



Research Report

**AN EXAMINATION OF TDSB POST-
SECONDARY PATTERNS: 17 Year Old
Students, 2007 – An Overview**

**Dr. Robert S. Brown
Research Co-ordinator**

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Dr. Robert S. Brown

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Toronto District School Board
1 Civic Centre Court, Lower Level
Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B3

Tel.: 416-394-4929

Fax: 416-394-4946

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OVERVIEW

Two thirds or more of new jobs in Ontario, according to consensus, will require post-secondary experience. It is encouraging to see that post-secondary education applications, for the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and Ontario as a whole, have been increasing over time.

The 2007 application cycle was only the second time that the number of TDSB 17 year old students applying to post-secondary outnumbered the students who did not apply.

Given the importance of post-secondary access, it is instructive to examine the patterns of applications. Who is applying? Who is not? What are our students' post-secondary plans? In addition, what relationships do we see, if any, between application tendencies and student demographics?

Fifty-three Percent of TDSB Students Apply to Post-secondary

In fall 2006, the TDSB's Organizational Development/Research and Information Services (OD/RIS) implemented the Student Census at the Board's request. *An Examination of TDSB Post-Secondary Patterns: 17 Year Old Students, 2007* is the third report in a series of research reports on the 2006 Student Census.

The first report looked in detail at the overall census results, (see Yau and O'Reilly, 2007); the second examined academic achievement of Grade 7-10 students, (see Brown and Sinay, 2008); and the third report looks at the post-secondary application patterns of 17 year old TDSB students over the 2006-07 school year.

In 2006-07 (as of October 31, 2006), the 17 year old students in the TDSB totaled 19,081. This is the age when students are typically in Grade 12, and is the age when students most frequently apply to post-secondary institutions.

The TDSB receives information on confirmations, i.e. which students write back to a post-secondary institution accepting an offer of admission. For each application cycle,

information on TDSB applications and confirmations are sent to OD/RIS. The information is then linked to the Secondary Success Indicator dataset for the year in question.

For the 2006-07 school year, out of the 19,081 TDSB's 17 year old students:

- 6,655 (35%) confirmed an offer of admission to Ontario universities;
- 1,297 (7%) confirmed an offer of admission to Ontario community colleges;
- 2,020 (11%) applied to post-secondary but did not confirm an offer of admission; and
- 9,109 (48%) had not applied to a post-secondary institution.

For TDSB-level trends, confirmations are a more useful statistic than applications, providing a fairly complete picture of post-secondary success. Note that both confirmations and registrations miss the students who go to a university or college out of province. From past information received, we could extrapolate that 2-3% of 17 year old students attend post-secondary institutions outside Ontario. These out of Ontario students are concentrated in a small number of more socio-economically advantaged schools.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND APPLICATIONS

A range of variables influences a student's post-secondary education intentions, from performance in school, to career plans, to socio-economic factors. It is difficult to determine causation – but we can see certain connections.

Gender

- There is a sizeable gender gap when it comes to post-secondary applications, with 45% of male students applying versus 59% of female students.
- Far fewer male students (29%) confirmed an offer of admission to university than female students (41%) did.
- For community college, both male and female students are equally as likely to confirm an offer of admission (consistent with earlier research).

Student's Region of Birth

- Students born in Canada have confirmation results typical of the TDSB, similar to findings in earlier research.
- Students born in the English-speaking Caribbean, Central and South America/Mexico, and Eastern Africa have the lowest proportion of post-secondary confirmations, and the highest proportion of students not applying to post-secondary (two-thirds or more).
- South Asian and East Asian students had the highest proportion of university confirmations.
- There was little difference in application/confirmation rates between students whose parents were born in Canada or in another country.

Student's Racial Background

- South Asian and East Asian students had the highest proportion of applications and confirmations.
- White and Southeast Asian students had post-secondary achievement slightly above the TDSB average.
- Self-described mixed race students were fairly representative of application patterns in the TDSB.
- Students of Middle Eastern extraction had slightly lower applications than the average.
- Latin and Black students (whether born in Canada, the English-speaking Caribbean, or Africa) had post-secondary access much lower than the TDSB average.
- All results are consistent with earlier TDSB research.

Student's Language

- Of the 17 year olds in 2006-07, 23 languages were spoken by 100 or more students (accounting for 92% of students).
- Students speaking English only had confirmation patterns slightly lower than the TDSB average.

- Students speaking Dari, Portuguese, Spanish, and Tagalog had the lowest post-secondary application rates.
- In contrast, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Romanian, Serbian, and Tamil students were most likely to apply to post-secondary and confirm admission.
- These findings are similar but not identical to previous TDSB research.

Parents' Educational Background and Family Occupation

- Students living with two parents were much likelier to apply to post-secondary (64%) and confirm an offer of university admission than students living with a mother only (45% applied), with a father only (41% applied), or living in other family situations (39% applied).
- Students with university-educated parents, and/or parents with professional backgrounds, were also much more likely to confirm an offer of admission.

PLANS, PROGRAMS, AND APPLICATIONS

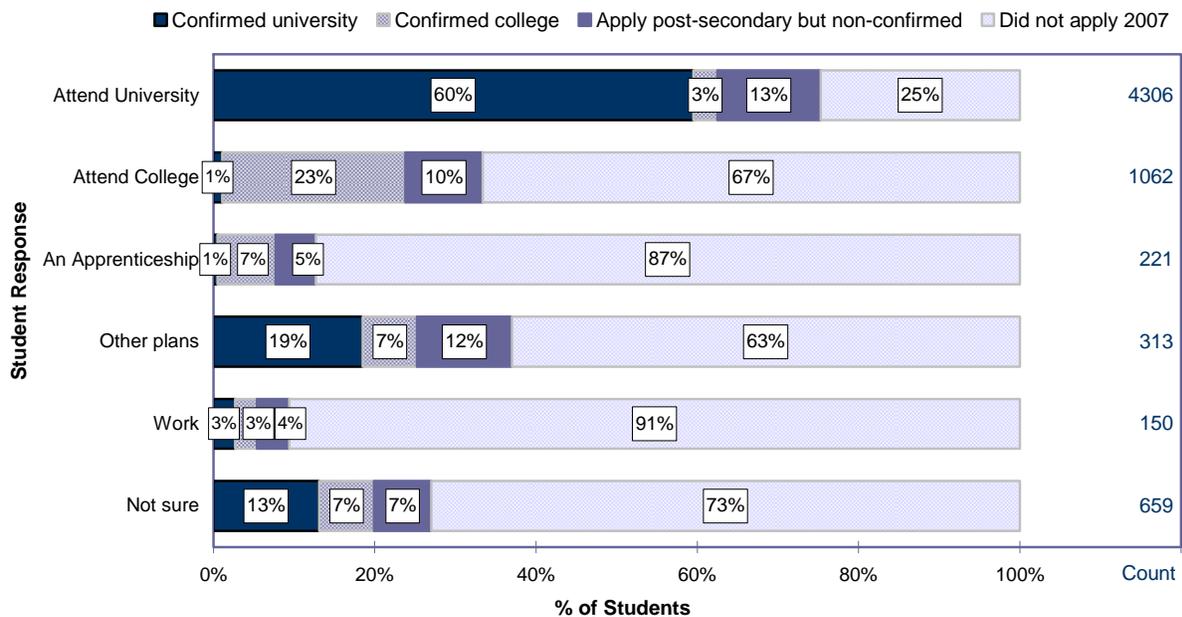
Post-secondary interests, homework patterns, and program of study all tended to be related to patterns of post-secondary access. It is not surprising to see a link between expectations and behaviours.

Students' Post-secondary Plans

- Students were asked what they thought they would be doing after high school, and what their parents expected them to do. The two answers were close. However, actions did not always match plans.
- Of the students who planned to attend university, three-quarters did apply in 2007, and almost two-thirds accepted an offer of admission.
- In contrast, less than a quarter of students who thought they would attend college actually ended up confirming a post-secondary offer of admission. Often students will plan to go to post-secondary school in the future. Perhaps this could be explained in part by the fact that the presumably college-bound students start with lower expectations than students who are focused on university.

Plans After High School – Post-secondary Confirmations

Plans After High School – Post-secondary Confirmations



Future Career or Occupation

- Forty percent of 17 year olds had decided on a future career or occupation, 52% were still thinking about it, and 8% had no idea of their plans. There was a correlation between those figures and applications/confirmations.
- Sixty-two percent of students who had decided on a career applied to post-secondary, and 52% confirmed an offer of admission.
- Fifty-eight percent of students who were still thinking about their future applied, and 46% confirmed an offer of admission.
- Of the 8% with no idea of their future, only 43% applied to post-secondary, and only 35% confirmed an offer of admission.

Hours of Work Per Week

- Some Grade 12 students balance school and homework with part-time work. As we see below, the more homework, the greater chance of post-secondary access; likewise, the more part-time work, the less post-secondary access.

- Working 15 or fewer hours per week had no obvious negative relationship to post-secondary access. When students worked 16 hours per week or more, their rate of post-secondary access declined.
- Those who did not work at all or just one hour a week actually had a slightly lower rate of post-secondary confirmations compared to those working 2-8 hours per week. We saw this pattern in an earlier generation of Toronto students.

Hours of Homework Per Week

- Students who did five or fewer hours of homework a week had a limited chance of post-secondary access.
- Less than half of the students who engaged in 6-10 hours of homework per week confirmed a post-secondary offer.
- Of the students who engaged in 11-15 hours of homework per week, a majority (56%) confirmed an offer of admission.
- The link between time devoted to homework, achievement, and ambitions seem clear. However, there appear to be limited differences among those who engaged in 16 or more hours of homework per week.

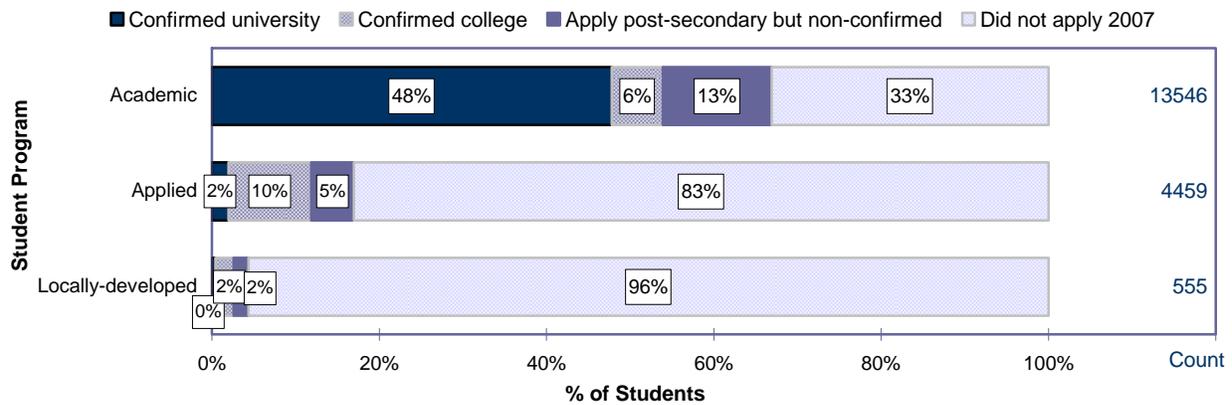
Program of Study

- We looked at program of study according to the majority of courses taken, which closely resembles the characteristics of the Advanced, General, and Basic streams of the former curriculum. These programs of study/streams prove to be related to post-secondary access.
- Attending post-secondary after four years of high school is a function of taking Academic courses in Grades 9 and 10. Out of 7,847 post-secondary confirmations, nearly all (7,302 or 93%) had taken a majority of Grade 9-10 courses in the Academic program of study.
- About twice as many Academic as Applied 17 year old students confirmed acceptance at community colleges. This is an important finding because, in theory, the Applied program is aimed at a post-secondary college pathway. We know that many students will enter college as older high school students or as

adults, so this examination of one year of applications is not the full picture. Still it may be appropriate for the Ministry of Education to re-examine the direction of the Grades 9 and 10 program of study.

Grade 9 & 10 Academic Program (2006-07) – Post-secondary Confirmations

Gr. 9 and 10 Academic Program (2006-07) – Post-secondary Confirmations



Further Analysis Needed

By the end of the 2006-07 school year, 42% of the TDSB's 17 year old students, had confirmed an offer of admission to university or community college, and another 11% had applied to post-secondary but did not confirm an offer. Those numbers will increase as individuals apply in subsequent years.

Previous cohort studies indicate that two-thirds of students who start in Grade 9 will end up taking some sort of post-secondary education. Following the Grade 9 cohort of 2006-07 over time will provide a greater wealth of detail on this complex subject. We will have results on two years of post-secondary applications by fall 2011.

This overview examined variables linked to applications without being able to identify which are actually causal factors. Attributing cause, when so many variables are related, can be difficult. Recent related research in this area shows promise, but also reinforces the complexities in this type of analysis.

The information here is more revealing than what we have seen in earlier studies. The 2006 Student Census has even greater possibilities for insight, as we examine attitudes and participation in the secondary school culture. We are in the midst of analyzing these environmental variables.

