

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

## Research Brief 1: Historical Trends of 10 Cohorts

### Why is This Important?

Key indicators of educational success change over time. In the late nineteenth century, ensuring that most elementary school students would attend most of their time in school was the most important goal of public school success. By the first part of the twentieth century this had changed to making sure most students could attend (although not necessarily graduate from) high school, and by the late twentieth century focus shifted to graduation from high school (and dropout).

Over the last decade another shift has taken place. Now, the majority of secondary school students enter post-secondary, either directly from high school or as adults. Current research indicates that long-term income and health outcomes are most closely related to post-secondary access; therefore, monitoring this access is a necessary accountability measure of public education. *This series of five Research Briefs will explore key trends of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) post-secondary pathways and college readiness.*

### Five Year Post-secondary Pathways: Trends from 10 Cohorts

The Ontario Secondary Schools (OSS) curriculum<sup>1</sup> started with the Grade 9 Cohort of Fall 2000. They became our baseline TDSB cohort, followed for five years (until Fall 2005). The tenth cohort of TDSB students started Grade 9 in Fall 2009 and were followed until Fall 2014.

Over the past few decades there has been a worldwide increase in both secondary school graduation and post-secondary access, and the TDSB figures seem representative of this trend. Figure 1 shows the post-secondary patterns of the 10 cohorts, looking at student confirming an offer of admission from an Ontario university or college over Year 4 or Year 5 of high school. While a majority (56%) of students in the 2000 cohort confirmed they would attend post-secondary, this increased to slightly more than two thirds (67%) by the 2009 cohort.

Both university and college pathways have increased: university from 43% to 50%, college from 13% to 18%. Increases from the past few years have been concentrated amongst those going to college. Students not applying to post-secondary declined from 35% to 23%.<sup>2</sup>

The increase of post-secondary access is consistent with the TDSB's high school graduation increase from 69% to 84% of the same cohort, over the same period. However, the gap

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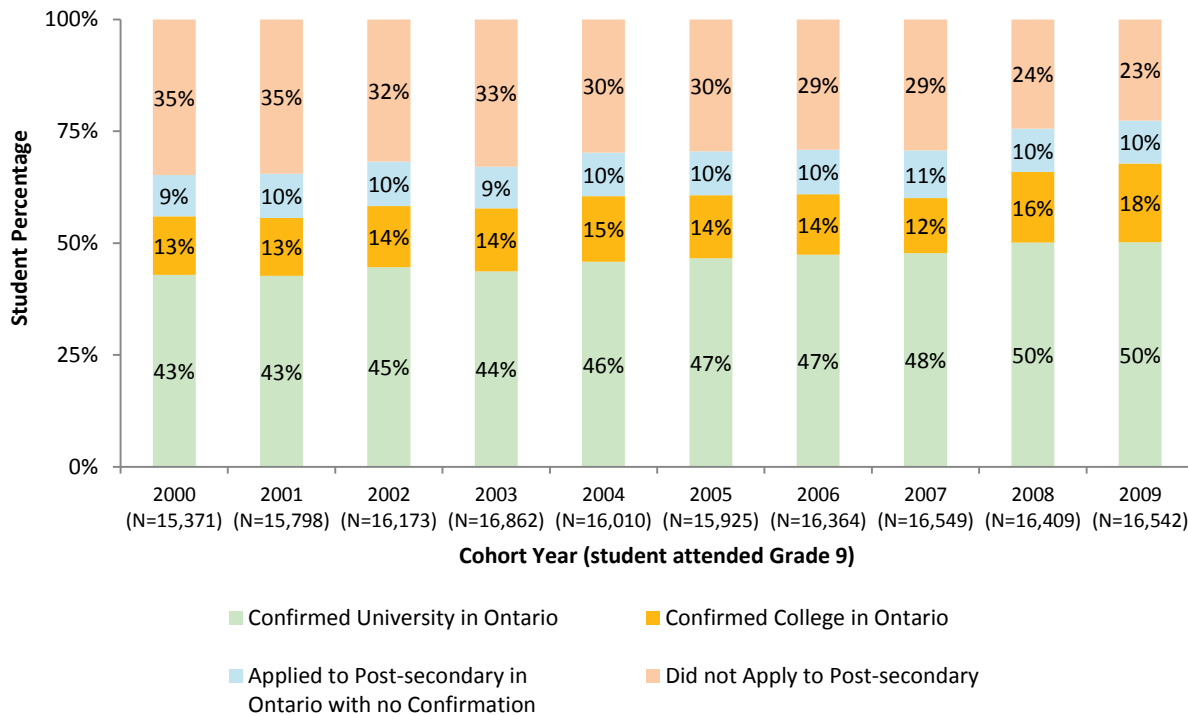
<sup>1</sup> Technically, the OSS curriculum was implemented in Fall 1999, but that was a hybrid cohort: the literacy curriculum had not been implemented and we found that many students took courses from the old OS:IS curriculum, depending on the course offerings of the school. Students who started Grade 9 in Fall 2000 were the first completely under the OSS curriculum.

<sup>2</sup> Students who apply to post-secondary but do not confirm in Ontario has remained consistent at 9-10%. This includes students who apply but received or confirmed no offers, and those who went outside Ontario. It may be that the proportion of students going outside Ontario has increased, but this cannot be confirmed from available information.

between students graduating and those not going to post-secondary has slightly increased, from 13% from the 2000 cohort to 17% from the 2009 cohort. This is potentially problematic given the most recent research indicating that a much more challenging future awaits students without a post-secondary education.<sup>3 4</sup>

The analyses in these Research Briefs will provide an introduction to the TDSB's post-secondary patterns.

**Figure 1: Post-secondary Confirmations for 10 TDSB Grade 9 Cohorts, Fall 2000 – Fall 2009**



<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center. (2014). The rising cost of not going to college. Pew Social Trends, February 11.

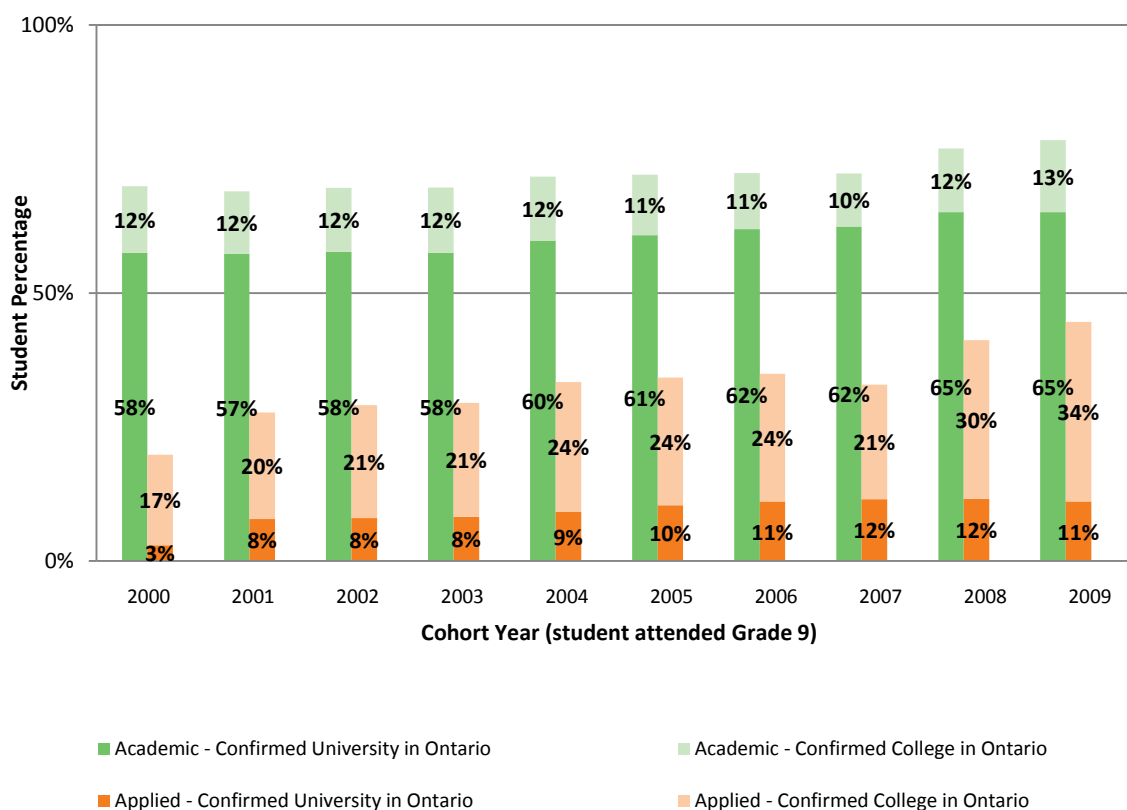
<sup>4</sup> Toronto Workforce Innovation Group. (2015) 95 months later: Turbulent Times in Toronto's Labour Market. <http://www.routestoemployment.ca>

## Programs of Study

While streaming was officially eliminated under the OSS curriculum, research findings show that nearly all students in Grade 9 who take courses in Academic Mathematics also take most of their other courses in the Academic Program of Study, and nearly all students in Grade 10 who take Academic English also take other courses in the Academic Program of Study.<sup>5</sup> We therefore examine post-secondary pathways according to the majority Program of Study of Grade 9 courses: Academic, Applied, and Locally-developed/Essentials.

As seen in Figure 2 and Table 1, a great deal of progress can be seen over 10 years (2000 to 2009), while very large gaps remain. The proportion of students taking Academic, Applied, and Locally-developed/Essential have all greatly increased, but the post-secondary access of students taking Applied courses more than doubled from 20% to 44%, while the post-secondary access of students taking Locally-developed/Essentials doubled from 9% to 18%. However, the majority of college-bound students continue to be those in the Academic Program of Study.

**Figure 2: Post-secondary Confirmations for 10 TDSB Grade 9 Cohorts by Academic and Applied Programs of Study, Fall 2000 – Fall 2009**



<sup>5</sup> 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.

**Table 1: Post-secondary Confirmations for 10 TDSB Grade 9 Cohorts by Program of Study, Fall 2000 – Fall 2009**

Cohort Year (when the student attended Grade 9)	Program of Study	Confirmed University in Ontario	Confirmed College in Ontario	Applied to Post-secondary in Ontario with No Confirmation	Did Not Apply to Post-secondary
2000	Academic (N=11,265)	<b>58%</b> 6,483	<b>12%</b> 1,394	<b>10%</b> 1,153	<b>20%</b> 2,235
	Applied (N=3,511)	<b>3%</b> 102	<b>17%</b> 592	<b>7%</b> 252	<b>73%</b> 2,565
	Essentials (N=360)	<b>3%</b> 10	<b>6%</b> 22	<b>2%</b> 7	<b>89%</b> 321
2001	Academic (N=11,317)	<b>57%</b> 6,486	<b>12%</b> 1,321	<b>11%</b> 1,202	<b>20%</b> 2,308
	Applied (N=3,220)	<b>8%</b> 250	<b>20%</b> 640	<b>9%</b> 301	<b>63%</b> 2,029
	Essentials (N=619)	<b>1%</b> 4	<b>12%</b> 75	<b>7%</b> 45	<b>80%</b> 495
2002	Academic (N=12,002)	<b>58%</b> 6,921	<b>12%</b> 1,426	<b>10%</b> 1,249	<b>20%</b> 2,406
	Applied (N=3,363)	<b>8%</b> 269	<b>21%</b> 709	<b>9%</b> 306	<b>62%</b> 2,079
	Essentials (N=716)	<b>2%</b> 14	<b>11%</b> 80	<b>7%</b> 48	<b>80%</b> 574
2003	Academic (N=12,283)	<b>58%</b> 7,058	<b>12%</b> 1,496	<b>10%</b> 1,263	<b>20%</b> 2,466
	Applied (N=3,708)	<b>8%</b> 305	<b>21%</b> 788	<b>7%</b> 265	<b>63%</b> 2,350
	Essentials (N=754)	<b>1%</b> 6	<b>12%</b> 90	<b>5%</b> 35	<b>83%</b> 623
2004	Academic (N=11,682)	<b>60%</b> 6,987	<b>12%</b> 1,387	<b>11%</b> 1,221	<b>18%</b> 2,087
	Applied (N=3,623)	<b>9%</b> 330	<b>24%</b> 880	<b>8%</b> 293	<b>59%</b> 2,120
	Essentials (N=606)	<b>1%</b> 7	<b>14%</b> 85	<b>7%</b> 44	<b>78%</b> 470

**Table 1: Post-secondary Confirmations for Ten TDSB Grade 9 Cohorts by Program of Study, Fall 2000 – Fall 2009 (continued)**

Cohort Year (when the student attended Grade 9)	Program of Study	Confirmed University in Ontario	Confirmed College in Ontario	Applied to Post-secondary in Ontario with No Confirmation	Did Not Apply to Post-secondary
2005	Academic (N=11,612)	<b>61%</b> 7,062	<b>11%</b> 1,310	<b>11%</b> 1,233	<b>17%</b> 2,007
	Applied (N=3,439)	<b>10%</b> 356	<b>24%</b> 819	<b>8%</b> 273	<b>58%</b> 1,991
	Essentials (N=758)	<b>2%</b> 11	<b>16%</b> 118	<b>6%</b> 43	<b>77%</b> 586
2006	Academic (N=11,856)	<b>62%</b> 7,341	<b>11%</b> 1,240	<b>11%</b> 1,314	<b>17%</b> 1,961
	Applied (N=3,573)	<b>11%</b> 396	<b>24%</b> 851	<b>8%</b> 285	<b>57%</b> 2,041
	Essentials (N=696)	<b>1%</b> 9	<b>17%</b> 115	<b>6%</b> 42	<b>76%</b> 530
2007	Academic (N=12,001)	<b>62%</b> 7,488	<b>10%</b> 1,183	<b>12%</b> 1,399	<b>16%</b> 1,931
	Applied (N=3,528)	<b>12%</b> 406	<b>21%</b> 756	<b>9%</b> 317	<b>58%</b> 2,049
	Essentials (N=728)	<b>1%</b> 8	<b>12%</b> 85	<b>5%</b> 35	<b>82%</b> 600
2008	Academic (N=11,957)	<b>65%</b> 7,788	<b>12%</b> 1,417	<b>10%</b> 1,241	<b>13%</b> 1,511
	Applied (N=3,643)	<b>12%</b> 421	<b>30%</b> 1,078	<b>9%</b> 316	<b>50%</b> 1,828
	Essentials (N=588)	<b>1%</b> 7	<b>16%</b> 93	<b>6%</b> 36	<b>77%</b> 452
2009	Academic (N=12,120)	<b>65%</b> 7,893	<b>13%</b> 1,620	<b>10%</b> 1,233	<b>11%</b> 1,374
	Applied (N=3,543)	<b>11%</b> 393	<b>34%</b> 1,186	<b>9%</b> 304	<b>47%</b> 1,660
	Essentials (N=645)	<b>2%</b> 12	<b>16%</b> 106	<b>8%</b> 49	<b>74%</b> 478

\*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

## SUMMARY

The TDSB patterns are representative of the worldwide increase in post-secondary access. Since the first TDSB cohort in the OSS curriculum started Grade 9 in Fall 2000, the proportion of students confirming an offer of admission from an Ontario university or college has increased from 56% to 67% over 10 years. At the same time, the gap between students who graduate and those going onto post-secondary has increased as well, from 13% to 17% over the decade. In looking at the Grade 9 Program of Study, post-secondary access of Academic, Applied, and Locally-developed/Essentials have all increased, with the greatest increase seen amongst students taking Applied and Locally-developed/Essential. Despite this progress, most students taking non-Academic programming are not going to post-secondary after high school. Furthermore, most of the students going to college took Academic, not Applied, programming, although according to the OSS curriculum, the Applied program is intended for the college pathways. Results therefore show great progress, but noticeable gaps remain.

## RESEARCH BRIEFS ON POST-SECONDARY PATHWAYS

The next research briefs will summarize the TDSB's post-secondary pathways from the decade of cohort studies, including the following:

- Socio-demographic patterns
- Ontario post-secondary institutions and key programs
- College progress: the TDSB-Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) cohort study of TDSB students in Ontario colleges
- College progress: TDSB students with Special Education Needs (from the TDSB-OCAS study)