



## THE GRADE 9 COHORT OF FALL 2002: A FIVE-YEAR COHORT STUDY, 2002-2007

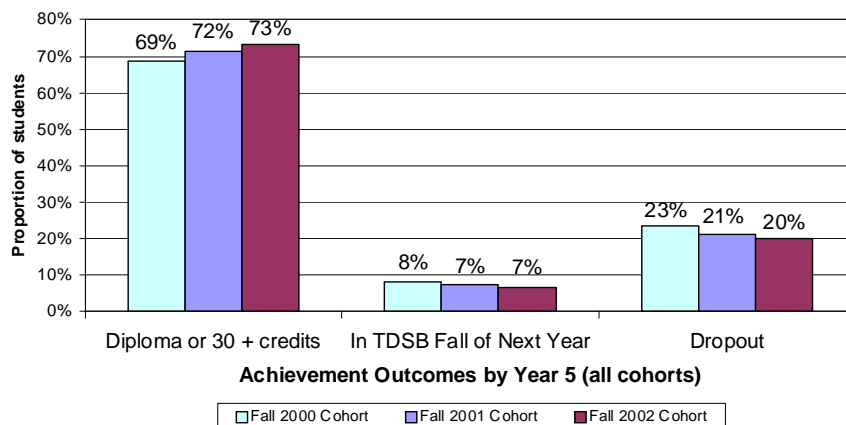
Prepared by Robert S. Brown

### Overview

This is the third cohort of Grade 9 students in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) who were tracked for five years, from Fall 2002 to Fall 2007. When the 2,030 students who transferred out of the TDSB to another educational authority are excluded, the following groups remained:

- **Graduates:** 73% of the students (11,836 out of 16,173) had graduated by the end of Year 5 and received an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or successfully completed 30 or more credits;
- **Still in TDSB:** 7% of the students (1,080) were still enrolled in the TDSB in the Fall 2007 for Year 6 of secondary school; and
- **Dropped Out:** 20% of the students (3,257) had dropped out by the end of Year 5, either leaving the TDSB without graduating or without a record of transferring.

Figure 1: Grade 9 Cohorts of Fall 2000, Fall 2001, and Fall 2002:  
Outcomes at the End of Five Years of Secondary School



### How does this cohort compare with earlier cohorts?

Compared to the Fall 2000 cohort, there has been:

- a 4% increase in graduates
- a 3% decline in dropouts
- a 1% decrease in students staying for a 6<sup>th</sup> year of study

These results reflect a continuing trend over the past decade.

### Some of the gaps are beginning to narrow

Although significant differences still remain, there were signs that the gaps in graduation rates were narrowing between some sub-groups, such as :

- Grade 9/10 Programs of Study (i.e. students taking Academic compared to Applied and Locally-Developed courses)
- Female and male students
- Age-appropriate and older students

A lower drop out rate was evident for most neighbourhood income groups compared to the Fall 2000 cohort. Furthermore, the dropout rate decline of the lowest income group (from 34% to 26%) was greater than the highest income group (13% to 12%).

## Who are our at-risk students?

Over the three cohorts, there have been consistent findings about students at-risk of not graduating, and most of these characteristics are clearly identifiable in the first two years of high school. Students with these characteristics are more likely to be at-risk:

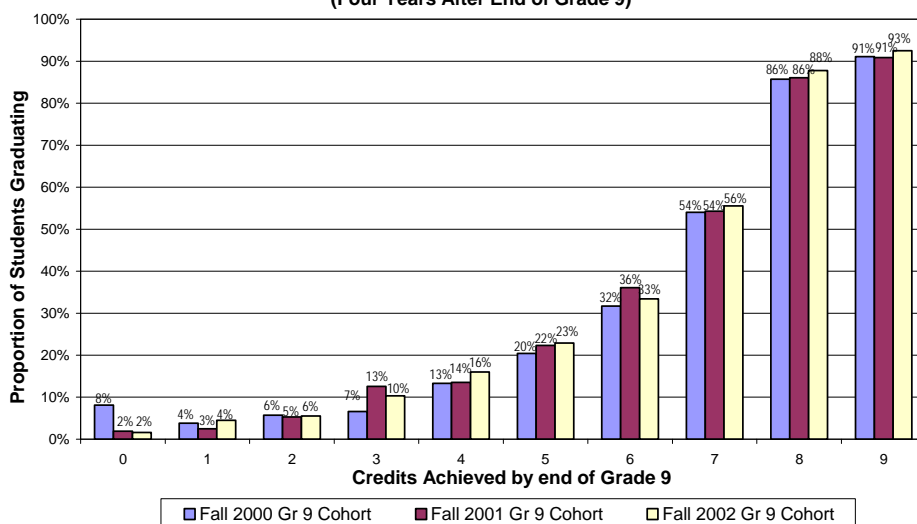
- Student Program of Study: Taking a majority of Grade 9 and 10 credits in the Applied or Locally-Developed (Essentials) programs of study
- Grades: Marks of less than 60 in English, Mathematics, or Science, in Grade 8 or in Grade 9
- Credit Accumulation: Achieving fewer than seven credits by the end of Grade 9 and/or fewer than 15 credits by the end of Grade 10 (see Figure 2)
- Neighbourhood Income: Residing in lower income neighbourhoods
- Age: Older than the age-appropriate year of birth when they started school
- Region of Birth: Born in the English-speaking Caribbean, Central and South America/Mexico, and Eastern Africa
- Student Language: Speaking Portuguese, Spanish, or Somali at home
- Absenteeism: Higher absenteeism rates (missing more than 10% of instructional days in Grades 9 or 10)
- Grade 10 Literacy Test: Deferred from writing the Grade 10 Literacy test the first time and/or absent during the writing of the test
- Gender: Male students

## Post-secondary is now the majority pathway

Two-thirds of the students in this

cohort applied to Ontario post-secondary institutions in 2006 or 2007. Based on previous patterns, this would likely mean that just over half of cohort students (51%) would attend post-secondary institutions in 2007. Only 8% of high school graduates in this cohort did not apply to post-secondary schools.

Figure 2: Graduation Rate of Grade 9 Students Based on Credit Accumulation (Four Years After End of Grade 9)



## Streaming continues to exist

Almost all (nineteen of twenty) of cohort students taking a majority of University courses in Grades 11/12 had taken a majority of Academic courses in Grades 9/10. This highlights a discrepancy between the official Ministry curriculum documents – where streaming no longer exists – and the reality of students' lives, where streaming exists in a form very similar to the earlier Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior (OS:IS) curriculum. The question of whether streaming in schools is worse than no streaming cannot be answered here – with the current system, the proper documentation and analysis of the streaming process is difficult because of the lack of acknowledgement that the process exists.

The complete Grade 9 Cohort study will be made available May 19, 2009 in the Research Report section of the TDSB website ([http://www.tdsb.on.ca/\\_site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=172&menuid=3019&pageid=2403](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/_site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=172&menuid=3019&pageid=2403))