

**Report on the Diversity Audit of the  
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

A significant undertaking such as this Diversity Audit on an organization with over 5,000 employees is no small feat and many people deserve thanks for their contributions.

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board initiated this Diversity Audit and is to be acknowledged for committing resources to the important goal of becoming a diversity competent organization.

The Advisory Committee, assembled by HWDSB's project coordinator Linda Lopinski, was composed of leaders of each of the employee unions or staff groups for the board. This group of people worked to ensure the audit process was communicated to all employees.

Almost 4,000 staff members of the HWDSB undertook the completion of the Diversity Audit Survey on May 17 and 18, 2007. Without their responses this work could not move forward.



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) initiated an evaluation process aimed at gathering data on the diversity of the staff in the organization. The administration recognized that it lacked the statistical data necessary on staff diversity to fully inform human resource practices connected to staff recruitment, retention and development initiatives. Currently working with community leaders to develop a comprehensive equity policy, the board saw conducting a Diversity Audit as another step in becoming a diversity-competent organization.

In the introduction to the Diversity Audit information package for staff members, it is declared to be “imperative that HWDSB embrace and model inclusive practice as a community standard. Diversity is not polite accommodation...Diversity is a test of our...educational institution created to be open and accessible to all.”

Embracing that goal, the board engaged one of its special project coordinators, Linda Lopinski, to take the lead on the Diversity Audit. The purpose of the work was identified as:

- Creating a database that will provide a picture of the designated groups within the Board’s workforce as of the spring of 2007 to determine how reflective we are of the community of Hamilton and, by extension, our student community.
- Identify to what degree ‘designated groups’ are represented in our workforce and review our recruitment initiatives within those communities with non-reflective representation to increase the number of applications received from those groups. For example, recruitment initiatives might involve getting the message out on why members of those designated groups should consider a career with HWDSB. It does not mean adjustments to the interviewing, selection or hiring processes to unfairly favour any one designated group.
- It will begin the process of evaluating our work environment for its sensitivity to and support of those members of designated groups in the employ of HWDSB.
- It will serve as the starting point for the development of a plan – initially with a three-year outlook – for the diversification of HWDSB’s workforce, policies, procedures and practices. A plan that will be built in consultation with staff, trustees and administration, with assistance from independent third parties acting in an advisory capacity.

*(excerpted from HWDSB Diversity Audit – Self Identification Information Package 2007)*

This work is not unique. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) undertook a Workforce Census in June 2006. The work resulted in a report entitled, “Demographic Composition of Toronto District School Board Employees”. The results of that work continue to be used to make positive changes in the human resource policy of the board with regard to equity. At this point in time, all new employees at the TDSB have an opportunity to fill out the census form voluntarily. Since 2006, another 2,300 staff members have filled out the census at the point of hiring to a rate of ninety-four (94%) percent.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

The Diversity Audit Coordinator, Linda Lopinski, worked with leaders of staff unions and employee groups as an advisory committee to develop an understanding around the need for this work as well as to create the tool or tools to be used in conducting the audit. Regular meetings were held with this group to achieve these goals. It was understood that what was done at those meetings would be shared with the employee groups in some way to continually further the entire staff's understanding of this work.

The coordinator also consulted leaders of the community at large to determine the diversity issues that needed to be addressed and further her and the advisory committee's understanding of the diversity in Hamilton as a whole. This included meeting with the Settlement and Integration Services Organization, St. Joseph Immigrant Women's Centre, the Gay-Lesbian-Bisexual and Transgender Advisory Committee to the City of Hamilton, The AIDS Network of Hamilton, The Well – Hamilton's LGBTQ Community Wellness Centre of Hamilton, as well as the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC).

It was determined that the areas of diversity in which information would be gathered from the survey included ethno-racial, language, physical and mental health, sexual orientation and gender.

After meeting with the SPRC, the Board decided that engaging an independent third party in the process of the audit would be beneficial in many ways including building the trust of the staff in the confidential nature of the data collection. The SPRC began working on with the project coordinator and advisory committee in February 2007. Social Planner, Deirdre Pike, was assigned to the project and began chairing the meetings from that time forward.

To develop a data collection tool, the project coordinator defined a survey format and then worked with the committee on the content, the dissemination and the collection of the survey. The Learning Community Day of May 17, 2007 was chosen as the date when all staff would have an opportunity to complete the survey. Community Learning Days bring all members of the staff, not just teaching staff, together for day long meetings or workshops and would provide a space and time where staff would have an opportunity as part of their professional development to complete the survey. Surveys were circulated on May 18, 2007 to any staff members who were away the previous day.

The coordinator also developed a Diversity Audit Self Identification Information package in consultation with the committee. Particular time was spent ensuring the purpose of the audit would be understood by all employee groups. The Information package and survey were made available on the School Board's website in advance of May 17 enabling many staff groups to convene meetings with their membership to discuss the process. Presentations were also made by the coordinator, and the SPRC staff person, to each of the staff groups.

School administrators (and staff managers at non-school facilities), were charged with responsibility for ensuring that all staff members had an opportunity to complete the survey during the day on May 17. The responses were kept confidential by providing staff with a 30-minute opportunity in any space they chose to complete the survey. Each survey came with a blank envelope that was sealed and returned in a process arranged

by each school administrator. Each staff person was asked to return their survey even if they chose to not complete any or all of the questions. All surveys were returned to the board using the school courier system and then forwarded together to the SPRC.

The SPRC then collected the data, conducted the input and analysis of data, and reported the findings back to the school administration. The surveys remain at the SPRC and will not be returned to the Board in order to ensure confidentiality of staff responses to the survey.

There were 5,183 eligible respondents in the HWDSB employee population. In total, 3,934 responses surveys returned indicating a response rate of just under seventy-six (76%) percent.

### 3.0 SURVEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The following provides an analysis of the findings gathered from the tabulation of responses to surveys circulated to the employee population of the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board.

#### Return Rate

The HWDSB Human Resources Department provided a count of its employees and indicated that there were 5,183 persons in their employ on May 17. Of that number a total of 3,934 employees returned a survey with some or all of the questions answered. Three thousand, five hundred and eighty three (3,583) surveys were completed while 351 were incomplete meaning there was no marking or writing on them at all.

#### Part A. Staff Role

This first section of the survey asked respondents to identify themselves as permanent or occasional employees and then, using a series of check boxes, indicate the role they had as a staff person. This list of options included: Teaching – Full time; Teaching - Part time; School-based support staff (e.g. clerical, maintenance, caretaker, cook); System-based support (e.g. clerical, maintenance, caretaker, cook); Supervisory staff (e.g. Principal, vice-principal, supervisory officers, non-teaching management); and Professionals, para-professionals, educational assistants.

Just over 92% of the respondents to this question reported being permanent staff of the HWDSB. 7.6% identified themselves as occasional staff.

Full time teachers represented the largest staff group as 62.5% of the respondents. The next largest staff group at 13% was comprised of professionals, para-professionals and educational assistants. Just under 8% identified as school based support staff; supervisory staff made up 6.1%; part-time teachers were 5.5% of those surveyed; and system-based support staff were the smallest group of respondents at 5.2%.

#### Part B. Self-identification

Of the 3,934 surveys collected, only 12% or 467 individuals chose not to self-identify at this time. Therefore, of the surveys returned, 88% provided information that was useful in generating a diversity profile of the employees of the HWDSB.

#### Aboriginal

This question asked, “Are you an aboriginal person?” Forty three (43) individuals or slightly over 1% of respondents identified as aboriginal.

#### Visible Minority

The first part of this section asked respondents if they were members of a visible minority community. One hundred and seventy eight (178) individuals or 4.5% of the total indicated they were members of a visible minority community.

The second part of the question used Statistics Canada’s self identification model from the 2006 Census to give an opportunity to respondents of visible minority communities to provide further details of their group or origin. Of the 178 who did identify with a visible minority community, the highest portion, 26%, were members of the South Asian community. Thirty-nine (39) or 23% identified as ‘other’. In the space provided beside ‘other’, individuals further identified themselves as British, Canadian, Finnish, Mexican,

and West-Indian-Guyanese. A total of 35 'other' categories were identified by respondents. A full list can be seen in the appendix.

Thirty-four (34) individuals or 20% identified as Black under the visible minority question. The next highest was Chinese with 10.7% and then Japanese with 6.5% or 11 individuals. Arab/West Asian, Filipino, South East Asian, and Korean all had respondents of less than 7% down to 1%. (see chart below)

Visible Minority category	%age of Respondents
South Asian	26.6
Other	23
Black	20
Chinese	10.7
Japanese	6.5
Arab/West Asian	7.1
Filipino	3.0
South East Asian	1.8
Korean	1.2

### Language

This question asked if the respondent had a first language other than English or French and if so to name that language. Two hundred and twenty-five (225) respondents or just over 5% noted having another first language besides French or English. The languages most indicated as a first language amongst the staff members other than English and French were Italian (39) and German (27). Spanish, Polish, Ukrainian, and Serbian each had just over 10 indications, while approximately another 35 languages were identified by individuals or very small groups of individuals.

### Disability

Just under 7% (273) of respondents reported having some kind of disability. In the second part of the question, individuals were given an opportunity to choose the areas in which they identify as having a disability or limitation. Respondents were given the option to choose more than one indicator.

Medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, kidney disease) were indicated most often as the kind of disability or limitation people had. Mobility and Mental Health issues were next most often indicated. The following chart shows the numbers of people with the particular disability or limitation they identify as having.

Disability or limitation	Number of Respondents
Medical condition e.g. diabetes, kidney disease...	97
Mobility	46
Mental Health	46
Hearing	40
Learning	37
Visual	32

Disability or limitation	Number of Respondents
Dexterity	17
Speech	2
Total	317

### Gender

In this question, staff members were asked to identify as male, female or transgender. Of the total number of respondents to this question (2993), female was the highest category chosen by over 76.7% of all respondents. Almost 23% or 683 individuals identified as male while 14 or .5% identified as transgender.

### Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer (LGBQ) Member

In this question, staff members were asked if they were members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Queer community. 2.1% of respondents indicated they were a member of the LGBQ community.

### Summary

A total of 66 individuals took the opportunity to make comments in various sections of the survey. This includes comments made in the margins beside questions or at the beginning of the survey near the introduction section.

Thirty-three (33) comments had to do with the question regarding being a member of the LGBQ community. These comments were all negative, many of them expressing the view that the use of the word “queer” as inappropriate.

Twenty (20) comments were comments or questions regarding the overall purpose or direction of the survey. Many of these had to do with an apparent concern that hiring quotas would be developed from the survey.

Fourteen respondents identified the survey as problematic from a human rights point of view or questioned the board’s role in doing this work.

Finally, five people had specific comments about the wording of questions on the survey.

## 4.0 DISCUSSION

As indicated in the findings of the analysis section above, the overall response rate for the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board's Diversity Audit Self-identification Survey was over 70%. Although this is considered a high response rate it is important to note there were some difficulties getting respondents to complete the self-identification tool. (Just as a measure of comparison, the overall response rate for the Workforce Census of the Toronto District School Board was 61%.)

Despite the various efforts of the Diversity Audit Coordinator, the SPRC staff person on the project, and members of the advisory group, many employee unions and groups were suspicious of the process and purpose of the work. In the end it was known that one union local asked its members not to participate in the audit. Another employee group didn't directly ask its members not to participate but did not encourage them either. Some of the non-response rate may have been influenced by ongoing contract negotiations with some groups. Employee groups or unions were not asked directly to let the coordinator know whether they were proposing support for the audit process.

Although 3,934 surveys were returned and therefore considered part of the response rate, in fact, 351 surveys were returned without any markings. Many of these blank surveys came as a group in an individual school's envelope. However, while some of these may have been left blank in protest, it could also be an administrative error in counting surveys for a school. One envelope came back with over 100 blanks.

One of the concerns that was voiced in advance and written about in several survey responses, noted a concern that reverse discrimination was suggested by asking these questions. It is useful to note that the staff information package addressed that question ahead of time, ensuring staff that the "HWDSB will not establish hiring quotas or targets as a result of this information, but will use information gathered to help with recruitment, retention and development initiatives."

Many comments made directly on the survey tool noted concerns about violating human rights by asking questions about visible minority status and sexual orientation. Again the information package provided material about self-identification as a voluntary process and defined and guided by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. The HWDSB ensured that this audit followed those guidelines.

The first purpose outlined in the information package states that this work will "determine how reflective we are of the community of Hamilton." In order to evaluate that reflection there must first be some comparable baseline information about the diversity of this city.

The aboriginal population in Hamilton is known to be highly underreported because of the view of government census data in that community. Although local Aboriginal organizations estimate the number of aboriginals in Hamilton to be between 12 and 15 thousand, Statistics Canada found just over 6,000 individuals identified as such or just around 1%. Similarly, only 1% of the HWDSB staff identify as aboriginal.

According to 2001 Census data, Hamilton was home to 52,705 people who identified as a visible minority, or close to 11% of the population. Through the diversity audit, only 4.5% of the HWDSB staff identified as coming from a visible minority community.

Interestingly, the top 3 visible minority groups in Hamilton corresponded to the top 3 visible minority categories for the HWDSB – South Asian, Black and Chinese.

Statistics Canada reports that 118,360 people or 24.4% of Hamilton's population has a language other than English or French that they 1<sup>st</sup> learned and still understand. The diversity audit found that just over 5% of the staff population has a first language other than English or French.

With regard to disability, close to 14% of Canadians identify themselves as having some level of disability according to the 2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS). However, the diversity audit found that only 6.9% of HWDSB employees report having a disability.

The gender of the school board staff does not reflect the overall gender breakdown of the population of Hamilton which has 51.1% females and 48.9% males. The diversity audit found that 76.7% of the staff identified as female, 23% identified as male and .5% identified as transgender. Statistics Canada does not include transgender as a category under gender.

With regard to sexual orientation, the generally expected average of the population that identify as members of the LGBTQ community is 10%. However, only 2.1% of the HWDSB staff reported themselves as belonging to that community.

The results of the audit raise many questions about the difference of the diverse makeup of the school board compared to the diversity of the community in which it functions. Staff members may have underreported in the self-identity tool because of a mistrust of the process. However, these results suggest that the employee population of the School Board is not closely reflective of the diverse population of the City of Hamilton as a whole.

It will be important for the administration of the HWDSB to spend time and expend further efforts in analyzing these findings and their impact. Following up with focus groups in employee groups or unions may be helpful in this task.

The data recorded here does not fully examine diversity characteristics within various employment groups, positions or strata with regard to visible minority status, language, disability, or other designated groups. For example, the majority of full-time teachers in the board are female from non-visible minority communities. Close study of these various dimensions of the HWDSB labour force could prove instructive. The human resource department could use more detailed information to develop policies and practices that will move toward elimination of significant inequities.

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has taken a very successful first step in conducting a demographic assessment of the workforce. The following recommendations, built on the experience of the workplace survey, will assist the board in moving forward to meet the goal of becoming a diversity-competent organization.

- 5.1. This survey of the labour force of the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board indicates that the employee population is not as strongly reflective of the diverse population in Hamilton as it could be. Therefore, we recommend that the HWDSB develop a renewed strategy for human resource practices that will further enhance diversity in its labour force.
- 5.2. In the course of conducting this audit of the HWDSB labour force, it became evident from the declared intentions of non-compliance or participation in the survey that there are still questions and lack of agreement and understanding about diversity issues that must be addressed. Therefore, we recommend that the HWDSB define and implement a plan of action to educate and increase awareness among employee populations and the community about diversity issues and the need for change in the HWDSB labour force.
- 5.3. An important strength of this study process contributing to a very high participation rate was the effort to engage various union, management and other employee group leaders and other resource people in the process to defining ways in which diversity issues could be examined in a non-threatening, safe and secure environment. Therefore, we recommend that the process for defining a plan of action for creating a more diverse work force include continued participation of leaders and resources from the full range of employee group interests represented within the HWDSB.
- 5.4. From the earliest stages of this Audit, it became clear that other school boards, unions and professional associations operating in other jurisdictions in Ontario are addressing very similar issues with good result and that their experiences can be instructive to a process of change in Hamilton. Therefore, we recommend that the HWDSB continue to maintain contact with other School Boards and associations in Ontario for the purpose of sharing information and mutual learning in the process of creating a more diverse workforce in the labour force.
- 5.5. Use of a Learning Community Day in May was instrumental to the success of this Audit. It increased awareness of equity and diversity issues and engaged a great many members of the HWSDDB labour force in this process. Therefore, we recommend that the HWDSB continue to commit to the use of professional development days such as this to invest the time and resources necessary to inform and engage its labour force about diversity issues and change taking place.
- 5.6. It is a continuing responsibility of the board to assist all staff in understanding the purpose of the data collection with regard to diversity. This includes education about terminology to be used in the data collection tools, how this work is supported by the Ontario Human Rights Code and does not contravene it, and the important and urgent nature of becoming a diversity-competent organization.

Therefore, we recommend that ongoing in-service training regarding anti-oppression training be undertaken by the HWDSB.

- 5.7. This Diversity Audit has engaged a great many people in the survey process and debate on diversity issues. The results are of interest to a great many people. Therefore, we recommend that this report of the Diversity Audit be made public and widely distributed or made readily available to all staff, parents and the broader community. Distribution should be augmented by joint presentations or multi-media presentations from the HWDSB and the SPRC to a wide range of interest or work groups concerned with this issue.
- 5.8. Having made a commitment to examining diversity issues and making appropriate change the HWDSB will inevitably create expectations within the organization and the community. It will be important as a result to continue to inform these constituencies about targets for change and progress being made in reaching those targets. Therefore, we recommend that the Board commits to repeating the diversity audit on a scheduled basis and that the results of the audit along with other measures of change be reported publicly on a regular if not annual basis.
- 5.9. A more precise measure of the extent to which the diversity of the HWDSB labour force mirrors the community would include a closer examination of the student population. Therefore, we recommend the HWSDDB commit to an audit of diversity within the student population.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

Through this process the board has entered this diversity conversation more deeply, stating that, "Diversity is not polite accommodation; instead diversity is, in action, the awareness that other people, other races, other voices and other habits of mind have as much claim to the world as we do." It is an essential conversation and this audit is one important and successful step in the HWDSB's process to become a diversity-competent organization

**APPENDIX A**

**HWDSB Diversity Survey Information Package 2007**



Diversity Survey  
INFORMATION PACKAGE  
2007

## **Introduction**

Hamilton is a community both enriched and challenged by a significant presence of diverse peoples. Diversity encompasses those who identify by regional profile or aboriginal status, by disability, by gender identity or sexual orientation amongst other things.

It is imperative that HWDSB embrace and model inclusive practice as a community standard. Diversity is not polite accommodation; instead diversity is, in action, the awareness that other people, other races, other voices and other habits of mind have as much claim to the world as we do. Diversity is a test of our basic and fundamental principles as educators and as an educational institution created to be open and accessible to all. It is more than an initiative- it must be a way of life.

That's no small task. It takes time. But quite simply embracing diversity will make the HWDSB better, smarter and stronger. It will, through inclusive practice and the sharing of diverse points-of-view and perspectives help us to better identify and serve the needs of our student population.

We have declared our core commitments to be respect, innovation and accountability. We are working together with community leaders to develop a comprehensive equity policy. In doing so, our work to cultivate a diverse working environment has begun.

By respect, we mean that we will:

- Respond to stakeholder needs in a caring, thoughtful and considerate manner
- Ensure a safe, welcoming, inclusive environment that nurtures personal achievement
- Communicate and respond to stakeholders in an open, honest, sensitive and intelligent manner
- Acknowledge the diversity, dignity and worth of all individuals and respect their roles, competencies and contributions to our mission

By innovation, we mean that we will:

- Foster an environment that encourages creativity and inspires people to make a difference
- Recognize and reward excellence, effort and innovation in pursuit of our vision
- Encourage thoughtful experimentation and challenge routine ways of doing things
- Be mindful of the need to adapt best practices in enhancing our mission effectiveness

By accountability, we mean that we will:

- Act with integrity in accordance with established Board policies
- Measure and report our accomplishments against explicit, planned outcomes
- Use resources wisely, efficiently, effectively and equitably
- Deliver on committed actions

At present, HWDSB has no statistical data to indicate the diverse makeup of our workforce. Data of this nature would inform an action plan to monitor and evaluate staff recruitment, retention and development initiatives. To capture this data and inform our HR practices, HWDSB is conducting a self-identification survey, which will be completed by all current personnel and any new employee joining the Board. This will provide each employee with the

opportunity to self-identify as a member of a 'designated group', as defined by the Ontario Human Rights Code.

This survey is a tool by which HWDSB can measure the identified 'designated groups' that work for us and to provide a clear profile of designated group members within the Board at one specific moment in time. The information gathered can then be used by the Board to help us determine where to better align resources to get the message out about working for HWDSB and to assist us in our efforts to become a diversity-competent organization.

### **Hamilton's Ethno Cultural Portrait**

The 2001 Statistics Canada Survey provide the following information in relation to the demographics of the City of Hamilton:

- Approximately 25% of the city's population is foreign-born. Only Toronto (44%) and Vancouver (38%) had higher proportions of foreign-born residents.
- Of the new immigrants living in Hamilton, 42% came from a nation in Asia, the most frequently reported region of birth among immigrants of the 1990's, and 39% reported a European country as their place of birth.
- The most popular countries of birth were Yugoslavia, Poland, India, the People's Republic of China, the Philippines, Iraq, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Hamilton was home to 64,000 visible minorities, which represented 10% of its population, up from 7% in 1991.
- Persons from South Asia accounted for more than 20% (14,300 people) of all visible minorities living in Hamilton or 2.2% of the total population. Hamilton was also home to 12,900 Blacks, who were the second most common visible minority, accounting for 2.0% of city's population.
- Hamilton also had a high proportion of residents with British origins (English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish). Nearly 30% of the census reported England as one of their ancestral origins. Those with Scottish ancestry accounted for 19% of the population.

Statistics Canada does not capture statistics related to sexual orientation; however, the size of the GLBTQ community is generally estimated at 10% of the population.

The 2001 Statistics Canada Survey captures the most up-to-date, verifiable and publicly available information. Results of the 2006 Statistics Canada Survey will not be published until April 2008. However, the above statistics do indicate that Hamilton is a truly diverse community and immigration trends give every indication that this community's diverse makeup will continue to evolve. They also point to the changing appearance of new immigrants who have chosen to reside in the city. To be reflective of the changing face of Hamilton, we need to begin by measuring our internal diversity. We need to gather baseline data on HWDSB's current diversity makeup.

### **Need/Benefits of Diversity**

In education, we have an awesome responsibility and challenge ahead. How well our younger generation adapts to a world that is increasingly influenced by its diversity will depend on their experiences in school. And if demographic trends persist the number of diverse learners will continue to grow. These students are not a homogeneous group. They enter our schools at different ages and at different times during the year. They come to our schools representing a diversity of languages, cultures, experiences with school and socio-economic factors that

influence their social norms. Schools must embrace and celebrate such diversity to be places of safety and excellence for all students.

The adage that there is “power in diversity” sets a standard for those of us associated with public education. By supporting diversity in our Board, we are teaching children to value and respect differences in others and also, to value and respect themselves. Exposing students to a rainbow of languages, cultures, classes and people prepares them for life’s journey through an increasingly diverse world.

By embracing diversity, we can:

- Facilitate organizational change and organizational adaptability – staff, drawing on diverse backgrounds and life experiences, offer a greater variety of solutions to problems in service, sourcing and allocation of resources.
- Harness the full potential of our people and this community – tapping into a broad collection of skills fuelled by life experiences and cultural understanding.
- Gain a variety of viewpoints – an organization that encourages varying points of view enjoys a larger pool of ideas and experiences
- Set the stage for the achievement of performance goals – by actively promoting diversity and free expression of ideas we will inspire staff to reach into themselves and perform to their highest ability.
- Enhance internal and external satisfaction – by reducing barriers created by a lack of understanding or empathy for our differences, frustration is reduced and communication increases.

We must acknowledge that embracing diversity is not without challenge. This means:

- We must work to overcome our perceptual, cultural and language barriers to achieve outstanding communication.
- We must be wary of our resistance to change and fight the “we’ve always done it this way” mentality because it can silence new ideas and inhibit progress.
- We must strive to implement diversity practice and policy - building a customized strategy to maximize the benefits of diversity in HWDSB

## **2007 Self-Identification Survey**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this self-identification survey is to create a database that will:

1. Provide a picture of the designated groups within our Board’s workforce as of the spring of 2007 to determine how reflective we are of the community of Hamilton and, by extension, our student community.
2. Identify to what degree ‘designated groups’ are represented in our workforce and review our recruitment initiatives within those communities with non-reflective representation to increase the number of applications received from those groups. For example, recruitment initiatives might involve getting the message out on why members of those designated groups should consider a career with HWDSB. It does not mean adjustments to the interviewing, selection or hiring processes to unfairly favour any one designated group.

3. It will begin the process of evaluating our work environment for its sensitivity to and support of those members of designated groups in the employ of HWDSB.
4. It will serve as the starting point for the development of a plan – initially with a three-year outlook – for the diversification of HWDSB’s workforce, policies, procedures and practices. A plan that will be built in consultation with staff, trustees and administration, with assistance from independent third parties acting in an advisory capacity.

## How does the Survey work?

The information provided is personal and provided in confidence by staff. To respect and safeguard the confidential nature of that information, the following steps will be taken to provide security and reassurance to staff:

- a) HWDSB has engaged the services of the Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC)\* to act as independent auditors of the survey process and to input the information provided by staff into a confidential database, at their offices.
- b) The survey is entirely paper-based. Using paper forms instead of an Online or electronic form will ensure that information cannot be shared or lost due to a technical glitch or failure.
- c) Administrators, managers and supervisors will hand out one survey document and one return envelope to each staff member under their direction.
- d) The survey form carries no identifying marks or information. Staff is asked NOT to provide their name or employee number. We do not want any information that will identify any individual respondent.
- e) Staff will choose a member of their staff peer group to be the site “returns person”. The return person will hold the large survey return envelope provide to each school or work location. The envelope will be clearly marked as **“to be opened by SPRC only”**. The only duty of the return person is to seal the envelope at the end of survey day and put it on the Board courier truck for return to the education center where they will be held in a secure location for transfer to SPRC.
- f) Time will be provided to staff members at work on May 16 (Learning Community Day) to complete the survey. Staff that are unavailable on the 16<sup>th</sup> for any reason will be provided time on May 17 to complete the survey.
- g) Staff is invited to fill the survey out on the spot or to find a quiet place in the school or their work location to fill it out in privacy. The choice is that of the staff person. A meeting room, a classroom, their own workspace or a study corral in the library is possible places in which the survey can be completed. The choice is that of the staff person.
- h) Each staff person is asked to complete Part A of the survey. Completion of Part B, the self-identification portion of the survey, is completely voluntary.
- i) The surveys are short and should only take a few minutes to complete;
- j) Completed surveys are completely confidential. There are no names required. Sealed envelopes will be transferred to the Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) for data entry at their offices. Once the data is entered into the database, the surveys will be destroyed. Only the summary information will be returned to HWDSB.

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\* For more information on SPRC please refer to the FAQ section at the end of this document

**How do we ensure that staff understands the purpose of the survey and how to respond in confidence? The goal is to achieve an accurate “snapshot” of the HWDSB workforce.**

It is important to ensure that staff knows their privacy will be respected and that they understand the importance of participating in the survey.

Low participation and therefore an inaccurate snapshot of the HWDSB workforce may result from members choosing not to identify themselves as members of ‘designated groups’ for a variety of personal reasons (e.g. They are concerned that the information will be share inappropriately). Others may identify themselves incorrectly as members of an equity group because they do not understand the wording of particular questions on the survey.

To support the gathering of an accurate snapshot of information the following action items have been implemented:

- a) The Director’s Office, Superintendents, Administrators and Managers will be involved in communicating the message to HWDSB staff and community.
- b) All Employee Groups have had an opportunity to review, comment and make suggestions on the survey document, the process for gathering information and supporting communication materials.
- c) We have prepared a list of frequently asked questions (F.A.Q.s -See Appendix A)

## **Appendix A**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

#### ***1. What is self-identification?***

Self-identification is a voluntary process that occurs when a member states whether they belong to one of the designated groups, as defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code (the *Code*).

#### ***2. What are the designated groups?***

The designated groups are defined as those groups of people who have been identified by the government as being under-represented in the workplace. There are four designated groups: Aboriginal persons, visible minorities, women and persons with disabilities.

**As defined by The Code:**

**An Aboriginal person is a North American Indian or a member of a First Nation, a Metis or an Inuit.**

**A member of a visible minority group is a person other than an Aboriginal person who is non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.**

**The legislated definition of "visible minority" does not include women, as they are included as a separate category.**

**Persons with a disability are persons who have a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment and who: a) consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment or, b) believe that an employer or potential employer is likely to consider them to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment. It includes persons whose functional limitations owing to their impairment have been accommodated in their current job or workplace.**

HWDSB has chosen to add a question regarding sexual orientation to the survey as is allowable under The Ontario Human Rights Commission Guidelines for Special Programs.

**3. *Why does the information package use statistics from the 2001 federal census when there was a new census conducted in 2006?***

The statistics from the 2001 census by Statistics Canada are the most recent, publicly published and verifiable statistics. The 2006 census data on ethno-racial portraits will not be released until Apr. 3, 2008.

**4. *What is a Special Program?***

The Ontario Human Rights Commission has recommended that data collection, based on grounds of sex, race and disability, be undertaken in key public services, including education in order to monitor, prevent and ameliorate reported systemic and adverse discrimination. The provisions of the *Code* allow employers to use Special Programs, if the program will likely contribute to the elimination of the infringement of rights protected under the code.

**5. *Is a Special Program reverse discrimination?***

No. Special Programs allow employers to identify inequity in the workplace. Special Programs are about creating an equitable and diverse workforce where opportunities are accessible to all.

HWDSB will not establish hiring quotas or targets as a result of this information, but will use information gathered to help with recruitment, retention and development initiatives.

**6. What is systematic discrimination?**

Systematic discrimination is unconscious and unintentional. It does not depend on a wilful intent to discriminate. It results from the simple operation of established employment policies and procedures that have the unintentional impact of excluding persons for reasons that are not job related. It usually is encompassed in a policy or practice that is applied equally to everyone in the organization, and that, on the surface, appears to be neutral, for example: the height and weight requirements that might apply in the hiring of police officers.

**7. How are we going to achieve Employment Equity?**

- by continuing to identify and remove any barriers to employment;
- by remedying the effects of past barriers through active recruitment, selection and training of designated group employees;
- by establishing an environment supportive of the principles of employment equity that would attract and retain designated group employees;
- by focusing recruitment efforts on identified “designated groups”.

**8. Does Employment Equity conflict with merit?**

No. Employment Equity encompasses merit, fairness and transparency. However, merit is not being served if qualified designated group candidates are not even applying for work with HWDSB because they think they may be screened out as a result of gender, race, cultural bias or preconceived notions on sexual orientation or the abilities of persons with disabilities.

**9. Does Employment Equity mean lowering the employment standards and hiring unqualified individuals because they are members of designated groups?**

No. Employment Equity means having Human Resource policies, practices, programs and systems in place that measures the merit and qualifications of individuals from all groups regardless of their background.

Candidates for employment must continue to meet minimum standards for education, work experience, job-appropriate physical requirements, licensing or other professionally required certification and/or testing.

Recruitment and hiring in compliance with an action plan will respect existing employment contracts, tenure and skill sets.

**10. When you say recruitment initiatives, what do you mean?**

Recruitment initiatives are things like attending recruitment fairs and placing recruitment advertisements in various publications. We want to look at whether our current practices in this area reach a diverse audience.

***11. How Does the Code's Special Program affect HWDSB?***

HWDSB is working towards being an organization that is representative of the community that it serves. The Code permits the collection and analysis of data based on enumerated grounds such as race, disability, sex and sexual orientation as long as it is for legitimate purposes not contrary to the Code. This is not about lowering the standards or giving preferential treatment. It is about ensuring that we attract and retain members from our diverse communities and that we are reflective, respectful and supportive of those communities.

***12. Why is HWDSB collecting this information from employees?***

Our goal is to determine the representation of each of the designated groups, to assist with our recruitment, retention and staff development goals.

***13. What are the specific benefits for HWDSB?***

It allows us to capture and complete information on the composition of our workforce to measure how reflective we are of our community. It is one part of an overall equity strategy, which is aimed at increasing the representation of designated group members in HWDSB and creating an environment that is supportive and understanding of their needs. A successful equity strategy is important to ensure the continuation of an operationally effective HWDSB. Both the demographics of Canada and the City of Hamilton point to a need for a more diversified workforce.

***14. Why are we putting emphasis on specific groups? If we talk about equity, then it shouldn't matter.***

You're right. It shouldn't matter - but it does. Research shows that Aboriginal people, visible minorities, people with disabilities and women experience barriers in the work place in North America. We are making good progress toward removing these barriers but challenges still exist.

Everyone benefits from fair and equitable treatment. This is why everyone is included in the information gathering process and why everyone is asked to participate. We want to capture accurate and complete information on the composition of HWDSB's workforce.

***15. Do I have to complete the survey form?***

Yes. Every member is required to complete the demographic information contained in Part A of the form. (For example: teaching, support staff etc.)

Each member must complete Part A, even if they choose not to self-identify in Part B of the survey.

**16. Do I have to self-identify on the survey form?**

No. While it is required that each member complete Part A on the survey form, HWDSB employees can choose whether to complete Part B - the self-identification information. While employees are strongly encouraged to self-identify, there are no consequences for employees who choose not to self-identify in Part B.

**17. How long will it take me to complete the survey?**

It should take on average less than 5 minutes to read and complete the form.

**18. Can you self-identify as belonging to more than one designated group?**

Yes. The survey form asks you to self-identify for all the groups of which you are a member. For example if you are a black woman, you will be able to self-identify as a "female" and as being of "black" origin, on the same form.

**19. What does HWDSB do with the information collected in the survey?**

- It maintains a database reflecting all employees, which will be used to prepare statistical analyses and reports about HWDSB and its population. Note that these reports will not identify individuals. They will contain only statistical or numerical data, not personal information; and
- Second, the collection of this demographic information is the first step in a process that will enable HWDSB to examine its personnel policies and practices, to determine if there are unnecessary or unreasonable barriers for one or more groups and then take action to remove these barriers.

**20. What happens to this survey form once it is filled out?**

The Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC), at their offices, will enter the information into the stand-alone database that has been created to hold this information. The information in this database will not be linked to or accessible from any other database. Once completed, the forms themselves will be destroyed.

**21. Who are SPRC and what qualifies them to do this work?**

The SPRC is a non-profit, registered charitable organization. They are governed by a community-based Board of Directors and have operated successfully in Hamilton for 41 years. Their key areas of interest are homelessness, poverty and issues related to children and youth, particularly in Hamilton. They carry out this work through research and advocacy initiatives and are contributing this expertise to HWDSB's workforce survey project.

Their role in the HWDSB workforce survey is to oversee the process as independent auditors so that staff can feel that the security of their personal information is respected and the project is true to its stated goals.

**22. Who can access the database?**

The only staff that will be able to access either the database, or the information contained in the database, are the staff responsible for preparation of the required statistical reports.

**23. Can my supervisor obtain information about me, under special circumstances?**

No. This information will not be used for anything other than statistical reporting.

**24. Can the information collected be used against me?**

No. The information is confidential and no names are asked. In addition, the Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, disability, age, sex or sexual orientation (in addition to other grounds).

**25. Why should I self-identify? What differences will it make?**

Self-identification benefits everyone. The data will be used to perform a workforce analysis that will identify how reflective of the community we are. This information will serve as a benchmark for the direction that recruitment, retention and staff development strategies must take.

**26. What if I don't want to self-identify?**

You do not have to self-identify-whether or not you are in a designated group. However, you are still required to submit a survey form indicating that you do not wish to self-identify. This is perfectly acceptable response that also provides important information to the organization.

Self-identification is a personal choice. We respect that some individuals prefer not to self-identify and there are no negative implications of indicating this choice.

To support the integrity of HWDSB, to the benefit of all, we require that you complete the census even if you choose not to self-identify. If everyone completes the census, whether they self-identify or not, we will know that our data is accurate and complete.

**APPENDIX B**

**Service Providers Survey**



b) If yes, and you wish to provide further details, please choose the category that best describes your visible minority group or origin.

- Chinese
- South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sri Lankan)
- Black (e.g. African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali)
- Arab/West Asian (e.g., Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Moroccan)
- Filipino
- South East Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Vietnamese)
- Japanese
- Korean
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. If your first language is other than English or French, please tell us what it is.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Are you a person with a disability? (A person with a disability can be described as a person who has long-term or recurring physical or mental health issues, sensory, psychiatric or learning issues.)

- No             Yes

If yes, please check any of the following areas in which you identify with having a disability or limitation.

- Coordination/dexterity
- Mobility
- Visual
- Hearing
- Speech
- Mental Health
- Learning Disability
- Medical Condition (e.g. diabetes, kidney disease, etc.)

5. Are you:

- Female
- Male
- Transgender

6. Are you a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Queer Community?

- No             Yes

***Thank you again for taking the time to respond to this survey. If you have any questions about the survey or the results, please contact Linda Lopinski at 905-527-5092, ext. 2219.***