

School-Wide Structures: Pathways through Secondary School

Highlighting important relationships between school-level organizational strategies and students’ experiences provides key insights into potential policy directions and program action. All three fact sheets explore school structures at the secondary school level (Grades 9-12) as well as mechanisms of promotion and transference from Grade 8 to Grade 9. In this issue, the focus is on **School-Wide Structures**.

School-Wide Structures—What is it?

This fact sheet explores secondary-level school structures and their relationship to student demographics, achievement, and students’ sense of belonging. School-wide structures are defined as programming decisions and strategies that affect the entire school population as opposed to a particular segment within the school. The school-wide structures explored in this report include Specialty Arts schools, Alternative schools, Special Education schools, and schools that offer limited Academic and University Preparedness level courses. Through a detailed comparison, an exploration of school-wide structures revealed not only demographic trends in program participation, but also a strong relationship between school-wide programming decisions, student achievement, and students’ sense of belonging and citizenship within their school community.

Promotion and Transference

THE TREND:

- Overall, 78.2% of students were successfully promoted from Grade 8 to Grade 9, while only 18.5% were transferred.
- For students in Specialty Arts schools, 94.7% were successfully promoted from Grade 8 to Grade 9. This rate dropped to 64% for students attending Secondary Alternative schools, and further fell to 14.5% for students in Limited Academic schools. Only 0.6% of students attending Special Education schools were successfully promoted from Grade 8 to Grade 9. In regards to student rates of transference, students attending Special Education schools had the highest at 82.9%, followed closely by schools with Limited Academics at 81.8%. Students attending Alternative schools had a rate of transference of 32%, while students attending Specialty Art schools were at 3.4% (see Table 1).

Table 1: Rates of Promotion and Transference Across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12 (Grade 8-10 Students Only)

Promotion and Transference	Promoted	Transferred	Other
Alternative School	64%	32%	4%
Arts	94.7%	3.4%	1.9%
Special Ed	0.6%	82.9%	16.5%
Limited Academic	14.5%	81.8%	3.7%
Average Across TDSB	78.2%	18.5%	3%



School-Wide Structures: Pathways through Secondary School

What is it?

- Tables 2 to 4 establish **Secondary School Students' Pathways** across **Selected School-Wide Structures**, from **Program of Study**, to **Graduating on Time**, to **Post-secondary Access**.

Table 2: Grades 9-10 Program of Study across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12

Program of Study	Academic	Applied	Essentials	Undefined
Alternative School	46.6%	45.5%	3.4%	4.5%
Arts	88.7%	5.9%	0%	5.3%
Special Ed	0.0%	2.0%	67.7%	30.3%
Limited Academic	10.8%	59.2%	25.2%	4.7%
Average Across TDSB	65.7%	25.4%	4.1%	4.8%

THE TREND: The proportion of students taking the Grades 9-10 Academic Program of Study ranged from 88.7% of students in Specialty Arts schools, to 46.6% of students in Alternative schools, to 10.8% of students in Limited Academic schools, to 0% of students in Special Education schools.

- Schools that had the highest proportion of students in the Grades 9-10 Applied Program of Study were Alternative schools (45.5%) and schools with Limited Academic (59.2%).
- The proportion of students in the Essentials Program of Study rose from 0% of students in Specialty Arts schools, to 3.4% of students in Alternative schools, to 25.2% of students in Limited Academic schools, to 67.3% of students in Special Education schools (see Table 2).

Table 3: Graduation Rates across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12
Year 4 Students Only

Graduation	Graduated	Returned	Transferred	Dropped Out
Alternative School	20.4%	48.0%	4.3%	27.2%
Arts School	84.8%	10.7%	2.1%	2.3%
Special Education School	10.5%	74.3%	3.8%	11.4%
Limited Academic	13.2%	52.5%	4.8%	29.6%
Average Across TDSB	67.5%	22.0%	3.5%	7.0%

THE TREND: Across selected school-wide structures, students attending Arts schools had the highest rate of graduating on time at 84.8%. The highest rate of returning students was in Special Education schools (74.3%), followed by schools with Limited Academics (52.5%), and Alternative Schools (48%). Arts Schools had the lowest rate of students dropping out at 3.1%; whereas, schools with Limited Academics had the highest rate at 29.6% (see Table 3).

Table 4: Proportion of Post-secondary Confirmations across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12, Year 4 Students Only

Post-Secondary Confirmations	Confirm Ontario University	Confirm Ontario College	Applied PSE but no confirmation	Did not apply to PSE
Alternative School	8.8%	2.1%	3.1%	86.0%
Arts	35%	4.4%	21.5%	39%
Special Ed	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	99.2%
Limited Academic	0.0%	2.6%	0.9%	96.5%
Average Across TDSB	39.5%	6.4%	11.4%	42.7%

THE TREND: Across selected school-wide structures, students attending Arts schools were most likely to confirm an offer to an Ontario university at 35%, followed by students attending Alternative schools at 8.8%. There were no confirmations of university offers for students attending Special Education schools or schools with Limited Academics. The highest rate of students not applying for any post-secondary education were Special Education schools at 99.2% followed by schools with Limited Academics at 96.5% (see Table 4).

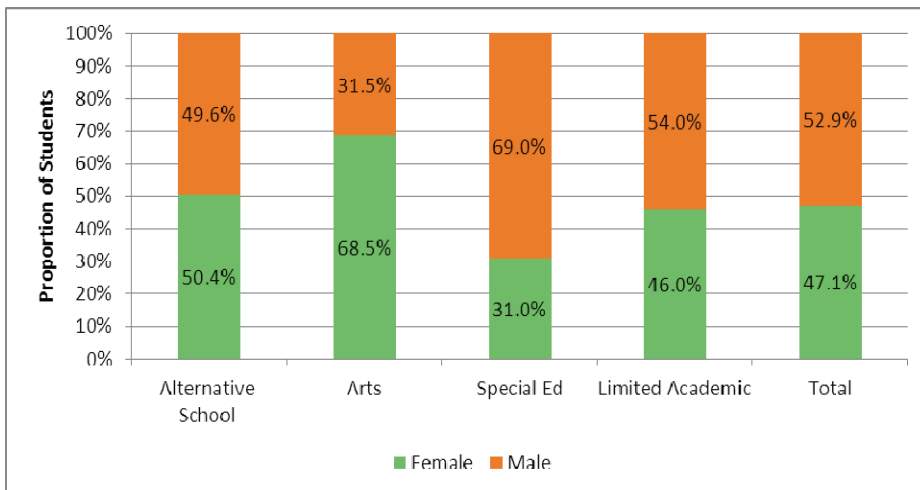
School-Wide Structures: Pathways through Secondary School

What is it?

- The following analyses explores the relationship between **Selected School-Wide Structures** across students' self-identified **Gender** and **Racial** categories.

THE TREND: The gender proportion in schools with Limited Academics roughly mirrors the overall gender proportion across the TDSB's secondary school panel. The proportion of female students is slightly higher in Alternative schools (50.4%) bringing the proportion of the two genders to near equal. The proportion of female students is notably higher in Specialty Arts schools (68.5%) and substantially smaller in Special Education schools (31%) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Gender across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12



THE TREND: The proportion of self-identified White students is close to triply represented in Arts Schools (73.4%), doubly in Alternative schools (54.4%) as well as over-represented in Specialty Arts schools (46.5%) and schools with Limited Academic opportunities (37.6%). The second largest racial category represented within Specialty Arts schools were self-identified Mixed students at 12.6%.

- Self-identified South Asian students are under-represented across all school-wide structures, most notably within the Specialty Arts schools (1.5%) and Alternative schools (8.3%).
- As a group, self-identified East Asian students were largely under-represented across Alternative schools (4.2%), Special Education schools (8%), and schools with Limited Academics (7.1%).
- Self-identified Black students are the largest racial category represented in Special Education schools (30.2%) where they are over doubly represented. Self-identified Black students are also over-represented in schools with Limited Academic opportunities (19.3%), but are under-represented in both Alternative schools (10.4%) and are only a third represented within Specialty Arts schools (3.2%) (see Table 5).

Table 5: Racial Categories across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12

Racial Categories	Aboriginal	Black	East Asian	Latin American	Middle Eastern	Mixed	South Asian	Southeast Asian	White
Alternative School	1.2%	10.4%	4.2%	2.8%	3.2%	12.6%	8.3%	2.9%	54.4%
Arts	0.5%	3.2%	4.3%	2.3%	0.7%	12.6%	1.5%	1.4%	73.4%
Special Ed	1.0%	30.2%	8.0%	4.5%	6.0%	6.1%	16.4%	2.3%	25.5%
Limited Academic	2.3%	19.3%	7.1%	2.8%	6.1%	8.5%	12.8%	3.4%	37.6%
TDSB Average	0.3%	12.6%	17.9%	2.2%	5.8%	6.9%	21.0%	4.9%	28.3%

School-Wide Structures: Pathways through Secondary School

What is it?

- The following analyses explores the relationship between **Selected School-Wide Structures** across students' **First Language** categories.

Table 5: Student Language across Selected School-Wide Structures

First Language	Arts School	Alternative School	Limited Academic School	Special Education School	Total
Albanian	0.4%	0.4%	0.2%	0.5%	0.5%
Arabic	0.1%	1.2%	1.7%	0.9%	1.6%
Bengali	0.2%	0.8%	1.1%	0.6%	2.0%
Chinese	2.7%	2.7%	4.6%	5.3%	13.3%
Dari		0.7%	1.7%	0.7%	0.8%
English	79.0%	75.3%	65.4%	59.8%	44.3%
French	3.4%	1.0%	0.9%	0.5%	0.8%
Greek	0.8%	0.5%	0.7%	0.9%	0.8%
Gujarati	0.1%	0.5%	0.8%	1.4%	1.8%
Hindi		0.5%	0.2%	0.3%	0.7%
Korean	0.6%	0.4%	0.6%	0.4%	1.6%
Pashto		0.1%	0.7%	0.3%	0.4%
Persian	0.4%	1.1%	1.6%	2.1%	2.2%
Portuguese	0.7%	0.4%	0.5%	1.3%	0.6%
Punjabi	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	1.1%	1.4%
Romanian	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%
Russian	1.4%	1.0%	0.2%	0.4%	1.4%
Serbian	1.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	0.7%
Somali	0.1%	0.7%	0.9%	2.9%	2.6%
Spanish	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	3.6%	2.4%
Tagalog	0.5%	1.7%	2.3%	0.9%	2.2%
Tamil	0.2%	2.1%	3.4%	5.6%	5.2%
Turkish	0.2%	0.4%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
Urdu		1.4%	1.6%	3.5%	3.5%
Vietnamese	0.5%	0.5%	0.3%	1.1%	1.9%

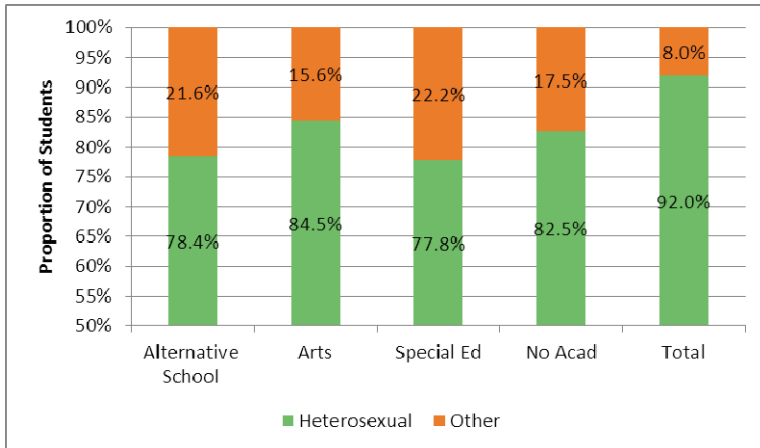
The Trend: The student language most represented in Specialty Arts schools is English. Students who spoke English were the only key language group over-represented in Alternative schools. English and Pashto were the only two languages to have a notable over-representation in schools with Limited Academics; whereas, students who spoke English, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, and Tamil were over-represented in Special Education schools.

School-Wide Structures: Pathways through Secondary School

What is it?

- The following analyses explore the relationship between students' self-identified **Sexual Orientation** data derived from the TDSB's 2011 Student Census, **Special Education Needs (SEN)** data derived from Trillium, and **Generational Status** across **Selected School-Wide Structures**.

Figure 2: Sexuality Categories across School-Wide Structures, 2011-12



THE TREND: Sexuality is relatively stable across all school-wide structures. Students in Alternative schools have a much higher proportion of self-identifying as Other than Heterosexual than the average across the TDSB's secondary school panel. However, one confounding factor within this analysis is the response option of "Not Sure/Questioning" as it is believed that many students may select this response because they interpreted it as "Not sure of the question" as opposed to an identification of sexuality (see Figure 2).

THE TREND: Across the TDSB's secondary school panel, 15.1% of students have been identified with SEN (excluding Gifted); however, this proportion fluctuates across school-wide structures. Students attending Specialty Arts schools and Alternative schools are slightly less likely to have been identified with SEN, 12.5% and 14.7% respectively. Whereas, students attending schools with Limited Academic opportunities were more than twice as likely (35.5%) to be identified with SEN. Understandably, close to all students attending Special Education schools were identified with SEN (99.2%) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Proportion of Students with Special Education Needs (excluding Gifted) across School-Wide Structures, 2011-12

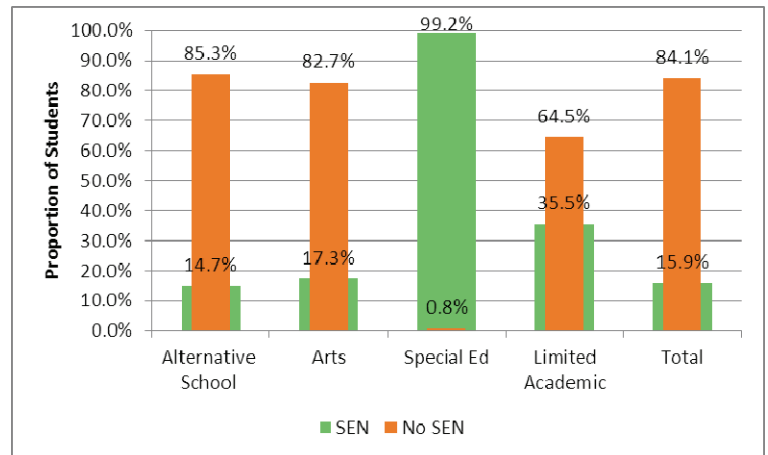


Table 7: Generational Status across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12

Generational Status	3rd Generation	2nd Generation	1st Generation
Alternative School	40.9%	17.3%	41.8%
Arts	50.2%	24.9%	24.9%
Special Ed	28.9%	5.7%	65.4%
Limited Academic	36.2%	7.6%	56.1%
Total	19.8%	8.7%	71.5%

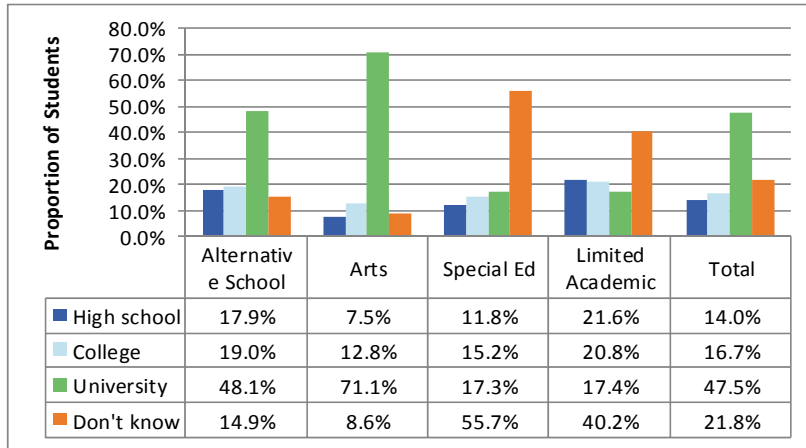
THE TREND: The proportion of first generation students attending Alternative schools is close to half (41.8%) of the total (71.5%). The proportion of first generation students remains notably reduced for students attending Specialty Arts schools, Special Education schools, and schools with Limited Academics. Conversely, the proportion of third generation students is disproportionately over-represented within each of the school-wide structures presented in this analysis, most notably in Arts schools (50.2%), Alternative schools (40.9%), and Limited Academic schools (36.2%) compared to the total at 19.8% (see Table 7).

School-Wide Structures: Pathways through Secondary School

What is it?

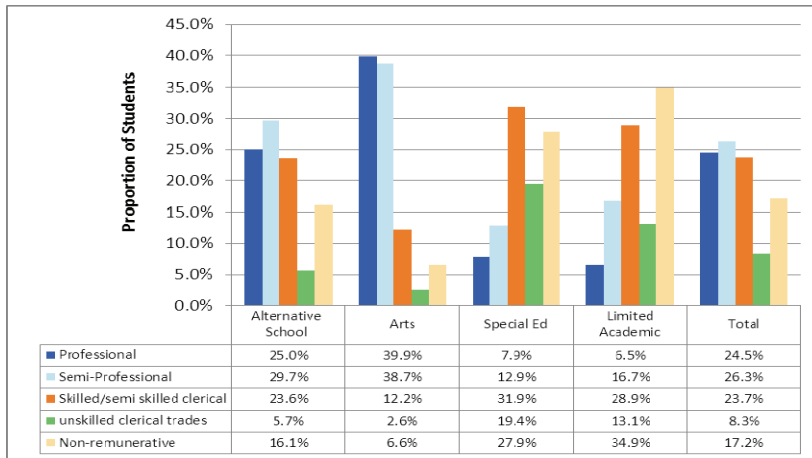
- Figures 4 to 6 reveal relationships between **Parental Education**, **Parental Occupation**, and **Parental Presence** across **Selected School-Wide Structures**.

Figure 4: Parental Education across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12



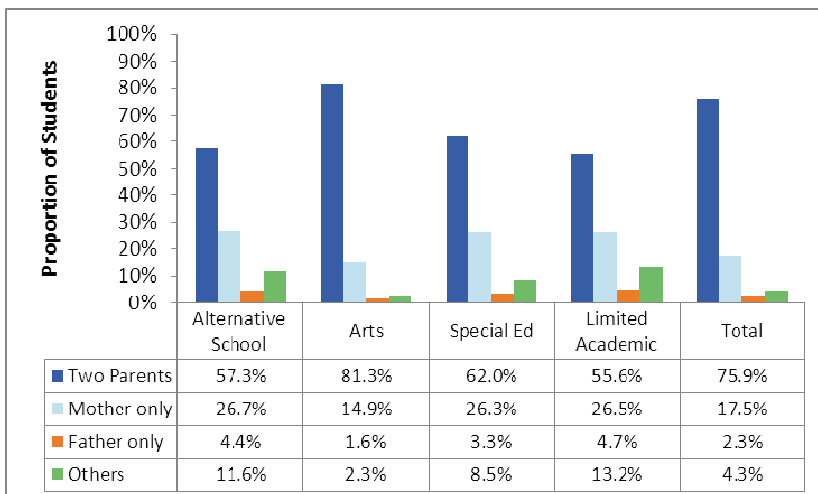
THE TREND: In this analysis, 71.1% of students attending Specialty Arts schools had parents whose highest level of education was university. Though still slightly higher than the overall total, the proportion of students whose parents had achieved a university education dropped to 48.1% for students attending Alternative schools. Students attending schools with Limited Academics and Alternative schools had the highest rates of parents who had college as their highest level of education. Students attending Special Education schools and schools with Limited Academics had the highest rate of students reporting that they did not know their parents highest level of education (see Figure 4).

Figure 5: Parental Occupation across School-Wide Structures, 2011-12



THE TREND: Students in Arts schools had the largest proportion of parents working in professional positions (39.9%) and semi-professional positions (38.7%). Students attending schools with Limited Academics had the largest proportion of parents who were non-remunerative (19.4%). Students attending Special Education schools had the largest proportion of parents working in skilled/semi-skilled clerical positions (31.9%) and unskilled clerical trades (19.4%) (see Figure 5).

Figure 6: Parental Presence across School-Wide Structures, 2011-12



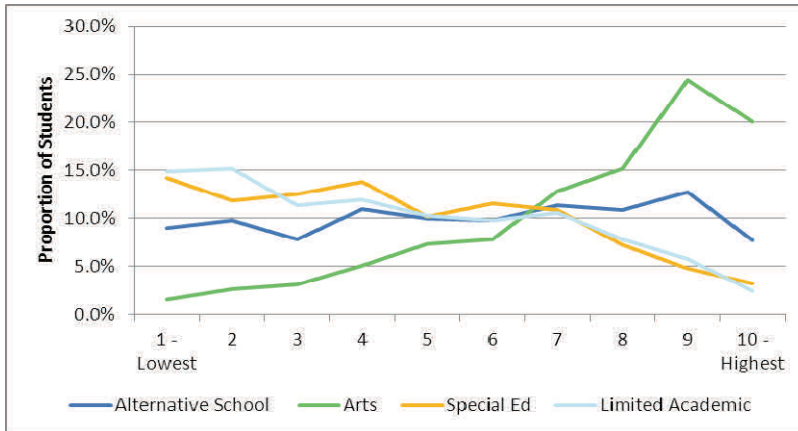
THE TREND: Students attending Specialty Arts schools were more likely to live with two parents than any other school-wide structure (including the average for the TDSB's secondary school panel); whereas, students attending schools with Limited Academic were the least likely to live with both parents (20.3% less likely than the total average). However, aside from students attending Specialty Arts schools, over a quarter of students within each of the other school-wide structures lived with only their mother (see Figure 6).

School-Wide Structures: Pathways through Secondary School

What is it?

- Figures 7 and 8 explore the relationships between **Family Income** and the **Learning Opportunity Index** across **Selected School-Wide Structures**.

Figure 7: Income across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12



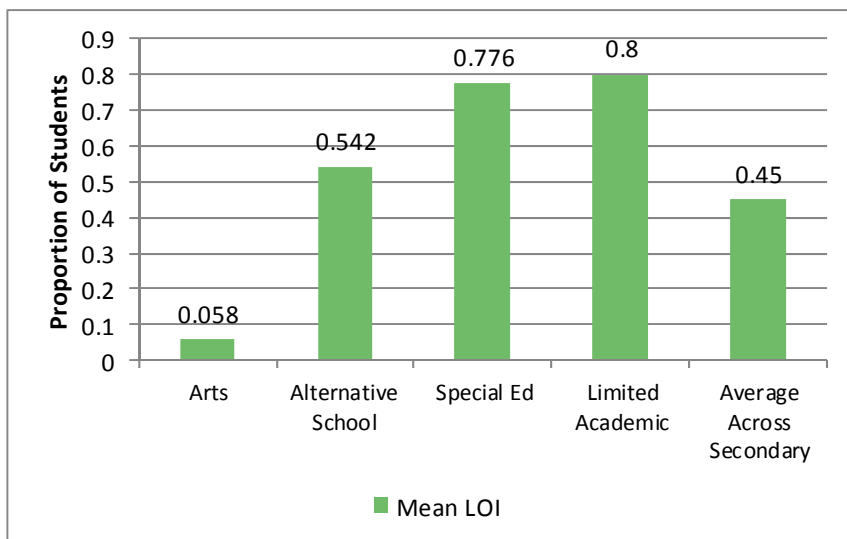
THE TREND: Students attending Specialty Arts schools were much more likely to come from higher income households and much less likely to come from lower income households compared to students attending Special Education schools or schools with Limited Academic opportunities. Students attending Alternative schools represented a much more equitable income stratification (see Figure 7).

What is it?

- The Learning Opportunity Index (LOI)** is a scale measuring external challenges facing students within the TDSB. It is a composite scale that includes median income, percentage of families whose income is below the Low Income Measure (before tax), percentage of families receiving social assistance, adults with low education, adults with university degrees, and lone-parent families.
- The minimum mean LOI across the secondary school panel is 0.001 which represents the least level of external challenges. The maximum mean LOI across the secondary school panel is 0.956 which represents the highest level of external challenges. The mean LOI across the secondary school panel is 0.45.

THE TREND: Both the minimum and maximum LOI ranges as well as the mean LOI fluctuate across school-wide structures. For example, the LOI range for students in Specialty Arts schools is from 0.046 to 0.161 with a mean of 0.058 which indicates far less external challenges than experienced by students who are attending schools with Limited Academic opportunities, which ranges from 0.693 to 0.913 with a mean of 0.8. A mean LOI of 0.8 signifies a high level of external challenges.

Figure 8: Mean LOI across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12



far less external challenges than experienced by students who are attending schools with Limited Academic opportunities, which ranges from 0.693 to 0.913 with a mean of 0.8. A mean LOI of 0.8 signifies a high level of external challenges.

- Although Alternative schools demonstrate a wide range of LOI and a higher than average mean (0.542), Special Education schools closely mirror the LOI of schools with Limited Academic opportunities with a high range from 0.632 to 0.943 and a mean of 0.776. What can be concluded here is that schools that offer more marketable programs, such as Specialty Arts schools, have substantially lower LOI scores than schools that offer Limited Academic opportunities (see Figure 8).

School-Wide Structures: Pathways through Secondary School

What is it?

- Tables 8 and 9 and Figure 9 explore the relationship between student success on the **Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)**, **Rate of Suspension**, and experience of **Belonging and Exclusion** across **Selected School-Wide Structures**.

Table 8: OSSLT (FTE) Pass Rate across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12

OSSLT FTE	Successful	Unsuccessful/Absent/Deferred/Exempt
Alternative School	53%	47%
Arts	94.4%	5.6%
Special Ed	2%	98%
Limited Academic	12%	88%
Total	73.1%	27%

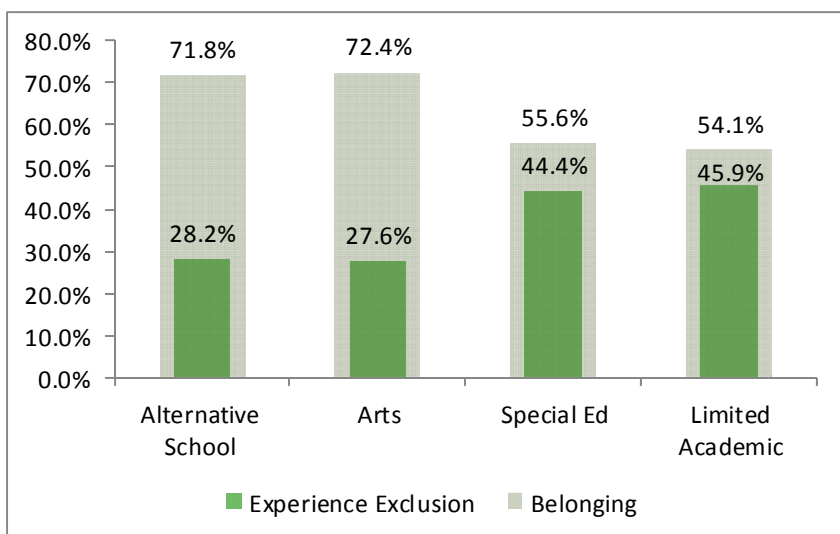
THE TREND: Results for the OSSLT were varied across school-wide structures. For example, 94.4% of first-time eligible students in Specialty Arts schools passed the OSSLT upon their first attempt compared to 53% of students in Alternative schools and 12% of students in schools with Limited Academics. While only 2% of students in Special Education schools successfully passed the OSSLT, it is important to remember that 91.3% of students in Special Education schools were either Deferred or Exempt from writing (see Table 8).

Table 9: Suspensions across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12

Suspensions	No Suspension	Suspended
Alternative School	96.4%	3.6%
Arts	98.5%	1.5%
Special Ed	89.3%	10.7%
Limited Academic	92.7%	7.3%
Total	96.4%	3.6%

THE TREND: While the overall proportion of students being suspended across the TDSB's secondary school panel is 3.6%, students attending Specialty Arts schools represented close to a third of the average at 1.5%. Students attending Alternative schools had a suspension rate equal to the TDSB's secondary school average at 3.6% while the rate of suspension was just over double at 7.3% for students attending schools with Limited Academic opportunities. Students attending Special Education schools had a suspension rate of 10.7% which was close to three times the TDSB's secondary school average (see Table 9).

Figure 9: Experience of Belonging across Selected School-Wide Structures, 2011-12



THE TREND: In terms of experiencing a sense of belonging, students attending schools defined as Alternative schools (71.8%) and Arts schools (72.4%) demonstrated the highest sense of belonging of all school-wide structures. Just over half of students attending Special Education schools (55.6%) and schools that only offered Limited Academics (54.1%) demonstrated the lowest sense of belonging and the highest sense of exclusion from their school community (see Figure 9).

Parekh, G. (2013). *Selected school-wide structures: An overview* (Fact Sheet 9). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.

