

Review of a Secondary School Having a Large Cohort of Students Identified With a Gifted Exceptionality: Perceived Implications for Students Taking 'U' Courses

Robert S. Brown

Research and Information Services, TDSB



CONTEXT

A parent at Northern Secondary School raised several potential issues, with respect to her concerns about the potential impacts of having large numbers of students with a gifted exceptionality in the same class as students in the regular university stream classes. Her concerns can be put into four questions.

QUESTIONS

1. Are students without Special Education Needs dropping Grade 11-12 'U' courses, because classes are predominantly enrolled by students having a Gifted exceptionality?
2. Does the concentration of Gifted students at Northern mean that some classes are predominantly enrolled by students identified with a Gifted exceptionality?
- 2b. Does this happen in other TDSB secondary schools?

QUESTIONS (cont'd)

3. Will students without a Gifted exceptionality be at a disadvantage being in a class with large numbers of students identified with a Gifted exceptionality (due to the very high achievement of Gifted students)?
4. If students drop classes having predominant numbers of students identified with a Gifted exceptionality, will they take courses from alternatives to the TDSB Day School system (e.g., Private study)?

Question 1

Are students without Special Education Needs dropping Grade 11-12 'U' courses, because classes are predominantly enrolled by students with a Gifted exceptionality?

Answer

Since we have only partial information on who drops courses at the very early stages of registration, we cannot provide a complete answer.

However, the answers to the other questions will provide context and explanation to this question.

Question 2

Does the concentration of Gifted students at Northern mean that some classes are predominantly populated by students identified with a Gifted exceptionality?

2b. Does this happen in other TDSB secondary schools?

Answer

Yes, but only at Northern due to the large grade 9 entry cohort of students identified with a gifted exceptionality and a congregated class placement for 4 of 8 courses in grades 9 and 10 and 2 of 8 courses in grades 11 and 12.

Context to Question 2

NORTHERN

At Northern: 1,670 of 3,713 'U' courses taken over 2014-15, were taken by students with a Gifted exceptionality (**45% of all courses**).

This resulted in 54 out of Northern's 136 'U' classes in 2014-15, where half or more courses were taken by Gifted students (**40% of all classes**).

TDSB

However, **in the TDSB**, only 8,424 out of 152,757 'U' courses were taken over 2014-15 by students with a Gifted exceptionality (**6% of all courses**).

There were 162 of 6,989 'U' classes in the TDSB where half or more of the courses were taken by students with a Gifted exceptionality (**2% of all classes**). Northern alone accounted for a third of these classes predominantly populated by students with a Gifted exceptionality.

Therefore there is a large number of 'U' courses taken predominantly by students with a gifted exceptionality at Northern while to a much lesser magnitude in other schools.

Question 3

Will students without a Gifted exceptionalty be at a disadvantage being in a class with large numbers of students with a Gifted exceptionalty (due to the very high achievement of Gifted students)?

Answer

Not at the Grade 11-12 'U' level of courses.

- there is an assumption that because students with a gifted exceptionalty test in the top 2-3%, they will achieve in the top 2-3% of courses
- This is not the case
 - courses taken by students with a gifted exceptionalty will have higher marks than the TDSB average—but they **will be noticeably lower than the very highest achievement range** (marks of 95% to 100%).

Table 1: All TDSB U Courses 2014-15 (N = 152,757)

Student Category	Mean	Median	Mode	N
All Courses	73.52	78.00	80	152757
SEN Excluding Gifted	65.34	70.00	50	10410
Students without SEN	73.60	78.00	80	133923
Gifted Exceptionality	82.32	86.00	90	8424
Top 5% of Marks (95-100)	96.50	96.00	95	7645

The median 'U' mark is 78 (which is also the median mark of students without Special Education Needs).

The median course mark of students identified with a gifted exceptionality is 86, which is 8 marks higher than the overall TDSB median, but 10 marks lower than the very highest achievement level.

Examples of School Median Marks

Tables 2 to 5 Show How This Difference of Median Mark Show Across a Few Selected TDSB Schools

Table 2: Northern U Courses 2014-15 LOI Ranking- 103

Student Category	Mean	Median	Mode	N
All Courses	77.05	81.00	90	3713
SEN Excluding Gifted	68.18	71.00	80	475
Students without SEN	75.35	80.00	80	1568
Gifted Exceptionality	81.18	84.00	90	1670

Table 3: Ursula Franklin U Courses 2014-15 LOI Ranking- 100

Student Category	Mean	Median	Mode	N
All Courses	78.82	82.00	85	1412
SEN Excluding Gifted	73.29	75.00	80a	108
Students without SEN	79.37	82.00	85	1134
Gifted Exceptionality	78.71	82.00	80	170
a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown				

Table 4: Marc Garneau U Courses 2014-15 LOI Ranking- 71

Student Category	Mean	Median	Mode	N
All Courses	77.03	80.00	80	3208
SEN Excluding Gifted	67.67	73.00	80	70
Students without SEN	75.89	80.00	80	2833
Gifted Exceptionality	89.70	91.00	90	305

Table 5: Weston CI U Courses 2014-15 LOI Ranking- 21

Student Category	Mean	Median	Mode	N
All Courses	74.71	78.00	80	1837
SEN Excluding Gifted	54.70	60.00	60	50
Students without SEN	75.08	79.00	80	1753
Gifted Exceptionality	85.24	86.00	84	34

Question 4

If students drop classes predominantly enrolled by those identified with a gifted exceptionality, will they take courses from alternatives to the TDSB Day School system (e.g. Private study)?

Answer

This is not an issue related to Giftedness per se; however it points to a potentially larger Ministry of Education issue- with respect to flexibility of choice.

Context for Question 4: Course Type

“Course Type” is found in the TDSB’s Trillium SIS system. Almost all (99%) of ‘U’ courses in the TDSB over 2014-15 were from five course types:

- the default ‘Day School’ (89%)
- Summer School (3%)
- Private Study (3%)
- Night School (2%) and
- E-Learning (2%).

When we look at examples of school-level results seen in Table 6, focusing on the example of courses taken through Private Study, **we cannot see a clear relationship to Giftedness.**

Table 6: Proportion TDSB 'U' Courses 2014-15:
Day School/Private Study (Selected Schools)

School	% Day School	% Private Study
Forest Hill	82.5	9.0
Earl Haig	84.2	7.1
Lawrence Park	86.9	4.6
North Toronto CI	90.9	4.1
Northern	88.1	3.2
TDSB	89.1	2.6
Ursula Franklin CI	91.6	2.3
Leaside	91.9	1.0
Marc Garneau	94.0	.9
Humberside	93.3	.6
Weston CI	92.2	.1



Toronto
District
School
Board