



Research Report

**SPECIAL EDUCATION / SPECIAL NEEDS
INFORMATION IN THE TDSB, 2005-6**

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Special Education/Special Needs Information in the TDSB 2005-6
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Pg. 1
INTRODUCTION	Pg. 4
Purpose.....	Pg. 4
Who are Students with Special Needs?	Pg.4
How are Students with Special Needs Identified?	Pg. 4
Information in this Report	Pg. 5
RESULTS	Pg. 5
How Many Students with Special Needs are in the TDSB?	Pg. 5
Different Definitions of Special Needs: A Blind Spot?	Pg. 7
Which are the TDSB’s Most Frequent Exceptionalities?	Pg. 8
What is the Gender Breakdown of Students with Special Needs?	Pg. 8
What Proportion of Students with Special Needs are Born in Canada?	Pg. 9
When Do Students Become Officially Identified as Special Needs?	Pg. 10
What are the Achievement Patterns of Students with Special Needs?	Pg. 11
What Happens in the Transition to Grade 9?	Pg. 13
NEXT STEPS	Pg. 13
TABLES	
Table 1 – TDSB Reported Exceptionality Oct 31 2005	Pg. 8
Table 2 – Gender Breakdown of Special Needs and All TDSB Students.....	Pg. 8
Table 3 – Gender Breakdown of IPRC’d Exceptionalities	Pg. 9
Table 4 – Students Born Inside and Outside of Canada	Pg. 9

FIGURES

Figure 1 – TDSB Special Needs 2005-6	Pg. 6
Figure 2 – New IPRC'd Exceptionalities, and all TDSB Students: by Grade, 2005-6	Pg. 10
Figure 3 – New Non-identified and Local IEP Students by Grade, 2005-6...	Pg. 10
Figure 4 – EQAO Grade 6 Mathematic Results 2005-6: Students at Level 3 and 4 (Method 1).....	Pg. 12
Figure 5 – Grade 9 Cohort of 2005-6: Proportion of Students with < 7 Credits by Program.....	Pg. 12
Figure 6 – First Time Eligible Students 2006: Proportion of Students Passing the OSSLT (Revised).....	Pg. 13

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research and Information Services worked with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Data Warehouse, Special Education, and Student Information Services to develop a common reporting process, and to resolve discrepancies around Special Education information. Periodic updates were provided to a committee of Special Education and administrative staff. The committee requested the data be used to provide the picture of Special Education in the TDSB as it existed in 2005-6, within the limitations of administrative data.

Who are Students with Special Needs?

Students with Special Needs have unique strengths and needs (behavioural, communication, intellectual, and physical) that may require more specialized or intensive programs and supports.

How are Students with Special Needs Identified?

They are identified in three ways. 1) Under the formal the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (**IPRC**). Students are identified into one or more of 14 'exceptionalities'. 2) Students may not be formally identified through the IPRC process, but are identified through the School Support team and receive programming through Special Education. These students are called "**Non-identified**". These students should have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) (although some do not). 3) Some students are identified by their teachers and the School Support Team, and have a **current IEP**. They are receiving direct assistance through the classroom, rather than programming in Special Education.

How Many Students with Special Needs are in the TDSB?

In 2005-6, 37,847 students out of 274,052 (**14% of TDSB students**) were identified as students with Special Needs:

- 2,652 students (1.0%) were in **IPRC Gifted - Special Education Classes** (that is, they had been IPRC'd as Gifted, and were taking 50% or more of their classes in Special Education).
- 1,037 students (0.4%) were in **IPRC Gifted - Regular Classes** (that is, they had been IPRC'd as Gifted, and were taking the majority of their classes in the TDSB regular day classrooms).

- 9,826 students (3.6%) were in **IPRC Non-Gifted - Special Education Classes** (that is, they had been IPRC'd as one of the 13 non-Gifted Exceptionalities, and were taking 50% or more of their classes in Special Education).
- 6,525 students (2.4%) were in **IPRC Non-Gifted - Regular Classes** (that is, they had been IPRC'd in one of the 13 Non-Gifted exceptionalities, and were taking the majority of their classes in the TDSB regular day classrooms).
- 11,672 (4.3%) were **Non-identified** students (i.e. not IPRC'd but receiving Special Education programming during the 2005-6 school year).
- 6,135 students (2.2%) had Individual Education Plans (**IEP's**) and were receiving direct assistance in the classroom, rather than programming in Special education. Most students with IEP's receive programming from Special Education; these are the exceptions.

It should be noted that some reporting of "Special Needs" (e.g., EQAO) excludes IPRC'd Gifted students, since the achievement characteristics of those students are so different from other Special Needs students.

Different Definitions of Special Needs: A Blind Spot?

Currently, information on TDSB students with Special Needs is reported to two sources: the provincial testing authority, EQAO, which reports results of Special Needs students in the TDSB and the rest of the province; and the Ministry of Education, to which the Special Education department reports information. Unfortunately, the two have somewhat different definitions of what they mean by "Special Needs". EQAO looks at students who are IPRC'd, and also students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Special Education looks at students who are IPRC'd, and also students who are not IPRC'd, but who have Special Education programming - the 11,672 "Non-identified Special Needs" students above. There appears to be a bit of a blind spot in the student systems, in part because the IEP information is entered by the teachers or administrators in the schools, while the IPRC/Non-identified information is entered by people in the Special Education department. Approximately 6,000 students with Special Needs are missed using the Ministry definition, while 3,000 students with Special Needs are missed using the EQAO definition.

Selected Key Findings from 2005-06

- While there are 14 Ministry exceptionalities, the majority of the TDSB's IPRC'd students were in five exceptionalities: Gifted, Learning Disability (LD), Mild Intellectual Disability (MID), Developmental Disability (DD), and Behavioural.
- Students without Special Needs were equally male and female (50% male 50% female). However, nearly two thirds of Special Needs students (64%) were *male*.
- The formal IPRC process is for the most part an *elementary school process*. In 2005-6 only 3% of new Gifted exceptionalities and 10% of non-Gifted exceptionalities occurred in secondary. The majority of new exceptionalities were identified between Grades 3 and 6. Most IPRC'd students received exceptionality designations only after already possessing the less formal Special Needs recognition (Non-identified and/or IEP).
- Students with Special Needs were *less likely* to be born outside Canada (19%) than students without Special Needs (31%).
- When we looked at a variety of achievement results, we found that Gifted students achieved at a much *higher level* than the TDSB average; however, all non-Gifted students (IPRC, Non-identified, local IEP) achieved at a much *lower level* than the TDSB average. Figure 2 shows the outcomes for EQAO's Grade 6 Mathematics assessment, administered in May 2006.
- Many students who received full-time Special Education programming in Grade 8 were integrated into regular secondary classes when they enter Grade 9. However, many of these students *remained high risk*. We will have to follow these students over time to know their long-term fate.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

An earlier examination of TDSB Report Card, elementary and secondary EQAO, and SIS information on Special Education found some confusion in how "special need" was defined in all three sources. A further analysis found that at least part of the reason was due to the complexity of how students are categorized as 'special education' and 'special need', and how this information is reported.

Research and Information Services worked with the TDSB Data Warehouse, Special Education and Student Information Services to develop of common reporting process, and to resolve discrepancies around Special Education information. Periodic updates were provided to a committee of Special Education and administrative staff. The committee requested the data be used to provide the picture of Special Education in the TDSB as it exists in 2005-6, within the limitations of administrative data. This report will attempt to do this.

Who are Students with Special Needs?

Students with Special Needs have unique strengths and needs (behavioural, communication, intellectual and physical) that may require more specialized or intensive programs and supports.

How are Students with Special Needs Identified?

Students with Special Needs are identified by in three ways.

1. Under the formal IPRC process (the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee), under 14 'exceptionalities'. In the TDSB, most IPRC'd students have been identified with Gifted, Learning Disability (LD), Mild Intellectual Disability (MID), Developmental Disability (DD), or Behavioural exceptionalities. This formal IPRC process is what most people think of when talking about "Special Education" but as will be seen, this is only part of the picture.
2. Students may not be formally identified through the IPRC process yet receive programming through Special Education. These students are called "**Non-identified**", most of whom have also received an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

3. Some students are identified by their teachers and have a **current IEP**. They are receiving direct assistance through the classroom, rather than programming in Special Education.

Information in This Report

The base information in this report was Special Needs information taken from the Student Information System, on students attending the TDSB in 2005-6, and provided to Research and Information Services/Organizational Development by the TDSB's Data Warehouse in May, 2007. This in turn was linked to other demographic, achievement, and EQAO information.

RESULTS

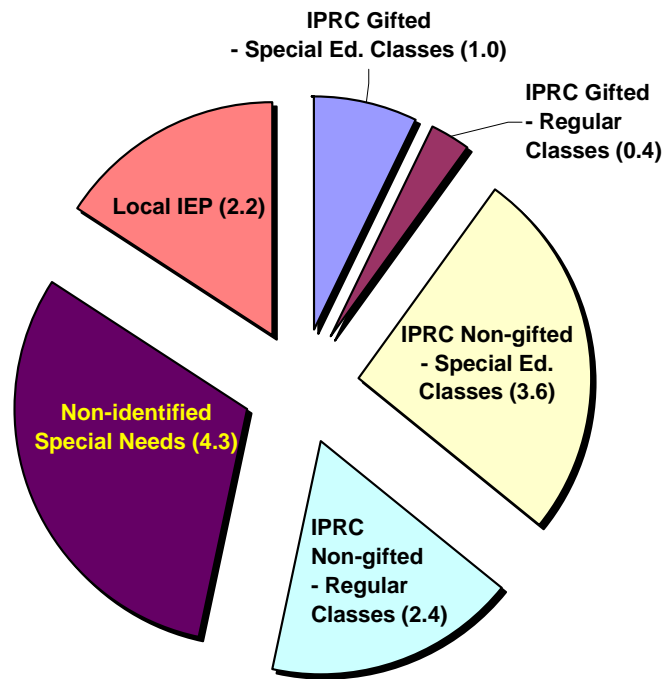
How Many Students with Special Needs are in the TDSB?

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- 2,652 students (1.0%) were in **IPRC Gifted—Special Education Classes** (that is, they had been IPRC'd as Gifted, and were taking 50% or more of their classes in Special Education).
- 1,037 students (0.4%) were in **IPRC Gifted—Regular Classes** (that is, they had been IPRC'd as Gifted, and were taking the majority of their classes in the TDSB regular day classrooms).
- 9,826 students (3.6%) were in **IPRC Non-Gifted—Special Education Classes** (that is, they had been IPRC'd as one of the 13 non-Gifted Exceptionalities, and were taking 50% or more of their classes in Special Education).
- 6,525 students (2.4%) were in **IPRC Non-Gifted—Regular Classes** (that is, they had been IPRC'd in one of the 13 Non-Gifted exceptionalities, and were taking the majority of their classes in the TDSB regular day classrooms).
- 11,672 (4.3%) were **Non-identified** students (i.e. not IPRC'd but receiving Special Education programming during the 2005-6 school year).

- 6,135 students (2.2%) had Individual Education Plans (IEP's) and were receiving direct assistance in the classroom, rather than programming in Special education. Most students with IEP's receive programming from Special Education; these are the exceptions.¹

Figure 1: TDSB Special Needs 2005-06



It should be noted that some reporting of “Special Needs” (e.g. EQAO) excludes IPRC'd Gifted students, since the achievement characteristics of those students are so different from other Special Needs students.

¹ With the exception of the “Local IEP” students who are not identified through Special Education, this categorization of Special Needs follows the overall logic of the information reported to the Ministry of Education. There will be comparatively minor differences from what is reported in “Section J” of the October Report, since the information shown here was extracted in May 2007, and between Fall 2005 and Spring 2007 student records may have been changed. For example, the October report lists 11,863 Non-identified Special Needs, compared to the 11,672 students listed this way in the Data Warehouse extract.

Different Definitions of Special Needs: A Blind Spot?

Currently, information on TDSB students with Special Needs is reported to two sources: the provincial testing authority, EQAO, which reports results of students with Special Needs in the TDSB and the rest of the province; and the Ministry of Education, to which the Special Education department reports information.

Unfortunately, the two have somewhat different definitions of what they mean by “Special Needs”. EQAO looks at students who are IPRC’d, and also students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Special Education looks at students who are IPRC’d, and also students who are not IPRC’d, but who have Special Education programming—the 11,672 “Non-identified Special Needs” students above. There appears to be a bit of a blind spot in the student systems, in part because the IEP information is entered by the teachers/administrators in the schools, while the IPRC/Non-identified information is entered by people in the Special Education department. Consequently:

- a. approximately 3,000 of these “Non-identified” students do not have IEP’s and are included in the information sent to the Ministry but are not included in the information supplied to EQAO; while
- b. the 6,000 “Local IEP” students identified above are included in the information sent to EQAO but are not included in the information supplied to the Ministry.

Which are the TDSB's Most Frequent Exceptionalities?

As noted above, the Ministry lists 14 exceptionalities for IPRC'd students; however, only 12 had students reported in the TDSB in 2005-6. Of these, 3 exceptionalities - Learning Disability, MID, and Gifted – accounted for 79% of IPRC'd students, and the other 9 exceptionalities accounted for a fifth of IPRC'd students.

Table 1 – TDSB Reported Exceptionality Oct 31 2005

Exceptionality	Frequency	Percent
Learning Disability	8436	42.1%
Gifted	3689	18.4%
Mild Intellectual Disability	3674	18.3%
Developmental Disability	1075	5.4%
Behavioural	1020	5.1%
Autism	930	4.6%
Physical Disability	375	1.9%
Language Impairment	368	1.8%
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	349	1.7%
Blind and Low Vision	64	0.3%
Multiple Exceptionalities	56	0.3%
Speech Impairment	4	0%
Total	20040	100%

What is the Gender Breakdown of Special Needs Students?

Students without Special Needs were equally male and female (50% male and 50% female). However, Special Needs students were disproportionately male (around two thirds).

Table 2: Gender Breakdown of Special Needs and All TDSB Students

Special Needs	Female	Male	Total
IPRC GIFTED--Special Ed Classes	36.3%	63.7%	100.0%
IPRC GIFTED--Regular Classes	39.4%	60.6%	100.0%
IPRCNONGIFTED--Special Ed Classes	31.1%	68.9%	100.0%
IPRC NONGIFTED--Regular Classes	32.2%	67.8%	100.0%
Non-identified Special Needs	38.8%	61.2%	100.0%
Local IEP	39.3%	60.7%	100.0%
Regular TDSB Students	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
All TDSB Students	48.0%	52.0%	100.0%

Table 3: Gender Breakdown of IPRC'd Exceptionalities

Exceptionality	Female	Male	Total
Autism	16.8%	83.2%	100.0%
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	43.8%	56.2%	100.0%
Learning Disability	30.5%	69.5%	100.0%
Language Impairment	26.1%	73.9%	100.0%
Gifted	37.2%	62.8%	100.0%
Mild Intellectual Disability	39.1%	60.9%	100.0%
Developmental Disability	38.1%	61.9%	100.0%
Physical Disability	37.3%	62.7%	100.0%
Behavioural	14.4%	85.6%	100.0%
All Exceptionalities	32.6%	67.4%	100.0%

*Note: exceptionalities with less than 100 students deleted

What Proportion of Students with Special Needs are Born in Canada?

Students with Special Needs were less likely to be born outside Canada (19%) than students without Special Needs (31%). Students with Gifted Exceptionalities attending full-time Special Education classes were an exception to this: 27% of these students were born outside Canada, much closer to the TDSB average.

Table 4: Students Born Inside and Outside of Canada

Special Needs	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	Total
IPRC GIFTED - Special Ed Classes	73.2%	26.8%	100.0%
IPRC GIFTED - Regular Classes	84.8%	15.2%	100.0%
IPRCNONGIFTED - Special Ed Classes	83.7%	16.3%	100.0%
IPRC NONGIFTED - Regular Classes	83.4%	16.6%	100.0%
Non-identified Special Needs	79.5%	20.5%	100.0%
Local IEP	78.6%	21.4%	100.0%
Regular TDSB Students	68.6%	31.4%	100.0%
All TDSB Students	70.3%	29.7%	100.0%

When Do Students Become Officially Identified as Special Needs?

As noted above, students are identified in three ways: the most formal and public process, the Ministry-designated IPRC exceptionalities; students without the formal designation but receiving Special Education instruction, the 'Non-identified' students; and students with a teacher-designated IEP only. Each has a different pattern².

Figure 2: New IPRC'd Exceptionalities, and all TDSB Students: by Grade, 2005-6

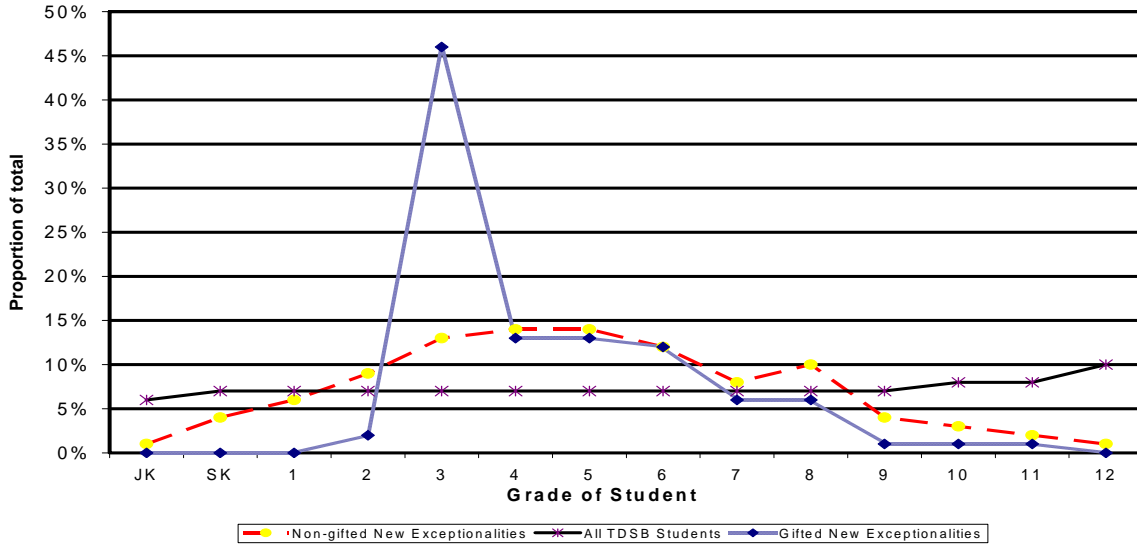
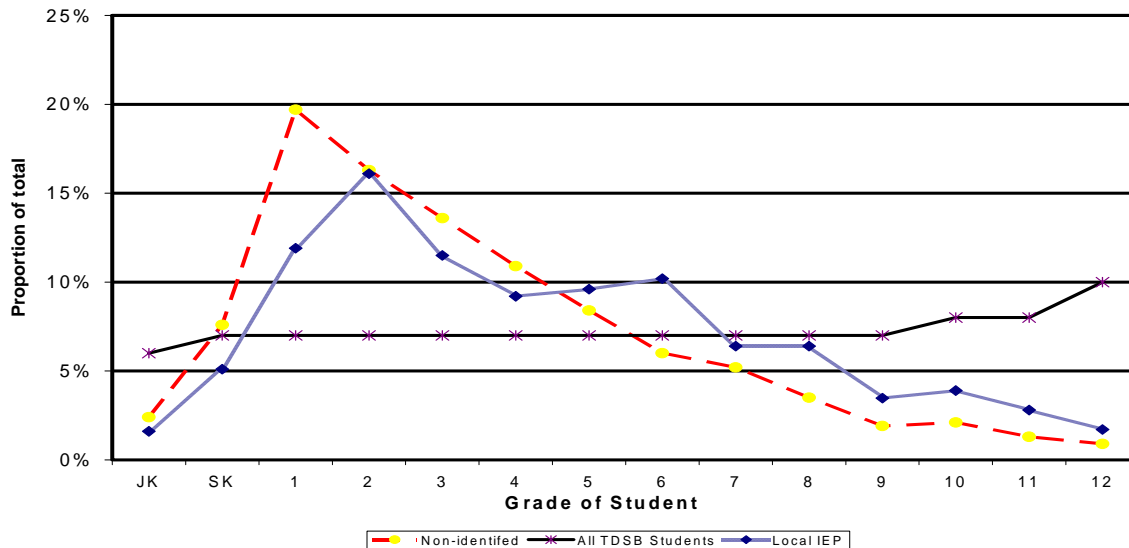


Figure 3: New Non-identified and Local IEP Students by Grade, 2005-6



² To find this pattern, we looked at the student program on October 31 2006, and looked back a year, October 31 2005, to see the changes. Thus for IPRC'd students, we looked at students who had an IPRC exceptionality on October 31 2006, but had NOT had an exceptionality a year earlier, October 31 2005.

As seen in Figure 2, most new IPRC exceptionalities occurred at the elementary panel. Thus, while two thirds of TDSB students were in elementary grades while one third were in secondary grades, only 3% of new Gifted exceptionalities and 10% of new Non-Gifted exceptionalities were secondary. The majority of new exceptionalities occurred between Grades 3 and 6 (almost half of new Gifted exceptionalities occur in Grade 3 alone).

In fact, the official IPRC designation appears to be a more formal designation of previously-recognized Special Needs. When we look at students who received a new IPRC designation, we found that 57% *already* had the less formal recognition of Special Needs status in the previous school year: either Non-identified Special Education programming (36%) or local IEP designation (21%).³

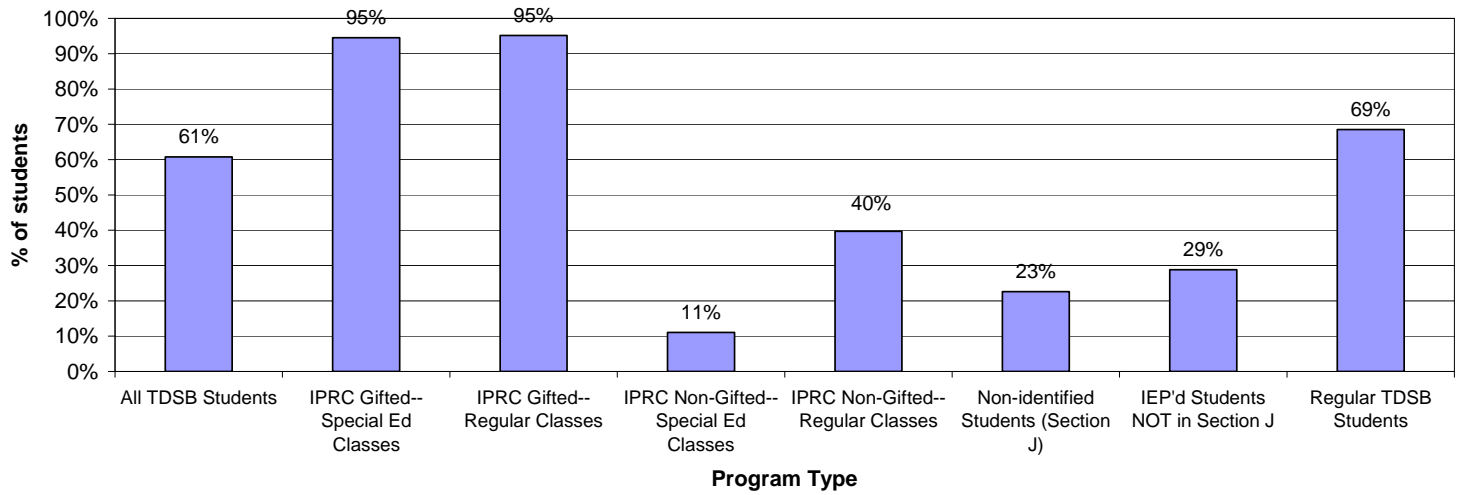
Figure 3 shows the grade pattern of new Non-identified and local IEP students. As with newly IPRC'd students, the designation mostly takes place in the elementary panel (94% of new Non-identified and 88% of students with new local IEP's). However, students in these more informal processes tend to be identified earlier than IPRC'd students. Nearly half (46%) of the new Non-identified and over a third (35%) of students with new local IEP'd students were identified between JK and Grade 2; by comparison, only 16% of students with new IPRC's were designated between JK and Grade 2. The single most frequent grade for new Non-identified students was Grade 1; the single most frequent grade for new local IEP'd students was Grade 2; and the single most frequent grade for new formal IPRC's was Grade 3. Again, this points to a cumulative process in recognizing Special Need, with formal exceptionality for many students coming after the Non-formal and local IEP designation.

What are the Achievement Patterns of Students with Special Needs?

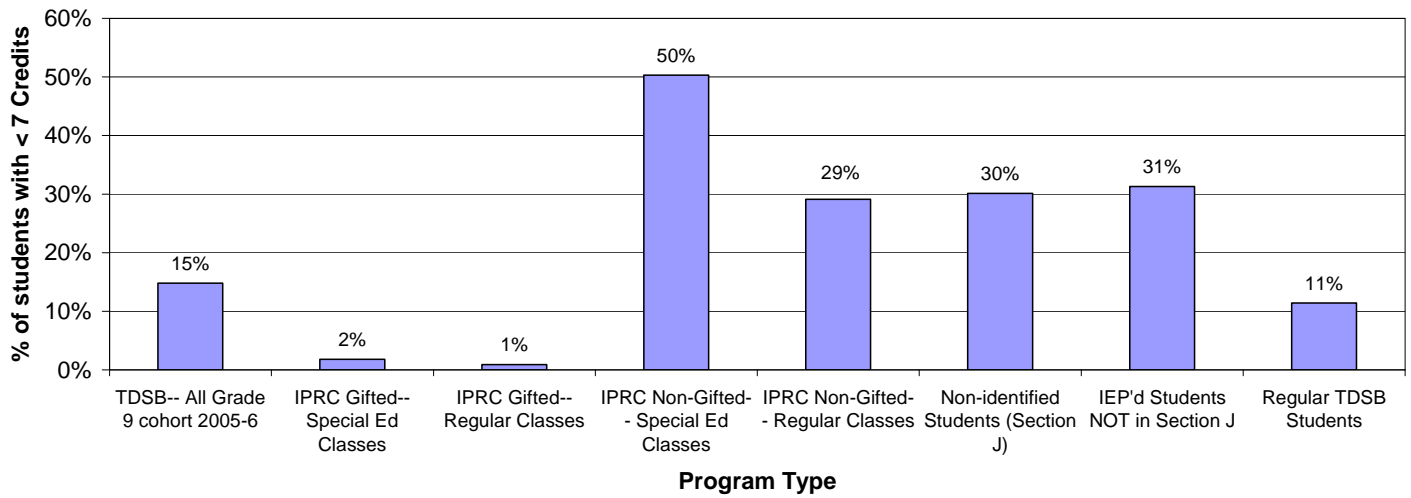
Figures 4-6 show the achievement of 2005-6 students in three key achievement thresholds: EQAO's Grade 6 Math assessment; the credit accumulation of Grade 9 students; and the performance of Grade 10 students in passing the provincial literacy test. In all three, we found that Gifted students achieved at a might higher level than the TDSB average; however, all non-Gifted students with Special Needs (IPRC, Non-identified, local IEP) achieved at a much lower level than the TDSB average.

³ When Gifted students are excluded, the proportion of Non-Gifted students who had previous Special Needs recognition rises to 75%: 48% were Non-identified in the previous year, while 27% had a local IEP in the previous year. Thus, only 25% of new Non-Gifted IPRC'd students were completely lacking previous Special Needs programming prior to the official Ministry exceptionality being formally recognized.

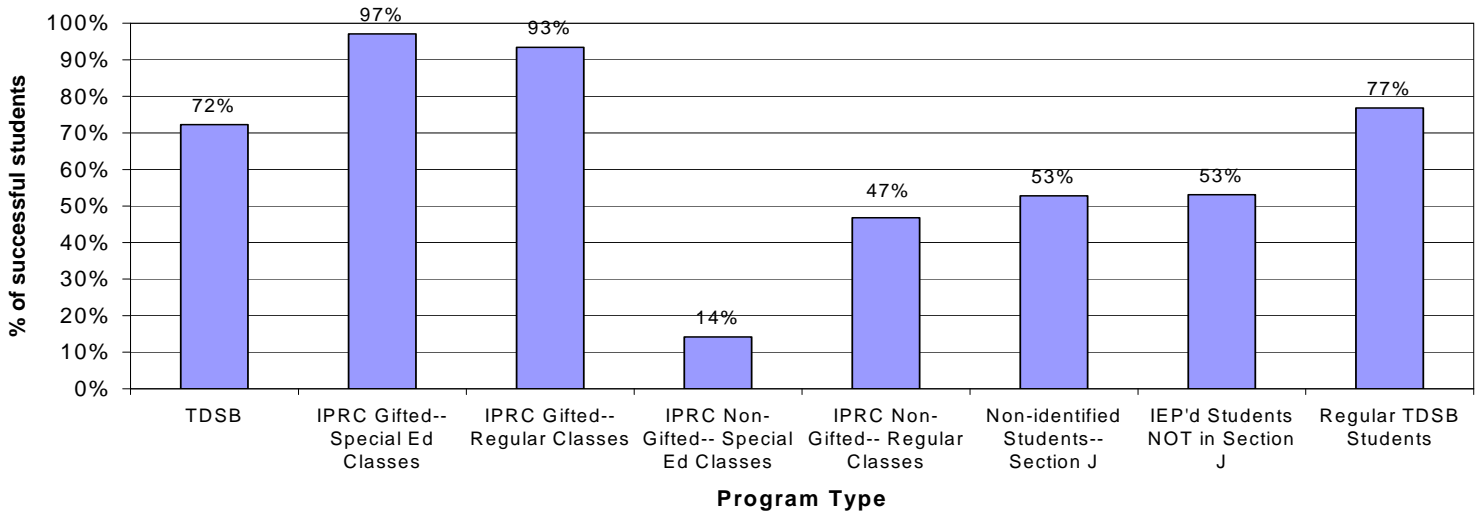
Figure 4 EQAO Grade 6 Math Results 2005-6: Students at Level 3/4 (Method 1)



**Figure 5 Grade 9 Cohort of 2005-6:
Proportion of Students with < 7 Credits by Program**



**Figure 6 First Time Eligible Students 2006:
Proportion of Students Passing the OSSLT (Revised)**



Note: Total Includes Exempt Students

What Happens in the Transition to Grade 9?

Slightly under half (44%) of Grade 8 students who had been in IPRC'd Non-Gifted-Special Education Classes, were integrated into regular classes when they transferred into Grade 9. Many of these students remained high risk, although the majority appear to have made a solid transition into secondary school. We will have to follow these students over time to know their long-term fate.

NEX T STEPS

This report is intended to provide an overview of Special Needs over 2005-6. A second report available in August will look at the issues and provide suggestions and recommendations improving our Special Needs services and programs.