Board Report Number: 23060

April 13, 2023
For Decision

To: The Chair and Members of the Halton District School Board

From: S. Taha, Superintendent of Human Resources

C. Ennis, Director of Education

Re: **Professionalism Policy**

Recommendation

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees approve the Professionalism Policy appended to Report 23060.

Background

On March 1, 2023 staff presented a draft Professionalism Policy with Report 23037. Since first presented, staff have completed a consultation with the HDSB community to gather feedback on the Draft Policy as presented on March 1.

This Report outlines consultation findings and summarizes revisions to the Draft Policy as a result of the consultation process.

Executive Summary of Consultation Findings

A total of **8,652** stakeholders provided feedback on the Professionalism Policy; of which 5,230 (60%) were received from parents/guardians, 2,202 (25%) from staff members and 1,220 (14%) from Grade 9-12 students. In addition, 12 responses were received from school councils (11 responses) and advisory groups (one response).

All HDSB parent(s)/guardian(s), students, staff, School Councils, and Advisory Groups were invited to provide feedback on the Draft Professionalism Policy. The feedback report represents only the views of the stakeholders who participated in the consultation.

Overall, respondents reported an **overall positive** impression of the Draft Professionalism Policy. Respondents felt that the policy is **most effective** in the following areas:

- Ensuring every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to employment, without discrimination.
- Protecting the right of every person to be free from harassment in the workplace, without discrimination
- Demonstrating respect for public education and each student's right to learn in a safe, inclusive and accepting environment
- Promoting a positive school climate
- Furthering the Mission of the Halton District School Board.

Respondents felt that the policy is **least effective** in the following areas:

- Encouraging students to achieve their educational goals
- Ensuring the delivery of effective and appropriate education programs to students
- Consolidating and affirming existing expectations regarding staff professionalism, including dress and decorum, at board, school settings and at school-based activities.

Commentary regarding the **Objectives** and **Guidelines** revolved around the following themes:

- Theme #1: Provide additional clarity and specificity with regard to staff professionalism, and the monitoring and implementation of the policy.
- Theme #2: The terms 'Dress' and 'Decorum' elicited concerns regarding the protection of Human Rights, and having inconsistent expectations for staff and students.
- Theme #3: Suggestions for improvement with specific recommendations for revision (e.g., rephrasing).

Policy revisions

The draft policy was revised to the extent possible, taking into account feedback received through the consultation process. The following revisions are reflected in the revised policy appended to this report:

- Language in the Objectives section has been revised for consistency with other Board policies.

- A statement was added to the guiding principles highlighting the application of the policy within the HDSB. The statement is consistent with similar statements in Board policies.

Multi-Year Plan Alignment

The development of this policy aligns to the Board's commitment to the Multi-Year Plan areas of equity and inclusion and learning and achievement.

Financial Impact

There are no immediate financial impacts associated with adopting this policy.

Respectfully submitted,

Sari Taha
Superintendent of Human Resources

Curtis Ennis
Director of Education

Adopted: **DRAFT**
Revised:
Review Date:

Objectives

The *Education Act* requires the Halton District School Board maintain policies that promote student achievement and well-being, promote a positive school climate, ensure the delivery of effective and appropriate education programs to students, and encourage students to achieve their educational goals.

The HDSB recognizes that it must comply with this statutory mandate in a manner that reflects the primacy of the Ontario Human Rights Code. The Code provides that every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to the provision of educational services, without discrimination on a ground protected under the Code. Every person also has the right to equal treatment with respect to employment, and the right to be free from harassment in the workplace, without discrimination on Code protected grounds.

The purpose of this Policy is to consolidate and affirm existing expectations regarding staff professionalism, including dress and decorum, at board and school settings and at school-based activities, focusing on the importance of demonstrating, through personal presentation, respect for public education and each student's right to learn in a safe, inclusive and accepting environment.

Guiding Principles

This Policy applies to all employees, volunteers, and Trustees of the Halton District School Board.

The Supreme Court of Canada has stated that teachers occupy a unique position of trust, confidence and responsibility in society, and exert considerable influence over their students as a result of their positions. The Court has recognized that the conduct of a teacher bears directly upon the community's perception of the ability of a teacher to fulfil a position of trust and influence, and upon the community's confidence in the public school system as a whole.

The Ontario College of Teachers "Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession" provides that members of the teaching profession "treat students equitably and with respect, and are sensitive to factors that influence individual learning."

O. Reg. 437/97 made under the Ontario College of Teachers Act 1996 defines teacher "professional misconduct" as including "an act or omission that, having regard to all the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional" or "conduct unbecoming a member."

The HDSB Code of Conduct states that it is the responsibility of staff to provide students with a "safe, caring, equitable and inclusive learning environment free from distractions" and to "teach and model positive behaviour and good citizenship."

The HDSB "Respectful Workplace Free of Discrimination and Harassment" Administrative Procedure states that all employees are expected to be a positive role model.

Legal References

Human Rights Code RSO 1990 c H.19, s. 2(1), 5(1) and 5(2)
Education Act RSO 1990 c E.2, s.169.1(1), 264(1)
Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 SO 1996, c 12
O.Reg. 437/97 "Professional Misconduct"
Supreme Court of Canada: Ross v. New Brunswick School District No. 15, [1996] 1 S.C.R. 825, at para 43

Ontario College of Teachers References

Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

Board References

HDSB Code of Conduct
"Respectful Workplace Free of Discrimination and Harassment" Administrative Procedure

Professionalism Policy

Summary of Consultation Findings

Authorship

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Table of Contents

Background

On January 3, 2023, the Board of Trustees passed a motion directing the Director of the Halton District School Board (HDSB) to develop a Professionalism Policy. The purpose of the policy is to consolidate and affirm existing expectations regarding staff professionalism, including dress and decorum, at board and school settings and at school-based activities.

Purpose of the Consultation

The purpose of the consultation was to gather feedback on the policy document only. Stakeholders were informed that "Administrative Procedures" are separate documents that explain how policy is operationalized or implemented within the HDSB. Feedback pertaining to "Administrative Procedures" and feedback containing personal information of staff or students, and/or pertaining to matters beyond the content of the draft policy document, is not included in this report.

Methodology

All HDSB stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the Draft Professionalism Policy (see Appendix A) through an online survey and/or by sending correspondence to hdsbvoice@hdsb.ca.

To ensure that feedback was received only from Halton stakeholders, including HDSB students, the survey was sent by invitation only, and therefore not anonymous. Responses were linked to respondents' email address and IP address. Nonetheless, all responses were confidential. Only staff within the research department have access to individual responses.

Student councils and advisory groups were invited to submit a collective response representing the voices of their respective members. Feedback could be sent through email and/or by completing the feedback form.

The online survey (see Appendix B) invited respondents to comment on the **Objectives** and **Guiding Principles** of the Policy. Respondents also shared their perceptions of the **effectiveness** of the policy in meeting specific expectations, and to share their **overall impressions** of the policy. Throughout the survey, respondents could provide open-text comments to contextualize their ratings.

Analysis

Quantitative analysis

Frequency and counts are reported for responses to the closed-ended questions (e.g., percentage of agree, percentage of disagree, etc.) For ease of presentation, some response options were regrouped whereby, for example, 'Strongly agree', 'Agree' and 'Somewhat Agree' were grouped into Agree', likewise for 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree' and 'Somewhat Disagree' were grouped into 'Disagree'. The 'Unsure' response option was left in its original form.

Thematic analysis

Responses were summarized in group format, so that no individual respondent could be identified. The qualitative data (i.e., open-ended responses) for each question were analyzed using a general inductive approach by reducing the raw data into codes and themes[1]. This approach does not rely on any particular a priori framework but *"...allows research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data"* (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). The first step of the thematic analysis involved a member of the research department reading the responses and deriving descriptive codes. The second step consisted of detecting similarities between codes, linking them and merging them together into more concrete thematic categories.

After the initial themes were established, they were then verified by three additional researchers who independently conducted a deductive analysis referencing the established themes. In the final analytical stage, the four researchers discussed and compared the results of their analyses and made necessary adjustments to arrive at the final set of themes presented in this report. This allowed the research team to establish an interrater reliability better known in qualitative research as trustworthiness[2].

Two criteria used to demonstrate trustworthiness are credibility and dependability[3]. Credibility is achieved through: a) investigator triangulation by using multiple researchers to

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[1]Thomas, D. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation, 27*, 237-246. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748

[2]Johnson, B., & Turner, L. A. (2003). Data collection strategies in mixed methods research. In: Tashakkori, A. M. & Teddlie, C.B., Eds., *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, 297-319.

[3] Stahl, N. A., & King, J. R. (2020). Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Developmental Education, 44*(1), 26-29. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/expanding-approaches-research-understanding-using/docview/2467348904/se-2

analyze the same findings (as aforementioned) and, b) data triangulation by using more than one type of data to establish findings (as demonstrated in the body of this report through the use of quantitative data in addition to qualitative). Dependability was achieved by holding a peer-review debriefing session, collectively reviewing the final themes and reaching consensus on the theme naming and description.

It is noteworthy that data saturation, meaning that collected information becomes redundant and does not add value to the established themes[4], was usually reached after reviewing about 30-40 responses for each question. Despite this fact, the researchers read **every** response to ensure that no pertinent pieces of information related to the policy document were omitted.

Interpretation of Findings

The methodology used to gather feedback on the Draft Professionalism Policy involved inviting all HDSB stakeholders to participate. This included students, parents/guardians, staff members, and groups who hold an advisory capacity to the board.

Of those invited, individuals self-selected, opted, or voluntarily decided to participate. This type of methodology is referred to as non-probability sampling, whereby participants are not randomly selected from the entire population of stakeholders based on specific characteristics, rather the entire population is invited to participate who then opt-in or self-select to participate (please refer to Appendix C for more details). Although this might appear as a minute detail, it is an important consideration to take into account when one is interpreting consultation findings. In general, with self-select methodologies the following guidelines must be taken into account:

1. **The findings represent solely the opinions of individuals who opted to participate in the voluntary consultation.**
   a. When participants opt-in or self-select in research, participants are not randomly selected from the entire population and therefore are usually not representative of the entire population[5].

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[4]Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality and Quantity, 52*(4), 1893-1907. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8

[5] Valliant R, Dever J. (2011). Estimating propensity adjustments for volunteer web surveys. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 40(1):105-137 https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124110392533

b. The findings are accepted as representing solely the views of those who participated in the consultation.

2. **It is not possible (or appropriate) to make inferences or comparisons between stakeholders who participated in the consultation relative to the entire population of HDSB stakeholders.**
   a. Without random sampling and adequate representation, inferences cannot be drawn from the sample of individuals who opted to participate, to the entire population. Rather, the findings are accepted at face value and as reflecting the perspectives of the participants who opted to participate in the consultation.

3. **Statistical significance does not apply.**
   a. Since the purpose of the consultation was not to make inferences or comparisons between the entire HDSB stakeholder population relative to those who provided feedback, statistical significance, confidence intervals, and other statistical procedures do not apply.
   b. Statistical significance relies on random sampling and which is not the methodology used in the consultation process (please see Appendix C for more details).

4. **Consultation findings should be accepted at face value.**
   a. Where consultation relies solely on the self-selection of participants who volunteer to participate, researchers have very little control on who decides to participate and the extent of their involvement (e.g., whether they answer all questions or only a few).
   b. Researchers implement best practices, proactively, to ensure that the consultation process and findings are protected from factors that might compromise the legitimacy of the results and process. Best practices include the following:
      ■ Providing a fair and inclusive consultation so that all stakeholders have equal opportunity to participate, while experiencing no barriers to participation.
      ■ Ensuring that all stakeholders are aware that the consultation is taking place.
      ■ Protecting the process so that only the voices of direct HDSB stakeholders provide feedback and each respondent submits their opinion one time (please refer to Appendix C for specific strategies used to ensure a fair and genuine consultation).

Executive Summary

Respondents

A total of **8,652** stakeholders provided feedback to the Draft Professionalism Policy; of which **5,230 (60%)** were received from parents/guardians, **2,202 (25%)** from staff members, **1,220 (14%)** from Grade 9-12 students. In addition, a total of **12** responses were received from school councils **(11 responses)** and advisory groups **(1 response)**.

Findings

Policy Objectives

The **majority of respondents agree** that the objectives are:

- A.   clear and understandable,
- B.   fair and reasonable,
- C.   sufficiently brief and concise,
- D.   and provide clear direction on staff professionalism.

Commentary regarding the **Policy Objectives** revolved around the following themes:

- Theme #1: Provide additional clarity and specificity with regard to staff professionalism, and the monitoring and implementation of the policy.
- Theme #2: The terms 'Dress' and 'Decorum' elicited concerns regarding the protection of Human Rights, and having inconsistent expectations for staff and students.
- Theme #3: Suggestions for improvement with specific recommendations for revision (e.g., rephrasing), providing definitions, and providing examples.

Guiding Principles

The **majority of respondents agree** that the principles are:

- A.   clear and understandable,
- B.   sufficiently clear and concise,
- C.   thorough and complete,
- D.   and do a good job of communicating expectations.

Commentary regarding the **Guiding Principles** revolved around the following themes:

- Theme #1: Provide additional clarity and specificity so that the principles are not open to interpretation and provide additional details.
- Theme #2: Suggestions for improvement included providing definitions of terms, revising specific sentences, clarifying expectations, and providing specific examples.

Policy Effectiveness

Respondents felt that the policy is **most effective** in the following areas, the policy:

- Ensures every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to employment, without discrimination.
- Protects the right of every person to be free from harassment in the workplace, without discrimination.
- Demonstrates respect for public education and each student's right to learn in a safe, inclusive and accepting environment.
- Promotes a positive school climate.
- Furthers the Mission of the Halton District School Board.

Respondents felt that the policy is **least effective** in the following areas, the policy:

- Encourages students to achieve their educational goals.
- Ensures the delivery of effective and appropriate education programs to students.
- Consolidates and affirms existing expectations regarding staff professionalism, including dress and decorum, at board and school settings and at school-based activities.

Overall Impression

When asked about their overall impression of the policy:

- **63%** of respondents indicated a **"Positive"** impression
- **26%** indicated a **"Negative"** impression
- **11%** indicated being **"Unsure"**

Respondents provided the following reasons for their impression:

For respondents with a negative impression

- *Theme #1:* The policy is too general and broad.
- *Theme #2:* The policy raises Human Rights concerns.
- *Theme #3:* Despite a negative impression, respondents generally approve the policy.

For **respondents with a positive impression**

- *Theme #1:* Respondents expressed general approval for the policy.
- *Theme #2:* The policy could be improved by increasing specificity.
- *Theme #3:* Despite a positive impression, respondents expressed concerns with the policy.

For **respondents who stated being unsure**

- *Theme #1:* The policy could be improved by increasing specificity.
- *Theme #2:* Respondents expressed general approval for the policy.
- *Theme #3:* Respondents expressed concerns with the policy.

Detailed Summary of Findings

Respondents

A total of **8,652** stakeholders provided feedback to the Draft Professionalism Policy. This included:

- **5,230 (60%)** responses from parents/guardians,
- **2,202 (25%)** from staff members,
- **1,220 (14%)** from Grade 9-12 students, and

The majority of the respondents provided feedback by completing the questionnaire, with the exception of 1 staff member, and 3 parents/guardians, who chose to email their feedback.

In addition, a total of **12** responses were received from school councils **(11 responses)** and advisory groups **(1 response)**. Of these, 6 were submitted through the feedback form, and 6 were received by email.

Overview of Findings

The following sections of the report provide a detailed summary of feedback, as shared by parents/guardians, students, staff, school councils, and advisory groups. The feedback is presented separately whereby section 1 summarizes feedback from parents/guardians, students, and staff, while section 2 summarizes feedback from schools councils and advisory groups.

Commentary shared by respondents is summarized below each section of the report. In total, respondents provided **8,929 comments**. These were analyzed thematically separately for 'Objectives', 'Guiding Principles', and 'Overall Impression of the Policy'.

Section 1: Feedback From Parents/Guardians, Students & Staff

Objectives

Respondents were asked the following question with regard to the **Policy Objectives**:
"Considering the Objectives section of the policy, please rate your level of agreement to each of the following statements. The objectives:"

- are clear and understandable
- are fair and reasonable (i.e., not overbearing)
- are sufficiently brief and concise
- provide clear direction on staff professionalism

Response options included: 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Somewhat Agree', 'Somewhat Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Unsure'. For ease of presentation, response options were collapsed into three categories with 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Somewhat agree' coded as **'Agree'**, 'Somewhat Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Strongly Disagree' coded as **'Disagree'**, and Unsure retained as **'Unsure'**.

Detailed Summary of Findings

The objectives are clear and understandable.
- **84%** of respondents Agree
- **14%** of respondents Disagree
- **2%** of respondents selected the 'Unsure" response option

Pie chart showing: 7161 (84%) Agree; 1232 (14%) Disagree; 168 (2%) Unsure. Legend: Agree, Disagree, Unsure.
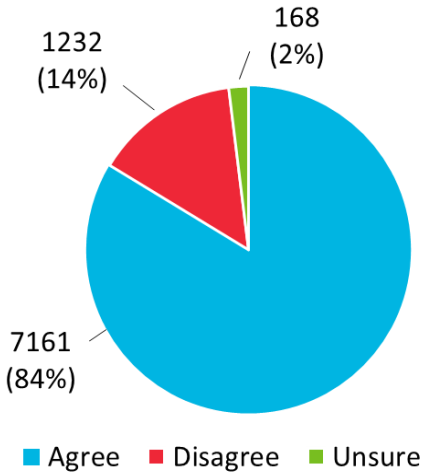
The objectives are fair and reasonable.

- **87%** of respondents Agree
- **10%** of respondents Disagree
- **3%** of respondents selected the 'Unsure' response option

286
(3%)

818
(10%)

7231
(87%)

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Unsure
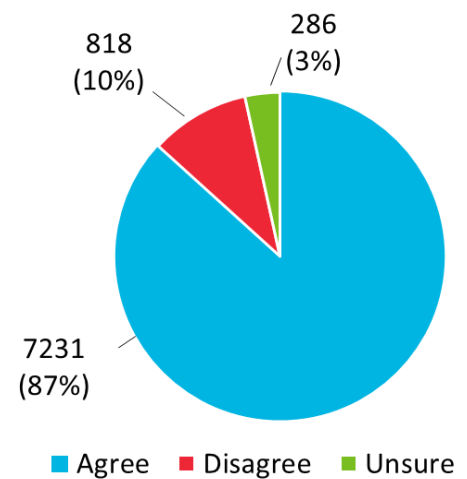
The objectives are sufficiently brief and concise.

- **82%** of respondents Agree
- **15%** of respondents Disagree
- **3%** of respondents selected the 'Unsure' response option

237
(3%)

1286
(15%)

6804
(82%)

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Unsure

The objectives provide clear direction on staff professionalism.

- **64%** of respondents Agree
- **33%** of respondents Disagree
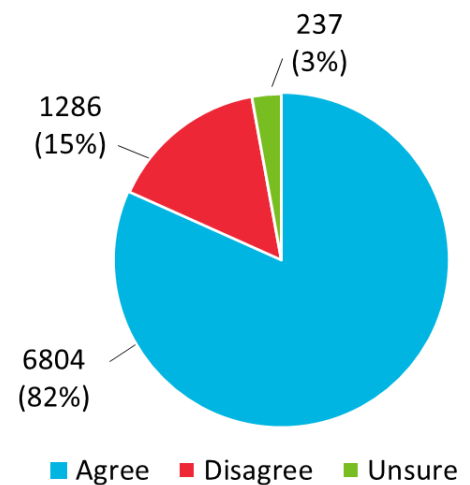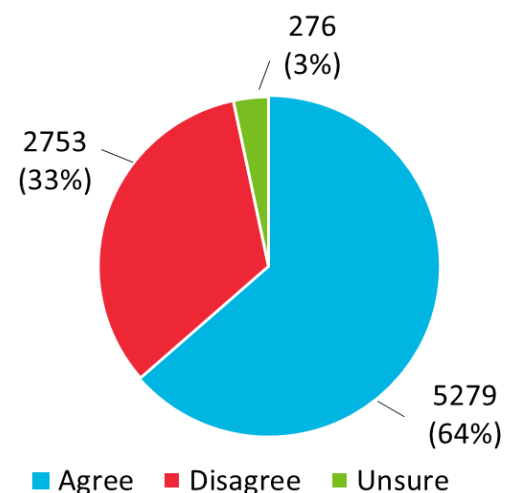- **3%** of respondents selected the 'Unsure' response option

276
(3%)

2753
(33%)

5279
(64%)

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Unsure

Commentary Regarding Objectives

Respondents were asked the following open-text question: *"Please share additional feedback you would like to provide about the **Objectives** of the policy."* A total of **2,266 comments** were received. The following themes emerged from the comments:

Theme #1 - Provide Additional clarity and specificity

Respondents indicated that the policy is too general, and that additional clarity is needed. Respondents felt that the Objectives should contain guidelines that specify parameters for acceptable staff behaviour.

"The statement is too vague."

"It would be better to have some clear guidelines as to what is and is not acceptable"

Policy implementation and monitoring is an additional area which respondents felt that enhanced clarity is needed. There is concern among respondents that it will not be possible to effectively operationalize and monitor the impact of the policy as the policy's language is too general, leading to differences in interpretation.

"...the policy does not give any clear direction on what is considered professional..."

Without enhanced specificity, respondents felt that the policy is open to interpretation which hinders the consistent operationalization and implementation of the policy.

"It could be considered slightly vague as one person's idea of professionalism may be different from another's."

Theme #2 - Dress and decorum

Respondents commented on the terms "dress and decorum", these comments focused on three areas:

1. **Human Rights**

    Respondents highlighted the importance of centering Human Rights when considering the implementation of dress codes. Respondents shared concerns that dress codes typically are disproportionately used to monitor the physical appearance of females, and other groups (e.g., non-binary gender). Therefore, the dress codes result in discriminatory practices that disadvantage specific groups of staff and students. Respondents shared concerns that dress codes might be used to "govern" aspects of individuals' identities resulting in some cultures and identities being undervalued while others centered as the exemplar of professionalism.

    "[Dress and decorum]...means be white, dress white and act white."

    *"[The policy]...supports gender identity and expression as well as desexualizing and destigmatizing the way females or feminine people dress or in regards
    to dress code (eg., not showing their shoulders etc.)"*

2. **Staff Expectations**

    Respondents suggest that the policy set expectations regarding staff dress and decorum. Respondents felt that this does not need to be overbearing or overly restrictive and provided the example of "business casual" as a form of dress code that is implemented broadly in the workplace.

    *"I'd like to see staff who work with students have a "business casual" expectation,
    unless other attire is needed for their job (e.g., Physical Education)."*

3. **Consistency between staff and students**

    Respondents provided mixed feedback with regard to expectations for staff and students with regard to dress and decorum. While some respondents felt that consistency between staff and students is needed, others felt that expectations should be higher for staff.

    *"...teachers and students have an expectation to display professionalism in the
    classroom setting. In order to maintain an environment conducive to learning,
    dress code and decorum need to be maintained."*

"[An educator] is to be held to a higher standard of decorum and modesty as to show neutral and/or balanced perspective to not create additional obstacles or distractions for children in the classroom".

Theme #3 - Suggestions for Improvement

Respondents made the following recommendations for improving the Objectives:

Suggestions for revision

- Replace the word "direction" with "framework".
- Revise the objective statement by adding the word 'reasonable' .
- Keep the objective statement short.
- Differentiate between law-abiding principles and simple guidelines.
- The objectives should end at the end of the first paragraph.
- Rephrase by using shorter sentences.
- Consider using bullet points to simplify the writing.
- Where it states that staff should be treated equally, should actually state equitably.
- Reduce the legal jargon and use more plain language.
- Revise so that instead of "consolidating" and "affirming" "existing expectations", the policy "establishes" the rules pertaining to dress and decorum of staff.
- Address the question of how this policy is different from what currently exists.
- Remove the following as it does not align directly with the policy: "...each student's right to learn in a safe, inclusive and accepting environment."

Suggestions for definitions and examples

- Define the following terms: personal presentation, positive learning environment, professionalism, dress and decorum, safe and student-friendly environment.
- Give examples of the following: affirm and consolidate existing expectations regarding staff professionalism, including dress and decorum.

Suggestions for additional detail:

- An objective statement highlighting the important role staff have in modeling behaviours to students.
- A statement on how conflict between student and staff human rights will be addressed; Whose rights will be emphasized?
- A statement that the human rights of students supersede those of educators.
- Wording regarding obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its provisions.

- A statement that educators' dress and appearance should not create distractions for students in the classroom.
- Identify the target audience for the policy.
- Outline specific expectations.
- State that the objectives apply to "incidents" vs "acceptable behaviour".
- Add the following 'Revealing clothing focusing on educators' breasts or genitalia is prohibited.'

Guiding Principles

Respondents were asked the following question with regard to the Guiding Principles of the policy: *"Considering the Guiding Principles section of the policy, please rate your level of agreement to each of the following statements."*
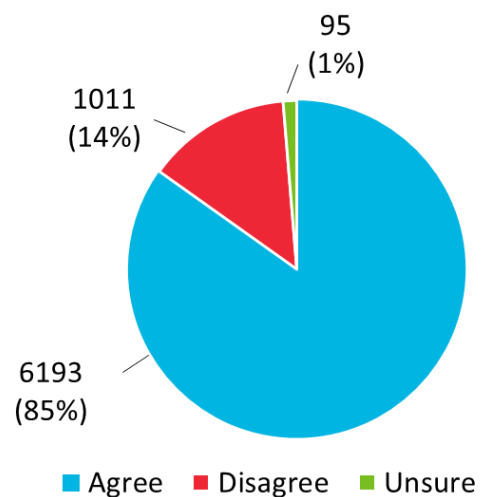
- The principles are clear and understandable
- The principles are sufficiently brief and concise
- The principles are thorough and complete
- The principles do a good job of communicating expectations
- The principles outline standards for professionalism set by the respective governing bodies (e.g., Education Act, Human Rights Code, etc.)

Response options included: Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and Unsure. For ease of presentation, response options were collapsed into three categories with Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat agree coded as **'Agree'**, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree coded as **'Disagree'**, and Unsure retained as **'Unsure'**.

Detailed Summary of Findings

The principles are clear and understandable.
- **85%** of respondents Agree
- **14%** of respondents Disagree
- **1%** of respondents selected the 'Unsure" response option

95
(1%)

1011
(14%)

6193
(85%)

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Unsure

The principles are sufficiently clear and concise.

- **84%** of respondents Agree
- **14%** of respondents Disagree
- **2%** of respondents selected the 'Unsure" response option

119
(2%)

1003
(14%)

6047
(84%)

■ Agree   ■ Disagree   ■ Unsure
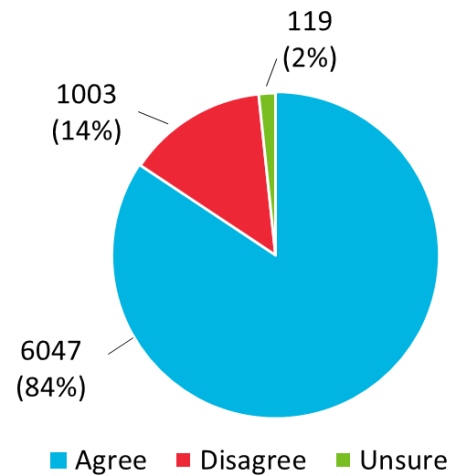
The principles are thorough and complete.

- **73%** of respondents Agree
- **25%** of respondents Disagree
- **2%** of respondents selected the 'Unsure" response option

172
(2%)

1771
(25%)

5234
(73%)

■ Agree   ■ Disagree   ■ Unsure

The principles do a good job of communicating expectations.

- **70%** of respondents Agree
- **28%** of respondents Disagree
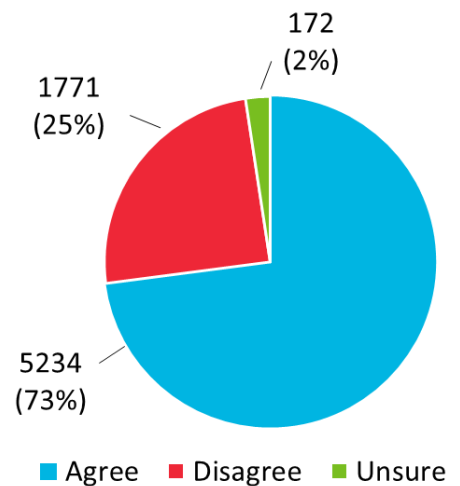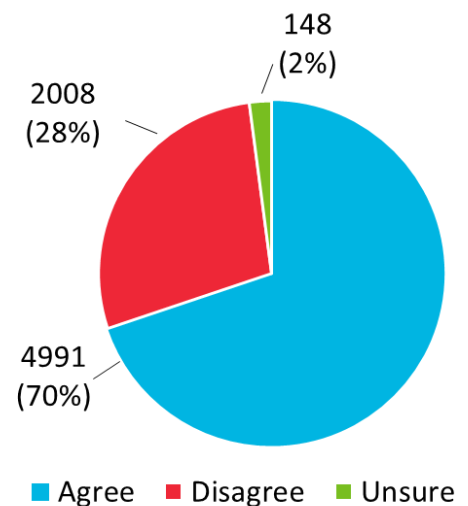- **2%** of respondents selected the 'Unsure" response option

148
(2%)

2008
(28%)

4991
(70%)

■ Agree   ■ Disagree   ■ Unsure

18

Commentary Regarding Guiding Principles

Respondents were asked the following open-text question: *"Please share additional feedback you would like to provide about the **Guiding Principles** of the policy."* A total of **3,243 comments** were received. The following themes emerged from the comments:

Theme #1 - Provide additional clarity and specificity

Respondents indicated that the Guiding Principles are too broad and that additional details are needed.

"...the wording is very vague."

"I feel more detail is needed, it is too broad."

Without providing additional specificity, respondents felt that the Guiding Principles are open to interpretation.

"...this language is too vague and open to individual interpretation."

Theme #2 - Suggestions for Improvement

Respondents made the following recommendations for improving the Guiding Principles:

Suggestions for revision

- Remove the term "free of distraction" as it could be used to discriminate against females and members of groups historically marginalized.
- Revise language so less legal and political jargon is used.
- Revise so that the policy is not a summary of other existing documents rather it is a 'stand-alone' document.
- Revise the statement "sensitive to factors that influence individual learning" so that it exempts staff identity protecting their human right to affirm their identity.
- Revise so that the duty to be 'professional' does not minimize one's human rights.
- Revise so that it includes all members of staff, not just teachers.
- Rewrite so that it is more succinct.
- Rewrite so that it is less subjective.
- Revise as the Guiding Principles contradict the Objectives.

Suggestions to clarify expectations

- Explicitly state what is expected of staff with regard to professionalism and staff dress and decorum.
- Explain why existing expectations need to be "reaffirmed".
- Add a section entitled 'Staff Expectations' and state the expectations clearly.

Suggestions for definitions and examples

- Define the following terms: staff professionalism, staff unprofessionalism, staff misconduct, staff deportment, distraction, 'safe, caring, equitable and inclusive learning environment', 'good citizenship', 'positive behaviour', 'positive role model', and 'conduct unbecoming a member'
- Add definitions to reduce differences in interpretation.
- Add additional details on guidance on what HDSB would accept as professional (e.g., business casual); consider referencing other documents where this is defined more explicitly.

Suggestions for additional detail:

- Add the following statement: "Ontario College of Teachers Act 1996 defines teacher "professional misconduct" as including "an act or omission that, having regard to all the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional."
- Indicate that clothing should not be racist, homophobic, or hateful.
- State that the Guiding Principles apply to both staff and students.
- Include statements about the need to balance the rights of individuals when those rights might be in conflict.
- Consider adding language from the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its provisions.
- Add details regarding the consequences for staff who do not follow the policy.
- Add more details on the Supreme Court decision referenced by quoting the ruling.
- Add details and provide examples regarding what is appropriate and inappropriate for a staff member to wear.

Effectiveness of the Policy

Respondents were asked the following question with regard to the effectiveness of the policy: *"Overall, considering the policy as a whole, please rate how effective do you feel the policy will be in achieving the following objectives:"*

- The policy consolidates and affirms existing expectations regarding staff. professionalism, including dress and decorum, at board and school settings and at school-based activities.
- It ensures every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to employment, without discrimination.
- It protects the right of every person to be free from harassment in the workplace, without discrimination.
- It demonstrates respect for public education and each student's right to learn in a safe, inclusive, and accepting environment.
- It acknowledges the unique impact of educators on the lives of students.
- It furthers the Mission of the Halton District School Board, which is "Together, we inspire every student to learn, grow and succeed".
- It promotes student achievement and well-being.
- It promotes a positive school climate.
- It ensures the delivery of effective and appropriate education programs to students.
- It encourages students to achieve their educational goals.
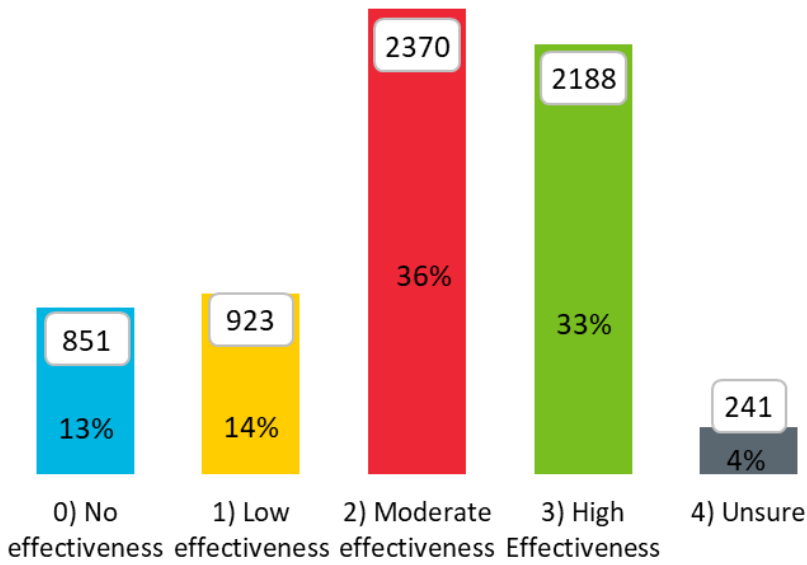
Respondents rated their perceptions of the effectiveness of the policy using the following scale:

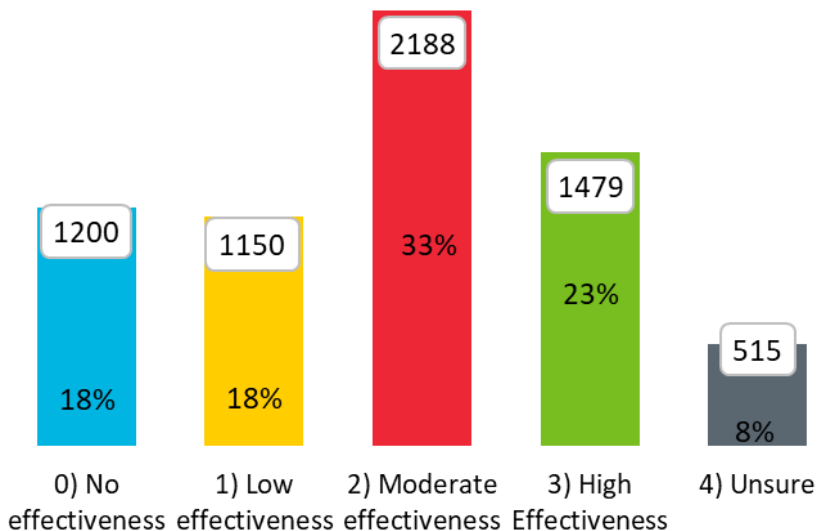| No effectiveness	Low effectiveness	Moderate effectiveness	High effectiveness	Unsure

Detailed Summary of Findings

The policy **demonstrates respect for public education and each student's right to learn in a safe, inclusive and accepting environment.**
- **69%** of respondents chose **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
- **27%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**
- **4%** indicated being **"Unsure"**

	0) No effectiveness	1) Low effectiveness	2) Moderate effectiveness	3) High Effectiveness	4) Unsure
Count	851	923	2370	2188	241
Percent	13%	14%	36%	33%	4%

The policy **encourages students to achieve their educational goals.**
- **56%** of respondents chose **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
- **36%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**
- **8%** indicated being **"Unsure"**

	0) No effectiveness	1) Low effectiveness	2) Moderate effectiveness	3) High Effectiveness	4) Unsure
Count	1200	1150	2188	1479	515
Percent	18%	18%	33%	23%	8%

The policy **ensures every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to employment, without discrimination.**

- **75%** of respondents chose **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
- **20%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**
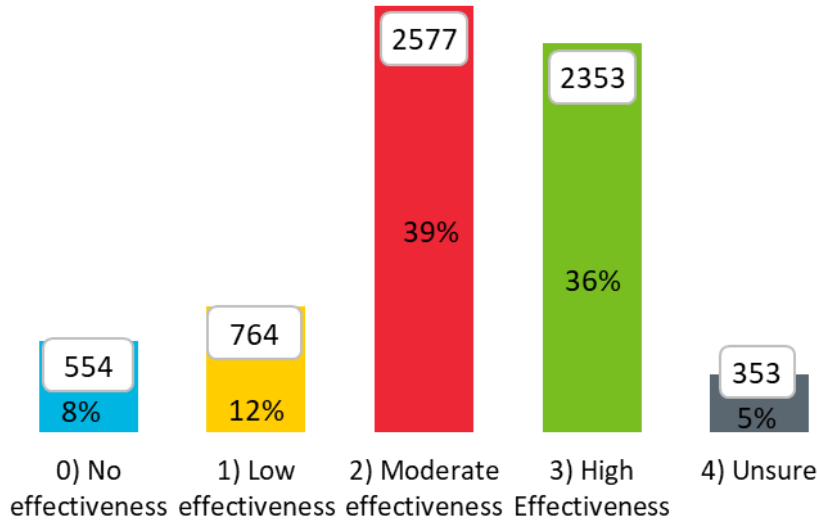- **5%** indicated being **"Unsure"**

554	764	2577	2353	353
8%	12%	39%	36%	5%
0) No effectiveness	1) Low effectiveness	2) Moderate effectiveness	3) High Effectiveness	4) Unsure

The policy **ensures the delivery of effective and appropriate education programs to students.**

- **59%** of respondents chose **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
- **34%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**
- **8%** indicated being **"Unsure"**
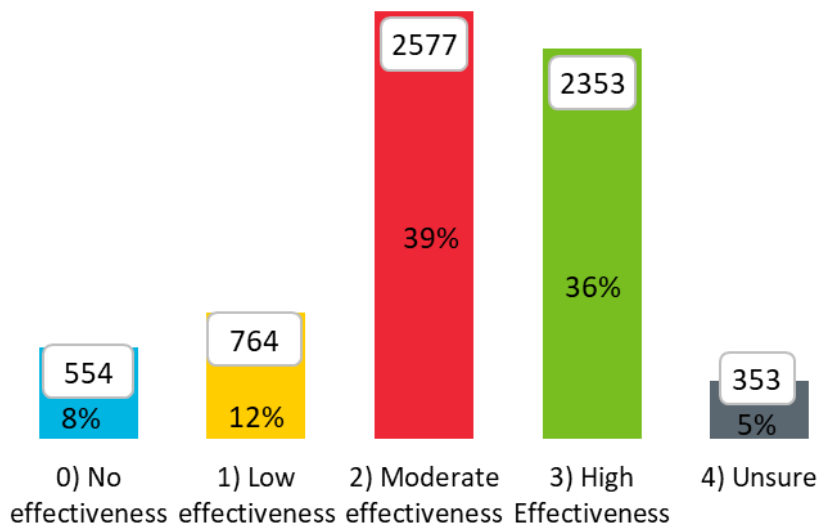
554	764	2577	2353	353
8%	12%	39%	36%	5%
0) No effectiveness	1) Low effectiveness	2) Moderate effectiveness	3) High Effectiveness	4) Unsure

The policy **furthers the Mission of the Halton District School Board, which is "Together, we inspire every student to learn, grow and succeed".**

- **65%** of respondents chose **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
- **28%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**
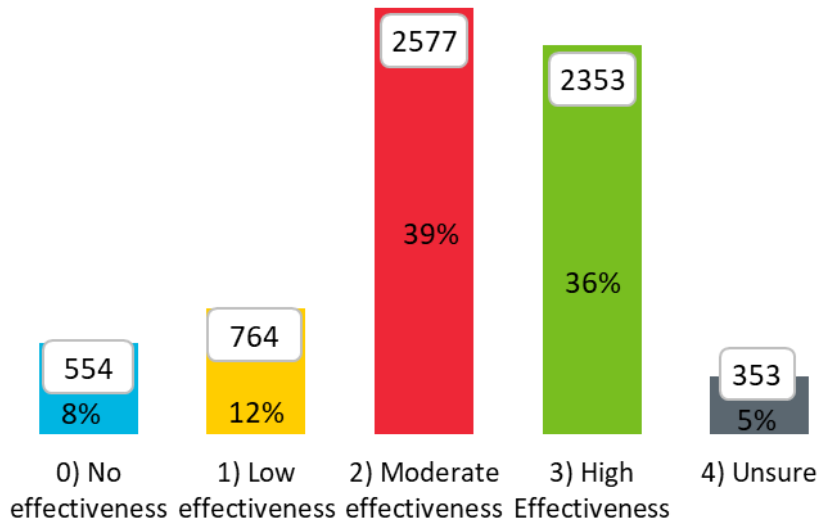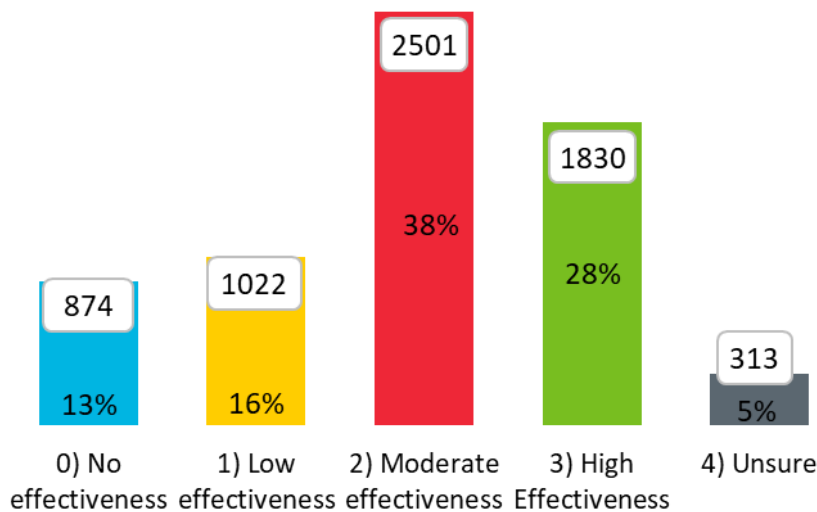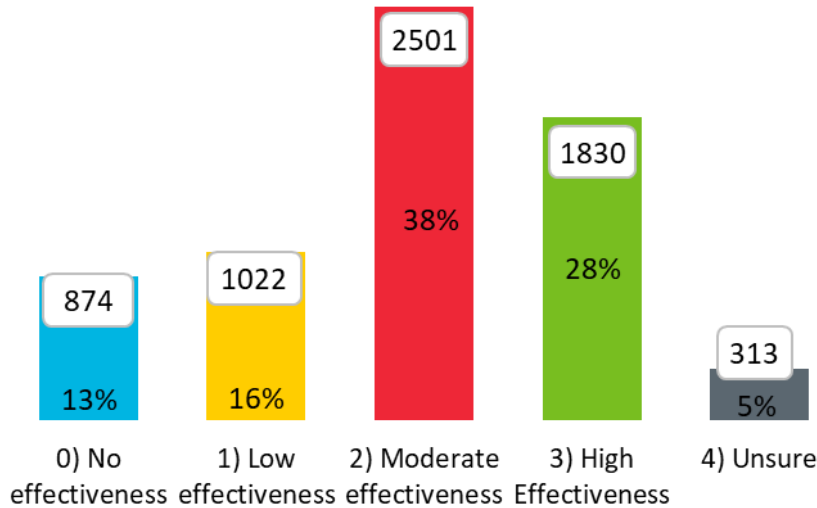- **6%** indicated being **"Unsure"**

The policy **promotes a positive school climate.**

- **66%** of respondents chose **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
- **29%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**
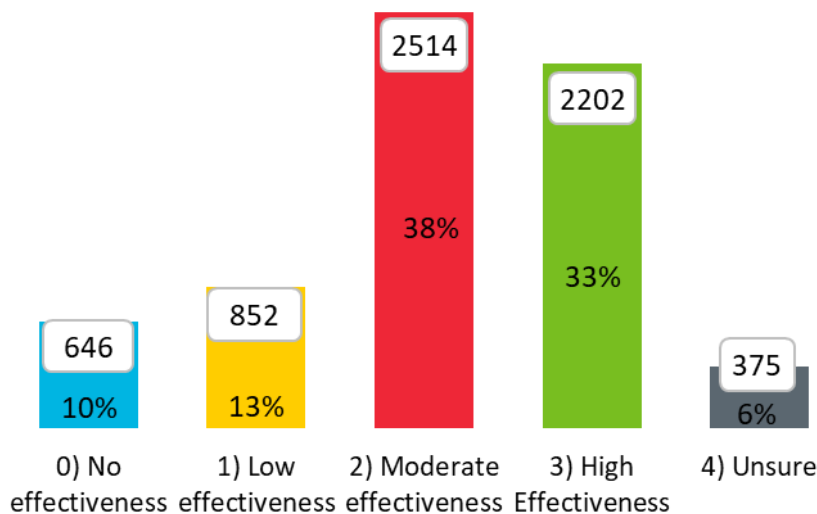- **5%** indicated being **"Unsure"**

24

The policy **promotes student achievement and well-being.**
- **63%** of respondents chose **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
- **32%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**
- **5%** indicated being **"Unsure"**

0) No effectiveness	1) Low effectiveness	2) Moderate effectiveness	3) High Effectiveness	4) Unsure
874	1022	2501	1830	313
13%	16%	38%	28%	5%

The policy **protects the right of every person to be free from harassment in the workplace, without discrimination.**
- **71%** of respondents chose **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
- **23%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**
- **6%** indicated being **"Unsure"**

0) No effectiveness	1) Low effectiveness	2) Moderate effectiveness	3) High Effectiveness	4) Unsure
646	852	2514	2202	375
10%	13%	38%	33%	6%

The policy **consolidates and affirms existing expectations regarding staff professionalism, including dress and decorum, at board, school settings and at school-based activities.**

- **57%** of respondents chose **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
- **37%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**
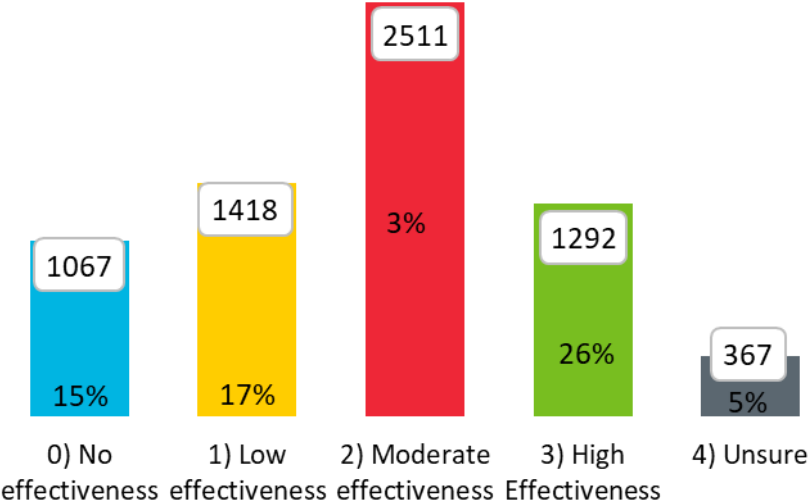- **6%** indicated being **"Unsure"**

Overall Impression of the Policy

Respondents were asked the following question with regard to their general impression of the policy: *"Considering the policy as a whole, please share your overall impression of the policy. Overall, my impression of the policy is: Very negative, Somewhat negative, Somewhat positive, Very positive, Unsure"*.

For ease of presentation, the response options were collapsed as follows: 'Very negative' and 'Somewhat negative' were coded as **'Negative'**, 'Somewhat positive' and 'Very positive' to **'Positive'** and 'Unsure' retained as **'Unsure'**.

Detailed Summary of Findings

Respondents were asked to indicate their overall impression of the policy. **63%** of respondents indicated a **"Positive"** impression, **26%** indicated a **"Negative"** impression while **11%** indicated being **"Unsure".**
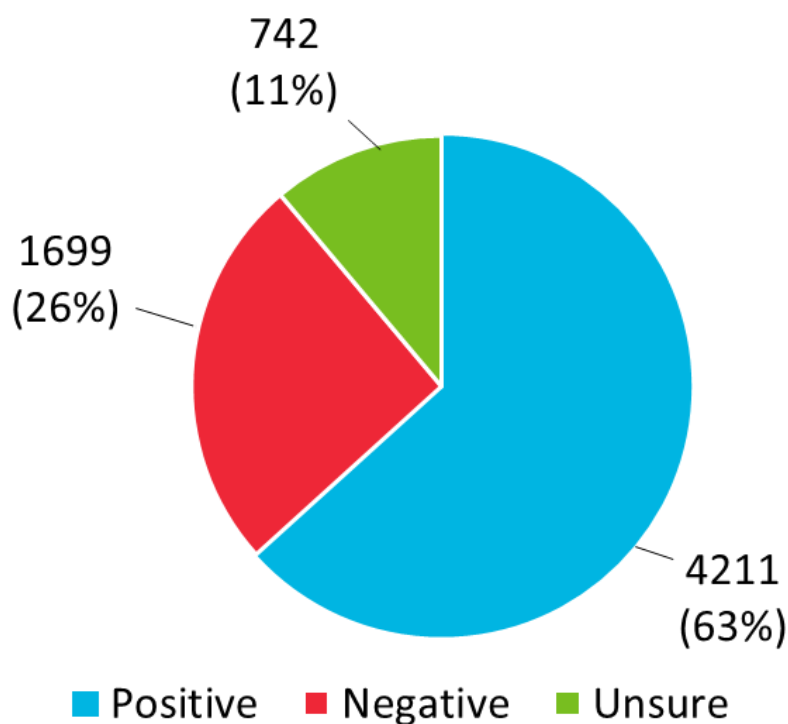
Commentary Regarding the Overall Impression of the Policy

Respondents were asked to provide a rationale for their overall impression of the policy. A total of **3,412** comments were received. The feedback is summarized below separately for respondents who rated their impression as 'Negative', 'Positive', and 'Unsure'. It is noteworthy that regardless of how respondents rated their impressions, their comments resulted in similar themes, irrespective of whether the impressions of the policy were 'Positive', 'Negative' or were rated as 'Unsure'.

Comments from respondents with a negative impression

Theme #1 - The policy is too general and broad

- The policy is too broad, vague, and unclear.
- The policy leaves expectations to individual interpretation.
- The writing is heavy with legal jargon.

Theme #2 - The policy raises Human Rights concerns

- Concepts like 'free of distraction' and 'model positive behavior' are problematic as they can be misinterpreted and/or used to discriminate and cause harm to specific communities (e.g., females, racialized individuals).
- The policy feels like an overreach on part of the board, and an infringement on staff's human rights.
- Dress code will discriminate against staff who do not follow a 'white attire', further marginalizing individuals from equity deserving groups.

Theme #3 - General Approval

- Respondents expressed general approval for the policy as it solidifies expectations that educators are already professionally bound to.
- Additional respondents felt that the policy sets additional expectations to replace the "lax dress" code currently in place.

Comments from respondents with a positive impression

Theme #1 - General Approval

- Policy is comprehensive, reasonable, and provides the right direction.
- The policy summarizes standards that have been in place for educators for many years, and that educators understand and follow.
- The policy is fair and respects everyone's rights.
- This policy provides a general framework for a dress code that is as equitable as possible.
- The policy has the potential of becoming an exemplar to other school boards, if implemented well.
- The policy is general but provides a good foundation.
- Supports the expectation that educators dress professionally.
- Language is supportive.
- The policy prioritizes student and school safety.

Theme #2 - The policy is too general and broad

- The policy leaves expectations to individual interpretation.
- Details on how the policy will be enforced are lacking .
- The policy lacks specific rules and guidelines.

Theme #3 - General Concerns

- The policy is not needed, it represents the board's response in pleasing a small vocal group of stakeholders.
- Respondents suggest implementing simple guidelines with actionable items to set expectations for dress and decorum, as opposed to a policy.
- Respondents expressed concern of HDSB holding a biased perspective with regard to staff professionalism.

Comments from respondents who rated their overall impression as 'Unsure'

Theme #1 - The policy is too general and broad

- It is unclear what is meant by professionalism.
- Enforcement and expectations of the policy are unclear and open to individuals' interpretation.
- The policy is very unclear as to what it is trying to achieve.
- The policy is not direct enough and does not state HDSB's goals specifically.
- The policy is missing the necessary details to inform action.
- The policy is open to interpretation.
- HDSB's mission statement is missing.

Theme #2 - General approval for the policy

- Protects students' right to a fair and equitable learning environment.
- Respondents support general guidelines (e.g., business casual) as appropriate for educators.

Theme #3 - General concerns

- A dress code has no bearing on one's ability to teach well.
- The policy does not clearly affirm human rights.
- Respondents feel that the policy will not result in change.
- Implementing a dress code is very outdated.

Section 2: Feedback From School Councils & Advisory Groups

Objectives

Members of school councils and advisory groups were asked the following question with regard to the **Policy Objectives**: *"Considering the Objectives section of the policy, please rate your level of agreement to each of the following statements. The objectives:"*

- are clear and understandable
- are fair and reasonable (i.e., not overbearing)
- are sufficiently brief and concise
- provide clear direction on staff professionalism

Response options included: 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Somewhat Agree', 'Somewhat Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Unsure'. For ease of presentation, response options were collapsed into three categories with 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Somewhat agree' coded as 'Agree', 'Somewhat Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Strongly Disagree' coded as 'Disagree', and Unsure retained as 'Unsure'.
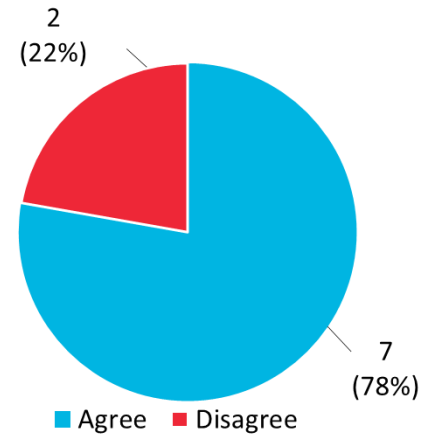
Detailed Summary of Findings

The objectives are **clear and understandable.**
- **89%** of respondents Agree
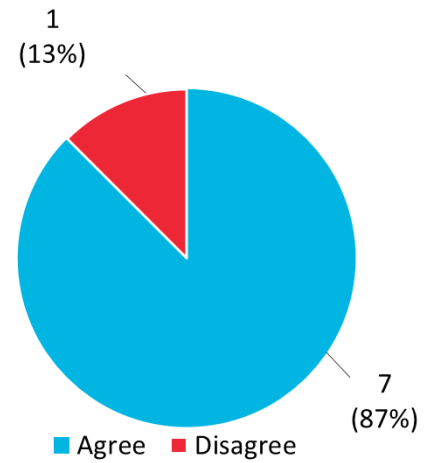- **11%** of respondents Disagree
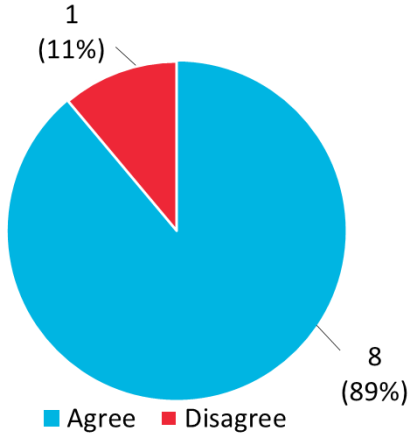
The objectives are **fair and reasonable.**
- **78%** of respondents Agree
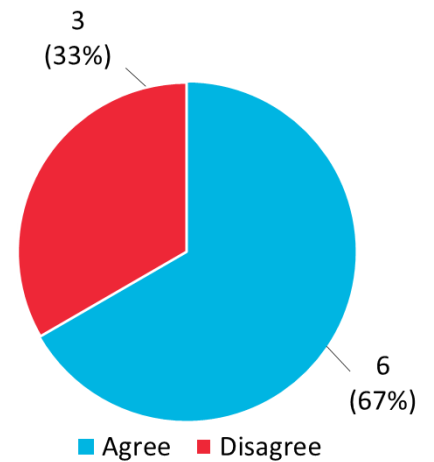- **22%** of respondents Disagree

The objectives are **sufficiently brief and concise.**
- **87%** of respondents Agree
- **13%** of respondents Disagree

The objectives provide **clear direction on staff professionalism.**
- **67%** of respondents Agree
- **33%** of respondents Disagree

Commentary Regarding the Objectives of the Policy

Respondents were asked the following open-text question: *"Please share additional feedback you would like to provide about the **Objectives** of the policy."* The following themes emerged from the comments:

Theme #1 - General approval for the policy

- The objectives are well written and are succinct.
- General approval of the objectives.
- The objectives provide a balanced perspective respecting both staff and students' needs.

"...[the policy provides a] balanced perspective to be respectful for both staff and students."

"I agree wholeheartedly with the objectives..."

Theme #2 - Policy's expectations and standards

- The Policy does not specify standards or expectations with regard to staff professionalism, dress and decorum. The summaries provided of the Education Act and Ontario Human Rights Code, are not sufficient in articulating the Board's expectations.
- Stakeholders felt they were unable to fully comment on any standards regarding staff professionalism, as set by the HDSB, the Ontario College of Teachers, the Ministry of Education, and/or any other governing body, as these standards were not articulated.

"...it is unreasonable and, in fact, impossible, for parents, staff, students and School Councils to be able to assess expectations that are not only not clearly described, but are not present in the Draft Policy."

- The absence of clear expectations articulated in the policy results in the board failing to provide direction to staff on maintaining appropriate standards of professionalism, including dress and decorum.

"Contrary to the Motion M23-0007 ..., this Draft Professionalism Policy does not require Board staff to maintain appropriate and professional standards of dress and decorum..."

Theme #3 - The objectives are too general and vague

- Respondents shared that the objectives were too general and vague.
- The objectives do not state direction beyond the requirement to treat staff in a non-discriminatory manner.

"The school council felt that the objectives are quite general and do not communicate any particular direction beyond not discriminating."

Theme #4 - Suggestions for revision

- Revise so that the objectives clearly articulate the "what" of the policy.
- Revise so that the objectives clearly state the "the strategic direction" stipulated by the policy.

"If this is meant to be the "what" section of the Draft Professionalism Policy, what is written does not in any way set out what "the strategic direction" prescribed by the policy is."

Guiding Principles

Respondents were asked the following question with regard to the Guiding Principles of the policy: *"Considering the Guiding Principles section of the policy, please rate your level of agreement to each of the following statements."*
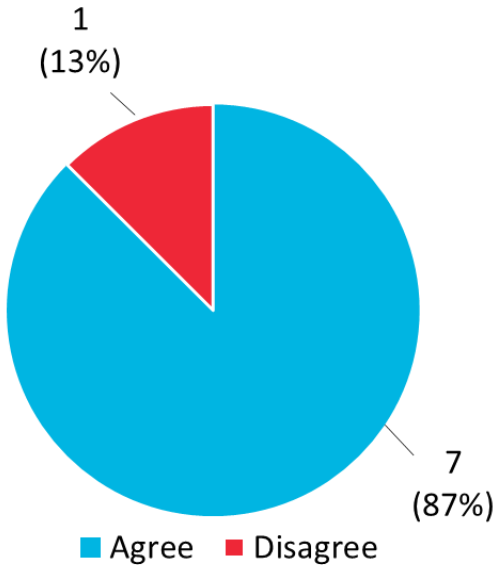
- The principles are clear and understandable
- The principles are sufficiently brief and concise
- The principles are thorough and complete
- The principles do a good job of communicating expectations
- The principles outline standards for professionalism set by the respective governing bodies (e.g., Education Act, Human Rights Code, etc.)

Response options included: Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and Unsure. For ease of presentation, response options were collapsed into three categories with Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat agree coded as **'Agree'**, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree coded as **'Disagree'**, and Unsure retained as **'Unsure'**.

Detailed Summary of Findings

The principles are **clear and understandable.**
- **87%** of respondents Agree
- **13%** of respondents Disagree

1
(13%)

7
(87%)

■ Agree ■ Disagree
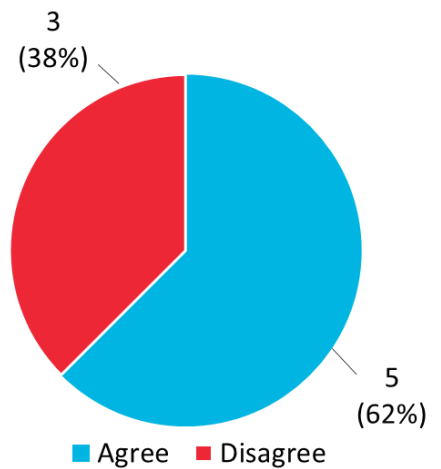
The principles are **sufficiently clear and concise.**
- **87%** of respondents Agree
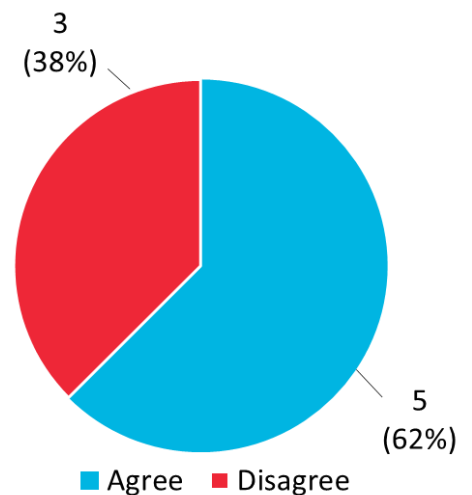- **13%** of respondents Disagree
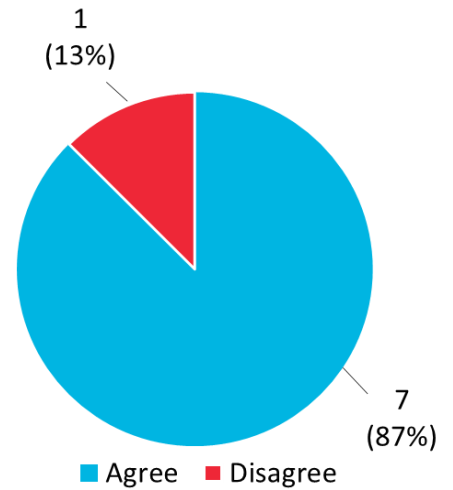
The principles are **thorough and complete.**
- **62%** of respondents Agree
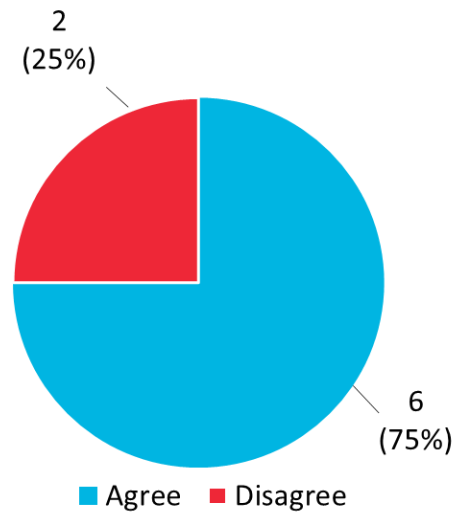- **38%** of respondents Disagree

The principles do a good job of **communicating expectations.**
- **62%** of respondents Agree
- **38%** of respondents Disagree

The principles outline standards for **professionalism set by respective governing bodies.**

- **75%** of respondents Agree
- **25%** of respondents Disagree

2
(25%)

6
(75%)

■ Agree ■ Disagree

Commentary Regarding the Guiding Principles of the Policy

Respondents were asked the following open-text question: *"Please share additional feedback you would like to provide about the Guiding Principles of the policy."* The following themes emerged from the comments:

Theme #1 - Suggestions for revisions

- The primary Guiding Principles should be promoting student achievement and well-being, and a positive school climate.

"Students, student achievement and well-being, and promoting a positive school climate must be the primary guiding principles of any professionalism policy intended to apply to teachers and school staff."

- Revise adhering to the following framework: "Guiding Principles are, by definition, principles or rules which regulate and/or govern a party's behaviour or action."
- Revise so to include the legislated requirement under section 169.1(1) (a) to (d) of the Education Act.
- Revise by including definitions for terms and concepts such "good role model and "free from distractions".

- The Guiding Principles as currently stated as summaries of specific case law, legislation and Board policies. These statements do not provide clear principles or rules intended to regulate staff professionalism.
- Stakeholders felt they were unable to fully comment on any standards regarding staff professionalism, as set by the HDSB, the Ontario College of Teachers, the Ministry of Education, and/or any other governing body, as these standards were not articulated.

"We cannot comment or give feedback on expectations or standards of professionalism in a vacuum, and certainly not on any expectations or standards which have not, in fact, been communicated, stated, or referenced."

Effectiveness

Respondents were asked the following question with regard to the effectiveness of the policy: *"Overall, considering the policy as a whole, please rate how effective do you feel the policy will be in achieving the following objectives:"*

- The policy consolidates and affirms existing expectations regarding staff professionalism, including dress and decorum, at board and school settings and at school-based activities.
- It ensures every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to employment, without discrimination.
- It protects the right of every person to be free from harassment in the workplace, without discrimination.
- It demonstrates respect for public education and each student's right to learn in a safe, inclusive, and accepting environment.
- It acknowledges the unique impact of educators on the lives of students.
- It furthers the Mission of the Halton District School Board, which is "Together, we inspire every student to learn, grow and succeed".
- It promotes student achievement and well-being.
- It promotes a positive school climate.
- It ensures the delivery of effective and appropriate education programs to students.
- It encourages students to achieve their educational goals.

Respondents rated their perceptions of the effectiveness of the policy using the following scale:

No effectiveness	Low effectiveness	Moderate effectiveness	High effectiveness	Unsure

Detailed Summary of Findings

The policy **demonstrates respect for public education and each student's right to learn in a safe, inclusive and accepting environment.**
- **50%** of respondents indicated that the policy is **moderately effective**
- **50%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**
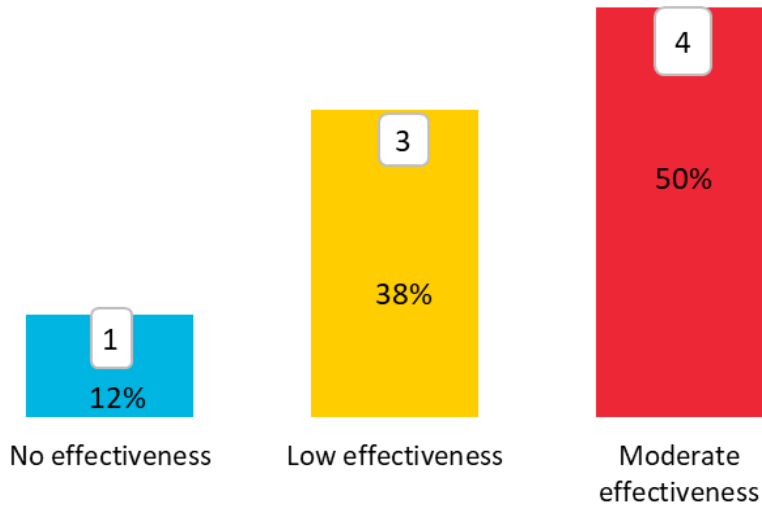
The policy **encourages students to achieve their educational goals.**
- **75%** of respondents indicated that the policy is **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
- **25%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**
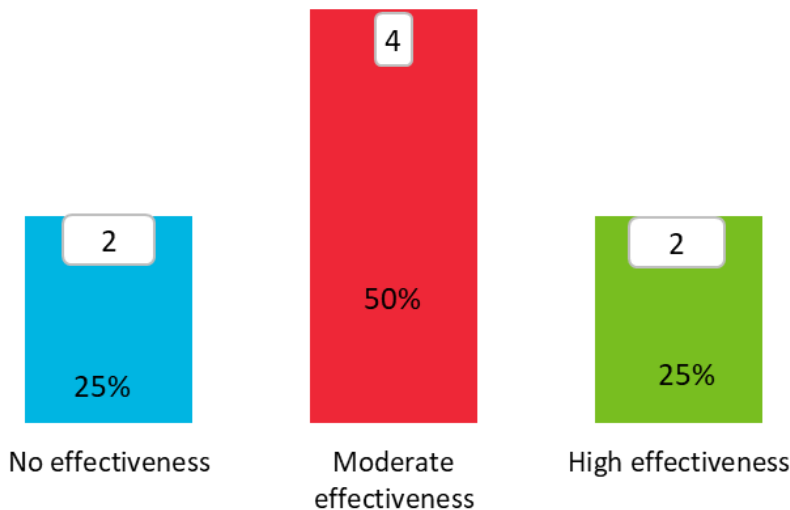
The policy **ensures every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to employment, without discrimination.**
- **88%** of respondents indicated that the policy is **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
- **12%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**

The policy **ensures the delivery of effective and appropriate education programs to students.**
- **71%** of respondents indicated that the policy is **moderately effective**
- **29%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**
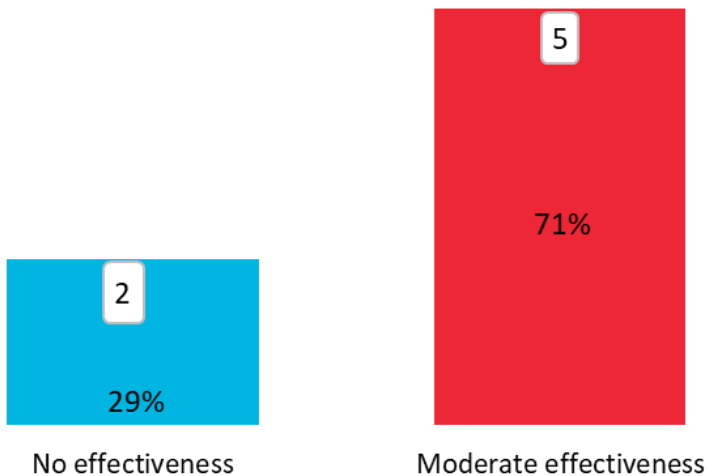
The policy **furthers the Mission of the Halton District School Board, which is "Together, we inspire every student to learn, grow and succeed".**
- **76%** of respondents indicated that the policy is **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
- **24%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**

1	1	5	1
12%	12%	64%	12%
No effectiveness	Low effectiveness	Moderate effectiveness	High effectiveness

The policy **promotes a positive school climate.**
- **72%** of respondents indicated that the policy is **moderately effective**
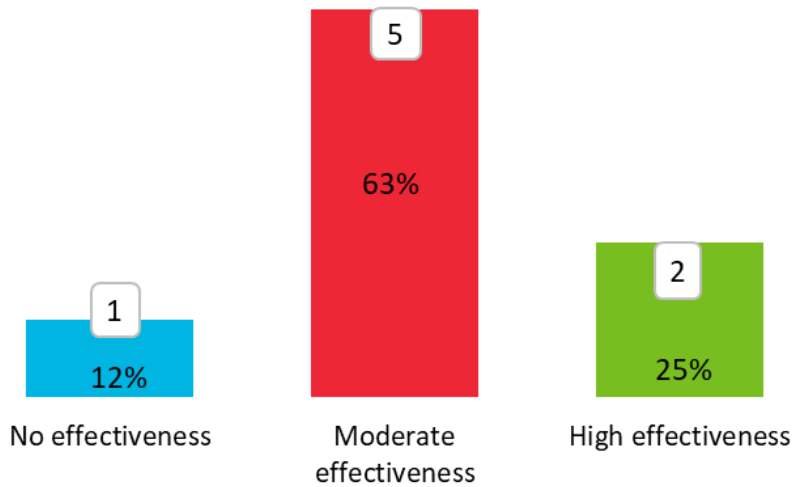- **28%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**

1	1	5
14%	14%	72%
No effectiveness	Low effectiveness	Moderate effectiveness

The policy **promotes student achievement and well-being.**

- **74%** of respondents indicated that the policy is **moderately effective**
- **26%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**

The policy **protects the right of every person to be free from harassment in the workplace, without discrimination.**

- **76%** of respondents indicated that the policy is **moderately to highly effective** (combined)
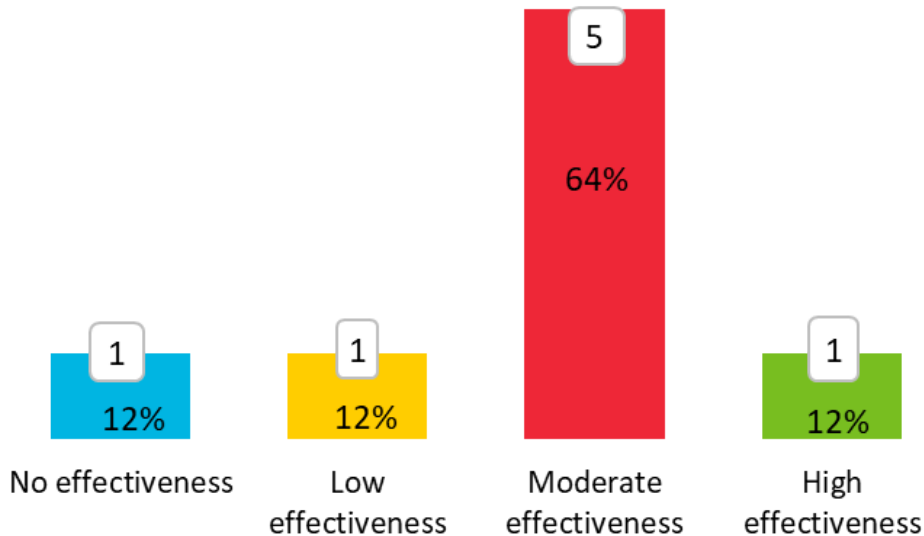- **24%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**

43

The policy **consolidates and affirms existing expectations regarding staff professionalism, including dress and decorum, at board and school settings and at school-based activities.**

- **43%** of respondents indicated that the policy is **moderately effective**
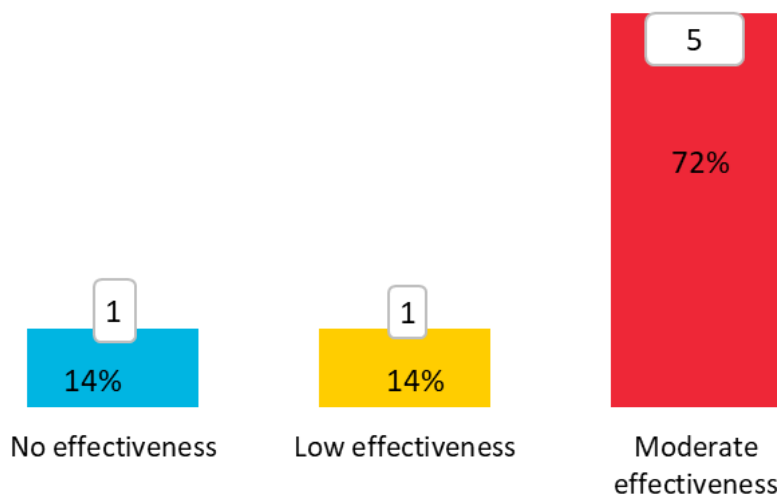- **57%** indicated **"No Effectiveness"** or **"Low effectiveness"**

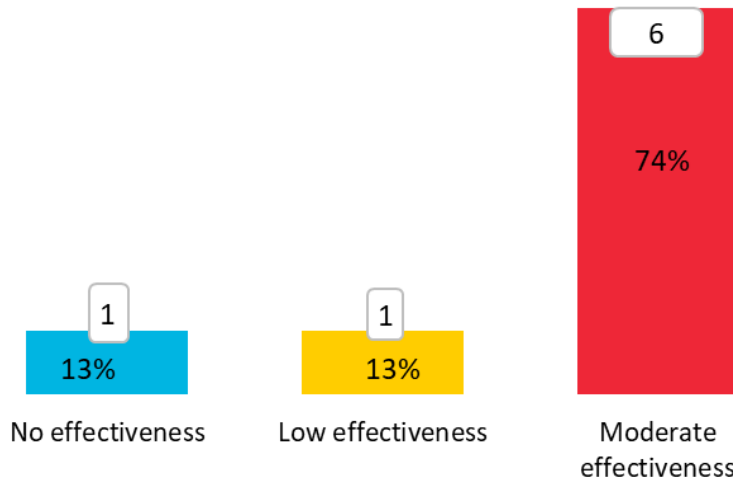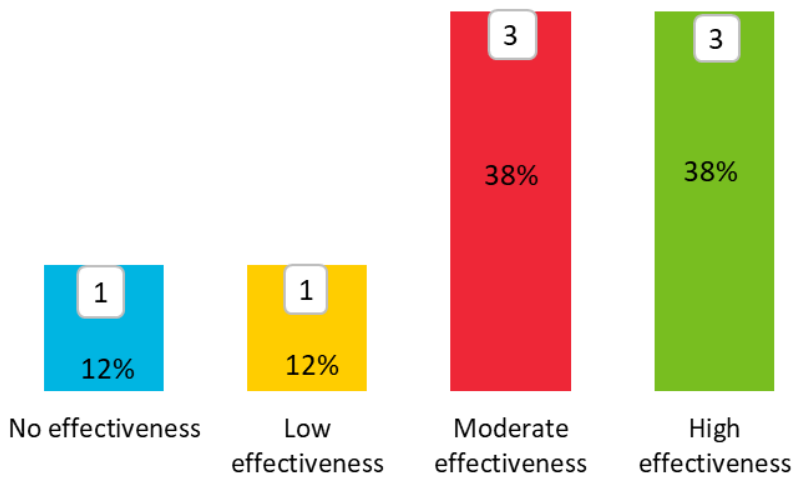| No effectiveness	Low effectiveness	Moderate effectiveness
1 / 14%	3 / 43%	3 / 43%
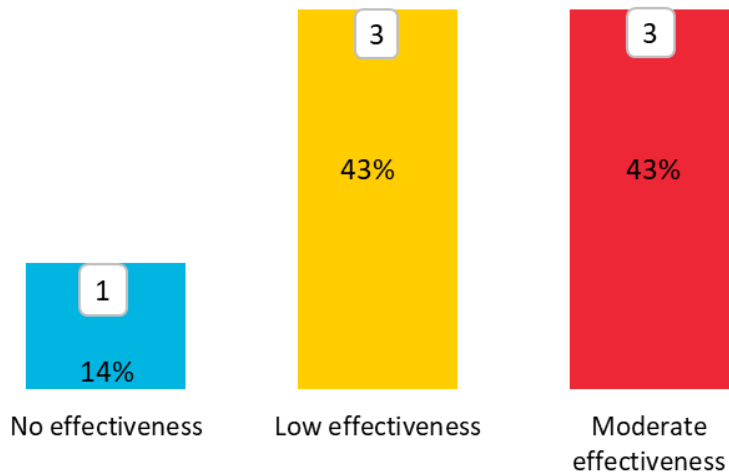
Overall Impression

Members of school councils and advisory groups were asked to indicate their overall impression of the policy.

- **57%** of respondents indicated a **"Positive"** impression,
- **29%** indicated a **"Negative"** impression, and
- **14%** indicated being **"Unsure".**
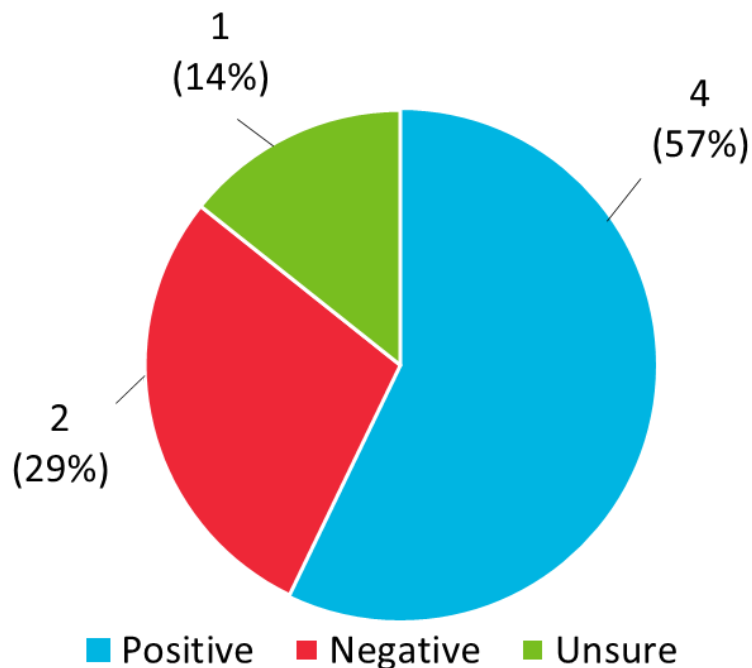
Commentary regarding respondents' overall impression of the policy

Respondents were asked to provide a rationale for their overall impression of the policy. The following themes emerged from the comments provided.

Theme #1 Concerns regarding the policy content and format

- The policy content is vague and open to interpretation particularly with regard to expectations related to dress codes and providing learning environments that are free of distractions.
- The policy will not contribute to the development of shared understanding among stakeholders on what constitutes professionalism and appropriate dress and decorum.

- The document does not follow the expected form and definition of what constitutes a policy.
- The policy fails to achieve its intended purpose of "…consolidate and affirm existing expectations regarding staff professionalism", rather it simply restates specific positions of legislative and professional standard frameworks.
- The content lacks specificity with regard to processes for implementing expectations for staff professionalism, dress and decorum.

Theme #2 Students and staff Human Rights

- Respondents are supportive of striking a balance between staff and students' rights which honours one's right to privacy and the right for students to study in a positive learning environment that is free of distractions.
- The policy clearly articulates that all students should be treated equally.
- The document clearly articulates protection of rights under the Human Rights Code.
- Enhance emphasis on Human Rights by adding specific mention of United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and additional board policies pertaining to Human Rights (e.g., the Indigenous Education Policy).
- Clarify how educators' dress and decorum can violate students' Human Rights (e.g., using regalia by educators when one is not an Indigenous chief).

Appendix A: Draft Professionalism Policy

Halton District School Board

Professionalism Policy

Board Policy

Adopted:　　　**DRAFT**

Revised:

Review Date:

Objectives

The *Education Act* requires the HDSB Board of Trustees to maintain policies that promote student achievement and well-being, promote a positive school climate, ensure the delivery of effective and appropriate education programs to students, and encourage students to achieve their educational goals.

The Board of Trustees recognizes that it must comply with this statutory mandate in a manner that reflects the primacy of the Human Rights Code, which provides that every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to the provision of educational services, without discrimination on a ground protected under the Code. Every person also has the right to equal treatment with respect to employment, and the right to be free from harassment in the workplace, without discrimination on Code protected grounds.

The purpose of this Policy is to consolidate and affirm existing expectations regarding staff professionalism, including dress and decorum, at board and school settings and at school-based activities, focusing on the importance of demonstrating, through personal presentation, respect for public education and each student's right to learn in a safe, inclusive and accepting environment.

Guiding Principles

The Supreme Court of Canada has stated that teachers occupy a unique position of trust, confidence and responsibility in society, and exert considerable influence over their students as a result of their positions. The Court has recognized that the conduct of a teacher bears directly upon the community's perception of the ability of a teacher to fulfil a position of trust and influence, and upon the community's confidence in the public school system as a whole.

The Ontario College of Teachers "Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession" provides that members of the teaching profession "treat students equitably and with respect, and are sensitive to factors that influence individual learning."

O. Reg. 437/97 made under the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* 1996 defines teacher "professional misconduct" as including "an act or omission that, having regard to all the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional" or "conduct unbecoming a member."

The HDSB Code of Conduct states that it is the responsibility of staff to provide students with a "safe, caring, equitable and inclusive learning environment free from distractions" and to "teach and model positive behaviour and good citizenship."
The HDSB "Respectful Workplace Free of Discrimination and Harassment" Administrative Procedure states that all employees are expected to be a positive role model.

Legal References

Human Rights Code RSO 1990 c H.19, s. 2(1), 5(1) and 5(2)
Education Act RSO 1990 c E.2, s.169.1(1), 264(1)
Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 SO 1996, c 12
O.Reg. 437/97 "Professional Misconduct"
Supreme Court of Canada: Ross v. New Brunswick School District No. 15, [1996] 1 S.C.R. 825, at para 43

Ontario College of Teachers References

Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

Board References

HDSB Code of Conduct

"Respectful Workplace Free of Discrimination and Harassment" Administrative
Procedure

Appendix B: Professionalism Policy Survey

Background:
On January 3, 2023, the Board of Trustees passed a motion directing the Director of the Halton District School Board (HDSB) to develop a Professionalism Policy. The purpose of the policy is to consolidate and affirm existing expectations regarding staff professionalism, including dress and decorum, at board and school settings and at school-based activities.

 As an important stakeholder, you are invited to provide feedback on the Draft Professionalism Policy. We value your input and thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this survey.

 Purpose of consultation:
 The purpose of the consultation is to gather feedback on the **policy document** only. Feedback containing personal information of staff or students, and/or pertaining to matters beyond the content of the draft policy document, will not be considered. The feedback will be summarized and provided to the Board of Trustees for consideration.

"Administrative Procedures" are separate documents that explain how policy is operationalized or implemented within the HDSB. Feedback pertaining to the implementation of the policy (Administrative Procedures) will not be considered for this consultation.

Anonymity and confidentiality:
 To ensure that feedback is received only from Halton stakeholders, including HDSB students, the survey is by invitation **only**, and therefore **not anonymous**. Responses are linked to respondents' email address and IP address. Please know however that responses are confidential. Only staff within the research department will have access to individual responses. Responses will be summarized in group format, so that no individual respondent can be identified. The only **limitation to confidentiality** pertains to threats of harm to self or others under which circumstance, the individual response might be shared with the respective authorities.

Questions:
 If you have questions pertaining to this survey please contact Dr. Rossana Bisceglia PhD,

Manager of Research and Accountability at hdsbvoice@hdsb.ca

Please complete this survey by **March 12th, 2023.**

Consent to participate:

To proceed with the survey, please acknowledge the following statements.

Description	I acknowledge that:
(a) This survey is by **invitation only**, for Halton District School Board stakeholders such as parents/guardians, students, school council (school advisory councils), Board advisory committee members, and staff, therefore the survey is **not anonymous**	o
(b) The **responses are confidential** with the sole exception to **limits to confidentiality** as described in the previous page	o

Please **select** the group to which you belong. If you belong to more than one group, please indicate the perspective from which you wish your response to be considered.

o   Parent/Guardian
o   Student
o   Staff Member
o   School Council
o   Advisory Group

The policy contains two sections: an **Objectives** section and a **Guiding Principles** section. Next you will provide feedback on the **Objectives** section of the policy.

The **Objectives** of the policy are as follows:

The Education Act requires the HDSB Board of Trustees to maintain policies that promote student achievement and well-being, promote a positive school climate, ensure the delivery of effective and appropriate education programs to students, and encourage students to achieve their educational goals.

The Board of Trustees recognizes that it must comply with this statutory mandate in a manner that reflects the primacy of the Human Rights Code, which provides that every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to the provision of educational services, without discrimination on a ground protected under the Code. Every person also has the right to equal treatment with respect to employment, and the right to be free from harassment in the workplace, without discrimination on Code protected grounds.

The purpose of this Policy is to consolidate and affirm existing expectations regarding staff professionalism, including dress and decorum, at board and school settings and at school-based activities, focusing on the importance of demonstrating, through personal presentation, respect for public education and each student's right to learn in a safe, inclusive and accepting environment.

Considering the **Objectives** of the policy, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

The **Objectives**:	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
are clear and understandable	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
are fair and reasonable (i.e., not overbearing)	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
are sufficiently brief and concise	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
provide clear direction on staff professionalism	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Please share additional feedback you would like to provide about the **Objectives** of the policy.

The next section of the survey will ask you to consider the **Guiding Principles** of the policy. The **Guiding Principles** of the policy are as follows:

Guiding Principles

The Supreme Court of Canada has stated that teachers occupy a unique position of trust, confidence and responsibility in society, and exert considerable influence over their students as a result of their positions. The Court has recognized that the conduct of a teacher bears directly upon the community's perception of the ability of a teacher to fulfill a position of trust and influence, and upon the community's confidence in the public school system as a whole.

The Ontario College of Teachers "Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession" provides that members of the teaching profession "treat students equitably and with respect, and are sensitive to factors that influence individual learning."

O. Reg. 437/97 made under the Ontario College of Teachers Act 1996 defines teacher "professional misconduct" as including "an act or omission that, having regard to all the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional" or "conduct unbecoming a member."

The HDSB Code of Conduct states that it is the responsibility of staff to provide students with a "safe, caring, equitable and inclusive learning environment free from distractions" and to "teach and model positive behaviour and good citizenship."

The HDSB "Respectful Workplace Free of Discrimination and Harassment" Administrative Procedure states that all employees are expected to be a positive role model.

Considering the **Guiding Principles** section of the policy, please rate your level of agreement to each of the following statements.

Guiding Principles	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
The principles are clear and understandable	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
The principles are sufficiently brief and concise	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
The principles are thorough and complete	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
The principles do a good job of communicating expectations	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
The principles outline standards for professionalism set by the respective governing bodies (e.g., Education Act, Human Rights Code, etc.)	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Please share additional feedback you would like to provide about the **Guiding Principles** of the policy.

You have now reviewed both components of the Draft Professionalism Policy. Overall, considering the policy as a whole, please rate how **effective do** you feel the policy will be in achieving the following objectives:

Policy Objectives	High effectiveness	Moderate effectiveness	Low effectiveness	No effectiveness	Unsure
The policy consolidates and affirms existing expectations regarding staff professionalism, including dress and decorum, at board and school settings and at school-based activities.	o	o	o	o	o
It ensures every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to employment, without discrimination.	o	o	o	o	o
It protects the right of every person to be free from harassment in the workplace, without discrimination	o	o	o	o	o
It demonstrates respect for public education and each student's right to learn in a safe, inclusive and accepting environment.	o	o	o	o	o

Policy Objectives	High effectiveness	Moderate effectiveness	Low effectiveness	No effectiveness	Unsure
It acknowledges the unique impact of educators on the lives of students.	o	o	o	o	o
It furthers the Mission of the Halton District School Board, which is "Together, we inspire every student to learn, grow and succeed".	o	o	o	o	o
It promotes student achievement and well-being.	o	o	o	o	o
It promotes a positive school climate.	o	o	o	o	o
It ensures the delivery of effective and appropriate education programs to students.	o	o	o	o	o
It encourages students to achieve their educational goals.	o	o	o	o	o

You are nearing the end of the survey. You have provided feedback on the objectives and guiding principles sections of the policy, and the policy as a whole. Next you will provide feedback on your **overall impression** of the policy.

Considering the policy as a whole, please share your **overall impression** of the policy.

Overall, my **impression** of the policy is:

o   Very negative
o   Somewhat negative
o   Somewhat positive
o   Very positive
o   Unsure

You indicated your overall impression of the policy is **[choice automatically populated based on previous question].**

Please share the reasons for why you feel this way. Please be as detailed as possible, so that we can fully understand your views.

You have reached the end of the survey. To submit your **FINAL** responses, please click on the **Submit** button.

Appendix C: Frequently Asked Questions

Statistical Considerations

1. **Can the results be interpreted within a context of statistical significance and/or margin of error (confidence intervals)?**
   No, statistical significance and confidence intervals apply to studies where a subset of participants are randomly selected to participate in a study. This is referred to as probability sampling. As it is usually impractical to include an entire population of individuals of interest in a study, a smaller sample is included instead of the entire population. Statistical significance can then be used to assess whether the findings from the smaller sample are reflective of the entire population. Inferences from the sample to the entire population can be made as great care is taken during the sample selection process to ensure the sample is representative of the entire population.

   Statistical significance and confidence intervals do not apply in research where the entire population is invited to participate and only those who are interested opt-in or self-select to participate in the research; this is referred to as a non-probability sampling whereby participants are not randomly selected from the entire population of stakeholders. In the Professionalism Policy consultation, all stakeholders were invited to participate and only those who self-selected or opted-in to provide feedback make-up the sample.

   A popular example of when a self-select method is used, includes the elections. While Elections Canada invites the entire population of eligible voters, only individuals who choose to cast a vote are included in the final sample of voters.

2. **When do statistical significance and confidence intervals apply?**
   Statistical significance and confidence intervals apply when the participants of the research are made up of a random sample of the population. For example, of 20,000 secondary students, a random sample of the students would be invited to participate in the research. Great care is taken to ensure that the subsample of the students are representative of the entire population. Random sampling and representation allow for inferences to be made from the subsample to the entire population.

   An example of studies that use random sampling techniques include election polls which attempt to predict the outcomes of elections. Polls invite a subset of the population to

answer questions on their voting behaviour (e.g., who they will vote for). Great care is taken in selecting the sample to ensure that the individuals are representative of the entire population of voters. If the sample is truly representative and randomly selected, the researcher is able to report a margin of error or confidence interval of their prediction on the results of the election.

3. **What inferences can be drawn from the Policy Consultation findings?**

   When participants opt-in or self-select in research, participants are not randomly selected from the entire population and therefore are usually not representative of the entire population[6]. Without adequate representation, inferences cannot be drawn from the sample of participants to the entire population. Rather, the findings are accepted as representing the views of those who participated in the study.

   Returning to the elections example, election results are always based on a self-select sample of the population, as voting is voluntary. The votes of those who cast a ballot may not represent the views of the entire population. However, as the purpose of the election is not to make inferences from the sample to the entire population, but rather to choose a candidate based on the casted ballots, the results are accepted "at face-value".

   Similarly to the methodology used in elections, all HDSB stakeholders were invited to participate in the Professionalism Policy consultation. The findings represent the opinions of those who opted to participate in the voluntary consultation. The purpose is to gather feedback, and not to make inferences or comparisons between stakeholders who participate in the consultation relative to the entire population of HDSB stakeholders. Hence, the findings should be accepted at face value and as reflecting the perspectives of the participants who opted to participate in the consultation.

4. **What statistics can be reported with self-select samples?**

   The purpose is not to make inferences or comparisons between the entire population relative to those who cast a vote. For these reasons, statistical significance and confidence intervals are not calculated on the election results.

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[6]Valliant, R., & Dever, J. A. (2011). Estimating propensity adjustments for volunteer web surveys. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 40(1), 105–137. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124110392533

5. **How can it be certain that the results are valid?**

   Where consultation relies solely on the self-selection of participants who volunteer to participate, researchers have very little control on who decides to participate and the extent of their involvement (e.g., whether they answer all questions or only a few).

   Proactive strategies are implemented to ensure that the consultation process and findings are protected from factors that might compromise the legitimacy of the results and process.

   Researchers take great care in ensuring that the consultation process is fair and inclusive of all stakeholders. All stakeholders should have equal opportunity to participate while experiencing no barriers to participation, and should be aware that the consultation is taking place.

   Below is a summary of the various strategies that were implemented to ensure the consultation was conducted in a genuine and fair manner.
   - Communication strategies
     - The opportunity to consult was emailed to all parents/guardians, staff members and school councils and respective advisory groups .
   - Survey administration strategies
     - To protect the consultation from respondents who are not direct HDSB stakeholders (students, parents/guardians, staff and advisory members), the survey was by invitation only.
     - The survey was not accessible through public channels, rather only those with a personalized link could complete the survey.
     - The survey platform generated a unique url for each individual based on their email address.
     - Each url was set up to receive one response.
     - IP addresses were gathered and tracked to ensure that where there were multiple responses from a single IP address, those responses were linked to separate email addresses (e.g., a student and respective parent in the same home).

- Support strategies
  - To ensure that all stakeholders could ask clarification questions or raise any concerns, a unique email address (hdsbvoice@hdsb.ca) was set up strictly for the consultation.
  - The survey was built within an AODA compliant software that also supports a number of read-to-text tools.
  - Stakeholders who had not received an invitation or preferred an alternate address could make those needs known by emailing hdsbvoice@hdsb.ca.
  - The survey was translated in 6 top languages and stakeholders in need of translation services could request translation through hdsbvoice@hdsb.ca.
  - All stakeholders were provided with the option of completing the survey, skipping questions they preferred not to answer, to provide open commentary through the survey and/or provide open feedback directly to hdsbvoice@hdsb.ca.

Survey Design & Questions

1. **What if a stakeholder does not agree with the survey questions, and wishes to provide feedback in an alternate manner?**

   The survey questions serve as a guide to provide feedback, however the survey was voluntary and respondents could skip any question they preferred not to answer. The survey also provided open text boxes for open feedback. Respondents could also share commentary by emailing hdsbvoice@hdsb.ca.

2. **What was the reasoning behind the formatting of the Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree ordinal scale?**

   For approximately one day, the response options for the Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree were ordered in an unusual manner (Agree following Somewhat Agree). This was not intentional and was quickly resolved. There are no concerns that this may somehow skew the results. As the data are summarized holistically (combined agree, combined disagree, unsure) instead of at the ordinal level (strongly, somewhat, etc), the error did not introduce data quality concerns.

3. **What if stakeholders wanted to submit additional feedback or feedback in lieu of the survey?**

   Feedback could be provided through the survey and/or by emailing hdsbvoice@hdsb.ca.

Consultation Process

1. **Who was included in the consultation?**

   HDSB students, parents/guardians, and staff members were invited to complete the feedback survey. A personalized survey link was sent directly to their email address. School council chairs/co-chairs and advisory groups (HREAC and IEAC) were asked to gather a collective response from their respective council members, and either complete a survey and/or submit a commentary to hdsbvoice@hdsb.ca.

2. **Why didn't some stakeholders receive their survey link?**

   Depending on the security and filtering settings of the receiving email address, some invitations were filtered to the junk/spam folder. Stakeholders were asked to look out for an email from the following address: noreply@qemailserver.com, and if none was found to send an email to hdsbvoice@hdsb.ca to request an additional invitation.

3. **Were translations provided?**

   The survey and policy were translated in 6 languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, Punjabi, Spanish, and Urdu). Stakeholders could also request additional languages and support through hdsbvoice@hdsb.ca.

4. **Why was the policy document not on the public website and where could stakeholders find it?**

   As the policy is still in draft, it does not reside on the public website. The policy was sent out to all stakeholders through a School Messenger email or board email (for staff), through the following direct link: HDSB Professionalism Policy - Board Policy Draft - and was hyperlinked in the survey. The policy was also available on the Board Agenda for March 1, 2023 board meeting, which can be found Board Agenda and Minutes.

5. **Were the survey and policy documents AODA compliant (i.e. accessible)?**
   The survey was administered through the Qualtrics software which is fully AODA compatible, offering text to read options. The draft policy was updated to ensure it was accessible throughout the consultation.