

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

Research Brief 4: The Ontario College Application Service – Toronto District School Board Cohort Study: Students with Special Education Needs

Previous research^{1 2} found that most students with Special Education Needs (SEN) excluding Gifted did not make the direct transition to post-secondary school, and most who did, went to college. Those college-bound students with SEN are the subject of this Research Brief.

The Population: There were 15,980 Toronto District School Board (TDSB) students who entered Ontario colleges between 2009 and 2011 (see Research Brief No. 3 for more detail). Of those students, 2,620 (or 16%) were identified as having SEN excluding Gifted while in the TDSB; while 13,360 (or 84%) had no record of SEN excluding Gifted.

Table 1 shows the characteristics of students with disabilities in our college study, compared to all TDSB cohort students with SEN.

Students with a Learning Disability (LD) exceptionality and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) only are somewhat over-represented, compared to those with Mild Intellectual Disability (MID) and those with other exceptionalities.

Table 1: Characteristics of Students with Disabilities

Disability Category	COLLEGE 3 Cohorts	%	TDSB 8 Cohorts	%
Learning Disability	1,201	46	6,301	42
Mild Intellectual Disability	271	10	2,138	14
Other Exceptionalities Excluding Gifted	205	8	1,588	11
IEP Only	943	36	5,161	34
Total	2,620	100	15,188	100

*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

¹ Brown, R. & Parekh, G. (2016). *The intersection of disability, achievement, and equity: A system review of special education in the TDSB* (Research Report No. 12-13-12). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.

² Robson, K., et al. (2014). *The intersectionality of post-secondary pathways: The case of high school students with special education needs*. Mississauga, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Review of Sociology.

College Students With and Without Special Education Needs

Table 2: Characteristics of College Students With and Without SEN Excluding Gifted, 2009-10 to 2011-12 College Cohorts

COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES		
DEMOGRAPHICS - COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES	With	Without
Gender - Percentage Male	58%	49%
Average age (when starting college)	20	20
Average Neighbourhood Income	\$101,081.54	\$89,141.80
Proportion Speaking English only	63%	52%
SECONDARY SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS		
Grade 9 Program of Study - Academic	28%	71%
Grade 9 Program of Study - Applied	57%	27%
Grade 9 Program of Study - Essentials	14%	2%
Average Grade 9 Absenteeism Rate	5%	4%
Average Grade 11-12 Mark	65	64
COLLEGE STUDY AREA		
College Study Area - Arts	45%	38%
College Study Area - Business	25%	31%
College Credential - Diploma	50%	46%
College Credential - Certificate	24%	16%
COLLEGE PERSISTENCE		
Time in College (average months)	14	14
Proportion Graduated (in progress)	30%	30%

To summarize Table 2:

- Generally, students with SEN excluding Gifted took non-Academic courses in Grade 9 (Applied and Locally-developed/Essentials) while those without SEN excluding Gifted took Academic programming.
- Students with SEN excluding Gifted were more likely to be male, to speak English only, and to come from higher income neighbourhoods
- Students with SEN excluding Gifted were more likely to take Arts in college while those without SEN excluding Gifted were more likely to take Business. Students with SEN excluding Gifted were more likely to take Certificate (one year) programs.
- Once students arrive in college it would appear - so far - that there is no difference between those with and without SEN excluding Gifted, in either time taken in school or graduation.
- However, we also know that college students tend to take longer to complete their program requirements than the supposed timeframe (e.g., one year for a certificate program) and to transfer programs. We therefore need to follow these students for a longer time period to get a more complete picture.