ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT, AND WELL-BEING OF INTERNATIONAL/VISA STUDENTS IN THE TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD'S SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years the number of international/visa students has increased steadily in the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) schools, especially in secondary schools. By examining the academic achievement, school engagement, and well-being of the 3,990 international/visa students in the TDSB's secondary schools during the period of eight school years from 2005-06 to 2012-13, the study found mixed results for these students who had almost half arriving as students in Grades 11-12, with the majority being from East Asian countries (51% from China, 25% from South Korea, and 2-5% from Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan).

Although falling behind in credit accumulation in Grades 9-11 and the first year in Grade 12, the majority of these students were able to catch up in Year 5 or beyond, indicating they needed more time to finish their secondary school than regular TDSB students. The vast majority took the Grade 9 Mathematics course at the academic level, and met the standard on the provincial assessments. However, only 60% of the participating international/visa students were successful on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, which is much lower than the TDSB or Ontario results.

Half of the international/visa students who had been in secondary schools for five or more school years graduated with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), 24% transferred out of TDSB secondary schools, and 25% dropped out (or with unknown destinations) without earning an OSSD. The majority (66%) of the graduates went to Ontario universities, and 8% went to Ontario colleges, with the University of Toronto and Seneca College being the top choice respectively.

When compared with all TDSB secondary school students, international/visa students had better school engagement: they attended school much more, and had a very low suspension rate over the eight school years. Over three quarters had "Good" or "Excellent" learning skills. They seemed to enjoy school more, and regarded their schools as a friendly and welcoming place. The vast majority felt safe in their schools. They had better relationship with school staff: when facing problems, about half felt comfortable to discuss their issues with their teachers, guidance counselors, or school administrators. About two thirds felt supported by their teachers, and were satisfied with the way their teachers taught them. They also felt they were encouraged by their teachers. However, fewer international/visa students felt they belonged in their schools, or got along well with other students. Also, fewer international/visa students felt accepted by other students or school adults. Their class participation was much lower. In addition, fewer felt their teachers expecting them to succeed in school, or school staff respecting their background.

In general, international/visa students had slightly better mental health and wellness than other students. In the 2011-12 school year, about two thirds felt good about themselves and were hopeful for the future. Over half felt reasonably happy, and were able to enjoy their daily activities. They also dealt with their emotional challenges better, with only about one quarter feeling under a lot of stress, being nervous or anxious all the time or often. They had fewer

showing physical and emotional symptoms such as being tired for no reason, having difficulty concentrating or making decisions, losing sleep, or felt like crying. They were also less likely to worry about their future, school work, family matters, or relationship issues. However, 21% of them felt lonely all the time or often, which is 5% more than all secondary school students in the TDSB.

BACKGROUND

As the largest school board in Canada and one of the most "multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual school boards in the world", the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) serves more than 250,000 students in nearly 600 schools each year. Over a quarter of the students were born outside of Canada in more than 175 countries, over half speak a language other than English, and about three quarters belong to a visible minority group. This diversity in the TDSB has been embraced as a strength and it provides challenges as well as opportunities. The publicly funded school board is committed to the principles of equity to enable all students to learn and grow to their full potential, in environments that welcome differences and are free from discrimination.

Among the many initiatives the TDSB has undertaken in recent years to ensure the principles of equity for all students to learn, the unique TDSB Grade 7-12 Student Census, first introduced in Fall 2006 and conducted again in Fall 2011, has provided the Board with an unique opportunity to collect student demographic information such as race, family socio-economic status, sexual orientation (students in Grades 9-12 only), as well as their school experience.

In recent years the number of international/visa students has increased steadily in TDSB schools, especially in secondary schools. The TDSB's Continuing and International Education department, which oversees the Board's international education programs, requested a research study on the academic achievement, school engagement and well-being of the international/visa students, in order to provide research evidence for examining existing policies and procedures to ensure the learning needs of international/visa students are being met.

A research plan was developed in 2013 to examine the academic achievement and well-being of international/visa students who enrolled in TDSB secondary schools during the period of eight school years, from 2005-06 to 2012-13. In this study, international/visa students were defined as students who had been born outside Canada, were in Canada as international or visa students at the time of their study, and paid tuitions for their study in TDSB secondary schools.

These international/visa students were grouped into 13 student cohorts based on the time they had "started" Grade 9. For those who had previous secondary school experience from their native countries and arrived in Canada as students older than 14, their Grade 9 starting time was backtracked according to the Ontario secondary school system. For example, if a 17 year old student arrived at a TDSB secondary school as a Grade 11 student in the 2012-13 school year, this student would be classified into the 2010-11 Grade 9 student cohort (the student

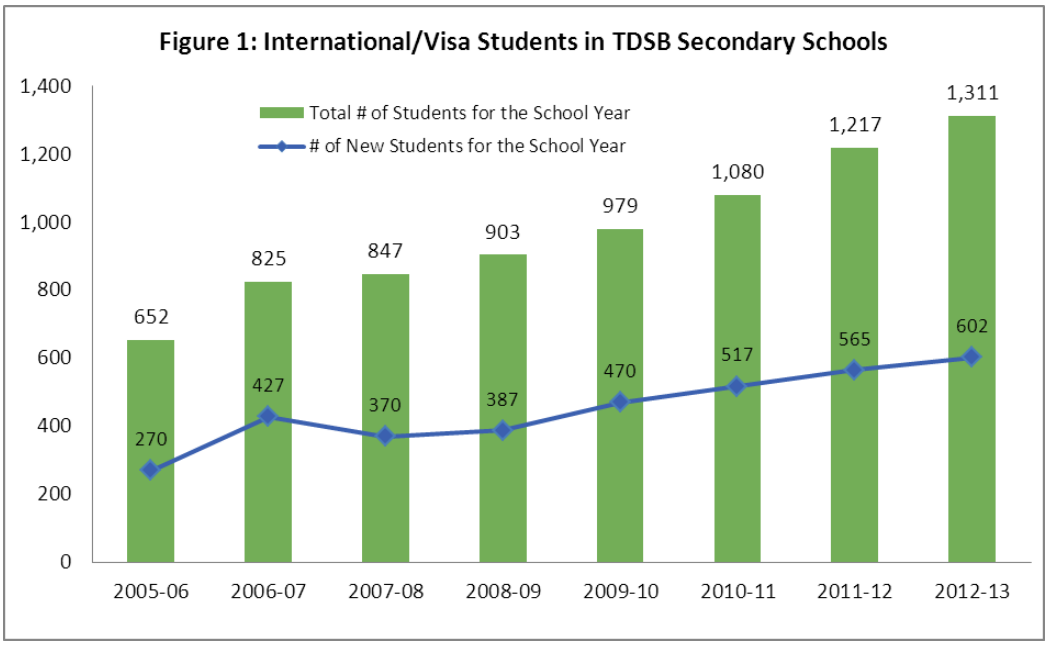
would have been in Grade 9 as a 14 year old in the 2010-11 school year). Students in each cohort were then tracked up to seven school years: four normal secondary school years from Grades 9 to 12, and three additional school years after Grade 12.

Table 1 shows the tracking process for each student cohort. It also shows the total number of international/visa students in the eight school years, for each school year, and for each cohort.

Table 1: International/Visa Students in TDSB Secondary Schools (2005-06 to 2012-13)

School Year	Student Cohort Tracking: Students Starting from Grade 9 Plus Students Joining the Cohort Later													# of New Students for the School Year	Total # of Students for the School Year
	Cohort 13 (2012-13 Gr. 9 Cohort)	Cohort 12 (2011-12 Gr. 9 Cohort)	Cohort 11 (2010-11 Gr. 9 Cohort)	Cohort 10 (2009-10 Gr. 9 Cohort)	Cohort 9 (2008-09 Gr. 9 Cohort)	Cohort 8 (2007-08 Gr. 9 Cohort)	Cohort 7 (2006-07 Gr. 9 Cohort)	Cohort 6 (2005-06 Gr. 9 Cohort)	Cohort 5 (2004-05 Gr. 9 Cohort)	Cohort 4 (2003-04 Gr. 9 Cohort)	Cohort 3 (2002-03 Gr. 9 Cohort)	Cohort 2 (2001-02 Gr. 9 Cohort)	Cohort 1 (2000-01 Gr. 9 Cohort)		
2005-06								Gr. 9 N=107	Gr. 10 N=158	Gr. 11 N=172	Gr. 12 N=151	Year 5 N=55	Year 6 N=9	270	652
2006-07							Gr. 9 N=120	Gr. 10 N=212	Gr. 11 N=222	Gr. 12 N=199	Year 5 N=62	Year 6 N=8	Year 7 N=2	427	825
2007-08						Gr. 9 N=91	Gr. 10 N=163	Gr. 11 N=275	Gr. 12 N=231	Year 5 N=75	Year 6 N=12	Year 7 -		370	847
2008-09					Gr. 9 N=77	Gr. 10 N=157	Gr. 11 N=244	Gr. 12 N=308	Year 5 N=109	Year 6 N=8	Year 7 -			387	903
2009-10				Gr. 9 N=84	Gr. 10 N=187	Gr. 11 N=276	Gr. 12 N=295	Year 5 N=120	Year 6 N=17	Year 7 -				470	979
2010-11			Gr. 9 N=82	Gr. 10 N=205	Gr. 11 N=331	Gr. 12 N=323	Year 5 N=128	Year 6 N=11	Year 7 -					517	1,080
2011-12		Gr. 9 N=78	Gr. 10 N=215	Gr. 11 N=362	Gr. 12 N=393	Year 5 N=139	Year 6 N=29	Year 7 N=1						565	1,217
2012-13	Gr. 9 N=112	Gr. 10 N=234	Gr. 11 N=354	Gr. 12 N=419	Year 5 N=170	Year 6 N=19	Year 7 N=3							602	1,311
# of Students in the Cohort	112	251	418	560	532	448	421	457	328	242	157	55	9	**3,608**	**7,814**
	Total N=3,990														

In total, there were 3,990 international/visa students in the 13 student cohorts during the eight school years who were included in this study. Among them, 3,608 enrolled in a TDSB secondary school during these eight school years, 382 students had enrolled at the TDSB prior to 2005-06 and continued their studies in the 2005-06 school year or beyond. Figure 1 shows the total number of international/visa students in TDSB secondary schools in the eight school years, and the number of new students for each school year.



It can be seen that the number of international/visa students has been steadily increasing over the eight school years. In 2012-13, the number of international/visa students in TDSB secondary schools reached 1,311, almost doubled from the count for the 2005-06 school year.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF INTERNATIONAL/VISA STUDENTS

Using student registration data gathered by the TDSB's School Information Systems, this section examines the demographics of the 3,990 international/visa students in TDSB secondary schools throughout the eight school years from 2005-06 to 2012-13.

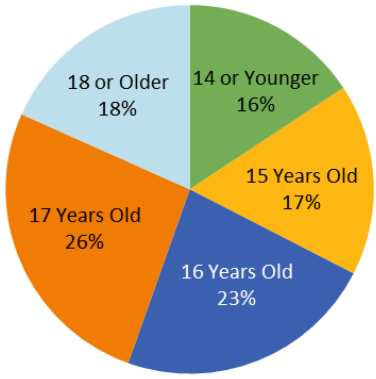
Gender

Among the 3,990 international/visa students, 52% were males and 48% were females.

Age at Arrival in Canada

Figure 2 shows the ages of these international/visa students when they first arrived in Canada. It should be noted that although most of them started their studies in TDSB secondary schools immediately upon their arrival, some students choose to go to private institutions first to learn English or other purposes before enrolling in a TDSB school.

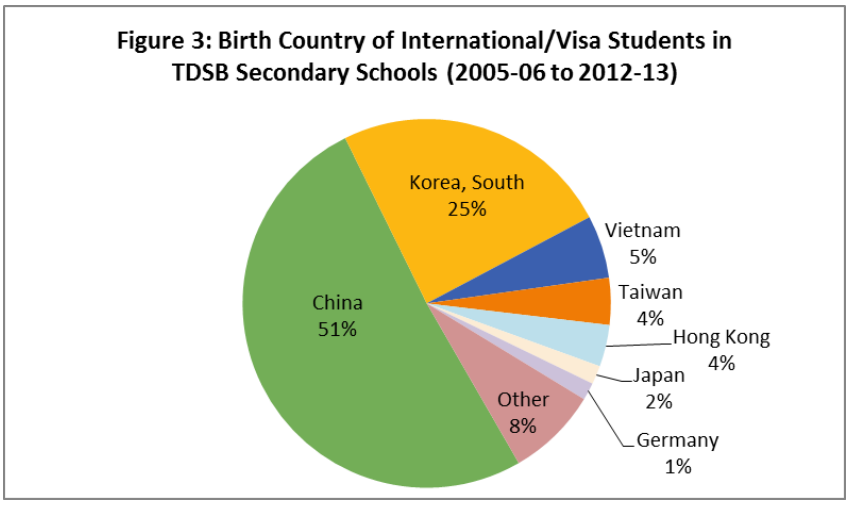
Figure 2: Age at Arrival in Canada of International/Visa Students in TDSB Secondary Schools (2005-06 to 2012-13)



One third (33%) of the students arrived in Canada at age 15 or younger: likely they started as students in Grades 9-10 in a TDSB secondary school. Almost half (49%) of these international/visa students arrived at the age of 16 (23%) or 17 (26%), which enabled them to enroll in a TDSB secondary school as a student in Grade 11 or 12.

Country of Birth

Figure 3 shows the birth countries of these 3,990 international/visa students in TDSB secondary schools from the 2005-06 to 2012-13 school years.



The vast majority of students were from East Asian countries, with over an half (51%) from China, 25% from South Korea, and 2-5% from Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

Special Education Needs

Only 5 of the 3,990 international/visa students had an Individual Education Plan (IEP), with only one student identified as having the exceptionality of Mild Intellectual Disability. This means the vast majority of international/visa students had no Special Education Needs (or if some of them indeed had, they had not been identified by school staff).

Status in the Last School Year with the Toronto District School Board

The vast majority (97%) of these international/visa students retained their international/visa status during the last school year with the TDSB. Only 3% had their status changed, mainly to permanent residents, with 10 students changing their status to refugees.

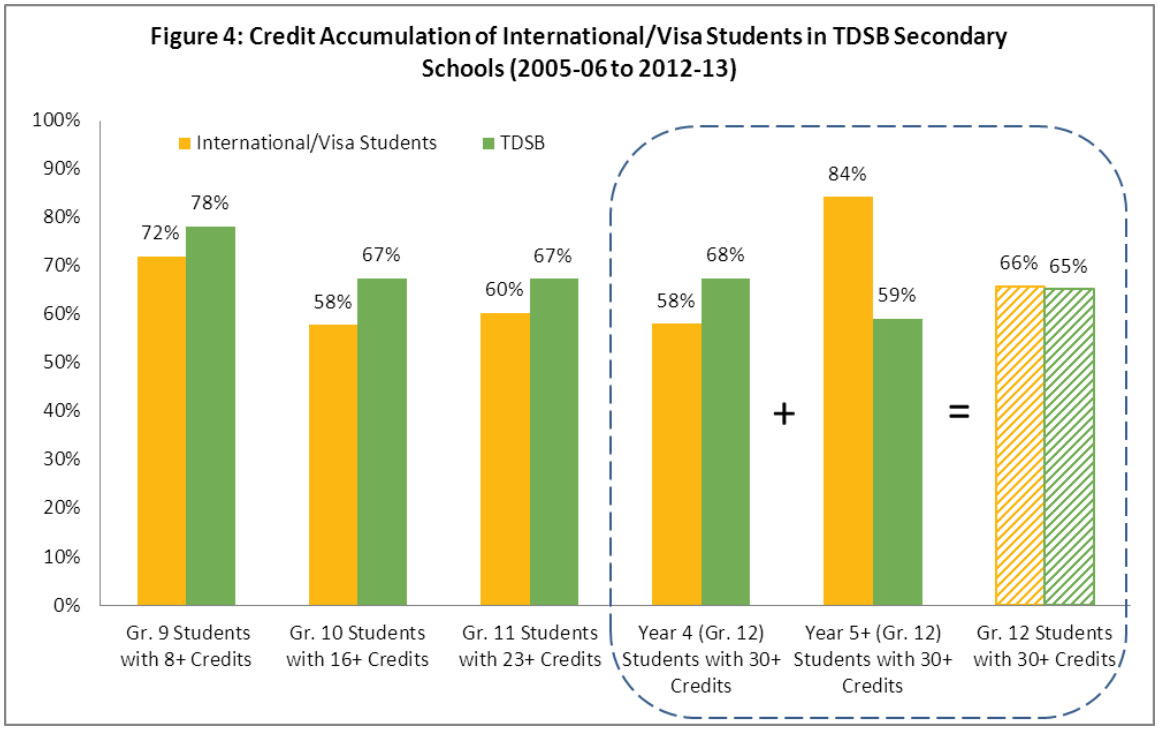
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL/VISA STUDENTS

This section examines these international/visa students' academic achievement on credit accumulation, provincial Grade 9 Mathematics assessment, Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, graduation, and post-secondary destinations. As the study covers eight school years, to eliminate variances among school years and for reporting purposes, the following analyses combined all eight school years' data on credit accumulation and provincial assessments according to student grades in these school years. The graduation and post-secondary destinations were analyzed by student cohorts.

Credit Accumulation

Credit accumulation has long been used as one of the best indicators for predicating student success in secondary schools. Consistent with other TDSB studies, this analysis uses 8, 16, 23, and 30 credits as expectations by the end of school year for students in Grades 9-12. A significant proportion of students, especially international/visa students, need more than four school years in secondary school to graduate, the students in Grade 12 were further divided into two groups, those in their fourth year in secondary school (i.e., first-time Grade 12 or Year 4 students), and those in their fifth year or beyond in secondary school (i.e., Year 5+ students).

Figure 4 shows the credit accumulation information for these international/visa students in the eight school years by their grades, comparing them with TDSB results in the same period.



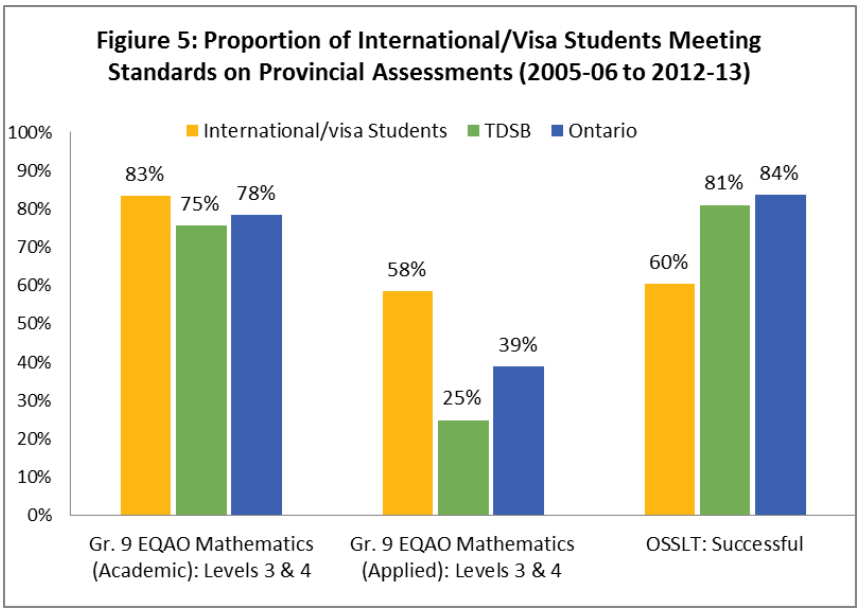
Achievement gaps existed between international/visa students and all TDSB secondary school students in Grades 9-11. For Grade 9, international/visa students had 72% earning 8 or more credits, which is 6% lower than the TDSB result (78%). In Grade 10, the gap in accumulating 16 or more credits increased to 9% (58% vs. 67%). For Grade 11, only 60% of international/visa students earned 23 or more credits, which is 7% lower than the TDSB result (67%).

As stated earlier, accumulated credits for the two subgroups of students in Grade 12 were examined by their years in secondary school. For the first-time students in Grade 12 (i.e., Year 4 in secondary school), 58% of international/visa students accumulated 30 or more credits, which is 10% lower than the TDSB result (68%). However, the majority (84%) of international/visa students in Year 5 or beyond earned 30 or more credits, which is much higher than the TDSB result in this category (59%). When accounting for all students in Grade 12 (Years 4-5 and beyond), about two thirds (66%) of the international/visa students met the expectation of 30 credits, which is actually 1% higher than the TDSB result (65%). This observation indicates that international/visa students require more time to finish their secondary school education than regular TDSB students.

Grade 9 Mathematics: Program of Study and Provincial Assessment Results

There are three levels of Program of Study in Grades 9-10 in Ontario secondary schools: Academic, Applied, and Locally Developed Compulsory Credit (LDCC). An examination of the Grade 9 Mathematics courses taken by international/visa students over the eight school years reveals that 90% took the Grade 9 Mathematics course at the Academic level and 10% at the Applied level. The proportion of international/visa students taking the Academic level of Grade 9 Mathematics course is much higher than the 69% for the TDSB and the 69% for the province based on information gathered by the provincial Grade 9 Mathematics assessment.

On the provincial Grade 9 Mathematics assessments over the eight school years, which were administered by the province's Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), 83% of international/visa students achieved at or above the provincial standard (Level 3) at the Academic level, which is 8% higher than the TDSB result and 5% higher than the result for Ontario. At the Applied level, 58% of international/visa students met the provincial standard, which again is much higher than the results for the TDSB (25%) and for Ontario (39%) (see Figure 5).



Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test

Passing the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), also administered by the EQAO, is a requirement for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma[1]. For those international/visa students who participated in the OSSLT over the eight school years, only 60% passed the test. This is much lower than the results for participating students in the TDSB (81%) or in Ontario (84%) (see Figure 5).

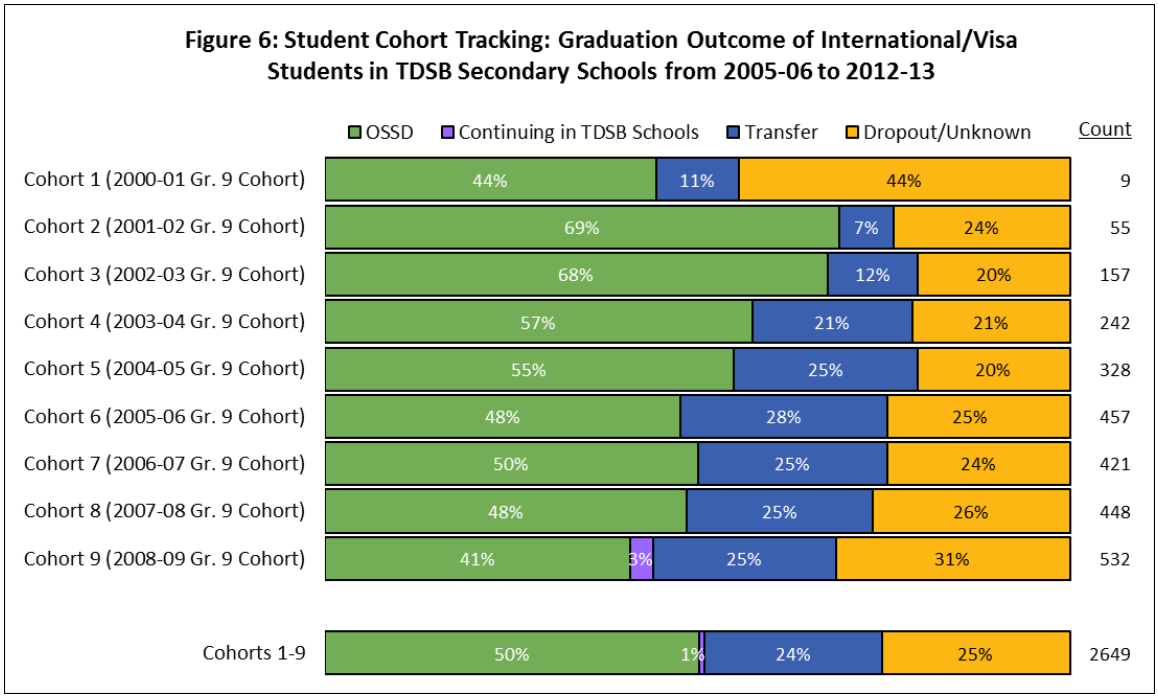
Cohort Graduation Rates

As described in Table 1, the 3,990 international/visa students included in this study were grouped into 13 student cohorts based on when they started Grade 9 or would have started if they were in Ontario secondary schools. The analysis of their credit accumulation in Grade 12 suggests that most of these students would need an extra year or more to earn enough credits in order to graduate, which also means when tracking these student cohorts, at least five years in secondary school would be appropriate for examining their graduation outcomes. Therefore, students in Cohorts 10-13 (students "starting" Grade 9 in the 2009-10 school year or later) have been excluded from this graduation analysis as they were still in Years 1-4 in secondary school in 2012-13, the latest school year for which the graduation data was available for this study.

There are four outcomes after tracking students for Years 5-7: graduate (i.e., earning an Ontario Secondary School Diploma), continuing in TDSB schools, transfer to other educational institutions, and dropout (or destination unknown). It should be noted that students in Cohorts 1-5 (students "starting" Grade 9 between 2000-01 and 2004-05) tracked here did not include all students in these cohorts: only students who remained in TDSB secondary schools between 2005-06 and 2012-13 were included in this study.

[1] As an alternative, students can choose to take the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) in Grades 11-12 if they fail the OSSLT (or upon recommendation from their schools).

Figure 6 shows the graduation outcomes for these student cohorts.



It can be seen that the graduation rates varied among the student cohorts: from 41% for the 2008-09 Grade 9 Cohort to 69% for the 2001-02 Grade 9 Cohort, resulting in an overall cohort graduation rate of 50% for the 2,649 international/visa students examined here.

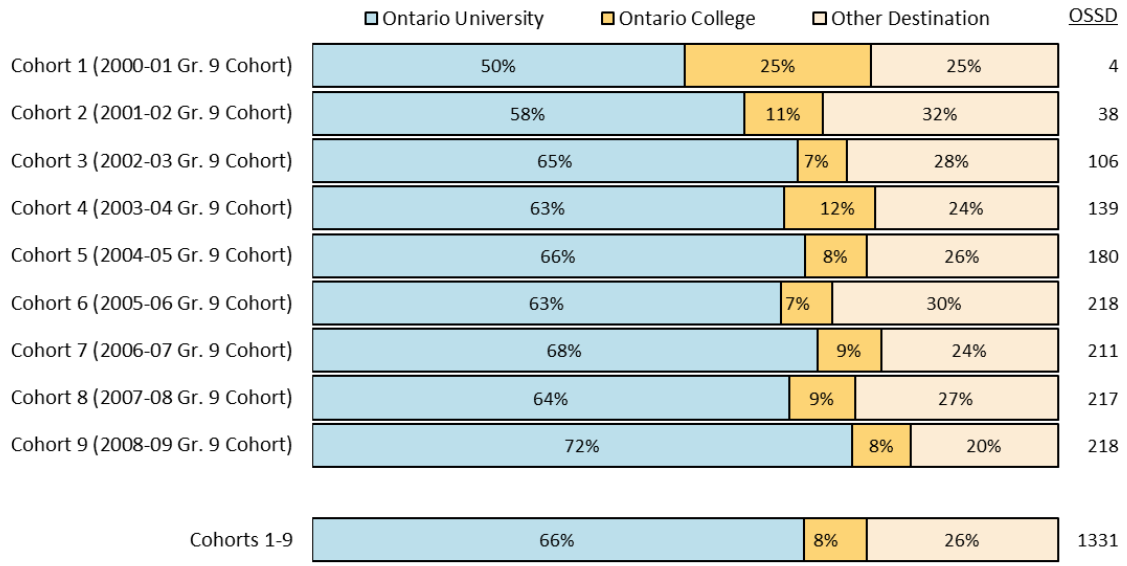
Except for the 1% of students who were continuing their study in TDSB secondary schools at the time of this study, approximately half of the international/visa students either transferred out of TDSB secondary schools (24%), dropped out or had unknown destinations (25%), all without earning an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. As the destinations for most of these students were unknown to the TDSB, the most logical guess would be either they enrolled in institutions other than the TDSB such as private schools, or returned to their home countries.

Post-secondary Destinations

Ontario university and college application data from 2005-06 to 2012-13 were used to further examine the destinations of the international/visa students who had graduated from TDSB secondary schools with an OSSD.

Figure 7 shows the post-secondary destinations of the 1,331 international/visa students in cohorts 1-9 who had graduated from TDSB secondary schools during the period between 2005-06 and 2012-13.

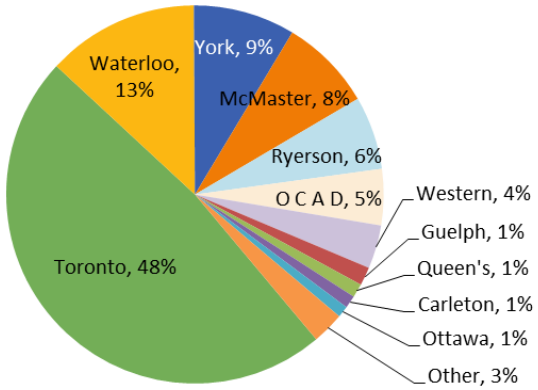
Figure 7: Student Cohort Tracking: Post-Secondary Destination of International/Visa Students Who Had Graduated from the TDSB between 2005-06 and 2011-12



In total, 74% of these graduates confirmed an offer from an Ontario post-secondary institution: 66% went to Ontario universities, and 8% went to Ontario colleges. The rest of graduates (26%) had other destinations; since the TDSB didn't have post-secondary data from other jurisdictions, most likely these graduates went to a post-secondary institution outside Ontario.

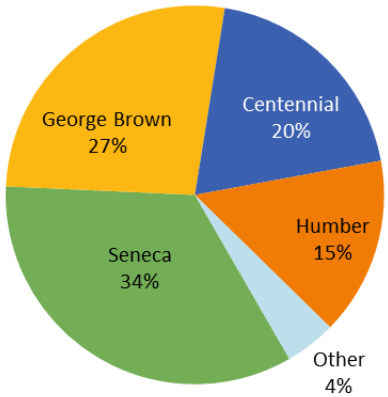
A further examination of the Ontario university and college confirmation data reveals that among the Ontario universities confirmed by international/visa students who graduated from TDSB secondary schools between 2005-06 and 2012-13, the University of Toronto was the top choice (48%), followed by the University of Waterloo (13%), and York University (9%) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: University Confirmation of International/Visa Students Who Had Graduated from TDSB Secondary Schools between 2005-06 and 2012-13



Among the Ontario colleges confirmed by international/visa students who graduated from TDSB secondary schools, the top choices were Seneca College (34%), George Brown College (27%), Centennial College (20%), and Humber College (15%) (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: College Confirmation of International/Visa Students Who Had Graduated from TDSB Secondary Schools between 2005-06 and 2012-13



Business related studies seemed to be the top choice by international/visa students who confirmed their post-secondary studies in Ontario. Among students who confirmed an offer of acceptance to an Ontario university, 33% chose Commerce, Management, and Business Administration as their majors of study (see Figure 10). For those who confirmed an offer of acceptance to an Ontario college, 56% chose Business as their program of study (see Figure 11).

Figure 10: University Program of International/Visa Students Who Had Graduated from TDSB Secondary Schools between 2005-06 and 2012-13

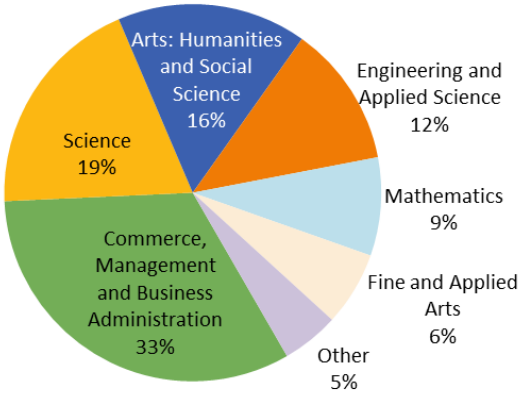
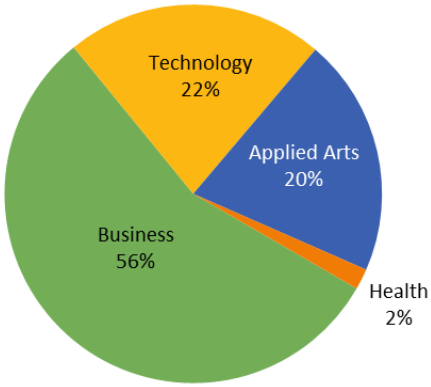


Figure 11: College Programs of International/Visa Students Who Had Graduated from TDSB Secondary Schools between 2005-06 and 2012-13



SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL/VISA STUDENTS

In this section, international/visa students' school absenteeism, suspensions, and learning skills on their report cards in the eight school years were examined as indicators for measuring their school engagement. Similar to the analysis of their academic achievement, for each of these school engagement indicators, results in the eight school years were combined and compared with results for all students in Grades 9-12 in the TDSB for the same period.

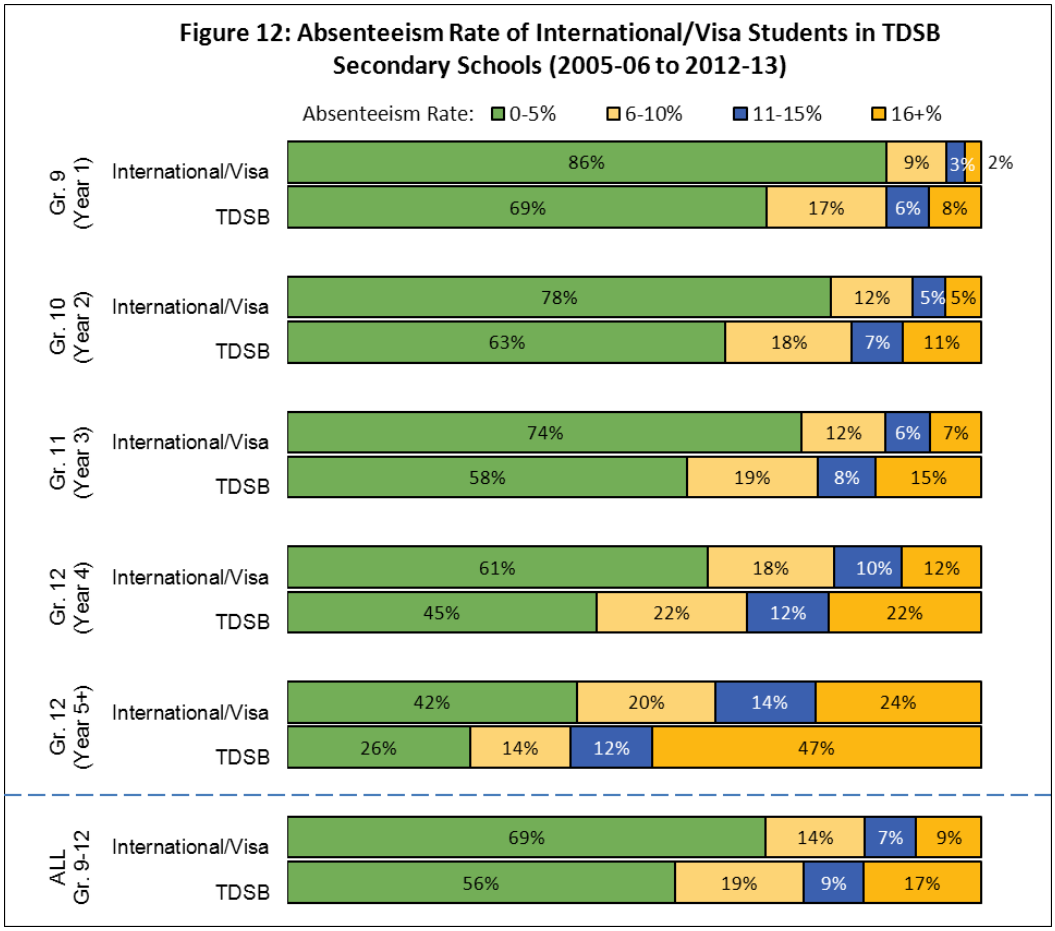
School Absenteeism

School absenteeism rate was calculated as the percent of school days a student is absent[2] from school throughout the school year. The absenteeism rate is a better indicator for measuring school engagement than the number of absent days because some students enrolled in a TDSB school during the school year, not at the beginning of the school year.

Four categories of absenteeism rate were used in this study: absent from school 0-5%, 6-10%, 11-15%, and 16% or more of the school days throughout the school year. For example, there were 188 school days in the 2012-13 school year for secondary school students, these categories represent students missing approximately 0-9, 10-19, 20-29, and 30+ school days throughout the school year when assuming they started the school year in September 2012 and finished in June 2013.

Figure 12 shows international/visa students' absenteeism rates in the eight school years by their grades, comparing these results to the overall rates for all TDSB students in Grades 9-12 in the same period.

[2] The number of days a student was absent from school has been derived from his or her class attendance during the school days: when missing more than half of the classes of the school day, a day of absence is recorded; when missing half or fewer classes of the school day, a half-day of absence is recorded.



It can be seen that secondary school students, both international/visa students and all TDSB students in Grades 9-12, tended to attend school more in the lower grades, especially in Grades 9-10, than in the later grades (e.g., Grade 12) , as demonstrated by the results from the lowest absenteeism rate category (0-5%).

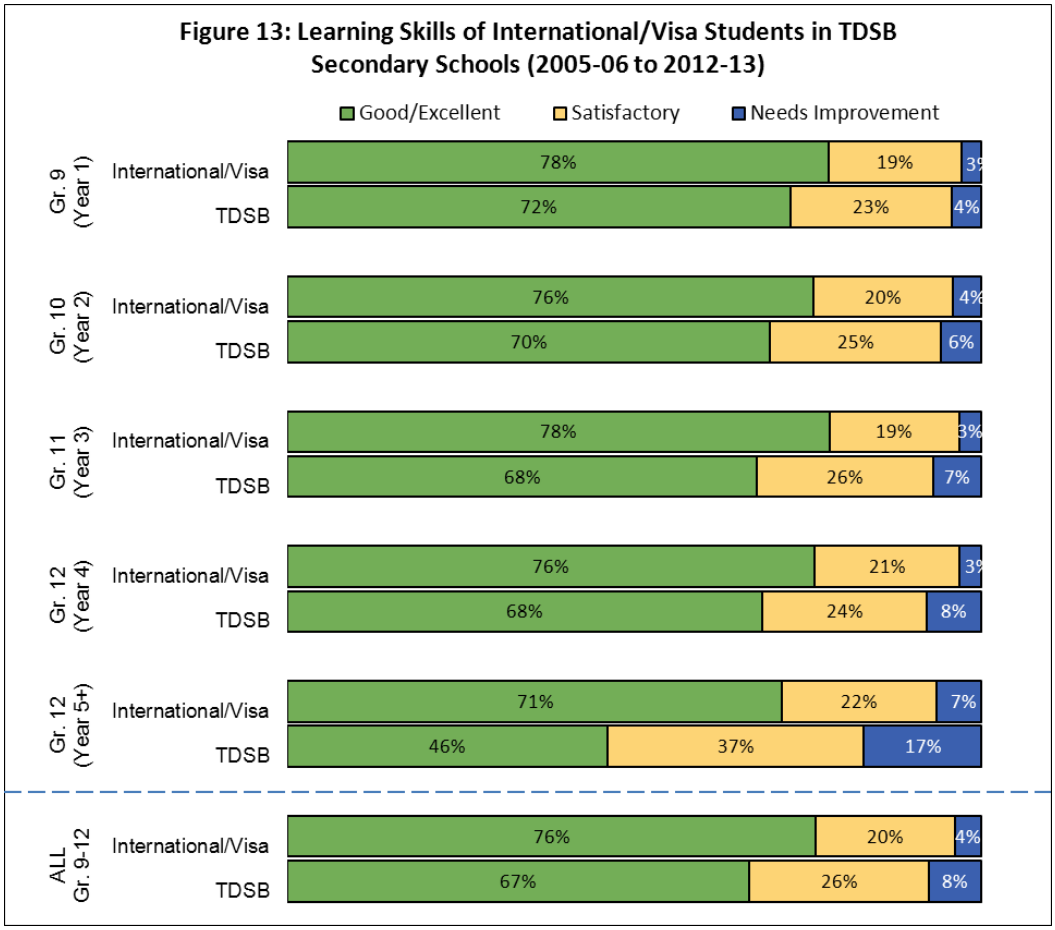
When compared with all TDSB secondary school students, international/visa students attended school much more (i.e., they had much lower absenteeism rates) in all grades. Overall, 69% of international/visa students attended 95% or more school days (i.e., being absent 5% or fewer of school days) when combining all grades in the eight school years. This is 13% higher than the result for all students in Grades 9-12.

Learning Skills

For each secondary course on the standard provincial report card there were five learning skills prior to the 2010-11 school year: *Works Independently, Teamwork, Organization, Work Habits/Homework, and Initiative*. They have been changed to six learning skills since the 2010-11 school year: *Responsibility, Organization, Independent Work, Collaboration, Initiative, and Self-Regulatio*n. For comparison purposes, an overall learning skill for each student in each

school year was computed[3] by averaging all learning skills from all the courses he or she took during the school year.

Figure 13 shows the comparison of international/visa students' overall learning skills with all TDSB secondary school students in the eight school years studied here.

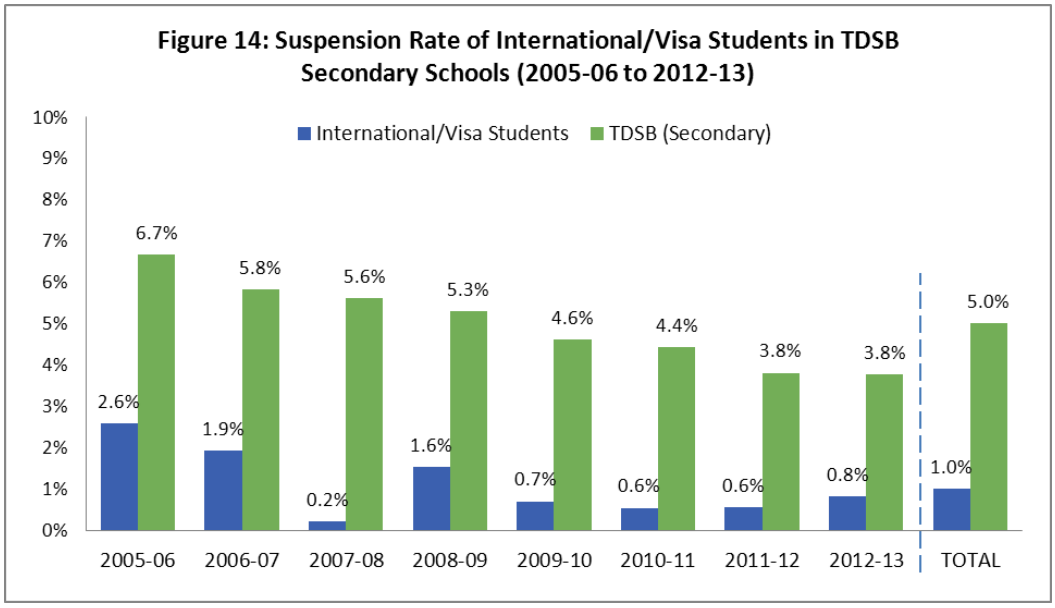


About three quarters of international/visa students had "Good" or "Excellent" for their learning skills: 78% in Grade 9, 76% in Grade 10, 78% in Grade 11, and 76% and 71% in Grade 12 for Year 4 and Year 5+ students. This is 6-10% higher than the TDSB results in Years 1-4, and 25% higher in Year 5 or beyond. As a result, 76% of international/visa students had "Good" or "Excellent" learning skills in the eight school years, which is 9% higher than the TDSB result.

[3] In order to calculate the overall learning skill for a student for a given school year, 1-4 were assigned to the levels of each learning skill for each course on the student's provincial report card: 4=Excellent; 3=Good; 2=Satisfactory; and 1=Needs Improvement. The calculated overall learning skill was then rounded and converted back to the four levels.

Suspensions

In the eight school years there were 84 suspensions applied to international/visa students examined in this study. Figure 14 shows the suspension rates in each school year, for international/visa students and for all TDSB secondary school students.



It can be seen that the suspension rates for international/visa students were much lower than for all TDSB secondary school students. Overall, only 1% of international/visa students were suspended during the eight school years, much lower than the 5% suspension rate for all TDSB students in Grades 9-12.

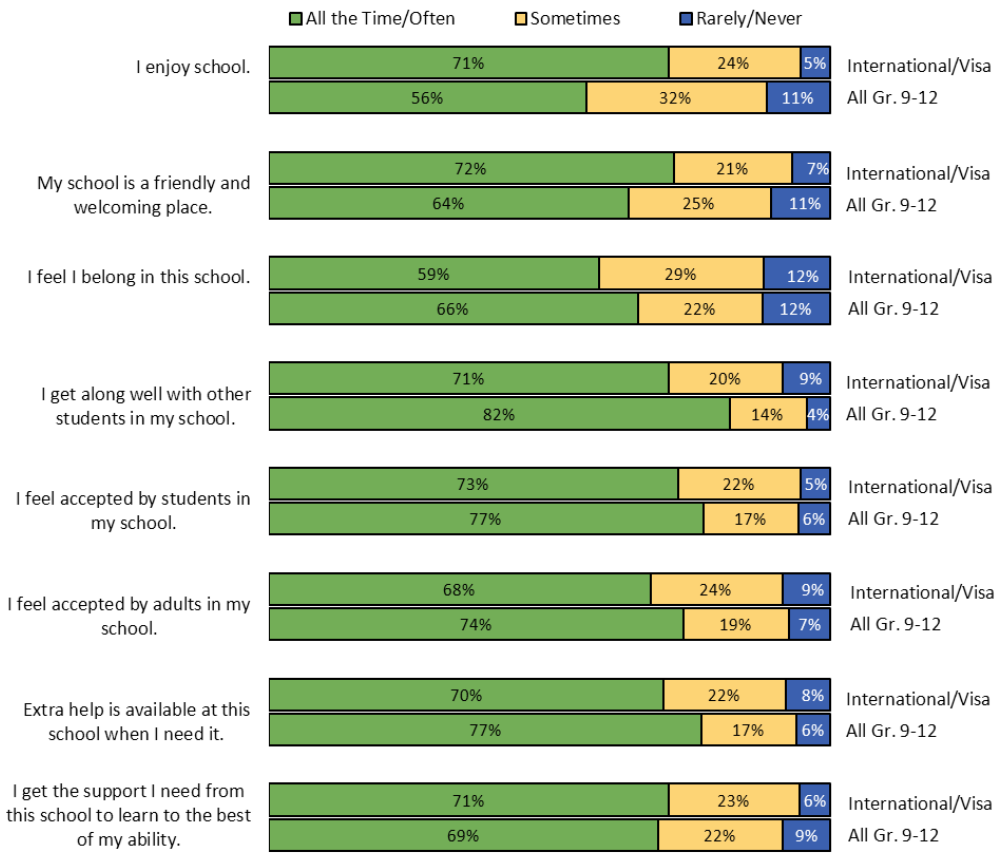
SCHOOL EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL/VISA STUDENTS

As mentioned earlier, the TDSB's unique Student Census, conducted in the 2006-07 and 2011-12 school years for students in Grades 7-12, provided rich data in student demographics such as race, parent education and occupation, parent presence at home, and sexual orientation (students in Grades 9-12 only), and school experience such as school belonging, caring and safe schools, bullying incidents, class participation, inclusive education, teaching and learning, and much more. As almost three quarters (74%) of international/visa students in these two school years participated in the surveys (613 of the 825 students in the 2006-07 school year, and 904 of the 1,217 students in the 2011-12 school year), it was worthy to examine international/visa students' school experience based on their perceptions in these two school years, and how they differed from other TDSB secondary school students.

Overall School Experience

Figure 15 shows international/visa students' overall school experience in the 2006-07 and 2011-12 school years, comparing these results with the experiences for all TDSB students in Grades 9-12 who responded to the Student Census in these two school years.

Figure 15: Overall School Experience of International/Visa Students in TDSB Secondary Schools in 2006-07 and 2011-12



When compared with all TDSB students in Grades 9-12, international/visa students had 15% more students enjoying their schools all the time or often (71% vs. 56%), and 8% more rating their schools as a friendly and welcoming place (72% vs. 64%). However, fewer international/visa students felt they belonged in their schools all the time or often (59% vs. 66%), or got along well with other students (71% vs. 82%). Similarly, fewer international/visa students felt that they were accepted by other students all the time or often (73% vs. 77%), or were accepted by adults in their schools (68% vs. 74%).

In addition, the majority of international/visa students felt extra help was available at their schools when they needed it (70%), and they could get the support they needed from their schools in order to learn to their best abilities (71%).

School Safety and Bullying Experience

Figure 16 shows students' experience with safety at their schools. The vast majority (92%) of international/visa students felt safe in their classrooms all the time or often. Over three quarters (78%) felt safe in other parts of the school building, such as the cafeteria, washrooms, and hallways. When being outside on school property, (e.g., school yard, playing field, parking lot), the proportion of students feeling safe all the time or often dropped to 70%. These results for international/visa students were similar to those for all TDSB students in Grades 9-12. Table 2 shows that international/visa students experienced fewer bullying incidents compared to regular TDSB students in Grades 9-12.

Figure 16: Safe School Experience of International/Visa Students in TDSB Secondary Schools in 2006-07 and 2011-12

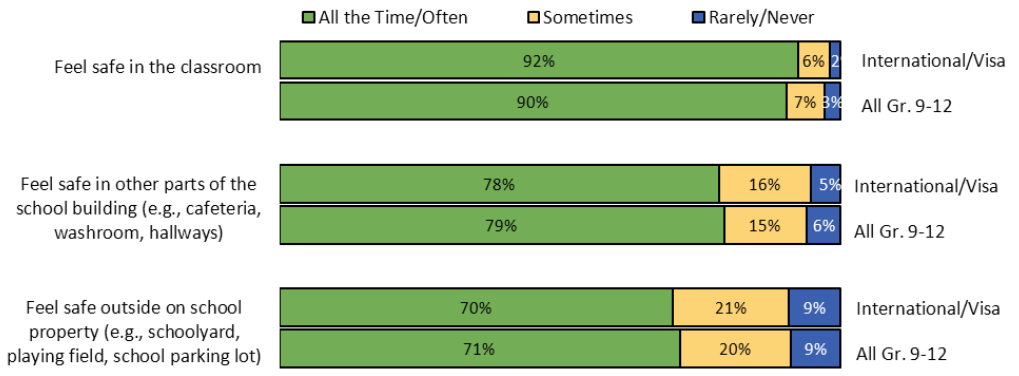


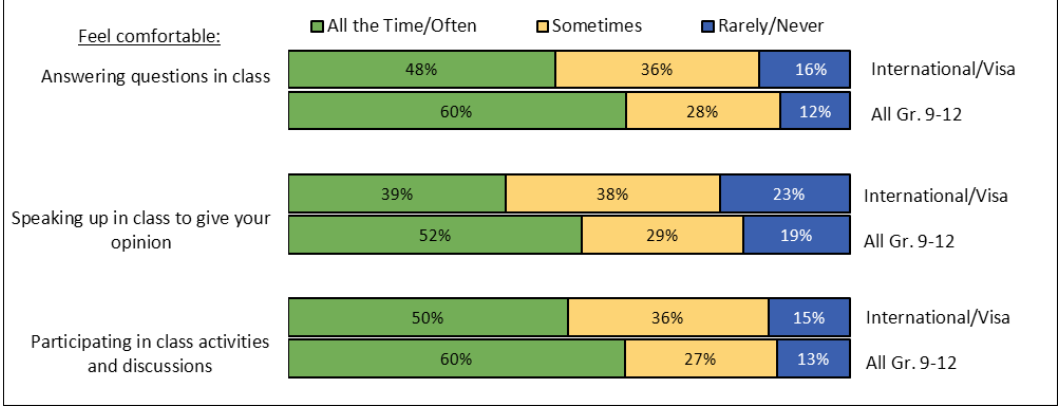
Table 2: Bullying Experience of International/Visa Students in TDSB Secondary Schools in 2006-07 & 2011-12

In school, have you ever experienced the following:	Student Group	All the Time/ Often	Sometimes	Rarely/ Never
Threats to hurt you	International/Visa Students	2%	7%	91%
	All Gr. 9-12 Students	5%	10%	85%
Physical bullying by an individual	International/Visa Students	2%	8%	91%
	All Gr. 9-12 Students	4%	6%	90%
Physical bullying by a group or a gang	International/Visa Students	2%	8%	90%
	All Gr. 9-12 Students	3%	4%	93%
Insults or name calling	International/Visa Students	5%	12%	83%
	All Gr. 9-12 Students	12%	19%	69%
Theft or destruction of your personal property	International/Visa Students	4%	9%	87%
	All Gr. 9-12 Students	5%	11%	84%
Being excluded or shut out from a group	International/Visa Students	3%	8%	89%
	All Gr. 9-12 Students	6%	11%	83%
Cyber bullying by other students (i.e., through emails, text messages, Facebook, and other ways on the internet or a cell phone)	International/Visa Students	1%	7%	91%
	All Gr. 9-12 Students	3%	5%	91%
Other	International/Visa Students	6%	6%	89%
	All Gr. 9-12 Students	14%	6%	80%

Class Participation

International/visa students' class participation was much lower than the average of all TDSB students in Grades 9-12: less than half (48%) of them answered questions in class all the time or often, which is 12% lower than the result for all TDSB students (60%) in Grades 9-12. Similarly, only 39% of international/visa students spoke up in class to give opinions all the time or often, which is 13% lower than the TDSB result (52%). In addition, only half of international/visa students participated in class activities and discussions all the time or often, which is 10% lower than the TDSB result (60%) (see Figure 17).

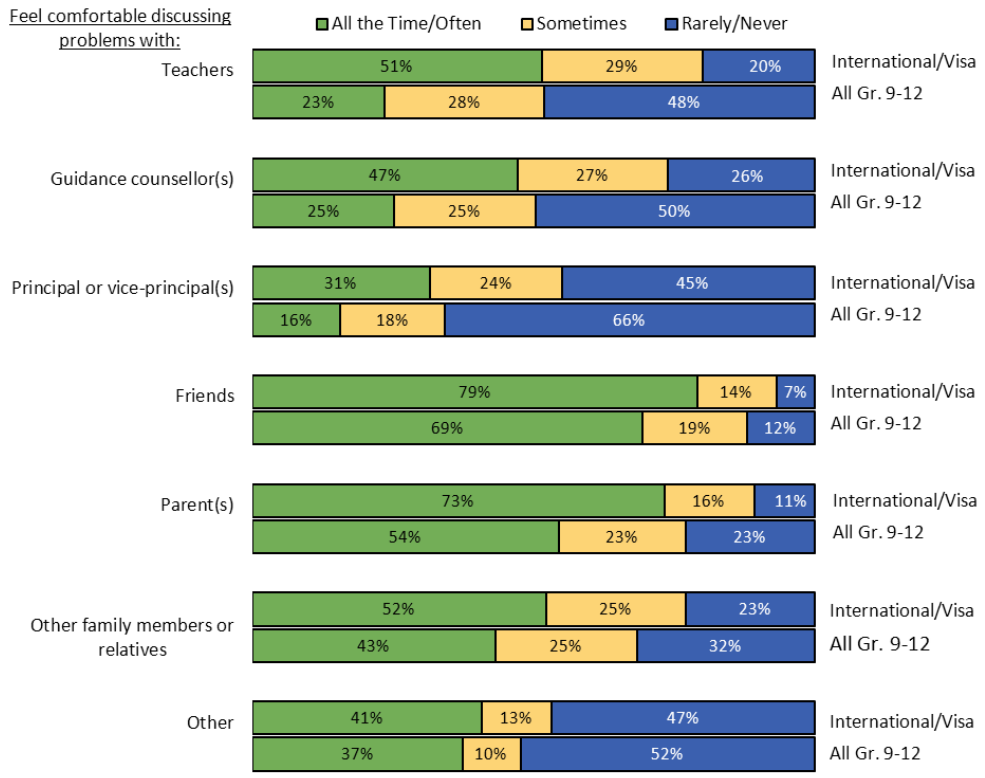
Figure 17: Class Participation of International/Visa Students in TDSB Secondary Schools in 2006-07 and 2011-12



Caring School Experience

International/visa students had better relationships with school staff. When facing problems, about half of the international/visa students felt comfortable in discussing their problems with their teachers (51%), or guidance counselors (47%), while only about one-quarter of the TDSB students in Grades 9-12 would do so (23% & 25% respectively). In addition, 31% of international/visa students were willing to discuss their problems with school administrators (principals or vice-principals), while in average only 16% of the TDSB students in Grades 9-12 would consult with their principals. Refer to Figure 18 for additional details.

Figure 18: Caring School Experience of International/Visa Students in TDSB Secondary Schools in 2006-07 and 2011-12

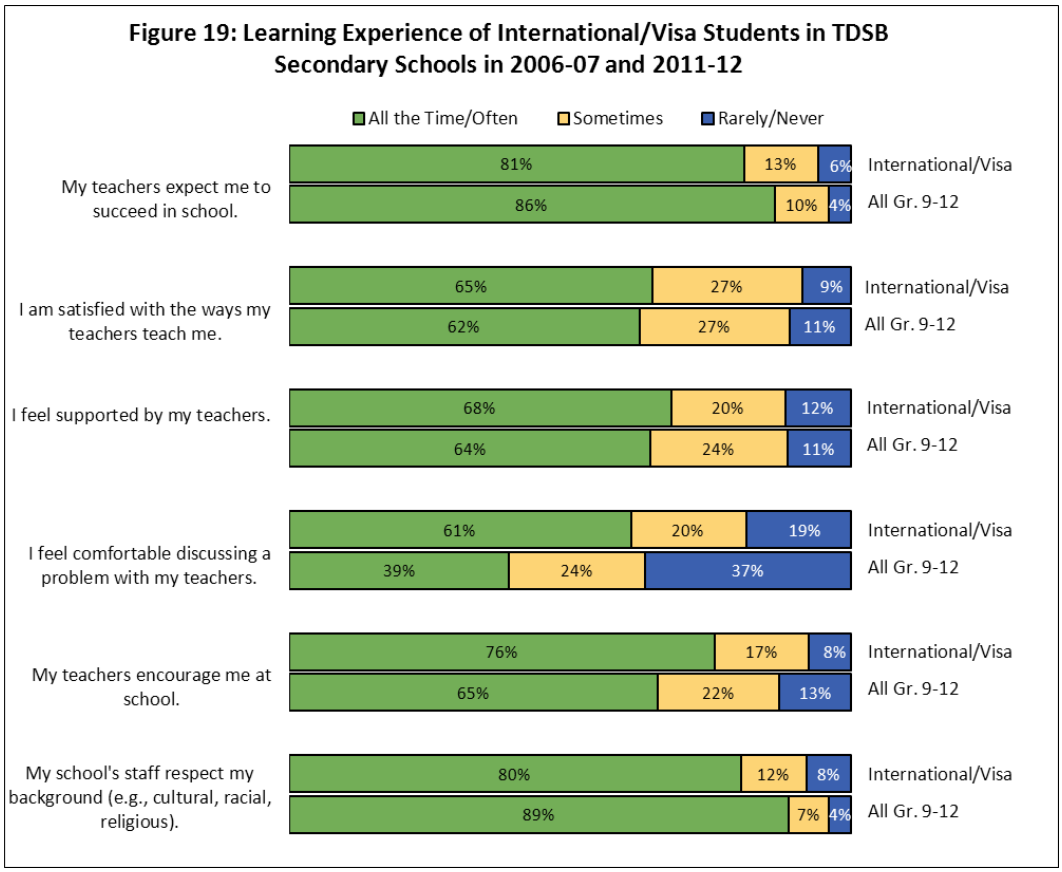


In addition to consulting with school staff, international/visa students were more likely to turn to their friends (79%), parents (73%), and family members (52%) for support when they faced problems. Again these results are higher than those for all TDSB students in Grades 9-12.

Classroom Teaching and Learning

The TDSB's Student Census also asked students about their experience with their teachers. As shown in Figure 19, about two thirds of international/visa students felt that they were supported by their teachers all the time or often (68%), were satisfied with the way their teachers taught them (65%), and were comfortable with discussing problems with their teachers (61%). They also felt they were encouraged by their teachers all the time or often

(76%). All these results are better than those for all TDSB students in Grades 9-12, especially in the last two items.



The two items in which international/visa students scored lower than all TDSB students in Grades 9-12 are teachers expecting students to succeed in school (81% vs. 86%), and school staff respecting students' cultural, racial or religious background (80% vs. 89%).

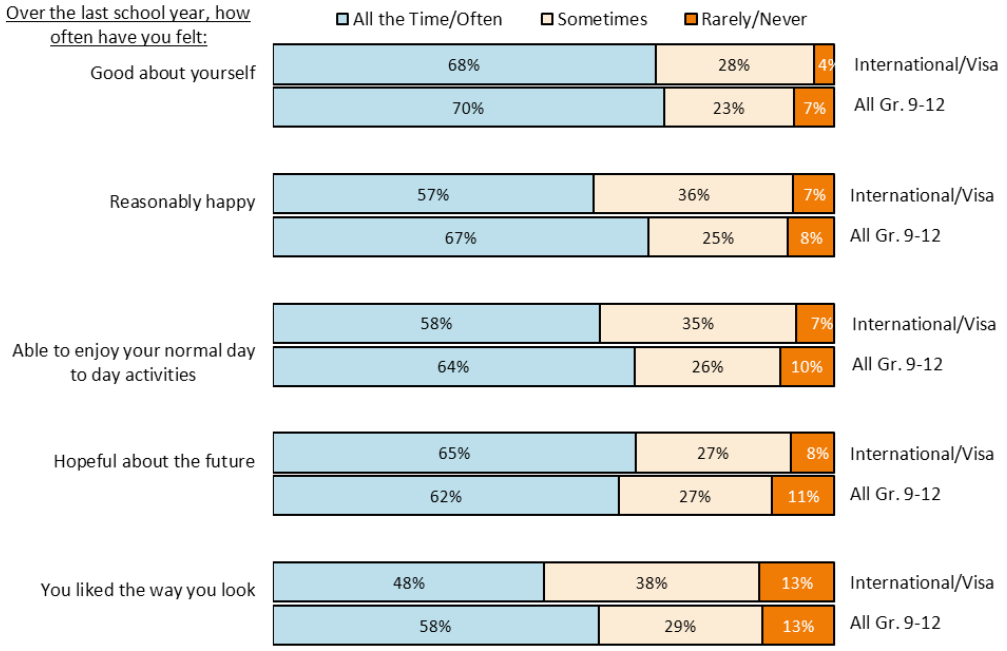
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF INTERNATIONAL/VISA STUDENTS

For the first time the TDSB's 2011-12 Student Census included items to measure students' mental health and well-being (these items were not available in the TDSB's 2006-07 Student Census). Results from these items had been used by the Board to develop and implement the TDSB's Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy 2013-2017 which was introduced in the 2013-14 school year.

Positive Feelings about Oneself

In the 2011-12 school year, about two thirds of international/visa students felt good about themselves (68%), and were hopeful for the future (65%) all the time or often. Over half of them felt reasonably happy (57%), and were able to enjoy daily activities (58%) all the time or often. However, fewer than half (48%) of them liked the way they looked (see Figure 20).

Figure 20: Positive Feelings of International/Visa Students in TDSB Secondary Schools in the 2011-12 School Year

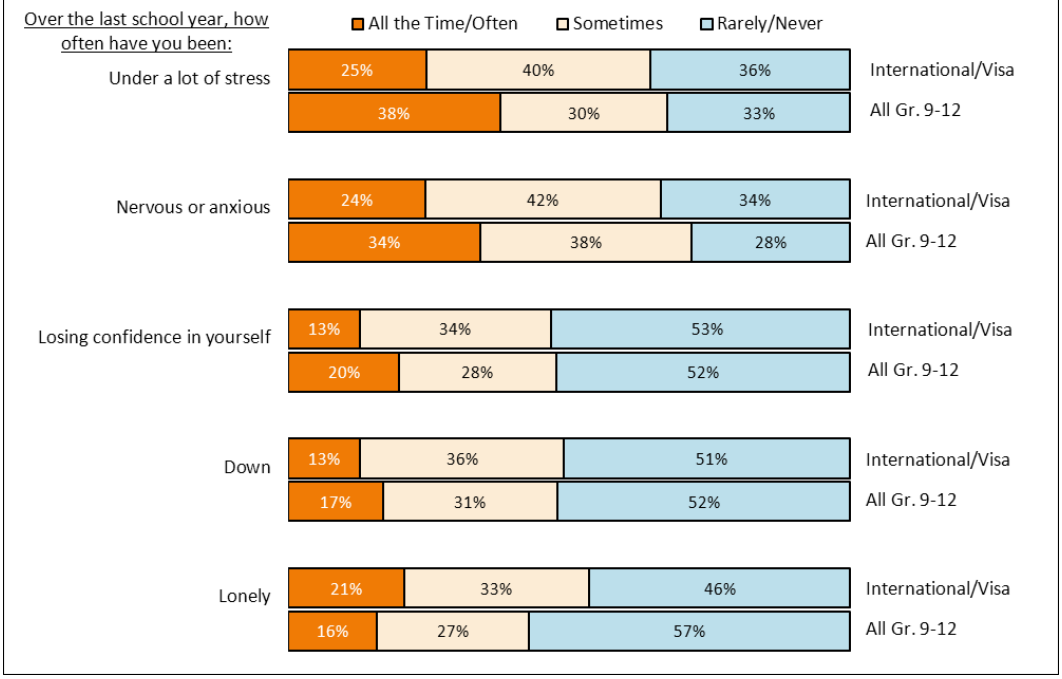


When compared with all TDSB students in Grades 9-12, the three items in which international/visa students scored significantly lower are feeling reasonably happy (57% vs. 67%), enjoying daily activities (58% vs. 64%), and liking the way they looked (48% vs. 58%).

Emotional Challenges

Figure 21 shows the emotional challenges international/visa students faced according to the TDSB's 2011-12 Student Census.

Figure 21: Emotional Challenges of International/Visa Students in TDSB Secondary Schools in the 2011-12 School Year



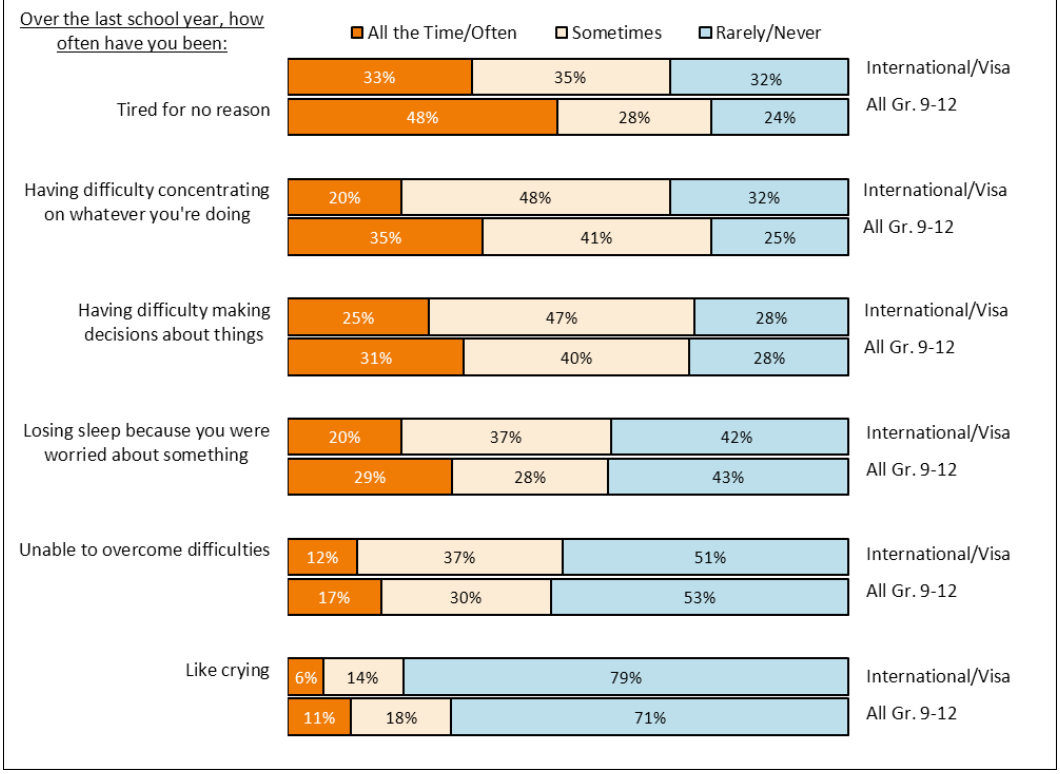
International/visa students seemed to deal with their emotional challenges better when compared to all TDSB secondary school students. When compared with all TDSB students in Grades 9-12, international/visa students had 4-13% fewer students facing emotional challenges all the time or often in four of the five indicators. For example, about one quarter of them felt under a lot of stress (25%), and were nervous or anxious (24%) all the time or often, which are 13% and 10% fewer than all TDSB students in Grades 9-12 students.

Although 13% of international/visa students felt down or losing confidence all the time or often, over half of them (51%) rarely or never felt that way. It is also noticeable that 21% of international/visa students felt lonely all the time or often, which is 5% more than all TDSB students (16%) in Grades 9-12.

Physical and Emotional Symptoms

Similar to emotional challenges, when compared with all TDSB students in Grades 9-12 in the 2011-12 school year, fewer international/visa students showed physical and emotional symptoms all the time or often in indicators such as being tired for no reason (33% vs. 48%), having difficulty concentrating (20% vs. 35%), having difficulty making decisions (25% vs. 31%), losing sleep (20% vs. 29%), being unable to overcome difficulties (12% vs. 17%), and felt like crying (6% vs. 11%) (see Figure 22).

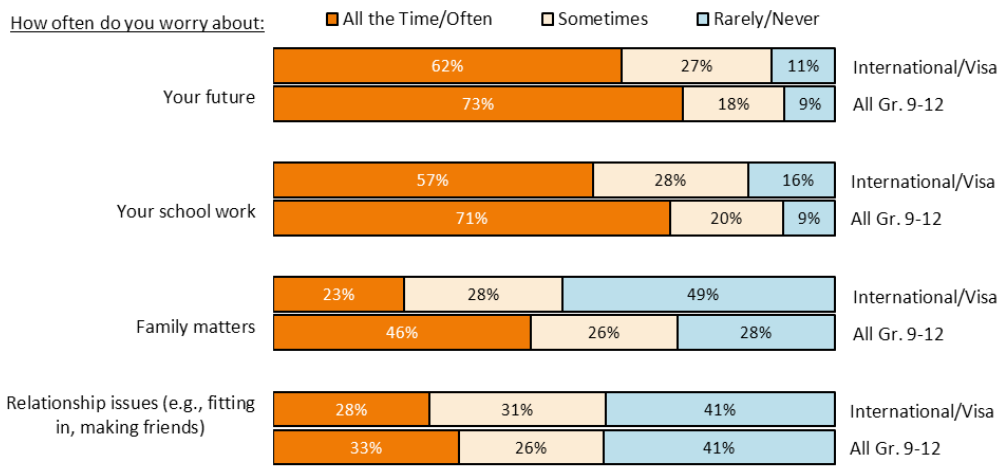
Figure 22: Physical and Emotional Symptoms of International/Visa Students in TDSB Secondary Schools in the 2011-12 School Year



Worries

The majority of international/visa students in the 2011-12 school year worried about their future (62%) and school work (57%) all the time or often. This is significantly lower than the TDSB results for all students in Grades 9-12 (73% and 71%). They were also less likely to worry about family matters (23% vs. 46%), or relationship issues such as fitting in or making friends (28% vs. 33%) all the time or often (see Figure 23).

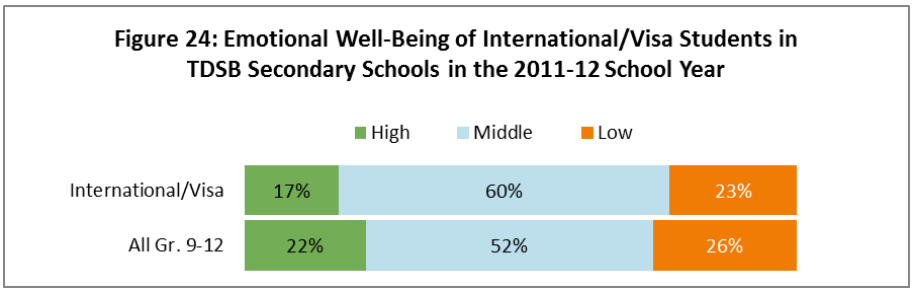
Figure 23: Worries of International/Visa Students in TDSB Secondary Schools in the 2011-12 School Year



Emotional Well-being Index

A composite index, based on six items about how students felt about themselves in the TDSB's 2011-12 Student Census was created to indicate students' overall emotional well-being – high (positive), middle, and low (negative). These items, which were identified with the use of a statistical procedure (Principal Component Analysis), include three positive emotions (feeling good about oneself, being hopeful about the future, and liking the way one looks) and three negative emotions (feeling nervous or anxious, down, and lonely).

Figure 24: Emotional Well-Being of International/Visa Students in TDSB Secondary Schools in the 2011-12 School Year



While the vast majority of international/visa students had high (17%) or middle (60%) emotional well-being, 23% of them scored low according to the index, which is 3% fewer students than all TDSB students in Grades 9-12 (see Figure 24).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In recent years the number of international/visa students has increased steadily in TDSB schools, especially in secondary schools. This research study examined the academic achievement, school engagement, and well-being of international/visa students in the Board's secondary schools during the period of eight school years from 2005-06 to 2012-13, using data from various sources including the TDSB's unique Grades 7-12 Student Census conducted in the 2006-07 and 2011-12 school years.

Student Demographics

Among the 3,990 international/visa students included in the study, 52% were males and 48% were females. While one-third (33%) of students arrived in Canada at age 15 or younger as students in Grades 9-10, almost half (49%) of these students arrived at the age of 16 or 17 as students in Grades 11-12.

The majority of international/visa students were from East Asian countries, with over half (51%) from China, 25% from South Korea, and 2-5% from Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Only five students had an Individual Education Plan (IEP), meaning the vast majority of them had no Special Education Needs. In addition, most of them retained their international/visa status during the last school year with the Board.

Academic Achievement

Credit accumulation has long been used as one of the best indicators for student success in secondary schools. In Grades 9-11 and the first year in Grade 12, international/visa students had 6-10% fewer students accumulating the expected amount of credits than all TDSB students in the same grades. However, the majority (84%) of Grade 12 international/visa students in Year 5 or beyond earned 30 or more credits, which is 25% higher than the TDSB result in this category. When accounting for all students in Grade 12 (Years 4-5 and beyond), about two thirds (66%) of international/visa students met the expectation of 30 credits, 1% higher than the TDSB result. This observation indicates that international/visa students would need more time to finish their secondary school than regular TDSB students.

An examination of Grade 9 Mathematics courses taken by international/visa students over the eight school years revealed that 90% of them took the course at the Academic level (and 10% at the Applied level), which is much higher than the 69% in the TDSB and in Ontario. On the provincial Grade 9 Mathematics assessments over the eight school years, 83% of international/visa students achieved at or above the provincial standard (Level 3) at the Academic level, which is 8% higher than the TDSB's result and 5% higher than the result for Ontario. At the Applied level, 58% of international/visa students met the provincial standard, which again is much higher than the results for the TDSB (25%) and for Ontario (39%). Passing the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) is a requirement for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. In contrast to the Grade 9 Mathematics assessment, only 60% of international/visa students who participated in the OSSLT over the eight school years passed

the test. This is much lower than the results for participating students in the TDSB (81%) or in Ontario (84%).

For the 2,649 international/visa students who had been in secondary schools for five or more school years, a cohort tracking analysis reveals that half (50%) graduated from TDSB secondary schools with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), 1% were continuing their secondary schooling at the time of this study, 24% transferred out of the TDSB secondary schools, and 25% dropped out (or with unknown destinations) without earning an OSSD.

Ontario university and college application data from 2005-06 to 2012-13 shows that for the 1,331 international/visa students who had earned an OSSD from a TDSB secondary school from 2005-06 to 2012-13, the majority (66%) went to an Ontario university, and 8% went to an Ontario college. The rest of the graduates (26%) had other destinations, likely post-secondary institutions outside Ontario, since the TDSB didn't have post-secondary data from other jurisdictions, most likely these graduates went to a post-secondary institution outside Ontario.

Among the Ontario universities confirmed by international/visa students who graduated from TDSB secondary schools from 2005-06 to 2012-13, the University of Toronto was the top choice (48%), followed by the University of Waterloo (13%), and York University (9%). Among the Ontario colleges confirmed by international/visa students, the top choices were Seneca College (34%), George Brown College (27%), Centennial College (20%), and Humber College (15%).

Business related studies seemed to be the top choice by international/visa students who confirmed their post-secondary studies in Ontario. Among students who confirmed an offer of acceptance to an Ontario university, 33% chose Commerce, Management and Business Administration as their majors of study. For those who confirmed an offer of acceptance to an Ontario college, 56% chose Business as their program of study.

School Engagement

When compared with all TDSB secondary school students, international/visa students attended school much more in all grades (i.e., they had lower absenteeism rates in all grades). Overall, 69% of international/visa students attended the majority of school days, which is 13% more than all TDSB students in Grades 9-12.

Over three quarters of international/visa students had "Good" or "Excellent" learning skills in all grades: 78% in Grade 9, 76% in Grade 10, 78% in Grade 11, and 76% and 71% in Grade 12 for Year 4 and Year 5+ students. This is 6-10% higher than all TDSB students in Years 1-4, and 25% higher in Year 5 or beyond. As a result, 76% of international/visa students had "Good" or "Excellent" learning skills in the eight school years, 9% more than all TDSB secondary school students.

In the eight school years there were 84 suspensions applied to the international/visa students examined in this study. The 1.0% suspension rate for international/visa students was much lower than the 5.0% for all TDSB secondary school students.

School Experience

There were 1,517 international/visa students who participated in the TDSB's Grades 7-12 Student Census in the 2006-07 and 2011-12 school years. When compared with all TDSB students in Grades 9-12 in these two school years, international/visa students had 15% more students enjoying school all the time or often (71% vs. 56%), and 8% more feeling their school is a friendly and welcoming place (72% vs. 64%). However, fewer international/visa students felt they belonged in their schools all the time or often (59% vs. 66%), or got along well with other students (71% vs. 82%). Similarly, fewer international/visa students felt that they were accepted by other students (73% vs. 77%), or were accepted by adults in the school (68% vs. 74%).

The vast majority of international/visa students (92%) felt safe in their classrooms all the time or often. Over three quarters of them (78%) felt safe in other parts of the school building, such as the cafeteria, washrooms, and hallways. When being outside on school property, (e.g., school yard, playing field, parking lot), the proportion of students who felt safe all the time or often dropped to 70%. These results for international/visa students were similar to those for all TDSB students in Grades 9-12. International/visa students also experienced slightly fewer bullying incidents compared to regular TDSB students in Grades 9-12.

International/visa students' class participation was much lower than the average of all TDSB students in Grades 9-12: less than half (48%) of them answered questions in class all the time or often, which is 12% lower than the result for all TDSB students (60%) in Grades 9-12. Similarly, only 39% of international/visa students spoke up in class to give opinions all the time or often, which is 13% lower than the TDSB result (52%). In addition, only half of the international/visa students participated in class activities and discussions all the time or often, which is 10% lower than the TDSB result (60%).

International/visa students had better relationships with school staff. When facing problems, about half of the international/visa students felt comfortable in discussing their problems with their teachers or guidance counselors, while only about one-quarter of TDSB students in Grades 9-12 would do so. In addition, 31% of international/visa students were willing to discuss their problems with school administrators (principals or vice-principals), while on average only 16% of TDSB students in Grades 9-12 would consult with their principals. In addition to consulting with school personnel, international/visa students were more likely to turn to their friends (79%), parents (73%), and family members (52%) for support when facing problems. Again these results are higher than those for all TDSB students in Grades 9-12.

About two thirds of international/visa students felt that they were supported by their teachers all the time or often (68%), were satisfied with the way their teachers taught them (65%), and

were comfortable with discussing problems with their teachers (61%). They also felt they were encouraged by their teachers all the time or often (76%). All these results are better than those for all TDSB students in Grades 9-12. The two items in which international/visa students scored lower than the TDSB averages were teachers expecting them to succeed in school (81% vs. 86%), and school staff respecting their background (80% vs. 89%).

Mental Health and Well-being

In the 2011-12 school year, about two thirds of international/visa students felt good about themselves (68%), and were hopeful for the future (65%) all the time or often. Over half of them felt reasonably happy (57%), and were able to enjoy daily activities (58%) all the time or often. However, fewer than half (48%) of them liked the way they looked. When compared with all TDSB students in Grades 9-12, the three items in which international/visa students scored significantly lower were feeling reasonably happy (57% vs. 67%), enjoying daily activities (58% vs. 64%), and liking the way they looked (48% vs. 58%).

International/visa students seemed to deal with their emotional challenges better than the average of TDSB students. When compared with all TDSB students in Grades 9-12, international/visa students had 4-13% fewer students facing emotional challenges all the time or often in four of the five indicators: about one quarter of them felt under a lot of stress (25%), and were nervous or anxious (24%) all the time or often, which are 13% and 10% fewer than all TDSB students in Grades 9-12. Although 13% of international/visa students felt down or losing confidence all the time or often, over half of them (51%) rarely or never felt that way. It is also noticeable that 21% of international/visa students felt lonely all the time or often, which is 5% more than all TDSB students (16%) in Grades 9-12.

Similar to emotional challenges, when compared with all TDSB students in Grades 9-12 in the 2011-12 school year, fewer international/visa students showed physical and emotional symptoms all the time or often in indicators such as being tired for no reason (33% vs. 48%), having difficulty concentrating (20% vs. 35%), having difficulty making decisions (25% vs. 31%), losing sleep (20% vs. 29%), being unable to overcome difficulties (12% vs. 17%), and felt like crying (6% vs. 11%).

The majority of international/visa students in the 2011-12 school year worried about their future (62%) and school work (57%) all the time or often. This is significantly lower than the TDSB results for all students in Grades 9-12 (73% and 71% respectively). They were also less likely to worry about family matters (23% vs. 46%), or relationship issues such as fitting in or making friends (28% vs. 33%) all the time or often.

The Emotional Well-being Index, a composite index based on six items about how students felt about themselves, indicated while the vast majority of international/visa students had high (17%) or middle (60%) emotional well-being, 23% of them scored low according to the index, which is 3% fewer than all TDSB students (26%) in Grades 9-12.