

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

Research Brief 3: The Ontario College Application Service – Toronto District School Board Cohort Study

The pilot study combines two cohort studies: it is the first to follow Toronto District School Board (TDSB) students as they progress through Ontario's Community College system. It examines what happened to TDSB students in the Grade 9 cohorts as they entered Ontario community colleges. The study (which has several components) is a joint research project involving the TDSB, Ontario College Application Service (OCAS), Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA), and the Ministry of Education. We think of this as the pilot of future college readiness studies.

1. **Entering College:** Around 10,000 to 11,000 students who had been in the TDSB enter Ontario colleges every year. We looked at former TDSB students entering college over three years: 2009, 2010, and 2011.
2. **From the TDSB:** We looked at eight cohorts of students who started Grade 9 in the TDSB, from those starting Grade 9 in Fall 2000 to those starting Grade 9 in Fall 2007.

WE USED EIGHT TDSB GRADE 9 COHORTS

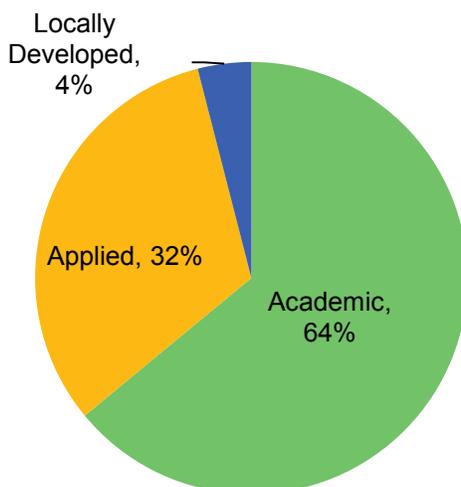
- Includes students who started secondary school as students in Grade 9 in Fall 2000 up to Fall 2007 (does not include students who entered the TDSB after the start of Grade 9, or students who transferred while in high school in other boards after starting Grade 9).
- Eight cohort total = **129,005**

WE ALSO USED THREE ONTARIO COLLEGE COHORTS

- Students in the cohort dataset who started an Ontario college in:
 - ❖ 2009
 - ❖ 2010
 - ❖ 2011
- A majority came from three TDSB cohorts - students who started Grade 9 in the TDSB in 2004 to 2006.

Programs of Study: TDSB research studies have found the majority of courses taken in Grade 9 to be closely related to post-secondary access: specifically, most students going to both university and college took a majority of their courses in the Academic Program of Study¹. This is confirmed in looking at students in the Grade 9 cohort who attended Ontario colleges: almost two thirds (64%) of college students took a majority of their Grade 9 courses in the Academic Program of Study; slightly under a third (32%) took Grade 9 courses in the Applied Program of Study; while 4% took courses in the Locally-developed/Essentials Program of Study (see Figure 1). Given that Applied is supposed to be the program of study for the college-bound, and yet most college students did not take Applied, this points to a mismatch between secondary school program of study and college pathways.

Figure 1: Grade 9 Program of Study for Students Attending Ontario Colleges, 2004-08 to 2010-14 Cohorts



College Program: Cohort students are most likely to take Arts programs (38%) followed by Business programs (31%). They also take Technology programs (17%) and Health programs (14%).

Diploma Type: Cohort students are most likely to be taking a two-year Diploma (47%) or a three-year Advanced Diploma (26%). They are less likely to enrol in a one-year Certificate (17%), a Graduate Certificate (4%), or Degree (6%). Note that this only shows part of the picture, since students may enrol in a college diploma and then transfer to a university, resulting in both a college diploma and university degree.

Next Steps: Our initial hypothesis was that most students would have graduated by the end of the analysis (2014). Instead, we found that most of the students were no longer active in their college program; indeed the average time in college was 14 months. However, this does not necessarily mean that students dropped out of college. Rather, there appears to be a great deal of mobility in college programs. Students take time off; they leave one program and go to another one, or transfer to a similar program in a different college. We are now working on a much longer-term college study.

¹ 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.