

RESEARCH BRIEFS ON THE TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD'S POST-SECONDARY PATHWAYS - 2000 TO 2014

Research Brief 5: An Eight-Year Study of Post-secondary Pathways: The Student Census of 2006

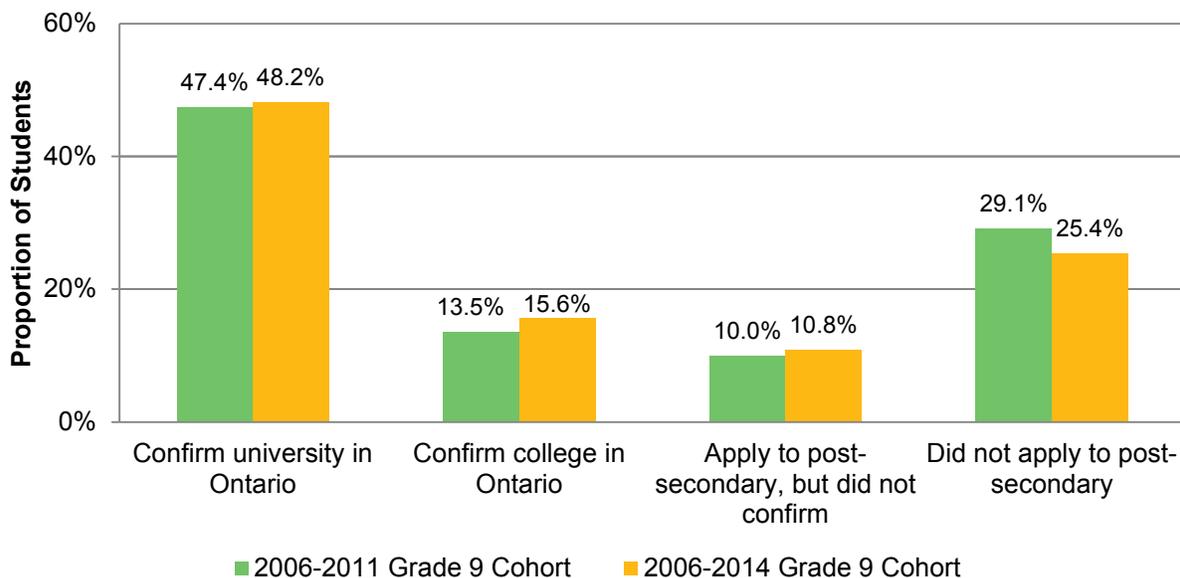
The Post-secondary Applications Process: Taking Eight Years to Complete the Process

The TDSB Grade 9 Cohort 2006-2011: Post-secondary Pathways Fact Sheet No. 3 followed the Fall 2006 cohort, who wrote the 2006 Student Census, for five years (until 2011) and post-secondary pathways for those five years are presented in this fact sheet.

However, we know that many students take beyond five years of high school before they go to post-secondary. This Research Brief extends the analysis three years. That is, applications of students in the cohort from the Ontario university and colleges application centres were looked at from 2010 (when students were in their fourth year of high school) into the 2014 application cycle (when the few remaining students were in their eighth year of high school) for a nearly complete picture of the direct transition of post-secondary.

Figure 1 shows the difference between five and eight years. By the end of five years of high school 47.4% of students confirmed an offer of admission from an Ontario university while 13.5% confirmed an offer from an Ontario college. By the end of eight years the proportion of university-bound students had increased to 48.2% and college-bound students had increased to 15.6% – a total increase of 2.9%.

Figure 1: Post-secondary Status as of Fall 2011 and Fall 2014, Grade 9 Cohort of Fall 2006



Why the difference? We cannot provide precise numbers but can offer possible explanations. In some cases it is because some students take longer than five years to finish high school, and will then apply to post-secondary. In other cases students may return for a necessary course or two (through the regular day school, summer school or night school) before gaining the prerequisites needed for post-secondary. A number also take time off for travel and/or work before making the decision to go to post-secondary. Note that most university-bound students transition in Year 4 of high school, while most college-bound students transition in Years 5-7.

Grade 9 Achievement: Even with the timelines extended from five to eight years, the importance of Grade 9 credit accumulation on post-secondary access cannot be understated: generally, if you completed fewer than eight credits in Grade 9, your chances of going to university are quite limited, although generally you will graduate secondary school. Of the students in Grade 9 who completed eight credits, 59% confirmed an offer of admission from an Ontario university (nearly all confirmed by Year 5); of those completing seven credits, only 15% confirmed university; while only 4% of those completing 6 or fewer credits confirmed university (see Table 1). The failure to complete a key compulsory credit in Grade 9 has a limiting effect on future achievement, something examined in a related TDSB study¹.

Table 1: Post-secondary Confirmations by Grade 9 Credit Accumulation, 2006-2014 Grade 9 Cohort

Grade 9 Credit Accumulation	Confirm university in Ontario	Confirm college in Ontario	Apply to post-secondary, but did not confirm	Did not apply to post-secondary
6 or fewer credits (high risk)	3.6%	14.5%	6.9%	75.1%
7 credits (medium risk)	15.2%	28.2%	13.1%	43.5%
8 or more credits (low risk)	59.3%	15.6%	11.2%	25.4%

This is not the full picture: We have captured eight years of information about the Ontario applications but this does not show our students' entire history of post-secondary access. For one thing, it does not follow students who went into a post-secondary institution outside Ontario, which we estimate to be 3-4% of the cohort. Secondly, it looks at students who confirm an offer of admission from an Ontario post-secondary institution – while in some cases students who confirm an offer will not follow through, while others who may be on waiting lists may enter at the last minute. There are also some smaller post-secondary institutions that are not part of the Ontario applications process (e.g., Royal Military College in Kingston).

Most importantly, this analysis shows only the direct transition between high school and post-secondary. It does not show the indirect transition – that is, students attending post-secondary after a hiatus of some (or many) years after high school. Most TDSB students going to an Ontario community college did so as older students – many of whom attended the TDSB and its predecessor boards before the current OSS curriculum (implemented fully in 2000). It is apparent that the already-varied pathways leading to post-secondary are becoming even more complex. Our research will need to keep up with these developments as lifetime learning becomes the norm for most of our current students.

¹ Brown, R.S., Newton, L., Tam, G., & Parekh, G. (2015). *The trajectories of grade 9 mathematics achievement 2008-2013*. (Research Report No. 15/16-05). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.