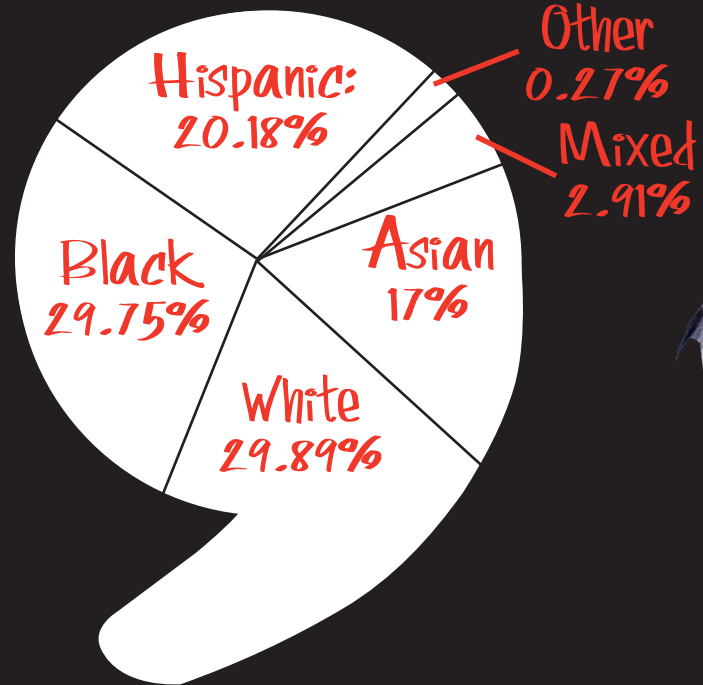


# Cultural Differences

## The Break Down



**Majority Rules?** There was no majority at Dawson. People from all walks of life, religions, ethnicities, colors and races found home at the school. And though nobody was the same, they found differences that united them as a population and as Eagles. "I feel like I am more accepting because I grew up here and there's a lot of different cultures," **Dinet Yusuf** said. "We all bring something different to the table. We are all unique in our own ways but when we come together, it's a very special thing."



Dinet Yusuf

Zara Ukani

Daniel Gaeta

Marissa Wakhu

Zachary Rouah

"My parents are from Mexico so I'm a first generation American. It's really hard. Education wise, my parents don't have college degrees or anything so applying to colleges can be really hard because they don't really know anything about it."

-Daniel Gaeta

"My parents grew up in Kenya and are from there originally so I am a first generation American. There are times still where I do feel a little different from everyone else. I speak swahili, but a lot of times, it's more about the food I eat. I bring more traditional Kenyan food for lunch a lot and a lot of times people are like 'ewww what is that?'. It's normal to me but not for a lot of other people."

-Marissa Wakhu

"I have spirituality but I'm not not Christian or anything. I try not to bring up the topic of religion in conversations because it divides people. It divides the world. Me and my friends just have an unspoken rule not to bring it up."

-Antonio Lasanta

"I find that my parents have different values than a lot of the parents I see here. My parents have always taught me to be accepting of others but at the same time, there are still things they are not accepting of and I think that I've become accepting to a lot of those things just because of my exposure to a lot of different types of people and the internet."

-Zara Ukani

# NONE AND THE SAME

Students Find Acceptance in Cultural Diversity

Everyday when **Dinet Yusuf**, an Ethiopian girl and Muslim, walks from her second period to her third, she passes people of different races, religions, and cultures. She could pass **Daniel Gaeta**, a Mexican Catholic and first generation American or wave at friend **Marissa Wakhu**, another first generation American from Kenya. Dinet could bump into **John Ketterer**, a white student and dedicated Christian, or help **Zara Ukani**, a half Indian and half Hispanic girl, pick up her books. She could smile at **Antonio Lasanta**, who is half African American and half Puerto Rican, or see **Zachary Rouah**, a Jewish American, heading to geometry class. Walking through the hallways was many things, but it wasn't boring.

"Here at Dawson, there are people of every different color and race," **John** said. "There's a lot of Asian and white people, but also some African Americans and we are just kind of a melting pot here at Dawson."

Though it's easy to see the racial blend by just looking around, the large variety of cultures and

religions isn't as easy to see.

"A lot of people assume I'm Indian and when I tell them I'm not, that I'm Ethiopian, they're always so shocked and they kind of light up and ask me to tell them about my culture," **Dinet** said. "I'm also Muslim and I find it interesting that I have a different religion from some of my friends. We all learn new things. I learn about their religions and they learn about mine."

**Dinet** wasn't the only one who enjoyed the array of cultures that collided at school.

"Whatever group I hang out with, nobody really pays attention to race," **Zara** said. "It doesn't really factor in here."

For students with multiple ethnic backgrounds, the unique cultural balance meant they found a home amongst everyone, instead of feeling isolated because of their mixed race.

"I don't feel left out because I'm mixed," **Antonio** said. "I know a lot of people in my family, all of my brothers, have felt it. But specifically her, I don't feel that much. I don't

identify with a specific group of people. I feel that is a bit stereotypical so I try to identify with everyone I can. I can identify with black people in some parts of my personality but also white people and Latinos and everyone really."

The different cultures and races were also accompanied by a diverse amount of religions.

"I'm Catholic," **John** said. "I'm very involved in a lot of youth groups and the pastor council at my church. My family is really dedicated to the church. We go to Sacred Heart of Jesus in Manvel. I feel very proud of my religion everyday."

Though many followed a variety of Christian faiths, other religions could be found easily.

"I'm Jewish," **Zachary** said. "I probably spend ten hours a week at my synagogue in Bellaire. They don't have one in Pearland and it's a long drive but it's my religion. And I feel proud of my culture all the time because we still have a huge influence despite our small population."

While some chose organized religions, others

decided to stray from that path to participate in lesser known faiths.

"I have spirituality but I'm not not Christian or anything," **Antonio** said. "I practice an old religion from Africa. It's not all that specific. We don't follow a specific text or anything. I believe in a higher being. And I pray for good health and things like that."

Growing up in a place with many cultures and ethnicities meant learning respect and tolerance in addition to the school curriculum.

"You get to learn about so many cultures here and you get exposed to so many cultures and races and religions," **Marissa** said. "I think it kind of reduces ignorance because you aren't only exposed to one culture all the time. It makes you more accepting of other people."

"I can dream." -Jeffrey Wu

