



The Grade 9 Cohort Study: A Five-Year Analysis, 2000-2005

Prepared by Robert S. Brown

Outcomes

The first group of Grade 9 students who could be identified and tracked at the Toronto District School Board level started secondary school in Fall 2000. By the end of their fifth year of secondary study (i.e. by Fall 2005):

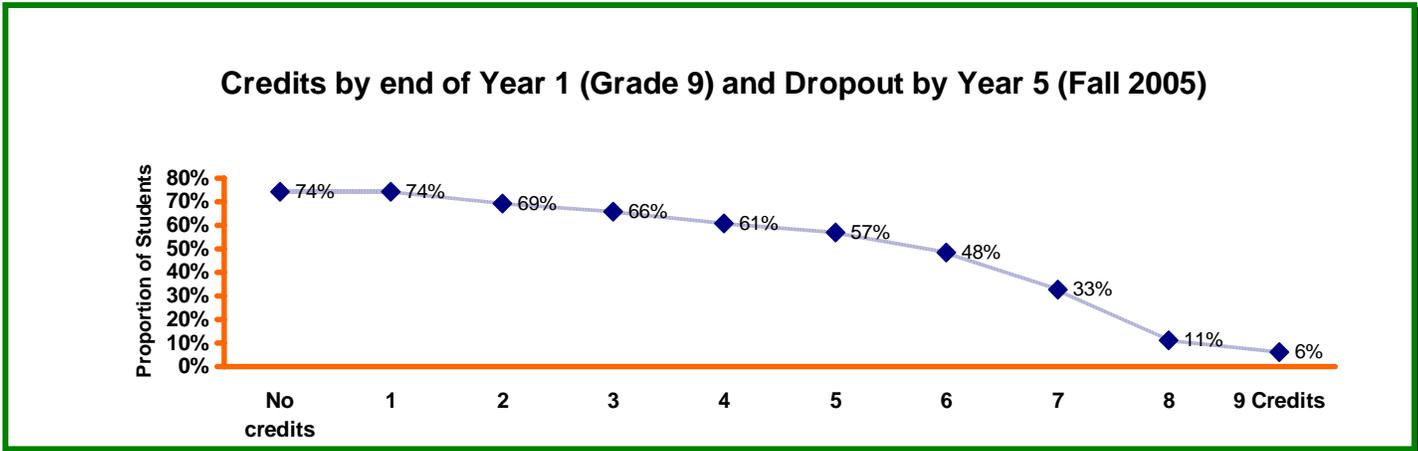
- 69% of students had graduated by the end of Year 5 (received an OSSD or successfully completed 30 or more credits);
- 8% had not graduated but were still in the TDSB in Fall 2005 for Year 6 of secondary studies;
- 23% had dropped out by the end of Year 5 (i.e. left the TDSB without a record of transferring, or without graduating).

Key Findings

Who Are Our At-Risk Students?

The vast majority of at-risk students are clearly identifiable in their *first year of secondary study*. A number of groups of students were identified as having higher proportions of at-risk students in Year 1 of secondary school (Grade 9), and likewise with a lower proportion of graduates, and/or higher proportion of dropouts, at the end of Year 5:

- those at-risk in Grade 8 (a mark of less than 60% in English, Science or Math);
- male students;
- those older than the age-appropriate year of birth when they started high school;
- those from lower income neighbourhoods, but also other identified geographical Toronto neighbourhoods;
- those born in the English-speaking Caribbean, Central and South America/Mexico, and Eastern Africa;
- those speaking Portuguese, Spanish, and Somali;
- those who had achieved fewer than seven credits by the end of Year 1 (Grade 9);
- those who had not completed a Math credit by the end of Year 1 (Grade 9), or had a mark of less than 60%;
- those who had not completed an English credit by the end of Year 1, or had a mark of less than 60% (students taking ESL/D courses in Grade 9 had an average range of achievement by Year 5);
- those taking a majority of Applied and locally-developed courses;
- those with high absenteeism (greater than 10% absenteeism in Year 1).



Students Who Move Schools Are More At-Risk: But This Is Not The Full Story

Students who move schools after Grade 9 are more at-risk than students who stay in the same schools. Students who move schools are more likely to drop out than those moving between homes. However, there was one major exception: students in Junior High Schools (Grades 7-9) moving to a new school in Grade 10 had the same dropout rate and a higher graduation rate, as those who stayed in the same school. It is not moving schools that is associated with dropout. Rather, students not doing well in Grade 9 are more likely to move schools in Grade 10 and Grade 11, and this in turn is associated with higher dropout rates.

Changes Over Time: More Are Graduating and Fewer are Dropping Out

Although we cannot compare this to previous TDSB cohorts, we can make limited comparisons with cohorts from the Toronto legacy system from 1987 through 1993. The long-term pattern from the 1987 to 2000 cohorts is positive, with increased graduation and decreased dropout.

Dropout Is Not A Permanent State

Over a quarter of dropouts had returned to the TDSB at least once, over the five years of the study. However, these students face daunting challenges and it is unclear how many will ultimately graduate.

Most Students Will Attend Post-Secondary Institutions

It is estimated that over half of the cohort will attend post-secondary institutions by the end of seven years (most will take over four years). Ultimately this will increase to 2/3 of the cohort over students' lifetimes.

The Cohort Study Continues

Progress of these students will continue to be monitored until the cohort study concludes in Fall 2007.

For a complete copy of the report, contact Organizational Development at 416-394-4929.