

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: School Climate Student Survey

What is it?

Our **HCDSB School Climate Student Survey** gives students an opportunity to provide their input on their school environment. It also fulfills the [Ministry of Education requirement](#) that all schools in Ontario implement a school climate survey for students, staff, and parents every two years. Information collected through this survey aligns with HCDSB's commitment to ensuring that every member of our community feels welcome, valued, included, and respected.

This year our student surveys include questions that measure school climate and that focus on *community* (e.g., quality of relationships, school-parish connection), *safety* (e.g., bullying), *academics* (e.g., school engagement), *health and well-being* (e.g., feeling happy (all grades), risky behaviours including drug and alcohol use (for grade 9-12 students only), self-esteem (for grade 7-12 students only)), and *demographics* (e.g., gender identity, Indigenous identity, religion, race, etc.). Demographic items plus the other items about community, safety, academics, and health and well-being together allow school planning teams to better understand the perceptions of various identities in our school environment. The survey will also include select items pertaining to mental health and the broader Halton community that will be shared in aggregate form with community partner, Halton Public Health. Those who are engaging in remote learning will also see select items pertaining to the virtual environment; these items will be used for our annual monitoring of student perceptions of the impact of remote learning.

Why is my child's participation important?

This is an opportunity for your child to have a voice on things that matter to them at their school. Responses will provide HCDSB staff with valuable information that will be used to inform school improvement initiatives and potentially enhance the teaching and learning environment of their school by identifying the school's progress and noting any potential challenges.

By participating in this survey, school communities will obtain helpful information that can be used to promote safe and inclusive school environments so that all students can succeed and thrive. That said, **this survey is completely voluntary**. While your child is encouraged to complete the survey, they will not be penalized in any way if they choose not to participate, and they may also skip any question that they do not wish to answer.

What will my child do?

Your child will be invited to fill out the voluntary online survey during designated class time. The survey should take them approximately 20 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers – they should answer based on their views and experiences. If your child requires special accommodations to complete the survey, your child’s teacher and/or support worker will work together to ensure that your child has an opportunity to complete the survey.

If you do **not** wish for your child to participate, your child’s name will be shared with the school principal, who will inform your child’s teacher of your request. To opt-out, please click [here](#).

Are there any risks to participating?

No, there are no serious risks associated with participating in this survey. Students will be informed that they can skip any questions they do not feel comfortable answering, and/or that they may reach out to their teacher or another adult they trust to talk about their feelings. They will also be made aware of the Kids Help Phone line (kidshelpphone.ca or 1-800-668-6868).

Is my child’s information kept private?

Yes, your child’s individual responses will remain private and confidential. Data will be stored in a secure, password-protected database and will only be accessible by authorized HCDSB Research and Development Services staff. Reports will contain a summary of the combined responses at the school, Family of Schools, and/or Board level; individual data will not be shared. Results will also not be released in cases where demographic information may lead to the ability to identify respondents. All information will be used, disclosed, and retained in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

What are you going to do with the information?

Results will be used by the HCDSB to:

- Better understand the climate of schools from the student perspective to nurture the learning environment that enables all students to thrive;
- Identify areas with the school that could use improvement;
- Monitor and evaluate various HCDSB Strategic Plan goals and school improvement plans.

Findings will be shared with school administrators or other HCDSB staff in the form of reports or presentations. Please note that this information is collected under the authority of the *Education Act* and will be used for educational and research purposes only.

Questions?

If you have further questions, please contact your child’s school Principal or Dr. Lisa Collimore, Chief Officer of Research and Development Services, research@hcdsb.org.