in all jurisdictions across Ontario collect administrative data pertaining to their student populations. Some of this data is collected at the time of school registration and much of it is demographic (e.g., age and month/year of birth, gender, language first spoken, country of birth, year of entry to Canada, postal code of home address, students receiving special education programs and/or services, and Indigenous student self-identification data).

The Ministry collects student and educator-level data from each school and board through OnSIS, a web-based application system. OnSIS collects elemental level data on courses, classes, students, and educators three times a year (October, March, June), as well as specific points in the summer (see Appendices D and E). The demographic variables collected through OnSIS are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Demographic Variables Collected Through OnSIS

Age and month/year of birth	Country of birth; year of entry to Canada	Postal code of home address
Gender	Board residence status	Post-secondary education registration
Language first spoken	Indigenous student self-identification	Identified students with special education needs*

*This group is potentially a different population than students who self-identify as disabled.

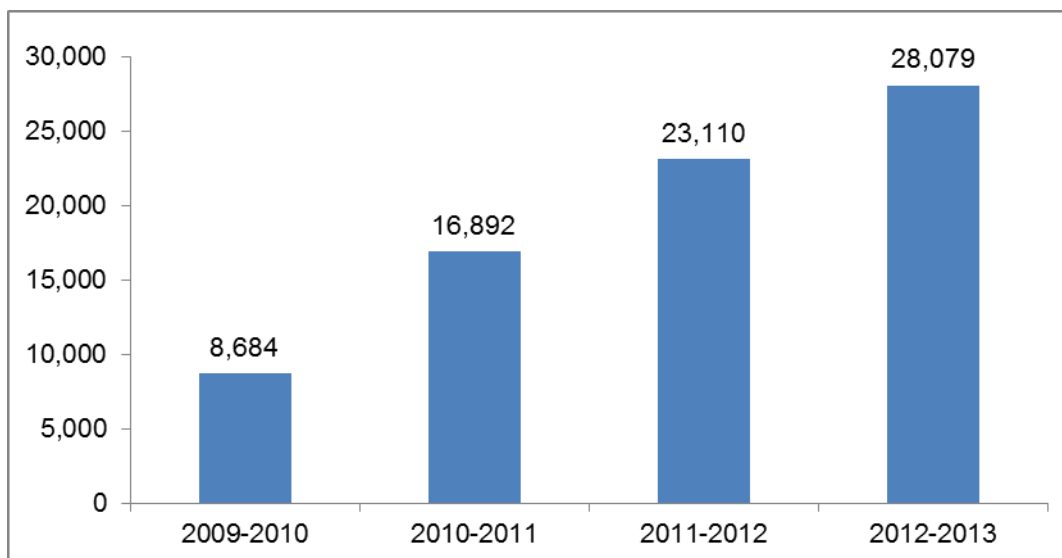
Data available through OnSIS and Statistics Canada can support Ministry investigations into how school-based processes and policies shape equitable opportunities and outcomes for students. The Ministry's Education Statistics and Analysis Branch (ESAB) works with policy and program areas to identify opportunities to undertake statistical analysis that supports evidence-based decision-making related to the goals of *Achieving Excellence*. Across the pre-kindergarten, school age, and post-secondary sectors, analysis exploring student achievement and equitable opportunities can provide the Ministry with insight on educational trends and outcomes. Through this work, the Ministry can examine issues related to education and access to education-related opportunities from before students begin school to when they reach post-secondary.

Data on Indigenous Students

The Ministry released the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Education Policy in 2007 which was intended to provide the strategic policy context to improve the academic achievement of Indigenous students who attend provincially funded elementary and secondary schools. As of 2011-12, the data show that approximately 64,000 of the 78,000 school-aged Indigenous children in the province are enrolled in the Ontario public education system.

Part of implementing the policy is collecting data to assess the success of its implementation and outcomes for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. The Ministry's effort to collect Indigenous student self-identification data through OnSIS began in 2009-10, and continues to show success (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Year-over-Year Comparison of Indigenous Self-Identification Data in Ontario School System



Source: Ontario School Information System (OnSIS). Enrolment as of October 31 for each year. October 2012 data are preliminary and subject to change.

Further to Figure 1, Indigenous self-identification data in subsequent years was 33,509 in 2013-14; 38,038 in 2014-15; and 40,402 in 2015-16 (preliminary and subject to change). As such, 63% of the 64,000 Indigenous students in the Ontario public school system have self-identified.

In the second progress report on the implementation of the FNMI Education Policy Framework, the Ministry notes the importance of collecting data on Indigenous students in provincially funded schools. The report notes that the data is necessary to:⁸⁴

- assess Ontario's progress in supporting all Indigenous students in reaching their full potential
- assess progress toward student achievement performance measures
- identify and close the achievement gap between Indigenous students and all students
- understand the needs and challenges facing Indigenous learners
- assess progress achieved as a result of implementing targeted strategies and initiatives designed to improve and advance the academic achievement of Indigenous students

⁸⁴ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2013). *A solid foundation: Second progress report on the implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/ASolidFoundation.pdf>

- assist school boards in improving programs and supports for Indigenous students
- enable boards to focus their efforts on effective student achievement strategies

This report notes that the self-identification data collected from Indigenous students provides a baseline against which progress in closing the achievement gap for Indigenous students can be measured.

The collection and use of additional demographic data for FNMI students point to its value in addressing the schooling and educational situations of students. As such, the Ministry's rationale for collecting this additional demographic data should be applied to all Ontario students.

School Climate Data

The Ministry of Education requires that school boards collect and report on students' experiences in school through the collection and analysis of school climate data. However, school boards rarely have the capacity to connect students' academic achievement to experiential data (e.g., experiences of safety, bullying, social inclusion, participation, etc.) and student demographic or identification characteristics (e.g., ethno-racial, religious, sexual orientation, etc.). To investigate where disparities across ethno-racial, cultural, and other identity characteristics occur, it is important that boards understand the issues that affect students' participation in school, their educational performance, and learning outcomes. An effective investigative strategy is to collect student demographic data so it can be cross-examined with students' academic achievement, program opportunities, and perceptual and experiential feedback.

The Ministry requires all schools to administer anonymous school climate surveys to students, school staff, and parents at least once every two years. These surveys collect a range of experiences with equity and inclusive education, bullying and harassment, through questions such as:

- Students: How do they feel about their school? Have they ever felt unwelcome or uncomfortable at school because of personal characteristics? Do they feel there are barriers that stand in the way of their learning at school? Have they experienced bullying or harassment?
- Parents: How does their child feel about school? Have school rules been applied fairly? Has their child experienced bullying or harassment? Have they encountered barriers to student learning?
- School staff: How do they think the students feel about their school? Do students ever feel unwelcome or uncomfortable at school because of their sex, race,

religion, etc.? What do they perceive as barriers to student learning? What do they perceive to be the extent of bullying/harassment within the school?

These surveys also collect the following demographic data of the students: grade, gender, first language, length of time in Canada (e.g., all or part of their life). Due to the anonymity of school climate surveys, data collected cannot be used to measure student academic outcomes.

Limitations and the Importance of Additional Demographic Data

Data that provide a full picture of the diversity of Ontario's student population would allow the education system to anticipate and better adapt to this diversity. This additional demographic data will enable school boards and the Ministry to measure educational disparities among students from diverse communities, backgrounds, and identities; investigate the causes of these disparities; and create the programs to address them. More complete demographic data would allow for more targeted interventions and better use of limited education funds.

The routine collection of demographic data is an issue being considered in various sectors and in various parts of Canada. This is being spurred on by analysis of the limited data that has been collected in a few organizations. For example, the Children's Aid Society of Toronto released its analysis of data on children in care.⁸⁵ The data showed that Black children made up 41% of children in care, even though they made up only 8.5% of the City of Toronto population. This concrete data, coupled with decades of advocacy by the Black community, led to a study funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the development of a Practice Framework to be used by child welfare agencies to address the disproportionality and disparities faced by Black children and families. This work contributed to the Minister indicating that he will require all child welfare agencies to collect disaggregated race-based data on the children and families involved with the child welfare system.

In addition, exposing the limited ability Canadians have to examine issues that are routinely explored in the United States and United Kingdom also contributes to the voices calling for the routine collection of demographic data. For example, Canadian public health experts rely on American or British data that indicate that, on average, racialized people have poorer health outcomes than Whites. However, they are unable to examine the same issues in Canada. In an article for the Dalla Lana School of Public

⁸⁵ Children's Aid Society of Toronto, as reported in: Contenta, S., Monsebraaten, L., & Rankin, J. (2014, December 11). Why are so many black children in foster and group homes? *Toronto Star*.

Health at the University of Toronto, one researcher wrote, “How big are racial health inequities in Canada and what are the processes that lead to these inequities? The answer, unfortunately, is we simply don’t have the data to say.”⁸⁶

In recognition of the public health information gap for Ontario’s children and youth, a recent research project entitled *Children Count: Assessing Child and Youth Surveillance Gaps for Ontario Public Health Units* led by public health units representing all regions of the province surveyed 36 public health units and set out to examine gaps in health related areas for children and youth. The project noted at the outset that Ontario currently does not have a systematic method of data collection and analysis to determine population-specific health needs of Ontario’s children and youth. As a result, the capacity to deliver, assess, and monitor priority population services is limited. The project is anticipated to report out in March 2017.

While collecting race-based and other demographic data is important, it is critical that this data be disaggregated by race and ethnicity. The available data from the child welfare system, policing, and education show how much variance there is in the experiences of various ethno-racial groups with these systems. For example, the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto data shows that while Black children are over-represented in their involvement with CAS, Asian children are under-represented. The Black community makes up 8.5% of the Toronto population, yet make up 41% of children in care. Conversely, Asians make up 35% of the Toronto population, yet represent 9% of children in care.

While differences between racial groups may be masked by grouping all racialized groups together, differences within racialized groups may also be masked by these groupings. For example, TDSB data show differences in education outcomes within the Black population, in which West African, Somali, and Jamaican students all have different educational outcomes. Similarly, differences for Chinese, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, and Filipino students may be masked by grouping them within the broader category of Asian. For example, a 2014 study found that non-immigrant Filipinos are less likely than other Asians to have a bachelor’s or higher-level degree.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Siddiqi, A. (2015, October 16). Should we routinely collect data on race? Canada at a crossroads. [Online article]. Retrieved from <http://www.dlsph.utoronto.ca/2015/10/should-we-routinely-collect-data-on-race-canada-at-a-crossroads/>

⁸⁷ Kelly, P. (2014). *Understanding intergenerational social mobility: Filipino youth in Canada*. IRPP Study No. 45 [Monograph]. Retrieved from <http://irpp.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/research/diversity-immigration-and-integration/filipino-youth/kelly-feb-2014.pdf>

Furthermore, the lack of data also leaves gaps in our understanding of the disparities faced by many groups of students. For example, a large proportion of racialized students are born in Canada. As such, asking only about place of birth does not allow us to examine the experiences of racialized students. In addition, asking only about whether the student is or is not Canadian-born means that we are unable to understand the generational differences in education outcomes, such as between first-generation students (i.e., those born outside of Canada), second-generation students (i.e., those born in Canada to immigrant parents), and third-generation students (i.e., those born in Canada to Canadian-born parents).

While considering what additional demographic data to collect, sub-categories should be considered too. This will ensure that differences within very diverse categories of people (e.g., racialized students, LGBTQ, and students with a disability) can be exposed and explored.

While school boards currently collect a range of demographic data on students, there are a few key aspects of social identity that most school boards and the Ministry do not currently collect data on, including: race, ethnicity, creed (religion), disability, gender identity, and sexual orientation. In addition, these key demographic data are not asked as part of perceptual surveys, such as the School Climate Surveys. Furthermore, allowing school boards to collect data on their own, with no provincial standards to ensure consistency, will result in gaps within the provincial picture of whether, and to what extent, education equity is achieved for students from diverse communities, backgrounds, and identities. Routine, consistent demographic data collection will allow school boards and the Ministry to close these knowledge gaps and create an education system that better serves all of Ontario's students.

This limited data collection then limits the understanding of the issues faced by students and parents from diverse communities, backgrounds, and identities both at the local and provincial levels. Developing and implementing targeted interventions that address specific groups of students is critically important as the student population becomes more diverse and education plays an increasingly important role in life outcomes. As such, the Ministry needs to deepen its capacity to uncover where inequities exist.

Calls for Additional Demographic Collections

The limitations and importance of demographic data collection has been a subject of significant discussion and interest in Ontario. Almost 30 years ago, a Provincial

Advisory Panel on Race Relations⁸⁸ recommended that school boards collect data on students' race and educational program placement to assess whether there were racial groups who were disproportionately represented in some school programs.

More than two decades ago, the provincial government established the Royal Commission on Learning to outline a vision to guide reforms to elementary and secondary school education in Ontario. The Royal Commission's report, *For the Love of Learning*,⁸⁹ was released in 1994 with a series of recommendations designed to ensure that Ontario's youth would be well-prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century. One of the recommendations was that a broader set of demographic characteristics be collected and reported at the provincial level. The Commission recommended that:

The Ministry of Education and Training, in consultation with community members and researchers, develop a specific procedure for collecting and reporting province-wide data on student achievement (marks, and Grade 3 and Grade 11 literacy test results) for groups identified according to gender, race, ethno-cultural background, and socio-economic status. (p. 33)

In 1993, just before the Royal Commission made its recommendations, the Ministry released *Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards*,⁹⁰ which indicated that school boards would need to collect data relating to the race and ethnicity of their students to monitor the impact of their anti-racism and ethnocultural equity policies and programs. However, none of Ontario's school boards responded by collecting data on race and ethnicity.

There have been calls for the collection of demographic data in other sectors as well. A prominent example is the *Review of the Roots of Youth Violence*⁹¹ report released in 2008 which recommended that race-based data be collected at the provincial level across sectors, including education:

To lay the foundation for the extensive action required to address this growing problem, the Province should proceed immediately to develop the methodology for the collection of race-based data in all key domains. (p. 41)

⁸⁸ Ontario Ministry of Education. (1987). *The development of a policy on race and ethnocultural equity*. Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Race Relations.

⁸⁹ Royal Commission on Learning. (1994). *For the love of learning: Report of the Royal Commission on Learning. Volume 1*.

⁹⁰ Ontario Ministry of Education. (1993). *Ethnocultural equity in school boards: Guidelines for policy development and implementation*. (p. 18).

⁹¹ McMurtry, R. & Curling, A. (2008). *Review of the roots of youth violence*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

The establishment in 2016 of an Anti-Racism Directorate, which aims to “apply an anti-racism lens to the development, implementation and evaluation of all government policies, programs and services,” has again underscored the need for disaggregated race-based data. To support its mandate, the Anti-Racism Directorate is focused on four key areas: Policy, Research and Evaluation; Public Awareness and Education; Community Collaboration; and Sustainable Governance. In the area of Policy, Research and Evaluation, the focus will be to “use evidence to identify, monitor and prevent systemic racism in Ontario”⁹² and disaggregated race-based data will be critical.

A current report by the African Canadian Legal Clinic entitled *The Blackening Margins of Multiculturalism: The African Canadian Experience of Exclusion from the Economic, Social and Cultural Promise and Prosperity of Canada* also asserts:

The right of self-determination of African Canadians is significantly undermined in Canada because of its government bodies’ and state agencies’ chronic reluctance to systematically and regularly collect and publicize race-based disaggregated data. Without this data, the African Canadian community is significantly compromised. (p. 9)⁹³

Finally, the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario also indicated that the Ministry and the province’s school boards should collect broader demographic data in its recommendation that the Ministry “assess the viability of calculating student success indicators by a variety of attributes such as ethnicity, language, and socio-economic status, and consider a system or process for collecting data based on student self-identification” (p. 278).⁹⁴

Members of various communities in Ontario have also been advocating for more comprehensive demographic data on students. While students, parents, and community organizations have raised concerns about disparities in educational experiences and outcomes, the lack of complete province-wide demographic data makes it difficult to fully understand the issues as they pertain to all students and racialized and other

⁹² Anti-Racism Directorate. (2016). Anti-racism directorate. [Webpage] Last modified January 25, 2017, Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/anti-racism-directorate>

⁹³ Morgan, A. (2016). *The blackening margins of multiculturalism: The African Canadian experience of exclusion from the economic, social and cultural promise and prosperity of Canada*. A Report on the Canadian Government’s Compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the 57th Session of the Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (February 22 to March 4 of 2016). Submitted by African Canadian Legal Clinic.

⁹⁴ Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. (2011). *Annual report*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Queens Printer for Ontario.

marginalized students in particular. Further, the lack of data makes it impossible to understand the extent to which the issues raised by students, parents, and community organizations go beyond their particular school and board, and whether province-wide strategies are needed to impact change. In the consultations held by Dr. James of York University with the Black community, one of the key consultation questions was regarding the collection of disaggregated race-based data throughout the public school system. While there was concern about how the data would be collected and who would analyze and interpret the data, everyone agreed that disaggregated race-based data should be collected for all students in Ontario in order to examine and address inequities in the education system.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has long recognized the importance of collecting and analyzing demographic data to address systemic discrimination and has expressed a commitment to supporting the Ministry's work to develop an informed data collection strategy. In its guide to collecting data,⁹⁵ the OHRC notes that collecting data that identifies people on the basis of the Ontario Human Rights Code – such as race, disability, or sexual orientation – is permitted for a purpose consistent with the Code and is in accordance with Canada's human rights legislative framework.

Examples of Code-consistent purposes include:

- monitoring and evaluating discrimination
- identifying and removing systemic barriers
- lessening or preventing disadvantage
- promoting substantive equality for people identified by Code grounds

One key argument for the collection of demographic data is that barriers to access may not always be apparent. For example, collecting data on people who identify as having an “invisible” disability may shed light on often hidden barriers in their access to curriculum, services, and supports in school. As stated by the OHRC, “Disabilities are often ‘invisible’ and episodic, with people sometimes experiencing periods of wellness and periods of disability. All people with disabilities have the same rights to equal opportunities under the Code whether their disabilities are visible or not” (p. 4).⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2010). *Count me in! Collecting human rights-based data*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Government of Ontario.

⁹⁶ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2016). *Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability*.

Retrieved from

http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Policy%20on%20ableism%20and%20discrimination%20based%20on%20disability_accessible_2016.pdf

The OHRC's position is that "data collection and analysis should be undertaken where an organization or institution has or ought to have reason to believe that discrimination, systemic barriers or the perpetuation of historical disadvantage may potentially exist" (p.43).⁹⁷ The guide notes that the need for data collection may be in response to one or more of these factors:

- persistent allegations of systemic barriers
- a widespread public perception of systemic discrimination
- evidence from other organizations or jurisdictions that a similar policy, program, or practice has had a positive or disproportionate effect on Code-protected persons
- an observed unequal distribution of Code-protected groups in an organization
- objective data or research studies showing that discrimination or systemic barriers do or do not exist⁹⁸

Similar to the discussion in the education sector, there is also a recent heightened discussion about the necessity of having disaggregated demographic data in other sectors to inform policy and program decisions. This is particularly important for Ontario's most vulnerable populations.

These vulnerable populations include: children in care, students identified as having special education needs, students in conflict with the law, and adjudicated youth. All of these populations require intentional outreach and support, and each of the sectors serving these students could benefit from the insights that additional data might provide.

Arguing for the importance of race data across sectors, James (2016) notes that "the absence of current province-wide representative demographic longitudinal data on youth points to a desperately needed source of valid evidence to make effective policy decisions to service the heterogeneous population of Ontario" (p. 26).⁹⁹

The United Nations has also weighed in on the lack of disaggregated race-based data in Canada. The United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent made an official visit to Canada in October 2016. In its statement to the media following the visit, the Working Group noted:

⁹⁷ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2005). *Policy and guidelines on racism and racial discrimination*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Government of Ontario.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ James, C. (2016). *What about race – the race variable that is? The importance of race data*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: York Centre for Education and Community, York University.

Despite the wealth of information and data on socio-economic indicators, there is a serious lack of race-based data and research that could inform prevention, intervention and treatment strategies for African Canadians. Authorities acknowledged that disaggregated data along ethnic lines is necessary to understand the human rights concerns of African Canadians. The Working Group is concerned that the category “visible minorities” obscures the realities and specific concerns of African Canadians.¹⁰⁰

While its report will not be released until fall 2017, the Working Group did release preliminary recommendations, which included the collection of disaggregated race-based data. One recommendation is to “[i]mplement a nation-wide mandatory disaggregated data collection policy, based on race, colour, ethnic background, national origin and other identities, to determine if and where racial disparities exist for African Canadians to address them accordingly.”¹⁰¹ Since the initial call for additional demographic data collections, a third cohort of students is receiving education in Ontario.

What’s Possible? Comparative Provincial and Board Analyses

As noted, the Ministry of Education currently has considerable capacity to collect and perform data analyses relating to school processes and student population. This report has provided evidence for the Ministry’s need to collect further demographic data. To develop and implement targeted interventions that address specific sectors of students, the Ministry needs to deepen its capacity to uncover where inequities exist. One school board in Ontario already collects extensive demographic data that can be correlated to student outcomes: the Toronto District School Board.

Through its Student and Parent Census, the TDSB asks parents and student communities about their experiences inside and outside of school as well as identifying several demographic characteristics (e.g., race, language, profession, parent education, sexuality). Exploring the demographic data in relation to program information (e.g., program participation, streaming, special education identification, support), achievement (e.g., credit accumulation, graduation, post-secondary access), and other schooling characteristics (e.g., suspension, attendance), the TDSB has the capacity to perform

¹⁰⁰ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (2016). Statement to the media by the United Nations’ Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, on the conclusion of its official visit to Canada, 17-21 October 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20732&LangID=E#sthash.ipnZs5h7.dpuf>

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

analyses that reveal where certain students are encountering barriers as they navigate the school system.

The issue of equity has been widely discussed in relation to the ways in which schools and school system organize students, enact disciplinary measures, and provide program opportunities. For the purpose of this report, the Ministry has provided analyses that reflect where some of the equity issues lie within these areas and others. Using the TDSB as a case example where enhanced capacity is enabled through collecting demographic data, comparable analyses are included that highlight the role that students' identity characteristics can play in achieving equity of access, participation, and academic outcomes.

The report now presents three case examples that demonstrate the current capacity of the Ministry and how it could be enhanced with the collection and analysis of additional demographic data.

1) Case example of the relationship between special education and post-secondary access

International literature draws attention to the cumulative disadvantages of placing students into lower ability groups such as Locally Developed Program of Study and self-contained special education classes. According to empirical evidence, students placed in lower ability groups receive less academic instruction and fewer opportunities for social development, and they encounter perpetual low expectations.¹⁰²

Existing data currently collected by the Ministry show notable differences in students' access to post-secondary education between regular and special education placements. As can be seen in Table 4, students who are educated in self-contained/partially integrated classes (excluding gifted) are much less likely to access college or university after completing high school.

¹⁰² Mitchell, D. (2010). *Education that fits: Review of international trends in the education of students with special educational needs*. Christchurch, New Zealand: University of Canterbury. Retrieved from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/86011/Mitchell-Review-Final.pdf

Table 4: Ontario Provincial Trends on the Relationship between Special Education and Post-Secondary Access for Students Who Were in Grade 9 in the 2009-10 School Year

	College	University	Other*
Total Students	25.0%	33.0%	42.0%
Gifted (Fully Self-Contained or Partially Integrated)	4.0%	69.0%	27.0%
Gifted (Indirect Service, Resource Assistance, Withdrawal Assistance)	8.0%	65.0%	27.0%
Special Education: Fully Self-Contained or Partially Integrated (excl. Gifted)	19.0%	4.0%	77.0%
Special Education: Indirect Service, Resource Assistance, Withdrawal Assistance (excl. Gifted)	28.0%	9.0%	63.0%
Students not receiving Special Education programs	25.0%	37.0%	38.0%

* "Other" post-secondary for students may include destinations such as: registered to a college or university outside of Ontario; remained in secondary school; started an apprenticeship; entered the workforce; or took a year off before registering in a college or university.

How does the inclusion of additional demographic data further tell the story?

The TDSB data allows for a more in-depth analysis and understanding of these issues. For example, the representation of students identified as having special education needs can be explored by race. This analysis identifies racial disproportionalities in special education identifications.

As Table 5 shows, while 12.4 % of students in the Grade 9 cohort self-identified as Black, 31.5% of students identified as having a Mild Intellectual Disability are Black. Conversely, students who self-identified as East Asian make up 18.3% of the cohort, but account for 28.5% of the population of students identified as Gifted. Similarly, students who self-identified as White accounted for 34.2% of the cohort, but represent over half of the students identified with a Learning Disability (53.2%) and over half of those identified as Gifted (52.1%).¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Brown, R., Presley, A., & Parekh, G. (2011) *Special education fact sheet 4*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board. Retrieved from <http://schoolweb.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/regentheights/docs/Gr9CohortFactSheet4SpecialEducation.pdf>

Table 5: Special Education Exceptionalities by Racial Background within the TDSB (Grade 9 Cohort 2006-11)

Subgroups (Grade 7 Status)	Black	East Asian	Latin	Middle Eastern	Mixed	South Asian	South East Asian	White
Gifted	4.6%	28.5%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	7.4%	1.1%	52.1%
Students without Spec. Ed. Needs	10.6%	19.8%	1.8%	4.1%	5.9%	20.6%	3.9%	33.4%
LD	17.1%	6.7%	3.8%	0.9%	7.6%	7.6%	3.1%	53.2%
MID	31.5%	2.8%	2.8%	9.6%	5.6%	20.2%	3.4%	24.2%
Other non-Gifted Exceptionalities	25.2%	10.4%	3.5%	5.2%	8.7%	11.3%	3.5%	32.2%
IEP Only	27.2%	9.9%	2.9%	6.5%	6.6%	14.8%	3.0%	29.0%
All Students in Grade 7 (2004) and Grade 12 (2011)	12.4%	18.3%	2.0%	4.2%	6.0%	19.2%	3.7%	34.2%

Through the collection of additional demographic data, the Ministry can have a provincial picture of whether student demographics are equitably represented across identification and placement recommendations. A key process involved in making identification and placement decisions is the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC). Review of cumulative identifications and placement decisions that result in the disproportionality of race, class, and gender could lead reforms that enable more equitable outcomes for all students.

2) Case example of the relationship between suspensions, achievement, and student characteristics

Not only do suspensions indicate evidence of inappropriate conduct and disciplinary practice, but students' history and experience of suspension is closely tied to student organization, identification, and placement decisions.

It has been well documented that disciplinary policies and practices in schools have a direct impact on student learning. For example, it was estimated that public school children in the United States lost nearly 18 million days of instruction during the 2011-12 school year because of exclusionary discipline policies.¹⁰⁴ Students who were suspended and/or expelled, particularly those who were repeatedly disciplined,¹⁰⁵ were more likely to be held back a grade or to drop out of school.¹⁰⁶ Balfanz, Brynes, and Fox

¹⁰⁴ Losen, D., Hodson, C., Keith II, M.A., Morrison, K., & Belway, S. (2015). *Are we closing the school discipline gap?* Retrieved from <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/federal-reports/are-we-closing-the-school-discipline-gap>

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Fabelo, T., Thompson, M.D., Plotkin, M., Carmichael, D., Marchbanks III, M.P. & Booth, E.A. (2011). *Breaking schools' rules: A statewide study of how school discipline relates to students' success and juvenile justice involvement.* Retrieved from: https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/.../Breaking_Schools_Rules_Report_Final.pdf

(2015) found that out-of-school suspensions are significantly and negatively correlated with high school graduation, as well as post-secondary enrolment and persistence, resulting in tremendous economic costs for the suspended student, the school, and the larger society.¹⁰⁷ Among different racial groups in the United States, Black students were disproportionately suspended/expelled at a much higher rate than their representation in the student population.¹⁰⁸

The Ministry's ESAB conducted an analysis, using the student as the unit of analysis versus the number of suspensions. The majority of the 52,715 suspended students in the 2014-15 school year were male (77% or 40,591 students), and almost half (47% or 24,776 students) were students with special education needs. For students with an identified exceptionality, Learning Disability and Behaviour were the two categories associated with the most suspensions.

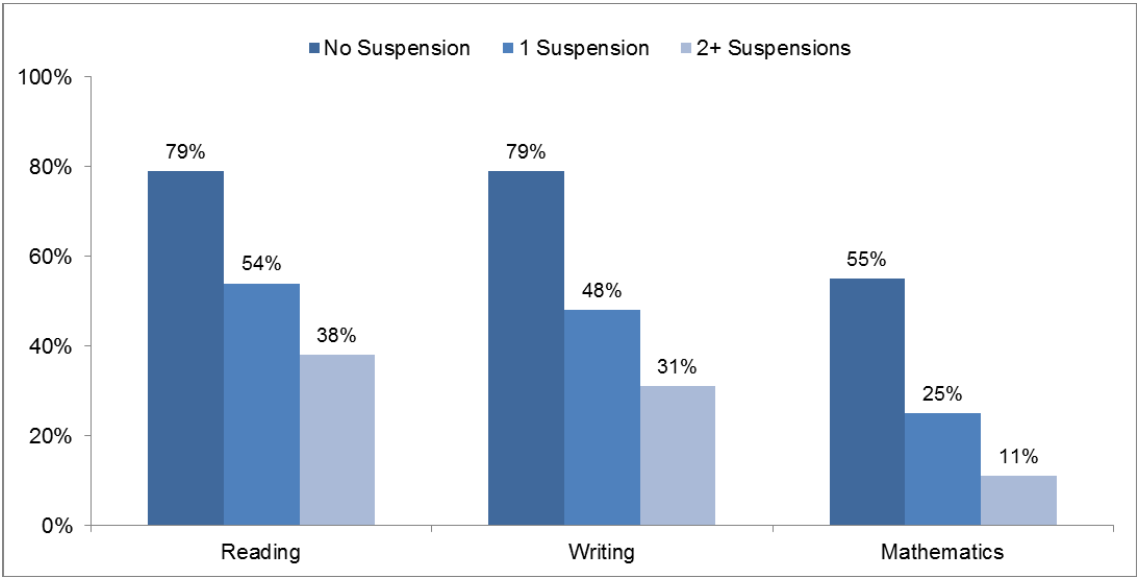
The proportion of suspended students who had special education needs increased 11% in the past six school years, from 36% in 2008-09 to 47% in 2014-15.

Figure 2 shows significant and negative correlations between student suspensions and their achievement that were reported by the Ministry. For instance, in the 2013-14 school year for students in the English public school boards who had zero, one, or two or more suspensions, the proportions meeting the provincial standard on the Grade 6 provincial reading assessment were 79%, 54%, and 38%, respectively; and on the mathematics assessment, 55%, 25%, and 11%, respectively.

¹⁰⁷ Balfanz, R., Byrnes, V., & Fox, J. (2012). *Sent home and put off-track: The antecedents, disproportionalities, and consequences of being suspended in the ninth grade*. Retrieved from: www.sese.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Sent-Home-and-Put-Off-Track.pdf

¹⁰⁸ Smith, E. J., & Harper, S. R. (2015). *Disproportionate impact of K-12 school suspension and expulsion on black students in southern states*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.

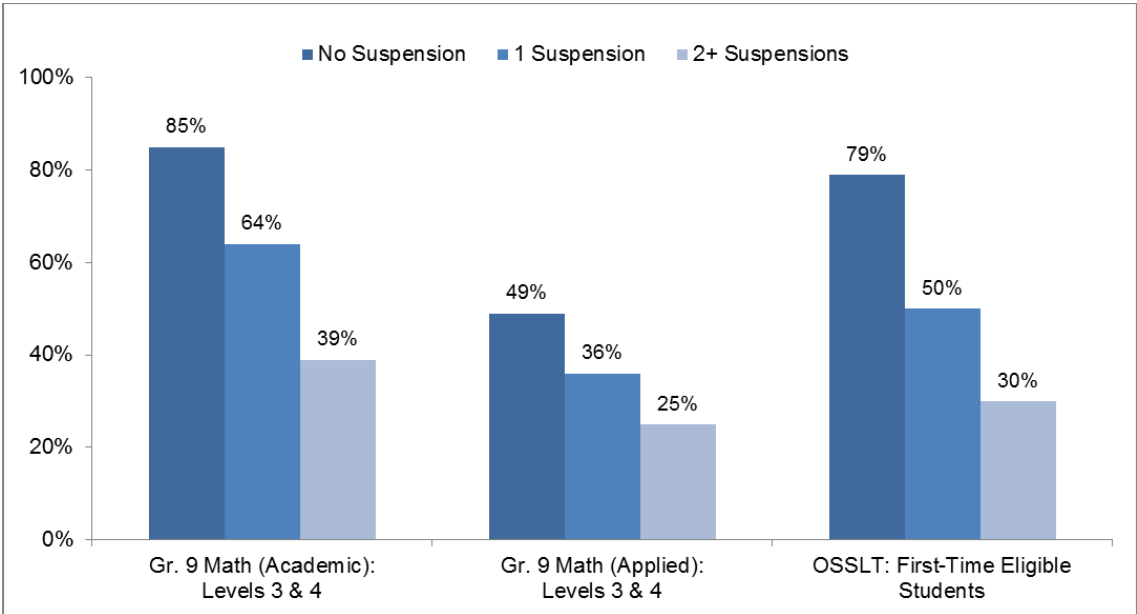
Figure 2: Percentage of Students in Grade 6 Achieving Levels 3 & 4 on the 2013-14 EQAO Assessments by Number of Suspensions across the Province of Ontario



Note: The relationship between suspension data and EQAO was not available for the year 2014-15 due to labour action.

Figure 3 shows the proportions for students in Grade 9 who had zero, one, or two or more suspensions during the 2013-14 school year. On the Grade 9 provincial mathematics assessment (academic level), the proportions meeting the provincial standard were 85%, 64%, and 39%, respectively. The success rates on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test were 79%, 50%, and 30%, respectively.

Figure 3: Percentage of Students in Grade 9-10 Meeting Expectations on the 2013-14 EQAO Assessments by Number of Suspensions across the Province of Ontario



In addition, for students who had zero, one, or two or more suspensions in the 2014-15 school year, the proportions earning the expected amount of credits were 88%, 56%, and 28% in Grade 9 (eight or more credits); and 81%, 45%, and 19% in Grade 10 (sixteen or more credits), respectively.

How does the inclusion of additional demographic data further tell the story?

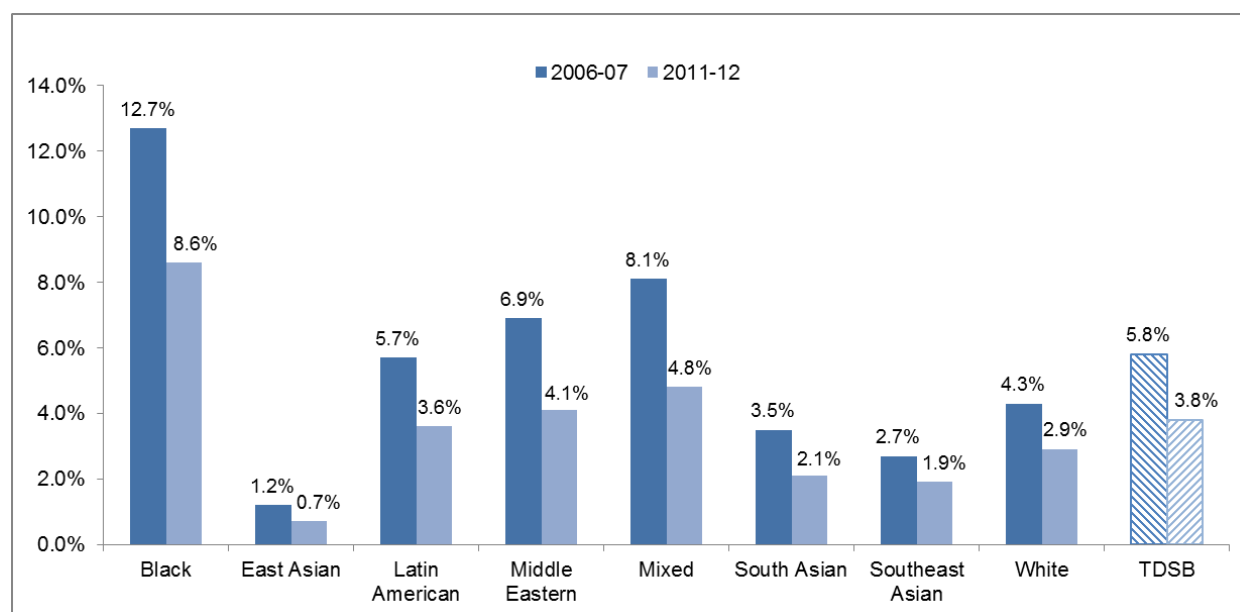
In the TDSB, student suspensions and expulsions have also been examined using information currently available in the student school information system, as well as additional information gleaned from the demographic data collected through its Student and Parent Census system surveys.

Through the demographic data collected by its Student and Parent Census surveys in the 2006-08 and 2011-12 school years, the TDSB has been able to further analyze the relationship between demographic factors and student suspensions, which indicate that certain student populations are at a greater risk of being suspended from school. These include students who self-identify as Black, Latin American, Mixed, or Middle Eastern.

Suspensions are also disproportionately given to students across income, parental education, sexuality, and other demographic characteristics.¹⁰⁹

Although still much higher than all students in Grades 9-12 in the TDSB, the suspension rate for Black students decreased 4.1% in five school years, from 12.7% in 2006-07 to 8.6% in 2011-12, while the overall suspension rate for all students in Grades 9 to 12 decreased 2% in the same period, from 5.8% to 3.8% (see Figure 4).

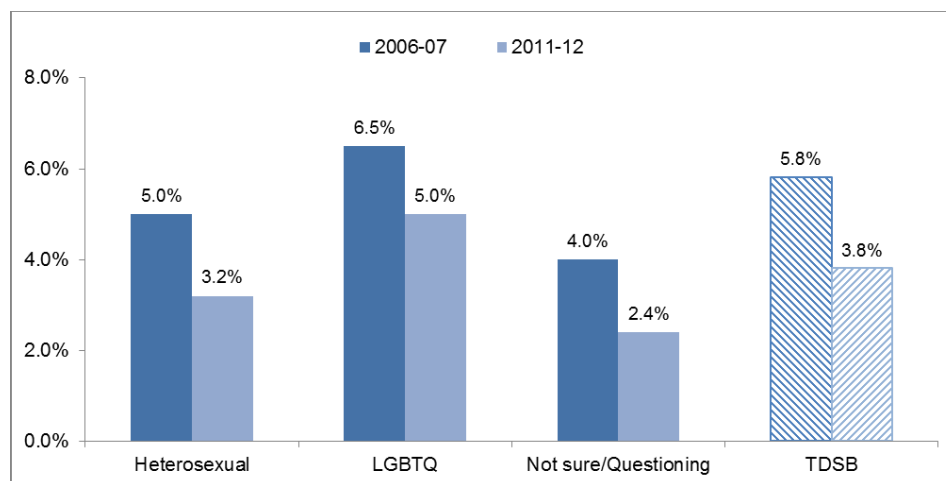
Figure 4: Comparison of Grade 9-12 Suspension Rates across Students' Self-Identified Racial Background within the TDSB between the 2006-07 and 2011-12 School Years



LGBTQ students' suspension rate decreased 1.5% in the same time period (see Figure 5). This is an example of how one board has used the collection of demographic data to monitor adverse situations for students.

¹⁰⁹ Zheng, S. (2013). *2011-12 student & parent census: Caring and safe schools*. (Fact Sheet Issue 3). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.

Figure 5: Comparison of Grade 9-12 Suspension Rates across Students' Self-Identified Sexual Orientation within the TDSB between the 2006-07 and 2011-12 School Years



3) Case example of the relationship between program of study and post-secondary access

Over a decade ago, a pivotal transition took place in Ontario education as post-secondary became the highest level of education for the majority of public school students. In this trend, Ontario is reflecting general trends across Canada and that of other developed countries in the OECD.¹¹⁰ The implications of this are as important as when, in the 1980s, high school graduation became the majority pathway for students. At that time, as most students were finishing high school, a focus on high school dropouts – that is, those in the minority who did not finish high school – became a priority for Ontario education policy.¹¹¹

Likewise, more recent research has emphasized the negative side of increased post-secondary access. Studies show how students who do not attain post-secondary education, whether or not they have a high school diploma, have increasingly lower long-term earning power and less positive long-term health, compared to students who have attained post-secondary education. As a result, access to post-secondary,

¹¹⁰ OECD (2011). *Education at a glance 2011: OECD indicators*. OECD Publishing. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2011-en>

¹¹¹ Radwanski, G. (1987). *Ontario study of the relevance of education, and the issue of dropouts*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Ontario Ministry of Education.

particularly achieving a university degree, is becoming the most important differentiator of an increasing socio-economic divide.^{112,113}

The Ministry’s ESAB produced an analysis which examined a cohort of students who started Grade 9 in 2006-07, and completed at least one Grade 9 mathematics course. Data was provided showing the relationship between Academic and Applied Grade 9 courses and entry to post-secondary.

As can be seen in Table 6, of students who took an Academic course in mathematics, 72% went on to post-secondary, 24% to an Ontario college, and 48% to an Ontario university. In contrast, of students who took an Applied course, only 41% went on to post-secondary, 35% to college, and 6% to university. The findings are similar for students who took an Academic course in language – so similar that it is likely that the students taking Academic Mathematics are also taking Academic Language – this is compelling evidence of the impact of streaming in Ontario schools.

Table 6: Relationship between Grade 9 Program of Study and Post-Secondary Pathways: Students who were in Grade 9 in the 2009-10 School Year and Grade 9 Mathematics

Grade 9 POS	College	University	Other
Academic	24%	48%	28%
Applied	35%	6%	59%
Not Academic/Applied	8%	8%	84%
All Students* (152,219)	25%	33%	42%

* Includes those who did not take Grade 9 mathematics.

These findings raise a number of issues. First, while close to three-quarters of those taking Academic Mathematics went on to post-secondary, less than half of those taking the Applied course went on to post-secondary (university or college). Only 6% of students taking Applied Mathematics went on to university, indicating that while it is possible for those starting in Applied to make the transition to Academic and then University-Mixed courses, the results show this to be unlikely for most students.

Thus, with most Applied students not going to college and most college-bound students coming from Academic, there is a fundamental mismatch between the purported purpose of the Grade 9-10 program of study and the actual evidence of the negative

¹¹² Fonseca, R., & Zheng, Y. (2011). *The effect of education on health: Cross-country evidence*. Working paper. Rand Labor and Population.

¹¹³ Kearney, M., Hershbein, B., & Jacome, E. (2015). *Profiles of change: Employment, earnings and occupations from 1990-2013*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute.

impact of the existing structured pathways on student outcomes. This amounts to economic disenfranchisement of most Applied students, given the stark lack of career choices for those students who are not currently going on to post-secondary (as previously noted), and represents a critical equity issue.

At this time, analyses investigating trends around “program of study” are being undertaken within some of the larger GTA school boards (e.g., Durham, Peel, Toronto). The TDSB has been looking at this information in a systematic way for over a decade and the pattern over ten 10 cohorts of students in Grade 9 is consistent with the Ministry’s findings previously mentioned.

How does the inclusion of additional demographic data further tell the story?

The kinds of analyses described here are further enhanced with the inclusion of demographic data. The TDSB analysis of the 2004-2009 cohort briefly looked at the demographic characteristics of TDSB students who did not go on to post-secondary.¹¹⁴ This was followed up by the 2006-2011 Grade 9 cohort, looking at students who completed the first TDSB Student Census, which allowed for the inclusion of additional demographic data in the analysis.

Generally, the same groups who continue to encounter barriers in accessing post-secondary were the same groups who historically encountered barriers in reaching graduation. As more students are now graduating secondary school, it is critical to target barriers to post-secondary as a key factor in addressing education equity. Key characteristics of students who have experienced historical barriers in reaching graduation or PSE access include students:

- who are taking courses in the Grade 9-10 program of study other than Academic (i.e. Applied, Locally Developed)
- who identified as male
- whose parents did not have university education
- who were living in lower income neighbourhoods
- who were living in a family structure that is not two-parent
- with Special Education Needs, excluding Gifted
- who self-identified as Black, Aboriginal, and Latino

¹¹⁴ Brown, R. S. (2010). *The Grade 9 cohort of fall 2004*. Research report. (pp. 11-12 and 23-24). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board. Retrieved from <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/research/docs/reports/TheGrade9CohortOfFall2004.pdf>

Overall, there was a strong relationship of non-Academic program of study with the other disadvantaged groups.¹¹⁵ Therefore, given the large differences in post-secondary access amongst Grade 9-10 program of study, it is essential for this information to be examined at the provincial level.

The Ministry has already developed an indicator, as previously noted, which can be measured at the provincial level, board level, and by sub-groups to understand the factors that impact the pursuit of opportunities beyond secondary school. Students organized by their program of study could serve as a sub-group for analysis, along with the other demographic factors previously noted.

With the exception of self-identified racial background, the Ministry currently has access to much of the demographic information noted above and can undertake these demographic analyses to further explore the relationship of demographic factors to program of study and other key education indicators.

It is critical to highlight the importance of intersectional analyses. One of the key tenets of a quantitative examination of intersectionality is that at-risk characteristics add to reducing the chances of post-secondary access.

Another example from the TDSB illustrates this. In the 2006-2011 Grade 9 cohort, by the end of five years, 61% of students in the cohort went on to post-secondary in Ontario: 47% to university, 14% to college. However, an intersectional analysis revealed:

- Male students were less likely to go on to post-secondary (56%).
- Male students taking Applied courses in Grade 9 were even less likely (31%).
- Black male students taking Applied courses were even less likely than all males taking Applied (23%).
- Black male students with special education needs taking Applied courses were lower than this (20%).

Thus, with the addition of four characteristics (Male/Applied/Black/Special Education Needs) the proportion of students going on to post-secondary dropped from 61% to 20%. The Ministry currently has the capacity and opportunity to work with the existing data in OnSIS to identify key areas of inequity that require intervention. These areas include issues associated with student discipline, program access, and streaming.

¹¹⁵ Parekh, G. (2013). *A case for inclusive education*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Unintended Outcomes: Student Discipline

1. The Ministry places priority in working with educational partners and the Ontario Human Rights Commission in the provision of training and application of the guide *Supporting Bias Free Progressive Discipline in Schools: A Resource Guide for School and System Leaders*.
2. The Ministry reviews Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145, Promoting Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour, to determine if the parameters for the application of mitigating factors need to be adjusted.
3. Seeking input from educational partners, the Ministry examines how the process to exclude a student from school, Education Act, Section 265(1)(m), is applied by school boards; this review should examine who is excluded, length of exclusions, reasons for exclusions, steps taken to ensure timely return to school, and the academic programming provided throughout the duration of an exclusion. A process to track and report on board-by-board exclusion rates should be developed for the purposes of accountability, transparency, and service alignment.
4. Seeking input from educational partners, the Ministry examines how to further provide and/or redirect investments in professional learning and program supports to ensure that students and staff are learning and working in safe and caring environments.
5. As per the results of our provincial analysis of suspension data, adverse impacts to specific groups of students, specifically those with special education needs, have been identified. Therefore, the Ministry places priority on engaging an external third party to conduct a systemic review of student discipline (suspensions and expulsions) across the province to identify concerns of systemic barriers and discrimination. This review is to include the following: numerical data to identify significant disproportionate outcomes; policies, practices, and decision-making processes; and organizational culture.¹¹⁶ This review should include voices from affected communities and educational partners, and be completed by December 2017.

¹¹⁶ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2005). *Policy and guidelines on racism and racial discrimination*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Government of Ontario. Retrieved from http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/Policy_and_guidelines_on_racism_and_racial_discrimination.pdf

Unintended Impacts: Choices or Streaming?

6. The Ministry identifies the relationship between streaming and student outcomes as an immediate area for monitoring and research to determine whether certain socio-demographic groups are unintentionally being disadvantaged.
7. The Ministry conducts, reports on, and responds to the results of analyses using the data already available in the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS), with specific use of data on special education, disciplinary, specialized programs, and program pathways.
8. Given the results of the provincial analysis undertaken for this study, the Ministry and local school boards review in-school processes through which students are streamed.
9. The Minister of Education places a priority on convening an Expert Panel to review streaming in Ontario schools. The Panel should consider recommendations for de-streaming. The Ministry publicly reports on this review by December 2018.

2.2 Enhancing the Data across Multiple Measures

The case examples and compelling local evidence presented in previous sections of this report illustrate the value and need to better know our learners for more effective policy directions, program planning, and appropriate resourcing. The Ministry's equity agenda could be further advanced through the collection of additional demographic, perceptual, program and process, and student learning data.

According to Bernhardt (1998), it is essential that four different types of data be collected to create a full picture of schools and school districts. She writes:

[a]ny definition of multiple measures should include four major measures of data – not just student learning, but also demographics, perceptions, and school processes. Analyses of demographics, perceptions, student learning, and school processes provide a powerful picture that will help us understand the school's impact on student achievement. When used together, these measures give schools the information they need to improve teaching and learning to get positive results" (p. 1).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Bernhardt, V. (1998). Multiple measures. Invited Monograph No. 4. California Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (CASCD). Retrieved from http://www.edl420.org/multiple_measures.pdf

The remainder of this section will expand on each of these areas and recommend ways in which the Ministry can bolster its approach to data collection.

Demographic Data

As previously noted, the Ministry currently has access to rich demographic data from its school boards (e.g., age and month/year of birth, gender, language first spoken, country of birth, year of entry to Canada, postal code of home address, students receiving special education programs and/or services, and Indigenous student self-identification data) as well as from other sources through various data sharing mechanisms (e.g., EQAO, Statistics Canada, OUAC/, Offord Centre). However, there are a few key pieces of demographic data that the Ministry does not currently have access to, including race, creed (religion), gender identity, and sexual orientation. As part of this study, a scan was undertaken to identify what demographic information is being collected by other provincial/territorial jurisdictions in Canada, but scant literature or documentation is available.

One study, undertaken in 2009 under the auspices of the Council of Ministers of Education and Statistics Canada,¹¹⁸ provided an overview of the student-level data landscape in each of Canada's provincial/territorial ministries of education. While informative regarding provincial data collection in general, the focus of their research was not specifically related to demographic data collection, and as such it cannot be definitively stated what demographic data is being collected in the various jurisdictions.

Schools in all jurisdictions collect administrative data pertaining to their student populations. Some of this data is collected at the time of school registration and much of it is demographic (e.g., age, birth date, gender, first language, language spoken at home, country of birth, citizenship and immigrant status, residence information, etc.). Additional administrative data is collected over time as each student moves through the school system (e.g., schools attended, report card marks, standardized test scores, courses taken, support received such as ESL/ELD or special education, etc.). Then, as in Ontario, each respective provincial/territorial ministry of education collects a subset of that information from boards and districts in different ways.

With the exception of self-identified Aboriginal status, which appears to be collected by all provincial/territorial jurisdictions, few jurisdictions currently collect information related

¹¹⁸ Educational Policy Institute. (2009). *The use of student-level data to provide information on student pathways and mobility: A study of the statistical journey through Canadian lifelong learning*. Report prepared for CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada) and Statistics Canada.

to ethnicity, culture, or race. Nunavut collects data related to ethnicity (i.e., Inuit or non-Inuit), and Nova Scotia is moving in this direction, taking steps to have student self-identification of race become a component of their provincial student information system.¹¹⁹

Recently, a major education review was undertaken in Nova Scotia, resulting in a five-year action plan.¹²⁰ The plan includes a commitment to support self-identification for all students during the 2016-17 school year. Recent reports on the Nova Scotia Department of Education's website suggest that it now has access to provincial race data for analysis. For example, Nova Scotia has recently completed a province-wide review of individual program plans,¹²¹ which was initiated because the percentage of IPPs had risen across the province despite enrolment declines and because of concerns about disproportionately high numbers of IPPs among students who self-identified as African Nova Scotian or Aboriginal according to provincial data.

No documentation could be found with respect to provincial/territorial collection of data related to other aspects of diversity, such as gender identity, religion, or sexual orientation. Many provincial/territorial jurisdictions conduct regular surveys of students, parents, and teachers to gather feedback from education system stakeholders and there may be student demographic data collected through these surveys. However, if this information is collected, it is unknown whether this information is identifiable; that is, whether it can be linked back to individual students in the provincial/territorial student information systems concerned.

The Ontario Ministry of Education has been collecting Indigenous student self-identification data since 2009. In collecting Indigenous student self-identification data, the Ministry has successfully developed processes for planning and implementing voluntary self-reported demographic data and can use this experience and the lessons learned to move forward with additional demographic data collection.

The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs received Cabinet approval in 2013 to work with partner ministries to implement an Ontario Public Service-wide Aboriginal Self-Identification Data Standard to allow Ontarians to voluntarily self-identify as Aboriginal: "Adopting the Data Standard will provide the government with more complete, comparable and

¹¹⁹ Nova Scotia Department of Education. (2011). *Racial equity/cultural proficiency framework*. (p. 7). Province of Nova Scotia, Canada.

¹²⁰ Province of Nova Scotia. (2015). *The 3Rs: Renew, refocus, rebuild – Nova Scotia's action plan for education*.

¹²¹ Nova Scotia Department of Education (2016). *Individual program plan (IPP) review: Themes and recommendations*.

accurate information about the Aboriginal population for making policy recommendations, programming decisions and monitoring performance on Aboriginal socio-economic outcomes.”¹²² Lessons learned from the implementation of the data standard can be gleaned and considered when moving forward with additional data collection and/or scaling up the use of the OEN.

In addition to collecting demographic data at the student level, boards have begun conducting workforce census surveys to collect demographic information at the educator level. The TDSB has been doing a Staff Census for many years and is about to embark on the third Staff Census in spring 2017. Other larger boards have moved in this direction as well (e.g., Peel).

As the examples in earlier sections of this report have illustrated, it is important for the Ministry and its school boards to be able to link demographic data back to other data in OnSIS for evidence-informed decision-making about funding, policies, and programs. For this reason, the recommendations for additional data collection that are outlined below leverage existing data collection processes and structures.

Using existing processes, such as point of registration, has many benefits. First, the information will be more accurate as it gets updated annually during the verification process. Having the information in the student information system will allow school boards to link this data to other available central information (e.g., demographic, achievement) as well as to any survey data they collect, allowing for demographic analyses to be conducted at the school board level. This approach also recognizes that Ontario school boards have varying levels of research capacity¹²³ and that other methods of data collection (e.g., surveys) can be a technical and complex process¹²⁴ for which some school boards may not have the capacity. In addition, this information can then be collected through OnSIS and made available to the Ministry for provincial-level analysis.

¹²² Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. (2015). *Aboriginal self-identification data standard, implementation guide*. Government of Ontario, Canada.

¹²³ Association of Education Researchers of Ontario. (2008). *The changing face of research in Ontario school districts: Context, challenges and opportunities*.

¹²⁴ See *Count me in! Collecting human rights-based data*, by the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Responding to Student Needs through Demographic Data

10. The Ministry takes a leadership role in mandating and supporting additional province-wide demographic data collection, and ensures that this data is collected in a way that can be reported to OnSIS.
11. The Ministry identifies for school boards the data to be collected through the registration process. The additional data to be collected is to include: race, ethnicity, religion, and creed and gender identity.
12. The Ministry and its school boards look at additional demographic data that can be collected through perceptual surveys that will not be part of registration processes. This should include but is not limited to sexual orientation, family status, socio-economic status, and disability.
13. The process to initiate additional collections should commence by no later than the 2018-19 school year; this would include Ministry review and development of any necessary legislation and policies requiring school boards to begin collecting additional demographic data.
14. The Ministry supports school boards to engage in community consultations that are required to develop and/or extend board voluntary self-identification policies and other demographic collections of data.
15. Workforces should be representative of the populations they serve. In consultation with educational partners, the Ministry provides direction to school boards on collecting human rights-based demographic data on their workforce; this is part of creating representative, equitable, and healthy work and learning environments.

Perceptual Data

With the exception of the perceptual data from EQAO questionnaires, the Ministry has limited perceptual information to inform education policy analysis, program planning, and research.

In *Achieving Excellence*,¹²⁵ the Ministry has recognized the importance of broadening the measures of success and of using both demographic and perceptual data to inform policy and program decisions and practices. These directions are consistent with an emerging discourse promoting the use of a broader set of goals and measures of success for Ontario's students and schools. Noting that success has largely been narrowly defined in terms of achievement in literacy and numeracy, the Measuring What Matters initiative¹²⁶ is working to develop a set of competencies and skills that are needed for students to be successful today. The competencies and skills fall into four interrelated domains: creativity, citizenship, social-emotional learning, and health. Learning in these domains is supported by school climate – that is, the learning conditions in schools.

The Ministry has recognized the importance of school climate to student achievement and well-being. Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145: *Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour*¹²⁷ requires that school boards administer voluntary, anonymous school climate surveys to their students, parents, and school staff at least once every two years. This survey data is collected and held locally, and is used by boards for school improvement planning. However, the Ministry does not currently collect this data from its school boards.

To address this gap, the Ministry should investigate the best way to collect this information. Options include using the perception surveys administered through EQAO, or collecting the information through the mandate for school climate surveys. While the Ministry provides school boards with sample surveys to facilitate the collection of school climate data at the school board level, boards have autonomy to develop their own questions. If the Ministry decides to collect some key perceptual data through the school climate process, identifying some common questions for all school boards would be required. Included in the collection of perceptual data should be students' experiences of access and exclusion (see Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, 2016).¹²⁸

The Ministry has also recognized the importance of student and staff well-being to student success. In the recently announced *Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for*

¹²⁵ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). *Achieving excellence: A renewed vision for education in Ontario*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Queen's Printer

¹²⁶ People for Education. (2013). *Measuring What Matters*. Retrieved from <http://peopleforeducation.ca/mwm>

¹²⁷ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2012). *Progressive discipline and promoting positive student behaviour*. Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145. Retrieved from www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/145.pdf

¹²⁸ Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. (2016). *We have something to say: Young people and their families speak out about special needs and change*. Retrieved from <https://www.provincialadvocate.on.ca/documents/en/We-Have-Something-To-Say-Report-EN.pdf>

*Education*¹²⁹ the Ministry has advocated for student success to be defined and measured more broadly than by academic indicators alone and to include perception data related to well-being. The strategy notes that the Ministry will begin considering how to measure well-being in a more consistent way across schools and boards across the province in order to provide the system, boards, schools, and educators with indicators of how students are doing, beyond literacy and numeracy results.

To this end, the Ministry released a Discussion Document¹³⁰ and implemented an engagement strategy over the 2016-17 school year. Part of the engagement strategy involved a survey of school boards. The findings suggest that the majority of school boards have developed tools to assess both student and staff well-being to support healthy learning and work environments – more than two-thirds of English boards and more than 80% of French boards collect data on both student and staff well-being – so there is much good work that the Ministry can build on.¹³¹

As a Provincial Student Well-Being Measurement Plan begins to take shape,¹³² looking at differences in well-being for different groups of student populations will become important and disaggregated data will be critical. Discussions on well-being of staff at every level are vital to a strong education system, and must involve education partners.

In addition to the extension of perceptual data collection, it is critical that the Ministry also collects data on the existence and impact of student voice. According to the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, incorporating student voice is key. In its 2016 publication, *We Have Something to Say*,¹³³ the Provincial Advocate recommended that “[t]he Ministry of Education must establish a youth advisory table and on-going working partnership with children and youth with special needs to inform and review policies pertaining to all facets of their education” (p. 78). Recommendations also included the incorporation of student feedback on areas of curriculum development and content for in-service training for educators.

¹²⁹ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2016). *Ontario's well-being strategy for education* (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/wellbeing2.html>

¹³⁰ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2016). *Ontario's well-being strategy for education: Discussion document*. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/WBDiscussionDocument.pdf>

¹³¹ ESAB. (2016). *Findings from well-being survey administered to school boards*. Note: Survey had 83% response rate (10 French boards and 50 English boards responded).

¹³² Ontario Ministry of Education. (2016). *Achieving excellence: Promoting well-being*. EDU ADM's Committee.

¹³³ Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. (2016). *We have something to say: Young people and their families speak out about special needs and change*. Retrieved from <https://www.provincialadvocate.on.ca/documents/en/We-Have-Something-To-Say-Report-EN.pdf>

Evidence and research collected for this report has identified a number of key demographic groups for which student representation and advocacy is important. Underserved student groups, whether they are identified through racial, sexual orientation, or ability characteristics, face inordinate barriers to having their needs and identities recognized within Ontario education systems. In order to address equity in academic success, social inclusion, and post-secondary access, educators and policy writers must account for students' diverse experiences in school. Establishing representative student-led advisory and advocacy groups will provide the Ministry with critical insight into whether policy, curriculum, or service interventions are working.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Hearing Student and Community Voice through Perceptual Data

16. In collaboration with educational partners, the Ministry identifies key perceptual questions related to school climate and learning conditions that are required at the Ministry level to inform policy, funding, and programs.
17. For the 2018-19 school year, the Ministry collaborates with EQAO to include key school climate questions of interest to the Ministry; this may include questions related to well-being, programs, processes, and school climate.
18. For the 2018-19 school year, the Ministry revises Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145 (PPM 145) and removes the stipulation that school climate surveys be anonymous so that the information can be correlated with other data at the school board level to improve data use; the Ministry also amends the requirement in PPM No. 145 to permit completion of school climate surveys every two to four years, from at least once every two years.
19. The Ministry reports on the development of well-being indicators that are drawn on the expertise in the sector and the work currently undertaken in school boards to inform next steps.
20. In collaboration with educational partners, the Ministry ensures perception data on well-being is collected for students; the collection of well-being data on staff should be encouraged.

Program and Process Data

The Ministry has been mostly focused on collecting demographic, achievement, and perceptual data – but has not been focused on collecting school process data or linking existing school process data to other data in OnSIS. Collecting this data would help build knowledge for future practice. This report has extensively addressed the important role program and process can play in the analysis of equitable outcomes. While OnSIS collects program and process data (e.g., program of study, specialty program enrolment, special education, IPRC, disciplinary, etc.), it is important that OnSIS consider ways it may extend its collection of program information.

As an example of the role program information can play in the analysis of demographic and academic equity, the TDSB recently conducted a review of specialty programs and their role in relation to the stratification of academic outcomes across student demographic groups.¹³⁴

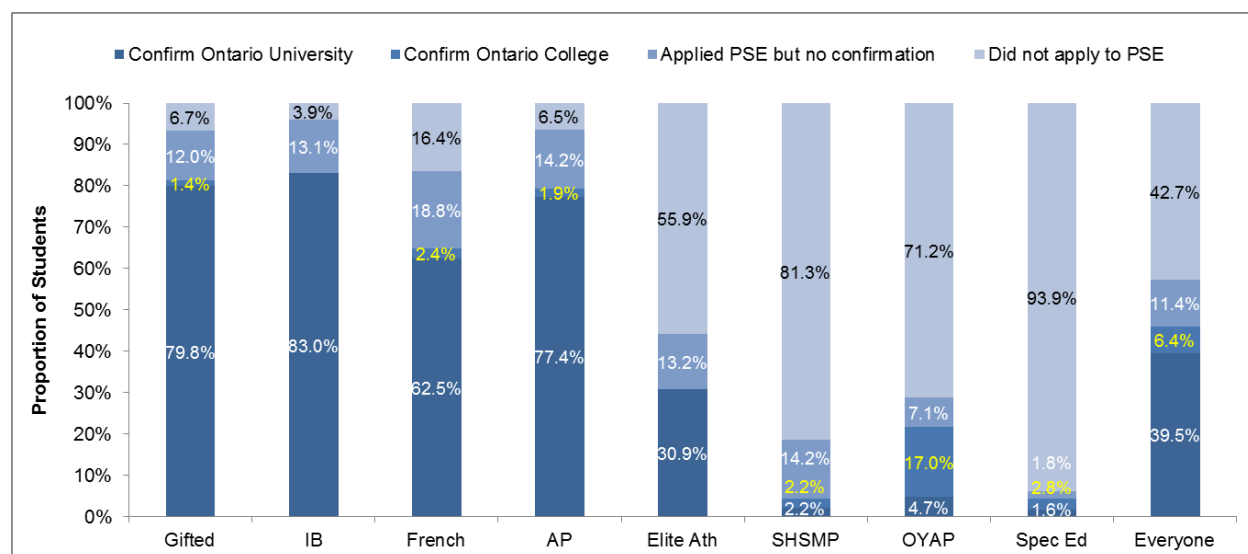
In this analysis, it was evidenced that, in addition to program of study, opportunities to engage in specialty programs were limited to certain demographic groups. In its discussion on structured pathways and the replication of disadvantage for historically marginalized groups, it became clear that specialty programs played a significant role in student outcomes.

In Figure 6, the relationship between program engagement and post-secondary outcomes is explored. Students participating in the secondary Gifted, International Baccalaureate, French Immersion, and Advanced Placement programs are much more likely to confirm, upon graduation, an offer to an Ontario university.

Conversely, students enrolled in Specialist High Skills Major, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship, and Secondary Special Education programs were the most likely to *not* apply to any post-secondary institution.

¹³⁴ Parekh, G. (2014). *Social citizenship and disability: Identity, belonging, and the structural organization of education*. PhD thesis, York University.

Figure 6: TDSB Example of Post-Secondary Confirmations across Selected In-School Programs, 2011-12



Across programs, class differences were also evidenced. As shown in Table 7, students enrolled in the Gifted, International Baccalaureate, French Immersion, Elite Athlete, and Advanced Placement programs were much more likely to have parents employed as professionals, whereas students enrolled in Specialist High Skills Major, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship, and Secondary Special Education programs were much more likely to report that their parents worked in skilled-clerical positions or were non-remunerative.

Table 7: TDSB Example of Parental Occupation across Selected In-School Programs, 2011-12

Parent Occupation	Parental Occupation				
	Professional	Semi-Professional	Skilled/ clerical	Unskilled Clerical Trades	Non-Remunerative
Gifted	48.6%	30.7%	10.4%	3.3%	7.0%
IB	38.0%	29.1%	18.3%	5.2%	9.5%
French	43.7%	32.2%	14.0%	3.4%	6.7%
AP	31.0%	30.4%	22.8%	4.3%	11.5%
Elite Athlete	38.4%	34.2%	20.7%	3.4%	3.4%
SHSMP	16.1%	23.4%	26.7%	9.4%	24.4%
OYAP	12.8%	24.1%	31.9%	11.4%	19.8%
Special Education	11.1%	16.3%	30.0%	15.3%	27.3%
Total Across TDSB Secondary Schools	24.5%	26.3%	23.7%	8.3%	17.2%

While the Ministry strives to establish the collection and analysis of additional data – whether demographic data (e.g., race-based data), perceptual, student learning, or school program and process – it is clear that the inclusion of additional demographic data reveals disturbing outcomes for specific groups of students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Examining Opportunity and Access through Program and Process Data

21. The Ministry determines key program and process data for analysis, collection, and integration with OnSIS. This data could include student participation in specialized programs, intervention and instructional processes intersected with achievement information to identify achievement trends in relation to program type and/or process applications.
22. In collaboration with educational partners, the Ministry examines processes through which students are identified with disabilities, exceptionalities, and special education needs (e.g., behaviour, communication, intellectual, physical, multiple exceptionalities). Identifications, placement recommendations, exclusions from school, and provision of support should be tracked using an intersectional framework of analysis (e.g., exploring the disproportionate representation of racialized students in special education programs). It is also important to identify additional data collections that may be used to improve student outcomes.
23. In collaboration with educational partners, the Ministry places priority on the recognition, development, and measurement of competencies and skills beyond academic outcomes. This should be a parallel area of discussion, and not an “add on.”

2.3 Focusing the Use of Data

Ensuring an expanded scope from birth to post-secondary

Early Years

The Ministry of Education is taking intentional steps to shape integrated early years service delivery through its Public Plan for Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres.¹³⁵ Recognizing the importance of Ontario’s Vision for the Early Years to the vision of *Achieving Excellence*, the Ministry has recently taken steps to begin collecting data on children’s individual child care and early years participation through the Kindergarten registration process. The data collected will assist in identifying how families access programs, improving planning and delivery of programs, and removing barriers to participation. This data can also be linked to students’ future learning data

¹³⁵ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2017). *Public Plan for Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres*. Last modified February 16, 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/plan.html>

through their OEN to examine the impact of early years experiences on later education outcomes.¹³⁶

The Ministry also has a data-sharing agreement with the Offord Centre for Child Studies to acquire Early Development Instrument (EDI) data. The EDI is a population measure used to determine school readiness – that is, the health and wellness of young children and their ability to take advantage of learning opportunities in the school environment. ESAB facilitates matching EDI data with data collected through OnSIS to create combined data sets that are used for internal analysis and made available to school boards.

Virtually all educational jurisdictions in Canada use either the EDI or the Early Years Evaluation (EYE) or both as formal assessment measures for Kindergarten-aged children, usually in combination with other observation-based assessments completed by teachers. In Ontario, the assessment is completed in Senior Kindergarten as a measure of children’s readiness for Grade 1.

In Canada, 25% of children experience learning, health, and/or behavioural concerns when they reach Grade 1.^{137,138,139} Responding to the importance of intervening as early as possible to improve outcomes, some jurisdictions are moving toward conducting these assessments earlier, either at entry to Kindergarten or prior. For example, some Maritime provinces (e.g., New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island) use the EYE to assess children prior to school entry – in New Brunswick, children registered in early years programs are assessed one year prior to entering Kindergarten. The use of Kindergarten entry assessments (assessments conducted within the first few months of Kindergarten) have become increasingly common among state departments of education in the United States in recent years as well.¹⁴⁰ On-entry assessments for literacy and numeracy are also common in the United Kingdom.

There is abundant evidence that interventions that provide fundamental learning experiences are beneficial and close achievement gaps among young

¹³⁶ Internal Ministry document.

¹³⁷ Janus, M. (2006). *Kindergarten parent survey* (unpublished manuscript). Hamilton, Ontario: Offord Centre for Child Studies, McMaster University. Retrieved from <http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness>

¹³⁸ Kershaw, P., Irwin, L., Trafford, K. & Hertzman, C. (2006). *The British Columbia atlas of child development*. 1st Ed. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada: Human Early Learning Partnership, University of British Columbia.

¹³⁹ Willms, D. (2002). *Vulnerable children*. Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press.

¹⁴⁰ Hanover Research. (2013). *Kindergarten entry assessments: Practices and policies*. Retrieved from <http://www.hanoverresearch.com/media/Kindergarten-Entry-Assessments-Practices-and-Policies.pdf>

students.^{141,142,143,144} Thus, assessing young children’s foundational learning skills, together with effective professional learning for educators to facilitate children’s learning, provide more enriching experiences, and address deficits, improves outcomes for students.

The Ministry and its school boards lack data to assess student achievement in literacy and numeracy for the youngest of learners. Prior to Policy/Program Memorandum No. 155, school boards were able to collect the results of diagnostic assessments at a system level. In the area of literacy, many boards collected the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) or PM Benchmarks and were exploring the use and system collection of diagnostic tools for numeracy. This is a critical gap that needs to be addressed, given the importance of early intervention for students who are struggling. Other jurisdictions mandate the administration of common literacy and numeracy assessments in the early primary years. In Nova Scotia’s most recent action plan, for example, student assessments will include administration of a common literacy assessment to all students at the start of Grade 1 and a common mathematics assessment at the start of Grade 2.

Post-Secondary Education

The Ministry has also recognized the importance of linking its data with data collected in the post-secondary sector to examine student outcomes after secondary school. The Ministry currently has a data sharing agreement in place with the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC) and the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) to acquire student-level application and registration data. Currently, ESAB facilitates matching OUAC and OCAS data with data collected through OnSIS to create combined data sets that are used for internal Ministry analysis and made available to school boards.

Using this data, the Ministry has developed an indicator called the College/University Direct Registration Indicator, which is the number of Ontario secondary school students from a Grade 9 cohort who are reported as registering directly in a university or college in Ontario within four years and within five years from Grade 9.

¹⁴¹ Baroody, A. J., Eiland, M., & Thompson, B. (2009). Fostering at-risk preschoolers' number sense. *Early Education & Development, 20*(1), 80–128.

¹⁴² Clements, D.H., & Sarama, J. (2011). Early childhood mathematics intervention. *Science, 333*(6045), 968–970.

¹⁴³ Dyson, N.I., Jordan, N.C., & Glutting, J. (2013). A number sense intervention for low-income kindergartners at risk for mathematics difficulties. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 46*(2), 166–181.

¹⁴⁴ Klein, A., Starkey, P., Clements, D., Sarama, J., & Iyer, R. (2008). Effects of a pre-kindergarten mathematics intervention: A randomized experiment. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 1*, 155–178.

The indicator provides data users within the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) with a way to track the percentage of students from a Grade 9 cohort who register in the year after completing school. This indicator can be measured at the provincial level, board level, and by sub-groups to understand the factors that impact the pursuit of opportunities beyond secondary school. Such cohort-based indicators have been providing the Ministry with a more complete picture of student success over time.

The Ministry currently publicly reports only the graduation rate, among other indicators, though the Ministry has the capacity to publicly report on post-secondary registrations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving Knowledge to Better Serve Students: Early Years to Workforce

Early Years

24. As part of its public plan for modernizing programs and services for Ontario Early Years and Family Centres, the Ministry works with its partners in the early years sectors to build the infrastructure for extending the Ontario Education Number (OEN) in all Ontario Early Years and Family Centres (OEYCFCs). This should be considered as a priority direction and investment.
25. In collaboration with educational partners, the Ministry explores the collection of early years provincial baseline data through the implementation of Kindergarten entry assessments, especially for foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

Post-Secondary Education

26. The Ministry publicly reports the number of Ontario secondary school students from a Grade 9 cohort who are reported as registering directly in a university or college in Ontario within four years and within five years from Grade 9 as one of its success indicators.
27. The Ministry continues to work with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) to extend the OEN to all government-sponsored employment training programs and apprenticeships to gain a more complete picture of post-secondary student outcomes.
28. The Ministry undertakes and reports on sub-group analyses by demographic factors to identify any disparate outcomes using currently available demographic and program information available in OnSIS (e.g., gender, language, special education needs, and program of study).

29. The Ministry establishes structures and processes to ensure that data on post-secondary registration and completion is made available to others both inside and outside of the original institution.
30. The Ministry and MAESD identify and implement mechanisms by which the collection of demographic data could be extended to post-secondary institutions.

Strengthening Infrastructure and Governance

As noted earlier, the Ministry has the technical infrastructure to collect, protect, analyze, and report on data from school boards and other sources to support Ministry policy and program work through its Education Statistics and Analysis Branch. The ESAB is also responsible for managing MISA, aimed at improving the capacity for evidence-informed decision-making at the Ministry, school board, and school level. As a result of these key areas of responsibility, ESAB has built capacity in a number of areas related to data collection, acquisition, analysis, dissemination, and use. In addition, ESAB has a lead role in managing the collection of data through OnSIS and the acquisition of data that can be integrated with the Ministry's elemental data sets.¹⁴⁵

In 2009, ESAB first developed a data strategy¹⁴⁶ to ensure the management of education data was aligned with Ministry needs and could respond to the increasing demand for evidence to inform decision making. Since then, implementing the strategy has served to improve the timeliness, quality, availability, and coordination of data as the demand for integrated, timely, and quality data, as well as in-depth statistical analysis, continues to increase. A 2016 update to the strategy sets forward a plan for how ESAB can continue to respond to the growing needs for information to support the Ministry's goals.

Ontario has recently established a Statistics Transformation Office, whose role is to develop options for the collection, use, and dissemination of data across the Ontario public service. While this recent direction puts Ontario in line with the rest of Canada,¹⁴⁷ it is still important for individual sectors to continue to build their own capacity. Within the Ontario public service, the Ministry of Education is a leader in terms of having the capacity for evidence-based policy development, performance and outcome measurement, data analytics, and evaluation.

¹⁴⁵ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2016). Managing Information for Student Achievement. Last modified February 10, 2016. Retrieved from <http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/misa/index.html>

¹⁴⁶ Internal Ministry document.

¹⁴⁷ Internal Ministry document.

OnSIS data has been used for determining funding allocations, supporting both internal Ministry and school board decision making, public reporting on the Ministry's website, and making data available through Ontario's open data site. In each of these areas, the Ministry has laid a solid foundation, the recommendations made in each of these areas are meant to further focus and build on this foundation.

Supporting Internal Ministry Decision Making

There is dedicated staff to support data, research, evaluation, and knowledge mobilization activities across the Ministry. ESAB consults with these branches to discuss data needs and collaboratively develop analytical products. To support the need for Ministry staff to have broader access to data and reports, ESAB has offered all branches direct access to aggregations and a range of analytical tools through its SharePoint site. ESAB notes that existing interface tools are routinely used by Ministry staff. But there are opportunities for the Education Research and Evaluation Strategy Branch (ERESB) to work toward more effective access and use of data collected to support research that informs policy and evaluation of Ministry programs. While many Ministry initiatives have a requirement to allocate funds toward an evaluation component, a recent research report notes that current strategies and interventions were rarely measured in terms of effectiveness.¹⁴⁸

Supporting Board Decision Making

In 2015, after extensive consultation with school board representatives and the identification of a number of reports that would benefit the analytical needs of school boards, the Ministry launched a new suite of web-based, interactive data reporting tools that are available to both Ministry and school board staff. These Board Interface tools are intended to make education data collected by the Ministry more readily available to support planning, data analysis, and evidence-informed decision-making. Ministry staff can access the board interface and have access to data for all boards across the province. School board users have access to their own board's data as well as regional and provincial aggregations. The Ministry has received positive feedback from boards on how these innovative products fill the gap previously experienced by boards, and it has documented that a significant number of boards are using the tools. In its data strategy, ESAB has committed to continue developing a series of reports based on key Ministry indicators for both board and Ministry users, enable board and Ministry access to reports through web-based tools, and assist branches with access to these tools to inform program and policy implementation dialogue with school boards.

¹⁴⁸ Gallagher-Mackay, K. (Forthcoming, 2017). *Data infrastructure for understanding equity of post-secondary access*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

However, another area of consideration is in ensuring and articulating the distinction between what is useful to the boards and what is useful to the Ministry, and there may be opportunities to provide more useful analytics to school boards, which may be different from those needed by government. To date, the focus has been more directed toward supporting Ministry decision-making and the policy side, but less on the idea that school boards would need more, less, or different information or need to work with data at an elemental level to make improvements and measure outcomes at the board level. One important way that this could be facilitated is by greater collaboration between Ministry and school board staff with responsibility for research and program evaluation, as well as greater sharing of elemental data with school board researchers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening Evidence Informed Decision-Making, Analysis, and Reporting

31. The Ministry positions the Education Statistics Analysis Branch (ESAB) as the authoritative source for the collection, analysis, and reporting of elemental level education data. Wherever possible, the use of elemental-level data is critical.
32. The Ministry strengthens the Education Research and Evaluation Strategy Branch's (ERESB) role in conducting and using research to support policy and program decisions and practices. In addition, ERESB supports the development of individual and divisional capacity to assess, conduct, and use research that specifically emphasizes multiple identity-based approaches to data analyses.
33. As a result of recurring themes on the challenges of accessing data by institutions with education-related mandates, in collaboration with educational partners, the Ministry identifies and addresses any barriers to sharing data with its school boards and partners, specifically data already collected and verified through OnSIS.
34. Through Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA), the Ministry strengthens the capacity of school boards to receive and critically use data sets created by ESAB.

Public Reporting and Open Data

The Ministry could be more transparent and accountable in its reporting to its school boards. The Ministry is perceived as being “out of step” with other jurisdictions, both within Canada and abroad, in terms of transparency and accountability in public

reporting. This observation was also made by the Auditor General of Ontario in 2011,¹⁴⁹ noting the more “rigorous accountability and transparency structures” evident in the education ministries and school boards of Alberta and British Columbia.

The Government of Ontario’s Open Data Directive demonstrates commitment to more transparency on data created and managed by its agencies and ministries. However, as a result of due diligence processes, with the exception of twelve 12 ESAB data sets, the Ministry of Education’s inventory of data holdings has not yet been posted online on the Open Data catalogue.

As a result of a settlement reached with the OHRC¹⁵⁰ in 2007, the Ministry publishes information on suspensions and expulsions – both provincial data and figures for each school board. The information provided includes the percentage of students suspended or expelled and the suspension rate for each board as compared to the province. Also included are the number of suspensions in total, with a breakdown of suspensions by panel, gender, and students with special education needs.

The School Information Finder has been available since 2009, and provides general information about schools (e.g., enrolment), student achievement information (e.g., Grade 3 and 6 EQAO results in Reading, Writing and Math) – both current results and change over three years, student population information (e.g., SES indicators based on the Census), and class size information.

The Ministry also publishes Education Facts and Quick Facts. At this time, the information is primarily focused on basic information pertaining to enrolment, number of schools, staffing, and financial information.

Since 2015, the Ministry has been reporting graduation rates across Ontario, and this information is now part of the School Board Progress Reports. In addition to graduation rate, the Progress Reports include board-level aggregate data on the following success indicators: Grade 6 EQAO Reading, Grade 10 OSSLT, Credit Accumulation by the end of Grade 10 and 11, and class size. The reports can be used to look at all results within a board, results across boards by indicator, and province-wide results. The most current results are shown, as well as progress over time. The Ministry intends to develop and

¹⁴⁹ Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. (2011). *2011 Annual report*. Last modified November 30, 2016. Retrieved from www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en11/313en11.pdf, p. 273

¹⁵⁰ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2005). Human Rights settlement reached with Ministry of Education on Safe Schools - Terms of settlement. Retrieved from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/human-rights-settlement-reached-ministry-education-safe-schools-terms-settlement>

publish more indicators over time with the advice of an advisory committee of representatives from the public and education sector.¹⁵¹

The CMEC framework¹⁵² takes a broad view of the outcome of K-12 education and considers the “level of success in post-secondary education or the labour market” to be the key outcome for the K-12 education system, not graduation. In this framework, graduation from high school is an “output.” Given the increasing importance of post-secondary access, and more importantly, completion, as a foundational credential for access to opportunity, the Ministry can be transformative and define access and success in post-secondary as the key “outcome” of the K-12 education system. In addition, according to Gallagher-MacKay (2017), 70% of future jobs will only be accessible to those with post-secondary education.¹⁵³ The measure of success through graduation rates has met its intended purpose, with notable provincial gains, but moving forward appears “regressive” if left as the banner outcome of K-12 success. The research and argument for post-secondary education access is well documented.^{154,155,156}

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving Accountability and Public Reporting

35. To further build on transparency and accountability, the Ministry works with school boards and educational partners to identify additional student outcomes for school improvement planning and public reporting; reported outcomes should employ a multiple-identity-based analysis to uncover often hidden barriers facing certain student groups (e.g., reporting suspension data alone is insufficient unless explored across racial, class, and disability demographics).

¹⁵¹ See school board reports, frequently asked questions: <https://www.app.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/bpr/faq.html>

¹⁵² Council of Ministers of Education. (CMEC) (2010) *A framework for statistics on learning and education in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.cmec.ca/publications/lists/publications/attachments/257/cesc-data-framework-sept2010.pdf>

¹⁵³ Gallagher-Mackay, K. (Forthcoming, 2017). *Data infrastructure for understanding equity of post-secondary access*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

¹⁵⁴ Fonseca, R., & Zheng, Y. (2011). The effect of education on health: Cross-country evidence. Working Paper. Rand Labor and Population.

¹⁵⁵ Kearney, M., Hershbein, B., & Jacome, E. (2015). *Profiles of change: Employment, earnings and occupations from 1990-2013*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute.

¹⁵⁶ Kirby, D. (2009). Widening access: Making the transition from mass to universal post-secondary education in Canada. *Journal of Applied Research on Learning*, 2, 1–17.

Strengthening Data Governance and Data Sharing

There is also work to build measurements that cross sectors as well as to share data across sectors. Data-sharing is a key piece in enhancing knowledge mobilization and bolstering accountability. Data-sharing initiatives hold the potential to produce analyses that can directly target areas of inequity as well as inform policies and actions geared to circumvent future recurrences. In addition, solid data-sharing agreements can lead to producing information that will be useful in a variety of capacities and to various organizations. While government organizations stand to gain from the culmination of cross-sectional analyses, extending the collection of data and instituting data-sharing agreements can also provide academics, school boards, advocacy groups, and others with useful analytics that can help inform community-, school-, and district-level improvements. Once data-sharing mechanisms have been established, the Ministry will have to develop ways that community organizations can also leverage critical information through providing relevant analyses.

Recently, a provincial inter-ministerial project co-led by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) and the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) - the Data Integration Initiative (DII) – has been working to create platforms and policies to share data across ministries in Ontario. The group has completed consultations of federal, provincial, and international jurisdictions to investigate data integration within specific jurisdictions.¹⁵⁷ More rigorous demographic and perceptual data collection in other sectors and sharing this data across sectors can only serve to benefit all sectors, including Ontario’s education system.

Today it is recognized that learning is a lifelong process. *Achieving Excellence* notes that “Ontario is setting its sights on a comprehensive and continuous education system that supports children all the way from birth to adulthood” (p. 20).

As the Ministry works more intentionally to extend its mandate beyond K-12 to include the early years through to post-secondary education and the “Workforce of Tomorrow” it will be increasingly important for the Ministry to continue to focus on building a longitudinal data system that can track outcomes over time and across sectors.

There are operational structures in place to support collaboration and agreements between ministries and arm’s-length institutions such as EQAO, HEQCO, OCAS, and

¹⁵⁷ Hillmer, M. (2016). *Data Integration Initiative (DII)*. OERS Presentation.

OUAC. For example, through the Life Long Learning Group (3LG),¹⁵⁸ the Ministry and MAESD are working together to “support outcome measurement across the learning continuum” from early years to the workforce. Currently the group is focused on addressing the shared-data needs between the Ministry and MAESD to ensure that both ministries have the data they need to support evidence-informed decision-making. The group’s efforts to ensure the correct data is collected, made accessible, and shared across ministries and with other stakeholders will assist both ministries to monitor and report on collaboratively developed indicators.

In the United States, at a state level in addition to government bodies, non-profit education organizations help promote the development of high-quality student data systems, in particular the Data Quality Campaign (DQC). They suggest 10 key elements of statewide PreK-12 data collection systems¹⁵⁹ and the Ministry currently has many of these elements in place. The DQC also recommends 10 actions that states can take to improve their available education data¹⁶⁰ and some of these are areas that the Ministry is in the process of and/or has the capacity to consider.

Determining Funding Allocations

As evident in the publicly available *2016-17 Education Funding: Discussion Summary* document, the Ministry’s Education Finance Branch makes notable efforts to seek “on the ground” expertise, experiences, and voices of a wide range of stakeholders as part of its commitment to “improve the funding mechanisms that support education in Ontario” (p. 4).¹⁶¹ This includes collaborating with not only Directors of Education and Board Business Officials, but also a range of teachers’ federations, trustees’ associations, and board associations. As indicated by the Ministry:

¹⁵⁸ Lifelong Learning (3LG) Committee. (2016, February). Terms of reference for: Executive steering committee, working group. PowerPoint presentation (p. 5).

¹⁵⁹ For example, unique identifier, student level enrolment/demographic/program participation information, to match test records year to year, information on untested students, a teacher identifier system matching teachers to students, student-level transcript information, student-level college readiness test scores, student-level graduation and drop-out rates, ability to match K-12 and PSE records, and state data audit system.

¹⁶⁰ For example, link K-12, early learning, PSE and workforce data; create sustainable support for longitudinal data systems; develop governance structures to guide data collection and use; build state data repositories; provide efficient and role-based access to data; create progress reports with student-level data for educators, parents and students; create reports with longitudinal indicators at a system level; develop a purposeful research agenda; implement policies and practices to improve educators’ ability to use data; and promote awareness of the data available.

¹⁶¹ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2016). *2016-17 Education funding: Discussion summary*. Retrieved from www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1617/2016_ds_en.pdf

For the 2016-17 school year, the Ministry of Education invested approximately \$22.9B in education through the Grants for Student Needs funding formula. As part of this, approximately \$2.76 billion is projected to support special education through the Special Education Grant and approximately \$532 million is projected to support students who are at greater risk of lower academic achievement based on a set of social and economic risk factors through the Learning Opportunities Grant. In addition to the funds allocated through the Grants for Student Needs, the Ministry of Education allocated approximately \$344 million to school boards and third parties through Education Programs Other (EPO) Grants to fund specific programs and targeted initiatives.”¹⁶²

ESAB has created a variety of data reports/extracts to assist in determining allocations. Examples of products include: Enrolment by attendance type (e.g., pupils of the board, French as a Second Language enrolment, Native languages enrolment, year of entry into Canada, Native Studies courses, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition, enrolment related to Continuing Education including international languages and native languages, targeted literacy and numeracy supports for schools). ESAB also calculated an Education Opportunities Index (EOI) in 2013-14 to examine socio-economic factors that influence student achievement (see Appendix F).

To fully support the priorities identified for the Minister of Education and other ministries serving children and youth, a more in-depth evidence-informed examination of how to extend and/or redirect funding toward providing more precise programs and relevant services for all students, but especially for those not experiencing success and who are underserved, will be the challenge ahead.

The Auditor General of Ontario’s *2017 Value for Money Audit of the Ministry of Education: School Board Use of Government Funding*¹⁶³ may serve to identify where existing funding can be redirected toward this goal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing Precision: Funding

36. The Ministry develops and implements a cross-divisional plan to document and measure the progress and impact of Ministry-funded programs and initiatives using

¹⁶² Ministry of Education, Education Finance Branch. (2017, Feb. 17). Personal communication.

¹⁶³ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2017, January 27). Auditor General of Ontario – 2017 value for money audit of the Ministry of Education: School board use of government funding. Retrieved from www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/memos/.../dm_auditor_audit_school_bd.pdf

the further analysis of existing and, in the future, additional data within OnSIS, and redirect funding decisions based on results.

37. The Ministry immediately works with existing data within OnSIS to recognize key areas that require intervention and, where possible, factor supports for school boards in the 2017-18 Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) and Education Program Other (EPOs) process. Disparities identified from this analysis should also be addressed in funding decisions for 2018-19 and subsequent years.

38. The Ministry reviews the Education Opportunities Index (EOI) and its suitability to allocating the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG). The Ministry consider extending the use of the EOI to distribute grants in the GSN where appropriate.

Working Better Together

A scan of recent literature within sectors with responsibility for the education, care, and welfare of children and youth (i.e., early years, child welfare, health, mental health and well-being, correctional services, and Aboriginal Affairs) highlights the current conversation surrounding data and its interrelationship with the education sector.

A brief overview of the current dialogue in these other sectors is in Appendix G. Efforts to improve the academic, social, emotional, and physical well-being of students from birth to adulthood are occurring across government with education, child welfare, and health-related mandates. In addition, with greater data sharing, organizations with province-wide mandates, such as those by People for Education, Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change, and Social Planning Network of Ontario, can also use the data to advocate for improving conditions that impact student achievement and sustained successes.

The hope for greater collaboration within and between ministries and educational partners in leveraging, enhancing, and focusing on demographic and perceptual data collections has been a consistent theme throughout the consultative and research processes. Stakeholders consistently expressed a desire for the Ministry to take a leadership role in supporting and facilitating additional data collections.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Working Better Together

39. Working together, identify and address barriers for appropriate sharing of data between the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), child and youth service providers, Ministry of Education, and local school boards for the purpose of improving seamless support and services for children and youth in a timely manner.

40. To inform policy, programs, and funding, the Ministry works with the MCYS to collect data on the educational outcomes of children and youth currently in care. Summaries should be publicly reported with follow-up responses to address any troubling findings.
41. The Ministry works with its partner ministries to align the definition, collection, and analysis of demographic and other data, including on well-being, to ensure comparability across sectors and service systems to provide a comprehensive view of Ontario students.
42. The Ministry supports the work of the Anti-Racism Directorate through providing education-related data and information needed to address societal inequities arising from systemic racism. The Anti-Racism Directorate defines racism as including forms of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.
43. Working with educational partners, the Ministry enables, supports, and implements population specific anti-racism initiatives to reduce disparities in student achievement, including those faced by Black and Indigenous students. Potential initial focus areas to reduce such disparities include program streaming and student discipline (suspension and expulsion) practices.
44. Working with school board associations and school boards, the Ministry supports ongoing training in human rights principles for school board elected officials and staff at all levels.
45. The Government of Ontario mandates development and implementation of a Racial Equity Impact Assessment Framework in the education sector, and considers developing and requiring other such frameworks to advance equity, including those based on creed and disabilities. Data identified to be collected from implementing the framework will be made public and used to inform Ministry decisions and funding as appropriate.
46. Effective data governance is mandatory. Working with its partner ministries and educational partners, the Ministry places priority on developing an Early Years through to Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Data Governance structure that has the expertise and clearly established authority to enable the extension of data collection and removal of barriers to data sharing and longitudinal tracking. This tracking should begin in the early years, continue from Kindergarten to Grade 12, and through to post-secondary education and the workforce.

47. Given the patterns of concern raised about the schooling and education of Black students, working with community representatives and educational partners, the Ministry establishes a task force to review systemic concerns experienced and faced by Black students. The *Task Force to Ensure Success for Students of African Descent* should identify systemic issues faced by these students and develop an action plan to address these issues. The plan should be submitted to the Ministers responsible for Education and Children and Youth Services.

Conclusion

A number of stakeholders who are working on the ground within various education sectors have also identified the equity issues raised throughout this report. In their opinion, they made it clear that politics often interferes with the use and reporting of data, which hampers the development and implementation of interventions. Their collective call was for greater transparency and accountability of data analysis and reporting. To enhance accountability, both gaps in access and quality of intervention require review.

This report's recommendations have taken into consideration those of the Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel¹⁶⁴ given the importance of education to Ontario's economic development. The recommendations are also aligned with Learn Canada 2020¹⁶⁵ and its goals for each of the pillars of lifelong learning. The data collections and analyses they would enable would serve to inform decision-making to ensure children arrive at school ready to learn; have access to teaching and learning opportunities in elementary and secondary school that are inclusive and provide them with strong skills in literacy, numeracy, and science; and increase the quality and accessibility of post-secondary education and adult learning and skills development.

To mobilize knowledge into action, the Ministry and its partners are encouraged to work more closely with external organizations with education and social change mandates, by sharing and effectively using data that supports the success of every student in Ontario.

¹⁶⁴ Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel. (2016). *Building the workforce of tomorrow: A shared responsibility*.

¹⁶⁵ CMEC. (2010). *A framework for statistics on learning and education in Canada*.

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Glossary

ability groupings: the practice of organizing students according to their abilities into non-academic programs (e.g., special education programs, secondary programs) and organizational decisions educators make in grouping students in the classroom.

achievement gaps: a difference in educational outcomes between groups of students that exist both in and outside of schools.

Achieving Excellence: the Ontario Ministry of Education’s vision for publicly funded education in the province renewed in 2014 with the goals of achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being, and enhancing public confidence.

Anti-Racism Directorate (ARD): established in February 2016 and mandated to address and prevent systemic racism in government policy, legislation, programs, and services.

Auditor General of Ontario: an independent office of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that was created in 1869 to support accountability by conducting independent audits of the provincial government, and its ministries, agencies, and organizations that receive provincial funding.

Baby Boomers: a demographic cohort that is characterized by individuals born after World War II (i.e., approximately during 1946 and 1964) in North America.

census surveys: a tool to systematically acquire demographic information about individuals of a given population.

Children’s Aid Societies / Family and Children’s Services (CAS / F & CSs): independent, non-profit organizations responsible for providing child protection services and investigating reports or evidence of abuse or neglect of children under the age of 16.

Children / Youth in Care: children / youth under the protection of Children’s Aid Societies / Family and Children’s Services.

Institute for Clinical and Evaluative Sciences (ICES): a non-profit research institute that provides the sector with health and health services research and evidence to support improvement in healthcare policy, delivery, and outcomes.

Code-protected persons/groups: persons/groups protected against discrimination by the Ontario Human Rights Code on the following grounds: age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status (including single status), gender identity, gender expression, receipt of public assistance, record of offences, sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding), and sexual orientation.

cohort: a group of individuals who are linked by a common characteristic, experience, or timeframe.

cohort-based indicator: a measurable variable specific to a group of individuals.

confidential but not anonymous: an approach to collecting information where the data are kept secret but individuals can be identified.

Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC): an intergovernmental body created in 1967 by ministers of education that provides leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels.

courses of study: course levels taken across the secondary school panel in which students can participate. For Grades 9 and 10, students can enroll in courses within Academic, Applied, and Locally Developed/Essentials levels. For Grades 11 and 12, students can enroll in courses at the University, Mixed, College, and Workplace Preparedness levels.

data: information (e.g., administrative, demographic, perceptual, program, etc.) in quantitative or qualitative form that is measured, gathered, analyzed, conveyed, and visualized.

Data Quality Campaign (DQC): a non-partisan, non-profit advocacy organization established in 2005 to enhance the quality, accessibility, and use of data in education.

deficit lens: a perspective whereby individuals are not credited for and are deemed deficient regarding their abilities, interests, former learning, and experiences.

demographic factors: personal characteristics including but not limited to age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status (including single status), gender identity, gender expression, sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding), and sexual orientation.

Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA): a standardized reading test used to identify students' reading ability, record progress, and adapt teaching methods to provide effective reading instruction.

disaggregated race-based data: quantitative or qualitative data that are analyzed on the basis of ethnic backgrounds and/or racial identities to reveal underlying patterns that are not discernible in aggregated data sets.

disparities: the absence of equality or similarity, especially in a discriminatory manner.

early childhood education and care (ECEC): the provision of quality programming, policies, and services for children (i.e., birth to eight years of age) and families with a focus on child development to facilitate an optimal transition to formal schooling.

Early Development Instrument (EDI): a population-based measure of the health and wellness of young children and their ability to take advantage of learning opportunities in the school environment: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge. There are also two additional scales indicating children's special skills and problems.

Early Years Evaluation (EYE): an indicator of children's development in the following domains: awareness of self and environment, cognitive skills, language and communication, gross and fine motor skills, social skills and approaches to learning, and physical development.

Education Opportunities Index (EOI): a measure to examine socio-economic factors that influence student achievement.

Education Program - Other (EPOs): funding allocated to support the Ontario Ministry of Education's core goals and priorities identified in the renewed vision.

Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO): a Crown agency of the Government of Ontario that was established in 1996 to create and administer large-scale assessments to measure Ontario students' achievement in reading, writing, and math at key stages of their education.

Education Statistics Analysis Branch (ESAB): a team in the Ministry of Education's Dissemination and Reporting Unit responsible for collecting, analyzing, and reporting

education data to support the Ministry's programs and policies and increase the Ministry's capacity for evidence-informed decision-making.

elemental data: fundamental information collected from individuals.

foundational credential: a qualification or achievement that is a basic requirement for or serves as a gateway to access opportunity.

foundational learning skills: a host of skills (e.g., basic literacy and numeracy) and behaviours (e.g., social and emotional development) that facilitate learning.

Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO): an agency of the Government of Ontario established in 2005 that brings evidence-based research to the continued improvement of the post-secondary education system in Ontario.

Home School Program (HSP): students who are in partially self-contained classes (i.e., students receive support for at least 50% of the school day).

Grants for Student Needs (GSNs): a collection of grants (i.e., funding formula) provided by the Ontario Ministry of Education that support funding for the classroom, school leadership and operations, specific student-related priorities, and local management by school boards.

gender identity: linked to an individual's intrinsic sense of self and their sense of being female, male, a combination of both, or neither regardless of their biological sex.

Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC): a committee legislated by the Education Act under Reg. 181/98 in making identification and placement decisions of exceptional students.

identity-based data: quantitative or qualitative information collected on the basis of identifiable variables, such as age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status (including single status), gender identity, gender expression, sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding), and sexual orientation.

Indigenous student self-identification data: a confidential and voluntary process that affords students and/or their families to identify as having First Nation, Métis, or Inuit ancestry.

individual program plan: a written guide and commitment(s) of intent devised by educators to ensure that the individual needs of students are met through appropriate planning and programming.

intersectionality: an approach that considers the historical, social, and political context and recognizes that an individual's experiences are based on the convergence of these factors, which together render unique effects.

intersectionality-based policy framework / analysis: a tool used to support the examination and evaluation of policies to determine whether they achieve a set of objectives while considering a convergence of historical, social, and political contexts. Various frameworks exist to guide this activity, each differing in the elements critical to appraising a policy and approaches used.

invisible disabilities: structural barriers that are not visible yet “disable” full social, economic, and political participation.

Joint Protocols for Student Achievement (JPAS): a data sharing agreement that provides a framework for collaboration between Children Aid Societies / Family and Children Services and school boards to improve the educational achievement of children / youth in the care of and/or receiving services from a CAS / F&CSs.

knowledge mobilization: the process of engaging producers and users of knowledge to meaningfully effect research, policy, and practice.

Learn Canada 2020: a joint declaration and guiding document framework among provincial and territorial ministers of education to improve Canada's education systems, learning opportunities, and overall education outcomes.

lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQQ): a common acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgendered, and queer individuals/communities.

Life Long Learning Group (3LG): a collaborative structure between the Ontario Ministry of Education and Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development to support outcome measurement across the learning continuum from the early years to the workforce.

locally developed program of study: courses that may be developed by a board for students in a particular school or region to accommodate educational and/or career

preparation needs that are not met through courses within the provincial curriculum policy documents.

Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA): an initiative to increase both provincial and local capacity to use data and information for evidence-informed decision-making to improve student achievement.

Mandate Letters: letters Premier Kathleen Wynne wrote to each cabinet minister, outlining the key priorities and policy objectives for their ministry with the goal to increase transparency and accountability to the public.

Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council: a three-year advisory body established by the Government of Ontario in 2014 that advises the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy's investments, promotes collaboration across sectors, and reports annually on the Strategy's progress.

Measuring What Matters: a five-year initiative involving representatives from across Canada and the Ontario government to create a new set of goals and indicators to assess school success that reflects the broad skills (e.g., creativity, citizenship, social-emotional learning and health) graduates will need to be engaged citizens and members of the workforce.

Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD): Ontario ministry responsible for administering laws and policies relating to higher education and skills training; distributing provincial funds to institutions and students; operating Employment Ontario; supporting apprenticeship, career and employment preparation; and undertaking labour market research and planning.

Ministry Educator Number (MEN): a unique identifier that is assigned to all educators (board and school level) in the province to enable the collection of educator assignment data at both board and school levels.

Offord Centre for Child Studies: a population health research centre established in 1992 to improve understanding of, quality of life, and opportunities for children with mental health problems.

Ontario College Application Service (OCAS): centralized application service for Ontario's public colleges.

Ontario Education Number (OEN): a unique nine-digit student identification number that is assigned by the Ministry of Education to elementary and secondary students across the province.

Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC): formed in 1961 as an arm's length agency of government to administer the Ontario Human Rights Code, prevent discrimination, and promote and advance human rights in Ontario.

Ontario Research and Evaluation Strategy: a key strategy introduced in 2005 and designed to support the application of research and evaluation to inform policy and program decisions and practices, as well as organizational capacity building to access, use, and conduct research and evaluation.

Ontario School Information System (OnSIS): web-based data collection system launched in 2005 to collect and manage student and educator-level data from each school and board, including information on courses, classes, students, and educators, three times a year (October, March, June), as well as specific points in the summer.

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT): an assessment that evaluates the literacy skills students are expected to have learned across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9. Successful completion of the literacy test is required to earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC): established in 1971 by the Council of Ontario Universities and the Ontario Universities' Council on Admissions to centralize the post-secondary school application process for admission to undergraduate, law, medical, rehabilitation sciences, and teacher education programs at Ontario's universities.

operational capacity: the maximum ability of an organization or business to realize their functions and activities.

opportunity gaps: a difference in resources or opportunities between groups of students, which exist both in and outside of schools.

organizational capacity: the maximum ability of an organization or business to achieve its goals.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): an intergovernmental organization established in 1960 to promote policies that stimulate economic and social progress globally.

output: the actual results of an individual or organization over a given period.

PM Benchmark Reading Assessment: a test designed to evaluate students' instructional and independent reading abilities using unseen, meaningful passages.

political will: the motivation or commitment to fulfil a policy or other political action that is not widely accepted.

post-secondary education (PSE): educational attainment beyond secondary school (e.g., apprenticeship or trades certificate, diploma, university certificate, or university degree).

program of study: a classification based on the majority of course levels students are taking.

Provincial Advisory Panel on Race Relations: a small team established in 1992 to report on the systemic racism in Ontario in criminal justice, law enforcement, employment, and education systems and provide recommendations.

Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth: reporting directly to the Legislative Assembly, this independent office affords both individual and system-level advocacy for Ontario's children and youth who are either "in care" or on the margins of government care.

Public Plan for Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs): a provincial commitment to integrate four existing child and family programs, funded by the Ontario government.

racialized: a process of imposing racial construct(s) to a person, group, relationship, or practice.

Review on the Roots of Youth Violence: established in June 2007 and commissioned academic research and conducted consultations across Ontario to better understand the impact of violence and why it occurs.

race / ethnic background: ethnic, cultural, or historical heritage group to which an individual belongs.

religious background: affiliation, beliefs, or behaviours towards mythical, supernatural, or spiritual facets of a religion.

School Climate Surveys: an anonymous survey mandated by the Ministry of Education that school boards are required to conduct of students, school staff, and parents at least once every two years to better understand equity and inclusive education, as well as bullying/harassment.

self-determination: ability or power to freely determine one's acts or states.

self-identity data: quantitative or qualitative personally identifiable information, such as age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status (including single status), gender identity, gender expression, sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding), and sexual orientation.

sexual orientation: an attraction continuum that includes a range of gender identities, expressions, and biological sexes (e.g., asexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, and homosexuality).

social inequality: differences in the distribution of resources, rewards, and positions regarded highly in a society.

special education needs (SEN): students who are identified as having behavioural, communication, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities who may have educational needs that cannot be met through regular instructional and assessment practices.

specialty programs: specialized elementary and secondary programs that offer unique opportunities and focus on a variety of interests, such as Advanced Placement (AP), Elite Athlete, French Immersion (FI), Gifted, International Baccalaureate (IB), Ontario Youth Apprenticeship (OYAP), Special Education, Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM).

Statistics Canada: a government agency established in 1971 to produce statistics to better understand Canada's population, resources, economy, society, and culture.

Statistics Transformation Office: a newly established office that reports to the Assistant Deputy Minister & Chief Economist, Ministry of Finance, with the role of

developing options for the collection, use, and dissemination of data across the Ontario public service.

stratification of academic outcomes: classification of students based on academic outcomes such as programs of study, specialty programs, and special education needs.

streaming: an educational practice whereby students are issued to various programs of study with graduation and post-secondary implications.

structured pathways: students' academic experiences with their programs of study during secondary school that affect graduation and post-secondary outcomes.

sub-groups: a subset of a group based on a common characteristic.

systemic racism: discriminating patterns of racism pervasive within political or structural institutions or organizations.

The College/University Direct Registration Indicator: the number of Ontario secondary school students from a Grade 9 cohort who are reported as registering directly in a university or college in Ontario within four years and within five years from Grade 9.

Toronto District School Board (TDSB): the largest and one of the most diverse school boards in Canada, which serves approximately 246,000 students in 584 schools throughout Toronto, and more than 160,000 lifelong learners in Adult and Continuing Education programs.

underserved students and communities: populations that are disadvantaged due to the provision of inadequate services, programs, or opportunities.

Appendix A: Project Mandate

Unlocking Student Potential Through Data

The Ministry of Education has partnered with York University on a project that aims to improve the future of students across the province by offering them the best possible learning opportunities. The project will explore the feasibility of collecting additional data to gain a better understanding of Ontario students and support the principles outlined in *Achieving Excellence (2014)*, the ministry's vision for publicly funded education.

Achieving Excellence outlines the ministry's renewed goals, which includes "Ensuring Equity." This is defined as offering all children and students the opportunity "to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood."

Although schools try to reach all students, some of those students continue to struggle and do not reach their full potential because of various factors such as poverty, language barriers, unfamiliarity with the education system, or lack of supports or well-being.

Why data matters

Having an in-depth understanding of students and school communities is crucial to helping students overcome barriers to academic success but this requires robust, reliable data. *Achieving Excellence* notes that, with "changes to national data collection, (the ministry) will need to work even more closely with partners, especially school boards, to ensure that accurate, up-to-date information, such as socio-economic and demographic data, is available to make the best decisions for Ontario children and students."

One way to achieve this goal is to, "Broaden the measures of success and the use of perceptual and demographic data (e.g., perceptual surveys) so that program and service enhancements address the specific needs of students who continue to struggle" (*Achieving Excellence, page 19*).

Project goal

Explore the feasibility of the Ministry of Education and school boards collecting additional student-level data to better understand student populations and school communities so that they can help to identify and address barriers to student success.

Primary benefit

The primary benefit of the project is to gain a better understanding of student populations and school communities so that the ministry can create a more equitable environment and more appropriately allocate funding and supports to produce better student outcomes and reduce gaps in student achievement.

Secondary benefits

Among the secondary benefits of this projects are:

- More informed decision-making about development and improvement of programs and services within available funding envelopes and any new supports that need to be put in place.
- Identification of the benefits, risks and costs related to the collection of demographic data
- Identification of a proposed strategy for the collection of additional student demographic data
- Establishment of productive partnerships between the ministry and other partners in education, including post-secondary institutions, and the potential for shared learning.

Project scope

The focus of this project will be on:

- finding a means of correlating and disaggregating student achievement and well-being data with socio-economic and demographic data
- making recommendations on the development of instruments to collect and effectively use such data.

The project would include the following:

- a review of current data requirements and identification of promising practices to collect additional student-level data
- identification of points of consideration for school boards and the ministry to inform collection and effective use of additional student level data
- identification of proposed variables, instruments and frequency of collection
- examination of the rationale and relevant risks, including an assessment of operational capacity and readiness
- a summary of promising practices in decision making, implementation and communication of the project's findings
- a list of guidelines and assessment of related cost requirements for the collection of additional data, including the approach, supports and considerations in ensuring compatibility with other existing methods of data collection.

Project lead

The project is being led by Donna Quan, former director of education at the Toronto District School Board, and now a senior advisor to the deputy minister of Education on educational and student data needs. Ms. Quan is well positioned to take on this project, with more than thirty years of experience in education and using data to inform decision-making. During this time, she has managed various projects that have demonstrated the vital linkages and relevance of education data management with the cultural and social well-being of students.

Ms. Quan will report directly to the Deputy Minister of Education and will be working closely with relevant branches within the ministry. She will also collaborate with other ministries and government agencies that will support and assist the project, as appropriate.



Timing

The work on this project began in December 2015 and will be completed with a final project report by August 31, 2017. Interim reports will be released regularly.

Quick Facts

- As of 2014-2015, there were 3,974 elementary and 919 secondary schools in Ontario.
- As of 2014-2015 there were 2,003,253 students in Ontario.
- Learn more about *Achieving Excellence, A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* at www.ontario.ca/eduvision

Appendix B: Stakeholder Consultation

Representatives from Organizations & Interested Parties Providing Feedback

Internal

- Anti-Racism Directorate
- Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development
- Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services
- Ministry of Children and Youth Services
- Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
- Ministry of Education
 - o Curriculum Division
 - o Leadership and Learning Environment Division
 - o Financial Policy and Business Division
 - o Early Years Division
 - o French Language, Aboriginal Learning and Research Division
 - o Student Achievement Division
- Ministry of Government and Consumer Services
- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
- OPS Diversity Office
- OPS Poverty Reduction Office

External

- Arch Disability Law Centre
- Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change
- Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)
- Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)
- People for Education
- Social Planning Council – Toronto
- Ontario Human Rights Commission
- Public Health Ontario (representatives from Toronto and Windsor-Essex County)
- University of Toronto – Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
- York University
 - o Faculty of Education
 - o Faculty of Law
 - o Institute for Social Research
 - o Jean Augustine Chair in Education, Community & Diaspora
 - o York Centre for Education & Community

Discussants and Informants Attending

- International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement 2017 – January 2017
- Partners in Dialogue Event, Ministry of Education – November 2016
- Anti-Racism Directorate Engagement Meeting – October 2016
- York Centre for Education and Community Summer Institute – August 2016
- Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (CMEC) / Statistics Canada – February 2016
- Racial Profiling Policy Dialogue: In partnership with: Ontario Human Rights Commission, York University Centre for Human Rights, York University School of Public Policy and Administration, York University Institute for Social Research – February 2016
- First Annual Meeting (Education Cluster) – Canadian Sociological Association – January 2016

Appendix C: Ontario Education Facts 2015-16

Ontario Ministry of Education Education Facts, 2015-2016* (Preliminary)

Schools and School Boards

The following are the most recent facts and figures available for Ontario's publicly funded education system.

- Administration: Ontario's schools are administered by district school boards and school authorities.
- School boards are divided as follows:
 - 31 English Public
 - 29 English Catholic
 - 4 French Public
 - 8 French Catholic
- There are 10 School Authorities, consisting of 4 geographically isolated boards and 6 hospital-based school authorities.
- There is 1 Provincial Schools Authority.
- As of 2015-2016, there were 3,978 elementary and 913 secondary schools in Ontario.

Education Funding

- For 2015-16, the government's total investment excluding capital was estimated to be \$22.6 billion.
- For 2015-16, the government's total capital investment was estimated to be \$1.2 billion.

Teachers, Administrators and Early Childhood Educators**

- In 2015-2016, there were 113,704.28 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers, consisting of 74,461.34 elementary and 39,242.94 secondary teachers. The numbers exclude teachers on leave, long-term occasional (LTO) teachers, and teachers in care and/or treatment, custody and correctional facilities.
- In 2015-2016, there were 9,874.68 FTE LTO teachers, consisting of 6,777.73 elementary and 3,096.95 secondary LTO teachers.

- In 2015-2016, there were 7,313.02 FTE administrators (principals and vice-principals), consisting of 5,306.53 elementary and 2,006.49 secondary administrators.
- In 2015-2016, there were 9,032.26 FTE early childhood educators (ECE), excluding LTO ECEs.
- In 2015-2016, there were 538.51 FTE LTO ECEs.

Enrolment

- As of 2015-2016 the number of students in Ontario was: 1,993,433.

The following illustrates enrolment by grade and language, as of 2015-2016:

Elementary

Grade	English Language	French Language	Total
Junior Kindergarten	117,313	8,314	125,627
Kindergarten	123,813	8,625	132,438
Grade 1	128,868	8,865	137,733
Grade 2	130,658	8,792	139,450
Grade 3	131,236	8,334	139,570
Grade 4	129,553	8,243	137,796
Grade 5	128,670	7,717	136,387
Grade 6	129,610	7,393	137,003
Grade 7	129,221	6,845	136,066
Grade 8	129,009	6,594	135,603
Total	1,277,951	79,722	1,357,673

Secondary

Grade	English Language	French Language	Total
Grade 9***	138,723	5,967	144,690
Grade 10	138,564	5,653	144,217
Grade 11	143,735	5,854	149,589
Grade 12	190,968	6,296	197,264
Total	611,990	23,770	635,760

Source: As reported by schools in Ontario School Information System (OnSIS), 2015-2016 (preliminary).

Data includes public and Roman Catholic schools and school authorities. Data excludes private schools, publicly funded hospital and provincial schools, care and/or treatment, custody and correctional facilities, summer, night and adult continuing education day schools. Data is based on headcount of students.

For data on prior years, see our Quick Facts publications:

- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2014-15](#)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2013-14](#)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2012-13](#) (PDF, 180 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2011-12](#) (PDF, 178 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2010-11](#) (PDF, 150 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2009-10](#) (PDF, 298 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2008-09](#) (PDF, 320 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2007-08](#) (PDF, 122 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2006-07](#) (PDF, 116 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2005-06](#) (PDF, 192 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2004-05](#) (PDF, 229 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2003-04](#) (PDF, 168 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2002-03](#) (PDF, 78 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2001-02](#) (PDF, 78 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 2000-01](#) (PDF, 70 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 1999-00](#) (PDF, 71 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 1998-99](#) (PDF, 69 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 1997-98](#) (PDF, 70 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 1996-97](#) (PDF, 62 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 1995-96](#) (PDF, 63 KB)
- [Quick Facts – Ontario Schools, 1994-95](#) (PDF, 62 KB)

Appendix D: Ontario School Information System and Ontario Education Number Overview

Ontario School Information System (OnSIS)

- The Ontario School Information System (OnSIS), launched in 2005-06, is a web-based application, which integrates and collects board, school, student, educator, course, and class data at the elemental level.
- OnSIS allows the ministry to gather accurate and reliable data from Ontario's elementary and secondary schools.
- Over 110 million data records with multiple data points are collected annually in three data submission periods.
- All collected data are validated and verified at source, improving data accuracy and integrity.
- The data that is collected and stored is protected by Ontario's privacy legislation and a rigorously controlled security system.
- This data is subsequently integrated, depersonalized, and stored in the ministry's data warehousing environments, where it is used to develop and promote information practices for analysis, policy development, and evidence-based decision-making in the education sector, to ultimately improve student outcomes.

Ontario Education Number (OEN)

- The Ontario Education Number (OEN) is a unique numeric identifier, assigned to each student throughout their elementary/ secondary and post-secondary education in Ontario.
- The assignment of the OEN has significantly enhanced the capacity to support ministry analytical needs and provide key indicator data about ministry priorities.
- The OEN is essential in collecting, tracking, and processing student-level data, enabling analysis and reporting of student achievement over time.
- A student's unique OEN allows for linking of OnSIS data to other datasets and tracking of student outcomes for a given cohort or other groups of students.
- Cohort-based measures provide a more complete picture of student success, allowing for longitudinal analysis and reporting as well as the integration of OnSIS data with external data sets (e.g., Statistics Canada Census Data, Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) results).
- Tracking student achievement over time, coupled with building capacity to contextualize achievement data with socio-economic, descriptive, program, and perceptual data, has supported the development of more granular and locally relevant approaches to student success.
- Longitudinal tracking provides opportunities to identify students at risk of not graduating for early intervention and help students improve and maintain achievement.

Appendix E: OnSIS collection schedule

2016-2017 OnSIS Academic Year Data Submission Schedule

Data to be Collected	Notes	Count Date	Board Submission Start Date	Board Submission Completion Date
October Data Submission (Data collected between July 1st – October 31st) Student data; course/class enrolment data; program data; educator data. Secondary schools also submit student achievement data including diplomas/certificates.	Includes elemental student and educator data from publicly funded elementary and secondary schools.	October 31, 2016	November 1, 2016	December 31, 2016
March Data Submission (Data collected between November 1st – March 31st) Student data; course/class enrolment data; program data; secondary school course calendar and option sheets; educator data. Secondary schools also submit student achievement data including diplomas/certificates.	Includes elemental student and educator data from publicly funded elementary and secondary schools.	March 31, 2017	April 1, 2017	May 31, 2017
Year End Data Submission - Elementary (Data collected between April 1st – June 30th) Student data; program data; student achievement data; educator data.	Includes elemental student and educator data from publicly funded elementary schools.	June 30, 2017	July 1, 2017	September 30, 2017
Year End Data Submission - Secondary (Data collected between April 1st – June 30th) Student data; course/class enrolment data; program data; student achievement data including diplomas/certificates; educator data.	Includes elemental student and educator data from publicly funded secondary schools.	June 30, 2017	July 1, 2017	August 31, 2017
Annual Suspension/Expulsion Data Incident, student and program data for suspension/expulsion.	Includes elemental data for incidents and students from publicly funded elementary and secondary schools. Data for the full year. You will have access to this submission once your school year end (June) submission is signed off.	June 30, 2017	July 1, 2017	September 30, 2017
Night School Data Submission Student data; student achievement data including diplomas/certificates (secondary panel only).	Includes elemental student data from continuing education programs which includes Night Schools and Adult Continuing Education Day Schools.	August 31, 2017	September 1, 2017	September 30, 2017

Summer School Data Submission Student data; student marks and credits data (secondary panel only).	Includes elemental student data from Summer Schools.	August 31, 2017	September 1, 2017	September 30, 2017
October Board Report Board and school personnel; teachers of exceptional students; continuing education data; International/Native language programs; home schooling; non-attendance; teacher performance appraisals; new teacher induction program (NTIP), habitually absent; educator data.	Includes elemental educator data. All other data collected is aggregate.	October 31, 2016	November 1, 2016	December 31, 2016
March Board Report Educator data.	Includes elemental educator data	March 31, 2017	April 1, 2017	May 31, 2017
June Board Report Violent incidents data; educator data.	Includes elemental educator data and violent incident data collected at an aggregate level by school.	June 30, 2017	July 1, 2017	September 30, 2017
October Care and/or Treatment, Custody and Correctional Facility Submission (CTCCF) Enrolment by age and gender; number of students by educational program; enrolment by areas of exceptionality/non-exceptional students; educator data	Includes elemental educator data. All other data collected is aggregate.	October 31, 2016	November 1, 2016	December 31, 2016
March Care and/or Treatment, Custody and Correctional Facility Submission (CTCCF) Educator data.	Includes elemental educator data	March 31, 2017	April 1, 2017	May 31, 2017
June Care and/or Treatment, Custody and Correctional Facility Submission (CTCCF) Educator data.	Includes elemental educator data	June 30, 2017	July 1, 2017	September 30, 2017
Care and/or Treatment, Custody and Correctional Facility (CTCCF) Course/Class Enrolment Course and class enrolment data.	Excel template – Aggregate data	October 31, 2016	November 1, 2016	December 31, 2016
Annual Secondary Care and/or Treatment, Custody and Correctional (CTCCF) Facilities Student data including student achievement data (secondary panel only).	Includes elemental student data collected annually.	August 31, 2017	September 1, 2017	September 30, 2016
Technology in Schools/Boards	Data will be collected throughout the year in the OnSIS Administration menu	Scheduled dates the Ministry will pull the data from the Administration Menu in OnSIS: October 31, 2016 March 31, 2017 June 30, 2017		
Teacher Performance Appraisal Submission (TPA) – Board collection of teacher performance data.	Includes elemental teacher performance data.	June 30, 2017	July 1, 2017	September 30, 2017

Appendix F: Education Opportunities Index Methodology

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES INDEX METHODOLOGY, 2013-14

Purpose

The Education Opportunities Index (EOI) combines several socio-economic status (SES) variables that have been found to influence student achievement into a composite index that measures SES-related factors that impact opportunities experienced by students in a school.

Data Description

Five socio-economic variables comprise the EOI. Four of the variables come from Statistics Canada:

- Lone Parent Family: The percentage of school aged children in a lone parent family from the 2011 Census (mandatory short form);
- Parental Education: The percentage of school aged children whose parents do not have a certificate, diploma or degree or who have no more than a secondary school diploma from the 2011 National Household Survey;
- Family Income: The percentage of families with income below the After-Tax Low Income Measure (AT- LIM) that have school aged children from tax file data for 2013-2014;
- Income Source: The percentage of families with no earned income that have school aged children from tax file data for 2013-2014.

Indicators derived from Statistics Canada data are proxies for students' SES within schools.

The fifth variable is immigration, specifically very recent immigrants arriving in Canada within the past five years. This indicator comes from administrative data in the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS).

Methodology

To derive the composition of SES variables for each school, the data was linked to student postal code records collected by the Ministry of Education and weighted by enrolment. Age specific Statistics Canada data along with the percentage of students who are very recent immigrants for each school were used to produce separate elementary school (Ages 4-13) and secondary school (Ages 14-18) EOIs.

A statistical method, Principal Component Analysis (PCA), was then used to determine weights for the variables based on the influence each carry in the dataset. PCA produces a single vector (principal component) that explains the greatest amount of variance among the SES variables. The principal component explained 64% of the variance among the variables used to produce both the elementary and secondary school EOI. The contribution of each variable to the principal component can then be derived and used to calculate the EOI as a composite index that represents the percentage of students experiencing SES-related factors that impact their educational opportunities.

To calculate the EOI for each school:

- The percentage value of each variable is multiplied by the normalized weight for that variable, producing weighted indicators; and
- The weighted indicators are then summed.

Interpretation

Index values can be interpreted as follows:

- A higher value means that students are experiencing fewer/lower educational opportunities;
- A lower value means that students are experiencing higher educational opportunities.

Distribution of EOI, 2013-2014

The EOI indices have an average value of 14.9% for elementary schools and about 16.6% for secondary schools, **after accounting for different enrolments in schools**. However, they are not evenly distributed. Elementary and Secondary panel averages are somewhat higher than the corresponding medians (13.1% and 14.9% respectively). This indicates that the distribution of schools on the indices is slightly skewed toward lower opportunities.

Appendix G: Cross-Sectoral Efforts

Cross-Sectoral Efforts: Working Better Together

A scan of recent literature within sectors with responsibility for the education, care, and welfare of children and youth (i.e., early years, child welfare, health, mental health and well-being, correctional services, and Aboriginal Affairs) highlights the current conversation surrounding data and its interrelationship with the education sector. What follows is a brief overview of the current dialogue in these other sectors.

Early Years

In 2003, Canadian researchers described the state of early childhood education and care (ECEC) data as incomplete and inconsistent. In 2013, researchers wrote, “it could be argued that Canadian ECEC data have only become more fragile since then and that the availability and collection of data has become more challenging.”¹

Researchers argue that a more consistent collection of ECEC data is vitally important to ensure policy and program design, services planning, accountability of public funds, and evaluation of program effectiveness. The Early Learning Division within the Ministry of Education collects data from child care operators that have funding agreements with service system managers; however, the data is primarily focused on inputs and outputs (e.g., attendance numbers).²

Moving forward, a major government objective is to better evaluate outcomes and support planning and decision-making. As such, the government is interested in collecting information directly from child care operators in order to have information on the entire licensed sector. Consideration is also being given to introducing a common provincial child care registration form and extending the Ontario Education Number (OEN) to include children in licensed child care settings.

With the change in legislation governing child care³ and the objectives of the early years areas of action, many transformations to regulated child care and non-regulated child

¹ Friendly, M., Halfon, S., Beach, J. & Forer, B. (2013). *Early childhood education and care in Canada 2012*. (p. 21) Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

² Early Learning Division, Ministry of Education. (2012). *Modernizing childcare in Ontario: Discussion paper*. (p. 14) Toronto: Queens Printer for Ontario.

³ Bill 143, Child Care Modernization Act, 2014

care are planned over the next few years.^{4,5} To monitor successful transformations, an increase in the collection of quality data will need to occur.

Child Welfare

Youth in care are among the most vulnerable, at-risk group within Canadian society.⁶ As a group, they face multiple barriers in their educational experience (e.g., frequent mobility, a large portion of special education needs, past trauma experience, mental health challenges, and/or the youth's socio-economic and cultural background). Researchers argue that black youth are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system because of systemic racism in society's institutions.⁷ The African Canadian Legal Clinic reports that "65% of the children and youth in the care of a Children's Aid Society in the Greater Toronto Area are African Canadian" (p. 22).⁸ Researchers argue that these incidents all suggest an urgent need for more transparency in child welfare accountability procedures – this includes tracking, monitoring, and publishing race-based aggregated data.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) agrees and has made several recommendations related to demographic data collection and its role in providing child welfare services to racialized children. The OHRC recommended that the Ministry of Child and Youth Services (MCYS) "...monitor how the Child and Family Services Act is applied, collect aggregate data, and report on the extent that child and family services...are assessing risk to children based on ethnic or race-based stereotypes, separating...racialized children from their family environment, or otherwise not meeting their needs."⁹ In December 2015, the OHRC announced its intention to examine the overrepresentation of Indigenous and racialized children and youth in Ontario's child

⁴ Early Learning Division, Ministry of Education. (2012). Modernizing childcare in Ontario: Discussion paper. (p. 4) Toronto: Queens Printer for Ontario.

⁵ Ministry of Education. (2016). Ontario Early Years and Family Centres. (p.4).

⁶ Goodman, D., & Burnett, J. (2014). *Best practices in educational transitions and outcomes for children and youth in care*. (p. 1).

⁷ Pon, G., Phillips, D., Clarke, J., & Abdillahi, I. (2015). Racial profiling in child welfare: The need for a black CAS. Presented at York University Racial Profiling Dialogue.

⁸ Morgan, A. (2016). *The blackening margins of multiculturalism: The African Canadian experience of exclusion from the economic, social and cultural promise and prosperity of Canada*. A Report on the Canadian Government's Compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the 57th Session of the Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (February 22 to March 4 of 2016). Submitted by African Canadian Legal Clinic.

⁹ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2014). *OHRC Submission to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services Review of the Child and Family Services Act*. Retrieved from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ohrc-submission-ministry-children-and-youth-services-review-child-and-family-services-act>

welfare system and they have called on MCYS to help all Children Aid Societies (CAS) to collect and report this kind of information.

School boards across the greater Toronto region are collaborating with CAS offices to work toward joint protocols for student achievement (JPSA). The JPSA are intended to assist Children Aid Societies / Family and Children Services (F&CSs) and school boards to improve the educational achievement of both children and youth in the care of, and those receiving services from a CAS / F&CSs. The JPSA provide a framework for collaboration, specifically a data-sharing agreement between CAS / F&CSs and school boards.

Corrections/Justice Services

Diversity in corrections reflects larger demographic trends in society as a whole, but certain groups are overrepresented in federal penitentiaries.¹⁰

For example: 9.5% of federal inmates today are Black (an increase of 80% since 2003-04); however, Black Canadians account for less than 3% of the total Canadian population. Aboriginal people represent 23% of federal inmates, yet comprise 4.3% of the total Canadian population, and one in three women under federal sentence are Aboriginal.¹¹

According to research on what has come to be known as the school-to-prison pipeline, “those students who are disciplined are more likely to drop out, and those students who drop out are more likely to turn to criminality.”¹² Researchers within the African-Canadian community suggest that these high drop-out rates are a result of more frequent suspension and expulsion of African-Canadian students and putting them on the school-to-prison pipeline.¹³

The African Canadian Legal Clinic recommends the federal government “[u]ndertake a review of suspension and expulsion rates of African Canadian students and develop an

¹⁰ Government of Canada, Office of the Correctional Investigator. (2013). *The changing face of Canada's prisons: Correctional investigator reports on ethno-cultural diversity in corrections*. Retrieved from <http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/comm/press/press20131126-eng.aspx>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Morgan, A. (2016). *The blackening margins of multiculturalism: The African Canadian experience of exclusion from the economic, social and cultural promise and prosperity of Canada*. (p.18).

¹³ Salole, A., & Abdulle, Z. (2015). Quick to punish: An examination of the school to prison pipeline for marginalized youth. *Canadian Review of Social Policy*, 72(73).

intervention strategy for reversing and eliminating the school to prison pipeline.”¹⁴ Along similar lines, the OHRC presented recommendations to the province on its Strategy for a Safer Ontario, proposing changes to the Police Act that dealt with racial profiling and included mandated race-based data collection.¹⁵

Aboriginal Affairs

Through *Learn Canada 2020*,¹⁶ ministers of education affirmed their joint commitment to improving outcomes for Aboriginal students. One of the strategies proposed to support Aboriginal students was to strengthen the capacity for evidence-based decision making. Toward that goal, the Canadian Ministries of Education, Canada (CMEC) commissioned a report to consider how better data and/or evidence could be developed to support jurisdictions’ efforts to improve the academic achievement of Aboriginal students. Findings within the report identified key gaps in data.

Moving forward, the CMEC-commissioned report outlined steps that could address and strengthen data and evidence in Aboriginal education which included: Aboriginal self-identification (which is now happening in many ministries across Canada), the scope and frequency of data collection (e.g., improve collection and reporting of measures of educational attainment; conduct annual assessments of early childhood development of Kindergarten students; report attendance data; and develop and report school-environment indicators such as the number of Aboriginal teachers and administrators), and consistent student numbers and data linkages.

The Ministry of Education has been collecting Aboriginal self-identification since 2009. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs received Cabinet approval in 2013 to work with partner ministries to implement an Ontario Public Service-wide Aboriginal Self-Identification Data Standard to allow Ontarians to voluntarily self-identify as Aboriginal, noting that “[a]dopting the Data Standard will provide the government with more complete, comparable and accurate information about the Aboriginal population for making policy recommendations, programming decisions and monitoring performance on Aboriginal socio-economic outcomes.”¹⁷ Lessons learned from implementing the data standard can

¹⁴ Morgan, A. (2016). *The blackening margins of multiculturalism: The African Canadian experience of exclusion from the economic, social and cultural promise and prosperity of Canada*.

¹⁵ Rankin, J., & Gillis, W. (2016, May 26). Ontario Human Rights Commission calls for big changes in policing. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2016/05/26/ontario-human-rights-commission-calls-for-big-changes-in-policing.html>

¹⁶ CMEC. (2008). *Learn 2020*.

¹⁷ Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. (2015). *Aboriginal self-identification data standard, implementation guide*. Government of Ontario.

be gleaned and considered when moving forward with additional data collection and/or scaling up the use of the OEN.

Health/Mental Health

The healthcare sector is advanced in terms of data collection and analysis. For example, the Institute for Clinical and Evaluative Sciences (ICES) provides the sector with health and health services research and evidence to support improvement in healthcare policy, delivery, and outcomes. With access to much of the publicly funded administrative health services records for the Ontario population eligible for universal health coverage, ICES undertakes applied health research to answer questions posed by health system stakeholders and policy-makers.

However, the call continues for a more illustrative demographic data picture. Certain population groups are not fully captured within the data (i.e., Aboriginal, undocumented, and LGBTQ youth)¹⁸ and the ability to deeply understand the health and healthcare system experiences of marginalized and/or racialized communities is incomplete.¹⁹

The same is true for data within the mental health area: “Due to inconsistent collection of socio-economic demographic information in health, there remain gaps in information about prevalence rates of mental health issues among different racialized groups.”²⁰ Echoed in the Health Quality Ontario/Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (HQO/ICES) report, *Taking Stock: A report on the quality of mental health and addictions services in Ontario (2015)*, “the province currently lacks relevant, high quality data on mental health and addictions services across the entire continuum of care.”²¹

However, there are many examples of collaboration and/or the creation of measurements that cross sectors – emphasizing the importance of understanding the intersectionality of individuals’ experiences. For example, the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council is developing a cross-sectoral data collection strategy while working with a team from ICES to develop a client-centred, “balanced score card” performance measurement framework.²²

¹⁸ Government of Ontario. (2014). *Stepping up: A strategic framework to help Ontario’s youth succeed*.

¹⁹ Morgan, A. (2016). *The blackening margins of multiculturalism: The African Canadian experience of exclusion from the economic, social and cultural promise and prosperity of Canada*. (p. 28).

²⁰ Subramanian, S., & Makonnen, S. (2015). *Racial profiling and mental health in Ontario*. (p. 2). Presented at York University Racial Profiling Dialogue.

²¹ Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council. (2015). *Better mental health means better health outcomes*. (p. 18).

²² Ibid.

In a similar vein, as part of the Open Minds, Healthy Minds, *Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy (2011)*, ICES was tasked to create a baseline scorecard specific to youth.²³ The scorecard describes the state of child and youth mental health in Ontario using 2013-14 available data; largely restricted to ICES health administrative data, population-based survey data, and school-level education data.

At a federal level, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) has a mandate to spark change within the country's mental health system, with the need for data paramount. "The ability of the MHCC and its stakeholders to create, share, and access data around mental health and mental illnesses is an important requirement to help achieve this goal" (p. 8)²⁴

More directly related to education, as part of Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education, discussions have begun about how to measure well-being in a more consistent way across school boards. As a Provincial Student Well-Being Measurement Plan begins to take shape,²⁵ looking at differences in well-being for different groups of student populations will become important and disaggregated data across sectors will be critical.

Lastly, Ontario's *Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed* hopes to guide, focus, and maximize Ontario's ministries collaborative actions to support young people. Its components (20 outcomes) will help ministries, service providers, foundations, community groups, young leaders, and their families better align work, research, and services for youth success. The indicators were selected based on *available data* about youth in Ontario, and may not perfectly measure all aspects of each outcome.²⁶ As such, additional cross-sectoral demographic and perceptual data is needed in this framework.

It is evident that there are many sector efforts underway to improve the care, education, and well-being of children and youth. Regardless of the sector, the desire for greater systemic collection, use, and sharing of data to drive development, implementation, and monitoring of relevant services is clear. Furthermore, priority populations will continue to be underserved without longitudinal data. The path ahead must place emphasis on evidence informed services and working better together.

²³ ICES. (2015). *The mental health of children and youth in Ontario*.

²⁴ Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2014) *Overview of mental health data in Canada: Background, needs, and gaps*. Calgary.

²⁵ Ministry of Education. (2016). *Achieving excellence: Promoting well-being*. EDU ADM's Committee.

²⁶ Ministry of Children and Youth Services. (2013). *Stepping up: A strategic framework to help Ontario's youth succeed*.

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Unlocking Student Potential Through Data