Toronto District School Board

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Absenteeism in the TDSB

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How is the Absenteeism Rate Calculated?

Schools are required to report the number of days each month that the student was absent. The absenteeism 'rate' is calculated by dividing the number of days the student was absent by the number of days that student was registered in TDSB over the year. For example, if a student was absent 18.5 days out of 185 school days in the year, his or her absenteeism rate is 10%.

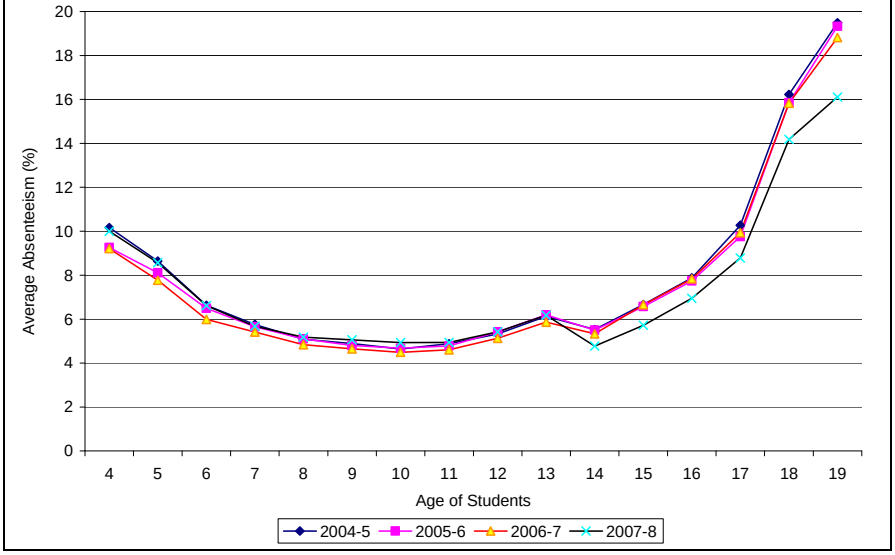
Absenteeism by Age

Figure 1 represents the overall absenteeism rates by age of student, from 4 years of age (age-appropriate for JK) up to age 19 (to include any students who take additional years to finish high school).

Using enrolment 'snapshots' as of October 31 each year, four years of absenteeism data have been calculated from 2004-5 through 2007-8.

The graph illustrates that each age or grade level has a consistent overall absenteeism rate.

Figure 1: Mean Absenteeism by Student Age, TDSB 2004-5, 2005-6, 2006-7 and 2007-8



Generally absenteeism rates:

- are somewhat higher among 4-5 year old students (Junior and Senior Kindergarten) compared to other elementary students
- are fairly stable throughout the elementary school years from ages 6 to 13 (Grades 1 to 8)
- rise in secondary school from age 14 upwards to age 19 (Grades 9 through 12)

Absenteeism and Other Demographic Factors

- Based on 2007-8 data, there is a clear relationship between neighbourhood income and absenteeism – students residing in low poverty/ high income neighbourhoods have lower absenteeism rates, and vice versa.
- Students living with two parents have lower absenteeism than those in other family situations.
- Among secondary students, those taking a majority of their courses in the Academic program of study have lower absenteeism than those taking other types of courses.

Policy Implications

- At-risk students missing more than a half day of school per week should get a "yellow flag"; while students missing more than a day of school per week should get a "red flag"
- High absenteeism is usually found more at the secondary school level, than in the elementary
- There are many causes of absenteeism, and the ways to address those causes are often multi-disciplinary and focused on individual students. A 'one size fits all' process rarely works.

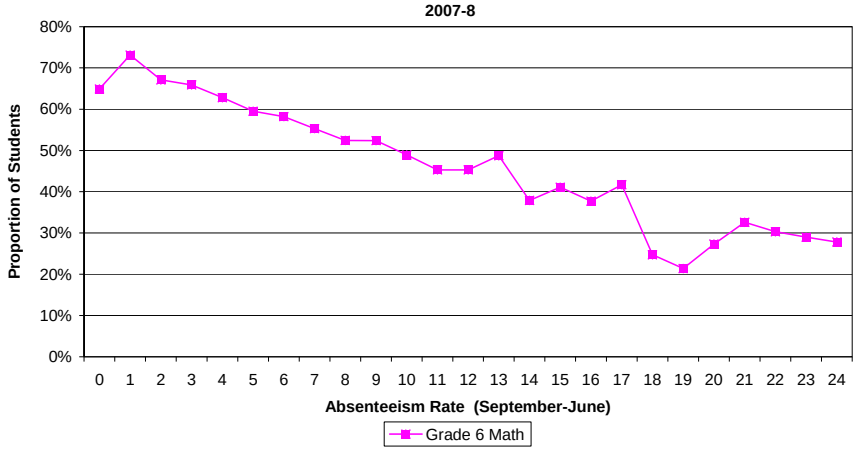
Absenteeism and . . .

Academic Success

There is a strong relationship between the annual absenteeism rate of TDSB students and their academic success.

Figure 2: The majority of students with an absenteeism rate of less than 10% (e.g. missed less than half a day a week) were performing at or above the provincial standard (Level 3 or 4) in EQAO's 2007-8 Mathematics assessment. Most students with an absenteeism rate of more than 10% were below the provincial standard.

Figure 2: Grade 6 Absenteeism (September-June) and Proportion of Students at Level 3-4 EQAO Math 2007-8



Graduation and Dropout Rates

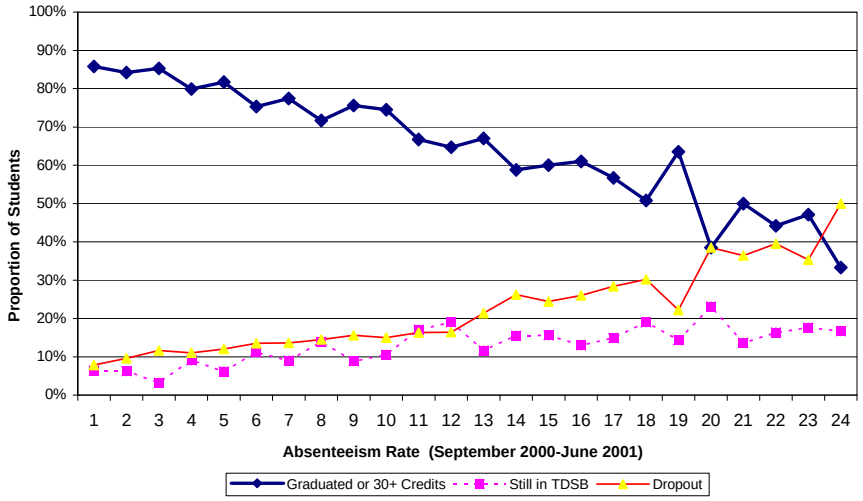
Figure 3: The absenteeism rate of the Grade 9 cohort of students in Fall 2000 influences graduation and dropout rates at the end of five years of secondary school (Fall 2005).

Three quarters or more of students with low absenteeism rates (i.e. less than 10% in Grade 9) had graduated by the end of five years of secondary school.

Between half to 70% of students with a Grade 9 absenteeism rate ranging from 10-19% had graduated at the end of five years.

Students who were absent at least 20% of the time (missing a day a week or more) were most at-risk of dropping out.

Figure 3: Grade 9 Absenteeism (September 2000 to June 2001) and Secondary Achievement by Fall 2005



Credit Accumulation

Figure 4: Five years of absenteeism and credit accumulation data for students in Grade 10 show a very consistent pattern of high absenteeism and being on track for graduating (i.e. defined as achieving 15 or more credits by the end of Grade 10).

While comparatively few students with low absenteeism rates of less than 10% were at-risk of not graduating on time; the proportion of at-risk Grade 10 students rises dramatically as their absenteeism rate increases.

Three quarters or more of those students with an absenteeism rate of 20% or more were considered to be at-risk.

Figure 4: Grade 10 Absenteeism (September-June) and Proportion of Students 15 or More Credits (Age-appropriate Grade 10 Students)