



AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS IN THE TDSB

PART ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

The first part of this appendix provides an introductory overview of a range of topics impacting students with special education needs (SEN) within the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) using data from TDSB students with SEN during the 2023-24 school year.

How are Students with SEN Identified?

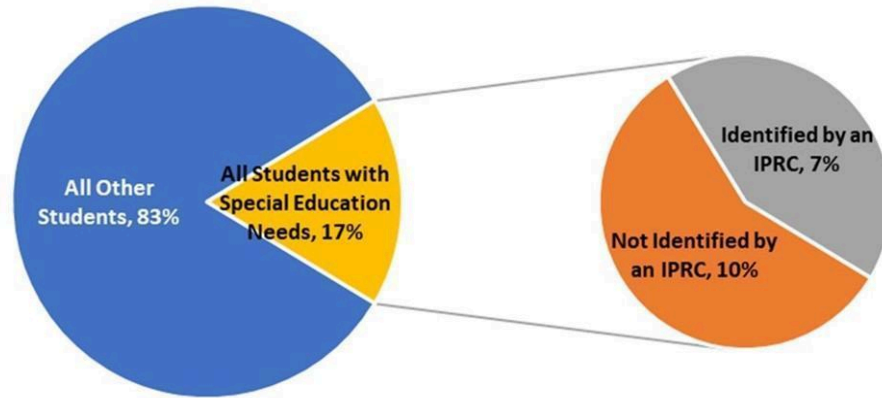
- Through a formal Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), a student is identified as an “exceptional pupil” who has one or more of the 5 [exceptionalities](#) outlined by the Education Act (behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical, and multiple).
- An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed for a student identified with one or more exceptionalities at an IPRC.
- In the TDSB, an IEP may be created for a student who has not been identified with one or more exceptionalities at an IPRC if the student requires special education programs or services to access the Ontario curriculum.

How many Students with SEN are in the TDSB?

- In 2023-24, 41,075 students out of 238,106 (17% of the TDSB student population) were classified as Students with Special Education Needs (SEN).
- Of those 41,075 students, 17,501 or 43% are formally identified with exceptionalities, while 23,574 or 57% have IEPs with no formally identified exceptionalities (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Percentage of TDSB Students with SEN (Formally Identified with Exceptionalities and IEP-Only)



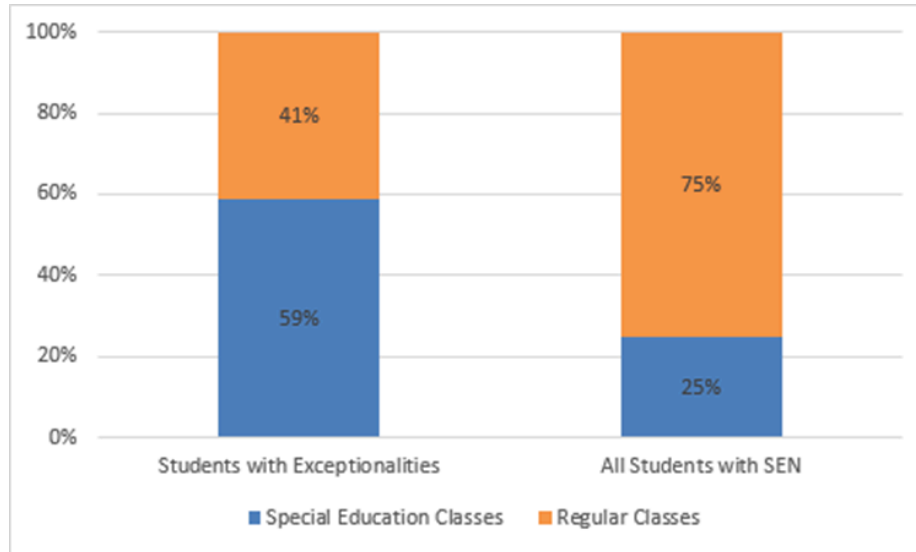
Inclusion

- Students with SEN have unique strengths and needs that may require them to have special education programs or services. However, in line with Ontario Regulation 181/98 and in consultation with families and students (where appropriate), the TDSB strives to meet the needs of students with SEN within regular classroom settings with support.
- When looking at all students with special education needs (including the 23,574 with an IEP-only), 75% (30,767 students) are in regular classes, while 25% (10,308 students) are in special education classes.
- However, of the 17,501 students formally identified with exceptionalities, 41% (7,193 students) are in regular classes, while 59% (10,308 students) are in special education classes (see Figure 2).





Figure 2: Special Education Classroom Settings



Select Key Findings

- There are 11 subcategories of exceptionalities within the 5 main categories of exceptionalities. The majority of formally-identified TDSB students with SEN are in five categories: Learning Disability (LD), Giftedness, Mild Intellectual Disability (MID), Autism, and Developmental Disability (DD).
- According to the 2022-23 Student Census, the overall TDSB student population is closely split between boys/men (49%) and girls/women (47%), with 3% identifying outside the gender binary¹. However, 60% of students with SEN excluding gifted are boys/men, over 10% higher than the overall TDSB student population. Gifted students also have a higher representation of boys/men (56%).
- The 2022-23 Student Census also reveals disproportionalities by racial groups in students with SEN excluding gifted and the overall TDSB student population. Students who identified as Black represent 10% of the overall TDSB student population, but are 16% of students with SEN excluding gifted. Conversely, gifted students are more likely to identify as

¹ Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.



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White (34% compared to 26% overall) and East Asian (26% compared to 13% overall).

- Students with SEN excluding gifted are more highly represented in families with low income (39%), whereas gifted students are much more represented in high income families (54%).
- Looking at a variety of achievement results, gifted students achieve at a much higher level than the TDSB average. On the other hand, all students with SEN excluding gifted (exceptionalities without gifted, non-identified/IEP-only) achieve at a much lower level than the TDSB average.
- While graduation rates have been increasing since at least 2000, there has always been a gap in graduation rates between the overall TDSB student population and students with SEN excluding gifted. However, the size of the gap has been declining since 2007-08 and as of the Grade 9 cohort of 2016-17, approximately 74% of students with SEN excluding gifted graduated compared with approximately 88% of students overall (a gap of ~14%).
- Post-secondary confirmations have been increasing since 2007-08. However, a gap between students with SEN excluding gifted and TDSB overall has remained fairly stable. In the Grade 9 cohort of 2016-17, approximately 67% of TDSB students confirmed a post-secondary offer compared to 46% of students with SEN excluding gifted (a gap of ~21%).
- Overall, the vast majority of post-secondary confirmations at TDSB are to universities. However, as of the 2016-17 Grade 9 cohort, post-secondary confirmations for students with SEN excluding gifted were more evenly split between colleges and universities.

Looking Ahead

Subsequent parts of this appendix will focus on the following areas:

- Identification (exceptionalities)
- Placement (ISPs or regular classes)
- Outcomes (achievement, pathways and post-secondary trajectories)



PART TWO: EXCEPTIONALITIES

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This section will explore comparisons between students with SEN in the TDSB, Greater Toronto Area (GTA) school boards and the province of Ontario, as well as the intersections between special education needs and demographic variables such as race, income, and gender. Intersectional analyses will be conducted for the 6 exceptionality categories which account for the majority (97%) of students identified with exceptionalities in TDSB. These categories are: autism, gifted, developmental disability, learning disability, mild intellectual disability, and behaviour.

Comparisons between TDSB and the Province

The following section explores comparisons between TDSB students with SEN and the province using special education data from the Ministry of Education. These comparisons were done using the most recent data available, which is from the 2021-22 school year.

Figure 1: Distribution of TDSB Students with SEN Compared to the Province, 2021-22

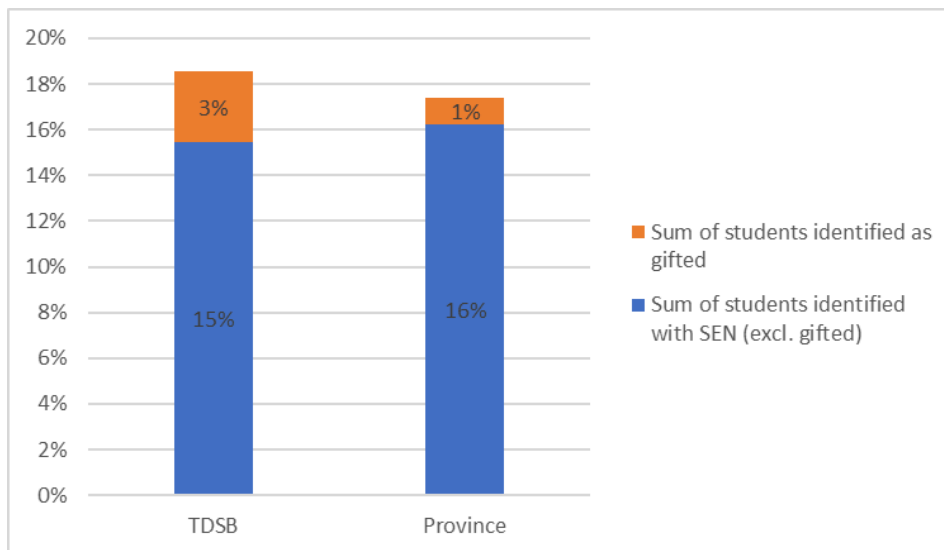


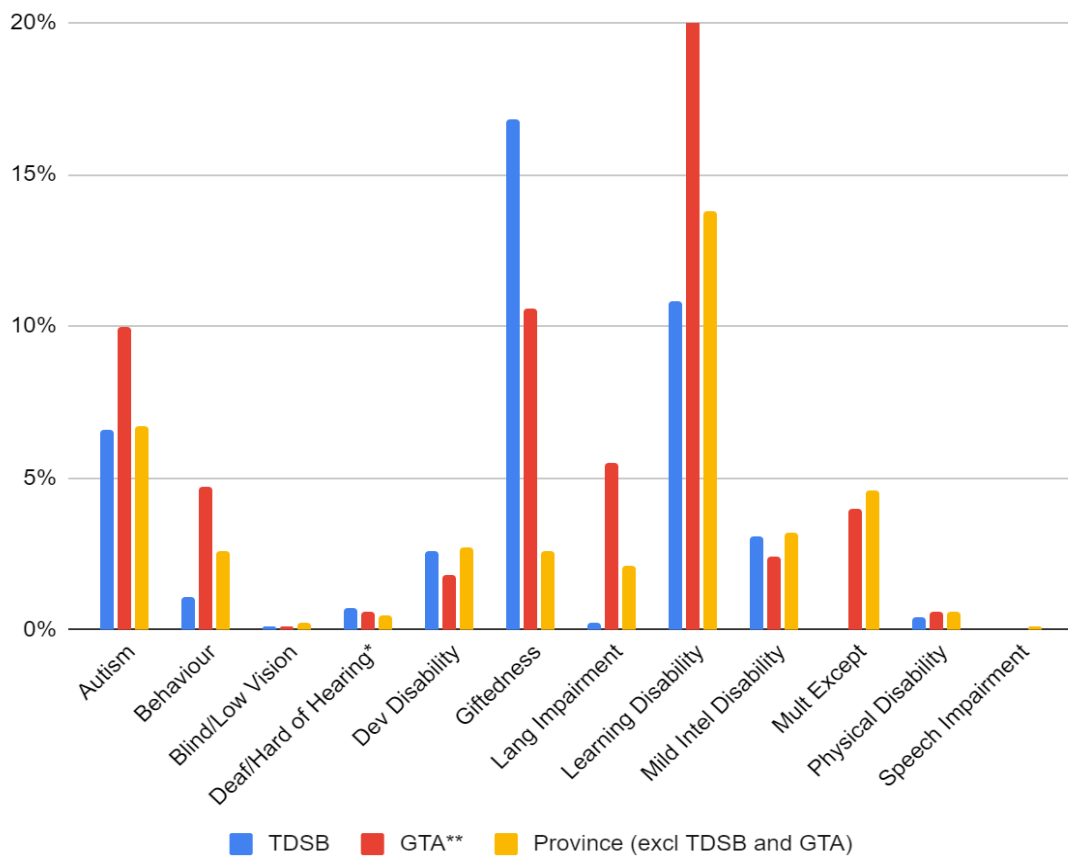
Figure 1 demonstrates that while the proportion of students identified with SEN within the TDSB is very similar to the province, the TDSB has three times more students identified as gifted.



Exceptionalities: TDSB, GTA Boards, Province

The figures below show comparisons between the percentage of students at the TDSB within each category of exceptionality, as well as GTA boards and the rest of the province. For more detailed information, please see Table 1.

Figure 2: Distribution of Exceptionalities between TDSB, GTA and Province, 2021-22



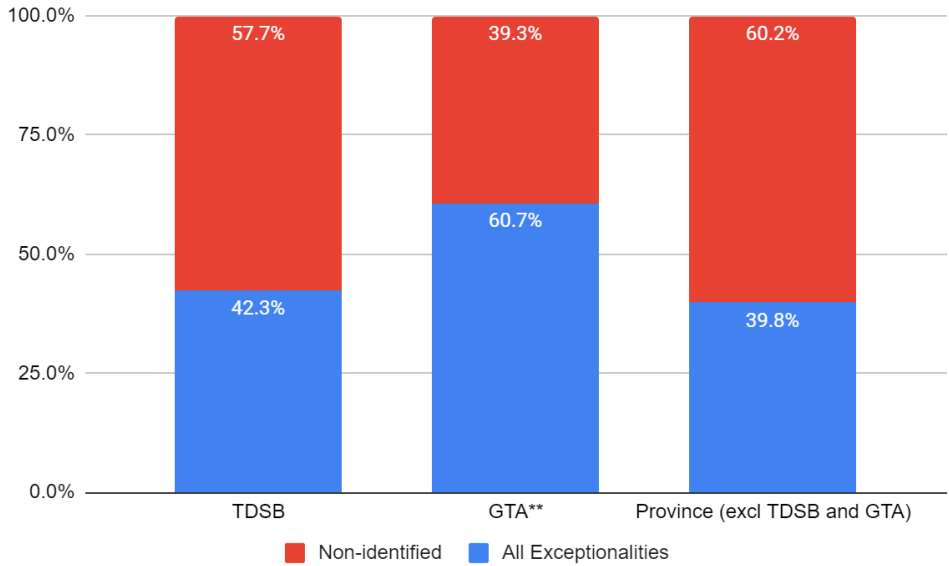
**GTA (excl. TDSB) includes the following school boards: Dufferin-Peel CDSB, Durham CDSB, Durham DSB, Halton CDSB, Halton DSB, Peel DSB, Toronto CDSB, York CSDB, York Region DSB.

- When compared with GTA boards and the rest of the province, the TDSB has a lower proportion of students with a behavioural exceptionality or learning disability.



- Of students with exceptionalities, the TDSB also has a large proportion with a gifted exceptionality (40% compared to 18% in GTA boards and 7% in the province).

Figure 3: Distribution Comparisons between TDSB, GTA and Province for Students with SEN, 2021-22



**GTA (excl. TDSB) includes the following school boards: Dufferin-Peel CDSB, Durham CDSB, Durham DSB, Halton CDSB, Halton DSB, Peel DSB, Toronto CDSB, York CSDB, York Region DSB.

- Figure 3 shows that while the TDSB proportions of students with SEN are similar with the province, the GTA boards have a higher ratio of students with exceptionalities versus non-identified.



Table 1: Exceptionalities Within TDSB, GTA and the Province (2021-22)**

Exceptionality	TDSB			GTA** (excl. TDSB)			Province (excl. TDSB and GTA)		
	Number of Students	Percent of All Students with an Exceptionality	Percent of All Students Receiving Special Education	Number of Students	Percent of All Students with an Exceptionality	Percent of All Students Receiving Special Education	Number of Students	Percent of All Students with an Exceptionality	Percent of All Students Receiving Special Education
Autism	2,861	15.6%	6.6%	10,657	16.4%	10.0%	13,576	16.8%	6.7%
Behaviour	476	2.6%	1.1%	5,005	7.7%	4.7%	5,306	6.6%	2.6%
Blind/Low Vision	34	0.2%	0.1%	113	0.2%	0.1%	321	0.4%	0.2%
Deaf/Hard of Hearing*	279	1.5%	0.7%	636	1.0%	0.6%	1,045	1.3%	0.5%
Dev Disability	1,104	6.0%	2.6%	1,922	3.0%	1.8%	5,536	6.9%	2.7%
Giftedness	7,260	39.7%	16.8%	11,312	17.5%	10.6%	5,349	6.6%	2.6%
Lang Impairment	76	0.4%	0.2%	5,854	9.0%	5.5%	4,306	5.3%	2.1%
Learning Disability	4,650	25.4%	10.8%	21,841	33.7%	20.4%	28,055	34.8%	13.8%
Mild Intellectual Disability	1,358	7.4%	3.1%	2,542	3.9%	2.4%	6,465	8.0%	3.2%
Mult Except	<10	<0.1%	<0.1%	4,315	6.7%	4.0%	9,280	11.5%	4.6%
Physical Disability	188	1.0%	0.4%	597	0.9%	0.6%	1,193	1.5%	0.6%
Speech Impairment	<10	<0.1%	<0.1%	25	0.0%	0.0%	273	0.3%	0.1%
Total for All Exceptionalities	18,288	100%	42.3%	64,819	100%	60.7%	80,705	100%	39.8%
Non-Identified	24,919		57.7%	42,023		39.3%	122,105		60.2%
Total for All SEN Students	43,207		100%	106,842		100%	202,810		100%

* Includes pre-school data for TDSB

**GTA (excl. TDSB) includes the following school boards: Dufferin-Peel CDSB, Durham CDSB, Durham DSB, Halton CDSB, Halton DSB, Peel DSB, Toronto CDSB, York CSDB, York Region DSB.



Intersectionality of Race, Income and Gender with SEN

Using preliminary data from the 2022-23 Student Census, the following section provides information on the demographic characteristics of students within the six largest exceptionality categories (autism, gifted, developmental disability, learning disability, mild intellectual disability, and behaviour). These categories were chosen for analysis because they represent the majority (97%) of students with exceptionalities at the TDSB. Additionally, the small number of students in the other exceptionality categories would not allow for an intersectional analysis due to suppression rules. While data for comparisons outside of TDSB was not available beyond 2021-22, for the analyses in this section we were able to use exceptionality data from October 2023 using the TDSB's Student Information System.

Table 2: TDSB Exceptionality Categories (October 2023)

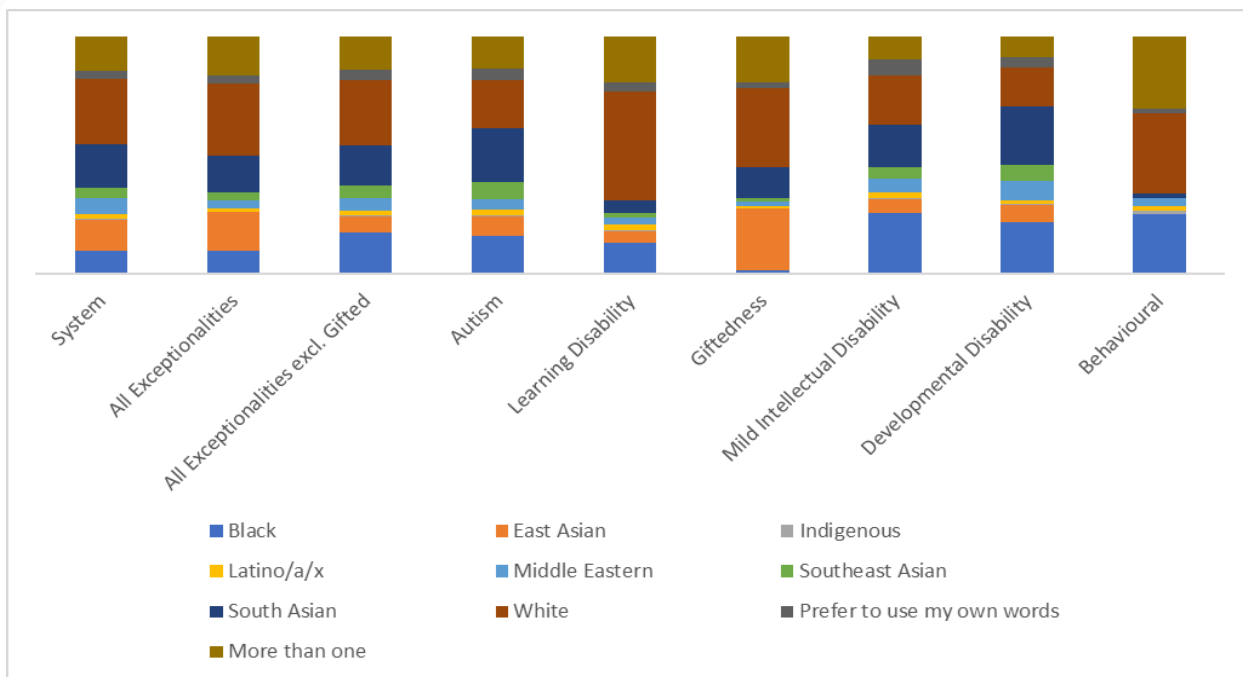
Exceptionality	Number	Percentage
Giftedness	7266	41.5%
Learning Disability	3662	20.9%
Autism	3393	19.4%
Mild Intellectual Disability	1251	7.1%
Developmental Disability	1107	6.3%
Behavioural	325	1.9%
Deaf/Hard of Hearing incl. Preschool	248	1.4%
Physical Disability	167	1.0%
Language Impairment	47	0.3%
Blind/Low Vision	34	0.2%
Blind/Low Vision and Deaf/Hard of Hearing	<10	<0.1%

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Figure 4: Exceptionality Intersected with Race*, October 2023



*The 2022-23 Student Census typology for race differed from previous Censuses by including the *Prefer to use my own words* category and replacing *Mixed* with the *More than one* racial category.

- Comparing all students with exceptionalities to the entire TDSB system, proportions across racial categories are similar. However, excluding gifted increases the proportion of Black students with exceptionalities and lowers the proportion of East Asian students with exceptionalities. While the overall proportions in each racial category of all exceptionalities combined are similar to the system, there are differences within each exceptionality.
- There are proportionally more White students in learning disability, gifted, and behaviour exceptionalities, while Black students are overrepresented in autism, mild intellectual disability, developmental disability and behaviour and are underrepresented in gifted.
- East Asian students make up a significant proportion of the students with a gifted exceptionality, but are less prevalent in other exceptionality categories.
- Students selecting more than one racial category make up a large proportion of students with learning disability, gifted, and behaviour exceptionalities.
- The largest proportions of South and Southeast Asian students with exceptionalities were in autism and developmental disability.
- With the exception of gifted, the proportions of Latino/a/x and Middle Eastern students with exceptionalities were generally consistent with the proportions found in the system overall.
- Relative to the system, Indigenous students are underrepresented in gifted and overrepresented in behaviour.



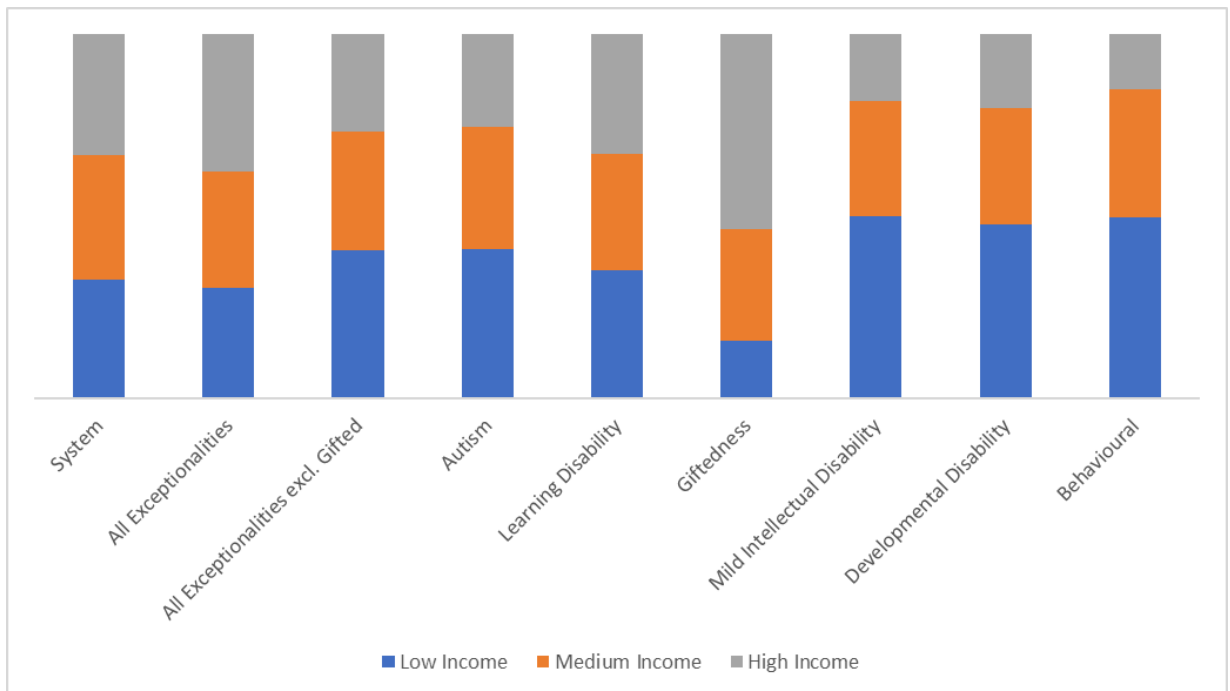


Table 3: Income Comparison Between System and Exceptionalities, October 2023

	Low Income	Medium Income	High Income
System (N=236,253)	32%	34%	33%
All Exceptionalities (N=17,449)	30%	32%	38%
All Exceptionalities excluding Gifted (N=10,199)	41%	33%	27%

- By dividing the TDSB into 3 income levels (low, medium and high), we can analyse how the income distribution differs across exceptionalities.
- Looking at all exceptionalities, the high income proportion is greater than medium or low incomes.
- Excluding gifted, the proportion of higher income students decreases and the proportion of lower income students increases.

Figure 5: Exceptionality Intersected with Income, October 2023



- Over half of students with a gifted exceptionalty came from the high income category, while fewer students came from the low income category.
- The exceptionalities of mild intellectual disability, developmental disability and behaviour all had higher proportions of students in the low income



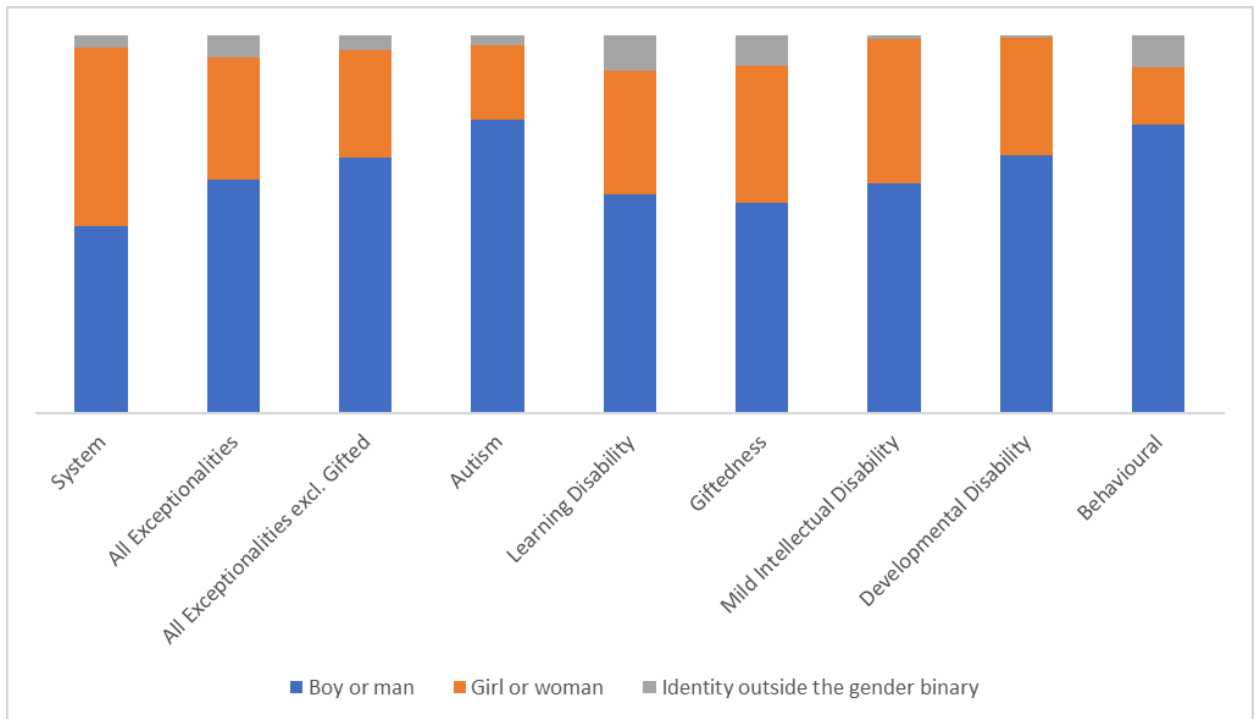
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category (approximately half) and lower proportions of students in the high income category.

- All exceptionalities had similar proportions of medium income students compared to the system.

Figure 6: Exceptionality Intersected with Gender*, October 2023



*The 2022-23 Student Census typology for gender identity differed from previous Censuses by including many more gender identities for students to select (or write-in) and were grouped here as *Identity outside the gender binary*.

- Comparing all exceptionalities to the distribution of gender identities within the system, students identifying as boys/men are overrepresented across all exceptionality categories.
- Over three-quarters of students with an autism or behaviour exceptionality identified as boys/men.
- There were higher proportions of students who selected an identity outside of the gender binary within learning disability, gifted and behaviour exceptionalities.
- Due to the overrepresentation of boys/men, the proportion of girls/women was lower than the overall system in all exceptionality categories, particularly autism and behaviour.





Summary

The TDSB proportion of students with SEN is fairly consistent with the province of Ontario, with a few notable differences. When looking at the distribution of exceptionalities across the TDSB, GTA boards and the province, the differences that can be seen are:

- The TDSB has a lower proportion of students with a behavioural exceptionality or learning disability.
- Of students with exceptionalities, the TDSB also has a large proportion of students with a gifted exceptionality (more than 2 times the GTA boards and nearly 6 times more than the rest of the province).
- While the TDSB proportion of non-identified students (IEP-only) is similar to the rest of the province, the GTA boards have a comparatively lower proportion.

It is important to consider students with SEN through an intersectional lens that takes into account other aspects of their identity. By analysing race, income and gender, significant differences are apparent across all exceptionality categories.

- Comparing all students with exceptionalities to the entire TDSB system, proportions across racial categories are similar. However, excluding gifted increases the proportion of Black students with exceptionalities and lowers the proportion of East Asian students with exceptionalities. While the overall proportions in each racial category of all exceptionalities combined are similar to the system, there are differences within each exceptionality.
- Looking at all exceptionalities, the high income proportion is greater than medium or low incomes. Excluding gifted, the proportion of higher income students decreases and the proportion of lower income students increases.
- Comparing all exceptionalities to the distribution of gender identities within the system, students identifying as boys/men are overrepresented across all exceptionality categories.

Looking Ahead

The next parts of the appendix will focus on the following areas:

- Placement (ISPs or regular classes)
- Outcomes (achievement, pathways and post-secondary trajectories)





PART THREE: PLACEMENT

This part will examine placement in relation to TDSB students with special education needs (SEN) (i.e., whether students are in regular classes or Intensive Support Programs (ISPs)).

Comparisons between TDSB and the Province

The following section explores comparisons between TDSB students with SEN and the province using special education data from the Ministry of Education. These comparisons were done using the most recent data available, which is from the 2021-22 school year.

Figure 1: Distribution of TDSB's Students with SEN in ISPs Compared to the GTA and the Province, 2021-22

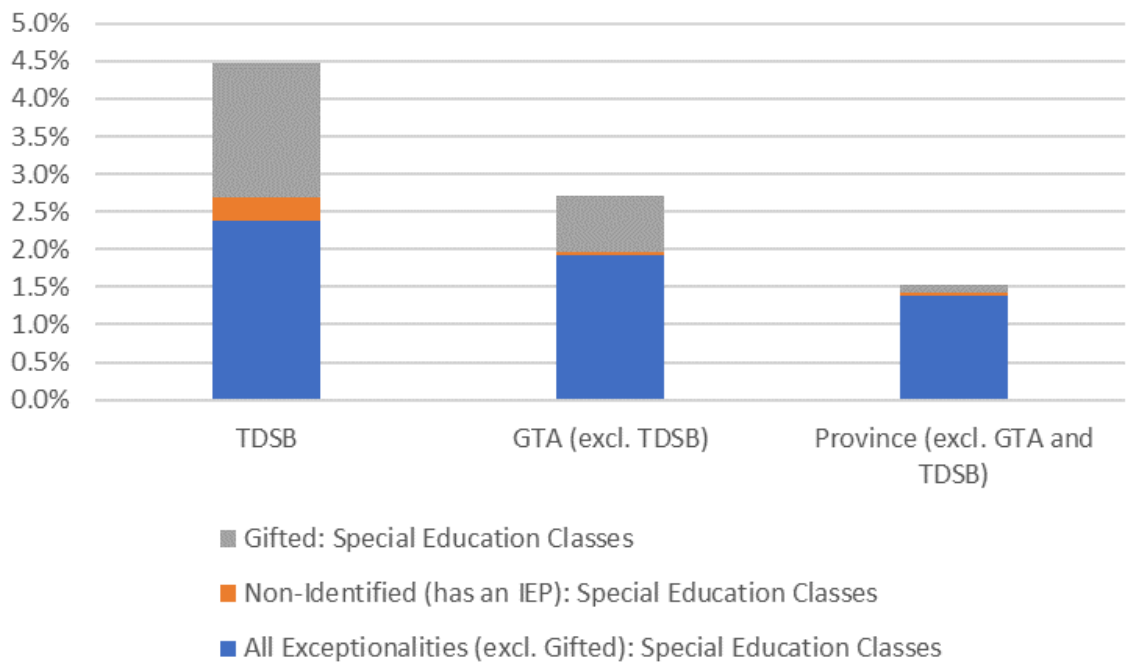


Figure 1 demonstrates the higher proportion of enrolment for students in ISPs in the TDSB compared to the province and the surrounding GTA. The bar on the left shows the distribution of students with SEN in ISPs at the TDSB between gifted, exceptionalities excluding gifted, and non-identified/IEP-only students. The centre bar shows the distribution in GTA school boards (excluding TDSB), and the bar on the right shows the Ontario distribution, excluding the TDSB and GTA because they make up such a large portion of the provincial numbers (see Table 1 for more detail.)

Table 1: Special Education Categories (Exceptionalities and Placement Types) Within TDSB, GTA and the Province (2021-22)**

Exceptionality and Placement Category	TDSB		GTA** (excl. TDSB)		Province (excl. TDSB and GTA)	
	Number of Students	Percent of Enrolled Students	Number of Students	Percent of Enrolled Students	Number of Students	Percent of Enrolled Students
All Exceptionalities (excl. Gifted): Regular Classes	5,495	2.4%	40,349	5.9%	59,900	5.4%
All Exceptionalities (excl. Gifted): Special Education Classes	5,533	2.4%	13,158	1.9%	15,456	1.4%
Gifted: Regular Classes	3,119	1.3%	6,123	0.9%	4,259	0.4%
Gifted: Special Education Classes	4,141	1.8%	5,099	0.7%	1,054	0.1%
Non-Identified (IEP-Only): Regular Classes	24,174	10.4%	33,693	4.9%	116,035	10.5%
Non-Identified (IEP-Only): Special Education Classes	744	0.3%	300	0.0%	431	0.0%
Non-Identified/No-IEP: Regular and Special Education Classes	<10	<0.1%	8,030	1.2%	5,639	0.5%
Students Not Receiving Special Education	189,509	81.4%	578,751	84.4%	907,572	81.7%
Total Enrolment	232,716	100%	685,593	100%	1,110,382	100%

**GTA (excl. TDSB) includes the following school boards: Dufferin-Peel CDSB, Durham CDSB, Durham DSB, Halton CDSB, Halton DSB, Peel DSB, Toronto CDSB, York CSDB, York Region DSB



Overview of TDSB Exceptionality and Placement Categories, October 2023

While data for comparisons outside of TDSB was not available beyond 2021-22, in this section we were able to use exceptionality and placement data from October 2023 using the TDSB's Student Information System.

There were 41,075 students with SEN in the 2023-24 school year (17% of the overall TDSB student population). Below you will find the breakdown of placements within each exceptionality category.

Exceptionalities excluding Gifted – ISPs: 6,034 students (2.5%) – IPRC'd as one of the 10 exceptionalities excluding gifted and taking 50% or more of their classes in special education settings.

Exceptionalities excluding Gifted – Regular Classes: 4,201 students (1.8%) – IPRC'd as one of the 10 exceptionalities excluding gifted and taking 50% or more of their classes in regular classroom settings.

Gifted – ISPs: 4,274 students (1.8%) – taking 50% or more of their classes in special education settings.

Gifted – Regular Classes: 2,992 students (1.3%) – taking 50% or more of their classes in regular classroom settings.

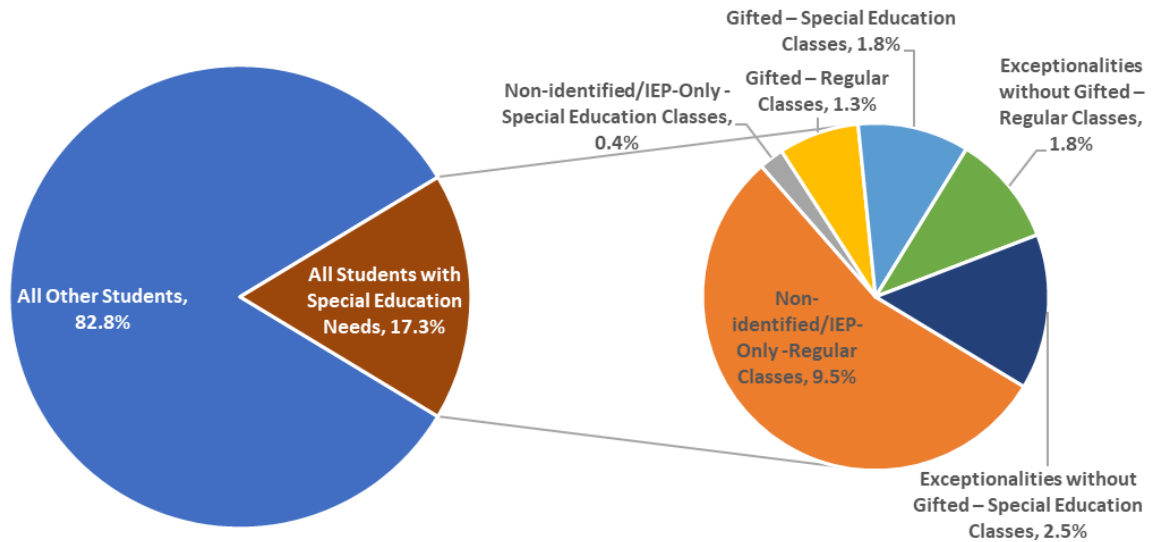
Non-identified/IEP-Only- ISPs: 819 students (0.4%) – no IPRC but were receiving special education programming as of October 2023, or had an IEP and were receiving direct assistance in special education settings.

Non-identified/IEP-Only- Regular Classes: 22,755 students (9.5%) – no IPRC but receiving special education programming as of October 2023, or had an IEP and were receiving direct assistance in the classroom.

Non-identified/IEP-only students account for 57% of all TDSB students with SEN.



Figure 2: Placement Information for TDSB Students with SEN, October 2023



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Intersectionality of Race, Income and Gender with SEN

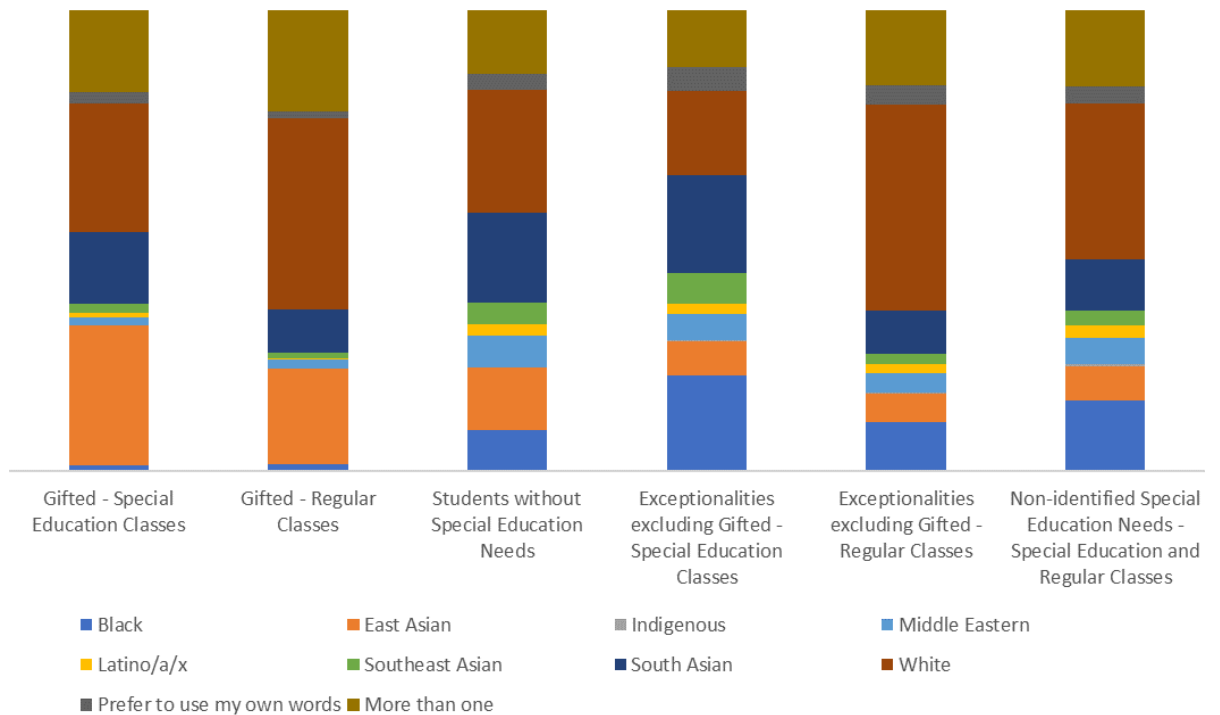
Using preliminary data from the 2022-23 Student Census, the following section provides information on the demographic characteristics of students within different placement categories (exceptionalities (excl. gifted) in regular classes or ISPs, gifted in regular or ISPs and all IEP-only students (regular and ISPs)).





Figure 3: Exceptionality and Placement Intersected with Race*, October 2023

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*The 2022-23 Student Census typology for race differed from previous Censuses by including the *Prefer to use my own words* category and replacing *Mixed* with the *More than one* racial category.

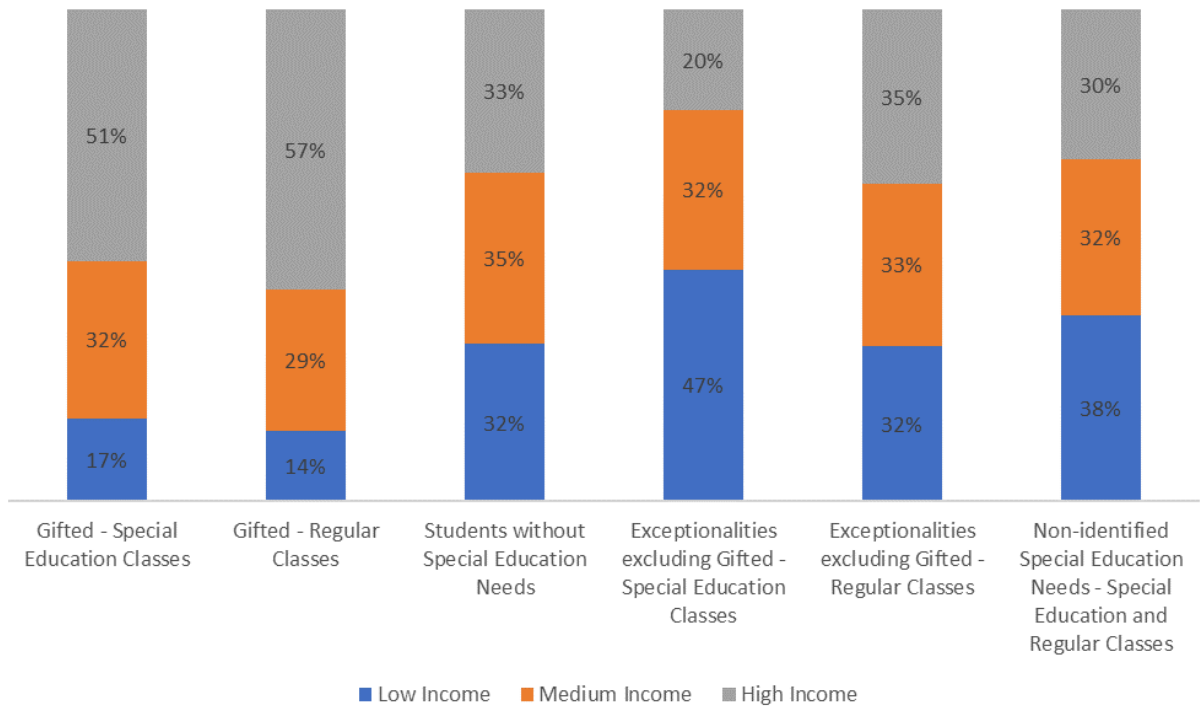
Placement and Race:

- Black, South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian students with an exceptionality (excluding gifted) are more likely to be in ISPs than regular classes.
- Students with special education needs (gifted and other exceptionalities) identifying as White or with more than one racial category are more likely to be in regular classes than ISPs.
- Gifted students identifying as Latino/a/x, East Asian, Southeast Asian, or South Asian are more likely to be in gifted ISPs than in regular classes.
- Similar proportions of Black and Middle Eastern students with a gifted exceptionality can be seen in regular classes and ISPs.





Figure 4: Exceptionality and Placement Intersected with Income, October 2023



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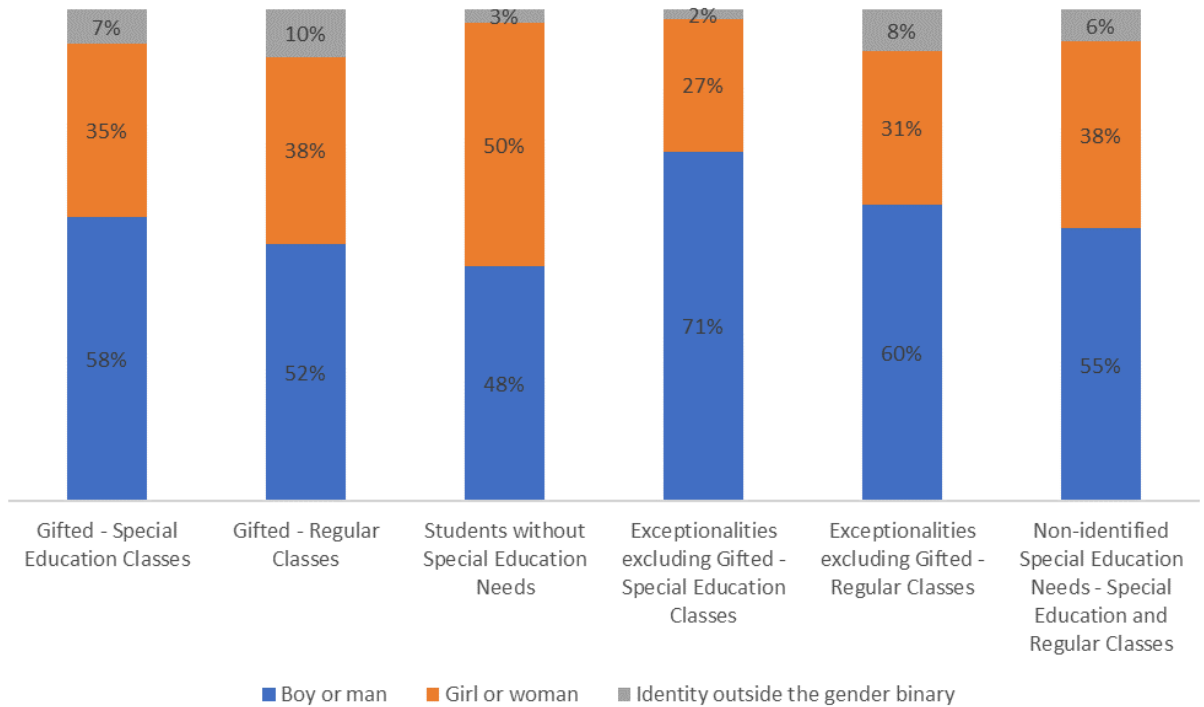
Placement and Income:

- Over half of students with a gifted exceptionality, regardless of placement, came from high income families, however, a higher proportion of gifted students in regular classes (57%) came from high income families than gifted students in ISPs (51%).
- Nearly half of students with exceptionalities (excluding gifted) in special education classes were from low income families.
- The income distribution for students with exceptionalities (excluding gifted) in regular classes was closest to the distribution of students without SEN.





Figure 5: Exceptionality and Placement Intersected with Gender*, October 2023



*The 2022-23 Student Census typology for gender identity differed from previous Censuses by including many more gender identities for students to select (or write-in) and were grouped here as *Identity outside the gender binary*.

Placement and Gender:

- Boys/men are overrepresented across all special education placements, with gifted-regular classes having the smallest degree of overrepresentation.
- Identities outside the gender binary are also more highly represented in gifted (up to three times more) compared with students without SEN.
- Boys/men are highly overrepresented in students with exceptionalities (excluding gifted) (both regular and special education classes), particularly in ISPs where boys/men represent nearly three-quarters of the group.
- The proportion of students with an exceptionality (excluding gifted) identifying outside the gender binary in ISPs is comparable with the proportion in students without SEN whereas the proportion in regular classes is nearly three times higher.

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Summary

Compared to the GTA Boards and the province, the TDSB has higher proportions of students in ISPs (both gifted and other exceptionalities) relative to the TDSB's proportion of the total provincial enrolment.

When special education placement is examined with intersections of race, income and gender, significant differences are apparent between ISPs and regular classes:

- Black and South Asian students with an exceptionality (excl. gifted) are more likely to be in ISPs rather than regular classes, whereas White students and those who identify with more than one racial category are more likely to be in regular classes rather than ISPs.
- Over half of students with a gifted exceptionality, regardless of setting, came from high income families and nearly half of students with exceptionalities (excluding gifted) in ISPs were from low income families.
- Boys/men are overrepresented in all special education programming (gifted and other exceptionalities both in regular classes and ISPs), but the highest disproportionalities can be seen in ISPs for exceptionalities (excluding gifted) - boys/men represent nearly three-quarters of this group.

Looking Ahead

The final part will focus on the following areas:

- Outcomes (achievement, pathways and post-secondary trajectories)



PART FOUR: OUTCOMES- ACHIEVEMENT, PATHWAYS AND POST-SECONDARY

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This final section examines academic outcomes for students with SEN as they move through the TDSB, as well as access to post-secondary education. This includes comparisons between students with SEN and students without SEN on Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments, as well as an analysis of pathways, graduation and post-secondary confirmations using Grade 9 cohort data.

EQAO Achievement and SEN

The table below demonstrates considerable differences in achievement on EQAO assessments for students with SEN (excluding gifted), gifted students and students without SEN. Table 1 outlines 2022-23 EQAO results in mathematics for Grades 3, 6 and 9 students. Gifted students achieved at a much higher level than the TDSB average. On the other hand, all students with SEN excluding gifted and non-identified/IEP-only achieved at a much lower level than the TDSB average.

Table 1: EQAO 2022-23 Math Results for Students with and without SEN

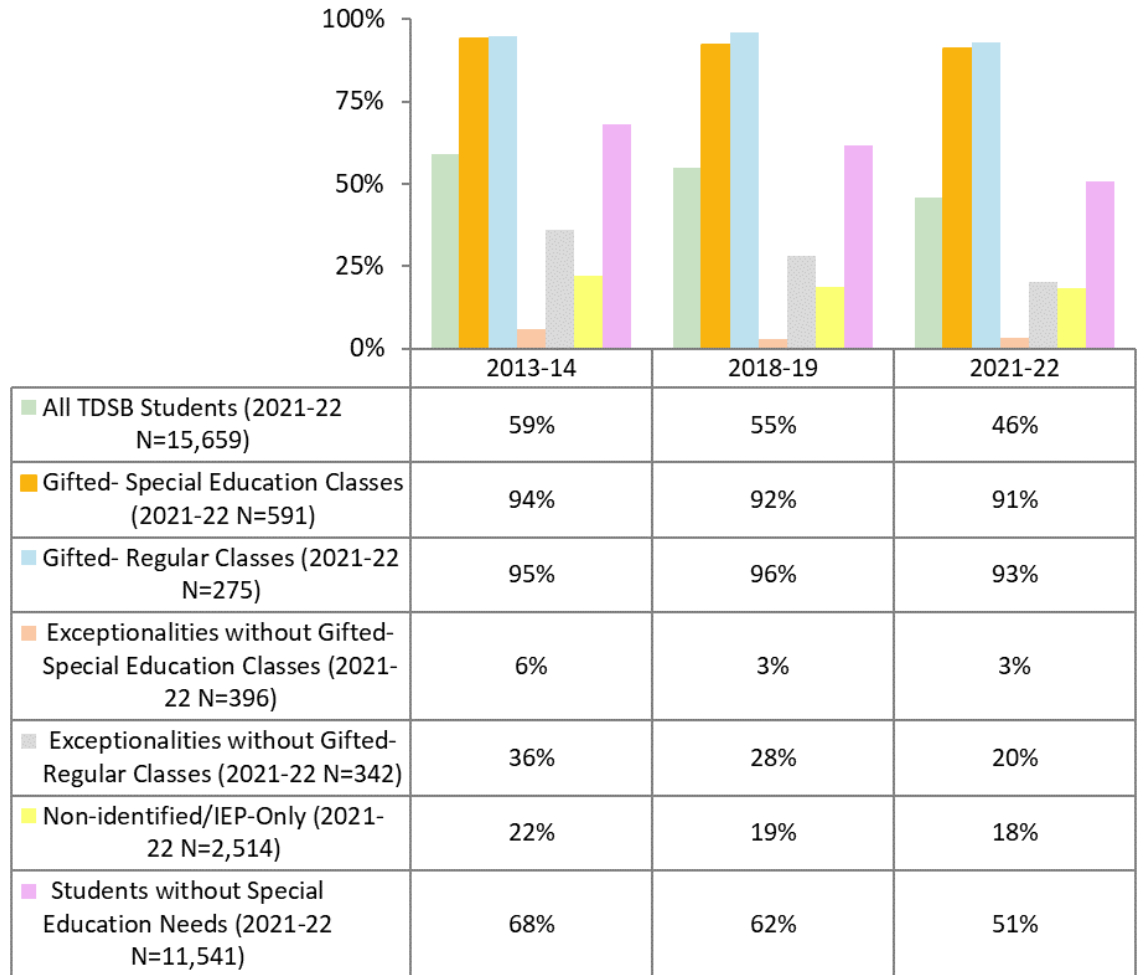
Subgroups	Levels 3-4 EQAO Grade 3 Mathematics	Levels 3-4 EQAO Grade 6 Mathematics	Levels 3-4 EQAO Grade 9 Mathematics
Gifted	* (N=<10)	98% (N=774)	99% (N=758)
Students with SEN excluding Gifted	25% (N= 1,605)	22% (N=2,580)	26% (N=2,807)
Students without SEN	64% (N=13,109)	60% (N=11,793)	64% (N=12,734)
Overall TDSB	64% (N=14,714)	54% (N=14,373)	57% (N=15,541)





In addition to looking at the most recent EQAO scores across the system, an analysis of EQAO scores over time was also completed using Grade 6 mathematics results at three time points: 2013-14, 2018-19 and 2021-22. Clear differences in achievement again emerge between groups of students (see Figure 1). While the same overall pattern of gifted students achieving at a much higher level than the TDSB average and students with SEN excluding gifted achieving at a much lower level than the TDSB average can be seen in this data, student placement also had an impact. Students in ISPs (particularly students with SEN excluding gifted) achieved at lower levels than students in regular classes.

Figure 1: EQAO Grade 6 Mathematics Results for Students at Level 3 or 4 from 2013-14, 2018-19, and 2021-22*



*Please note the EQAO assessment was changed to an online format in 2021-22 and therefore comparability with past years may be limited.



Pathways and Post-Secondary Access: Grade 9 Cohort Tracking

In order to examine pathways and post-secondary access for students with SEN, Grade 9 students who started in Fall 2016 were traced back to when they were in Kindergarten (2006-07 and 2007-08 school years) and then from Grade 6 (Fall 2013) through to 5 years of secondary school (June 2021).

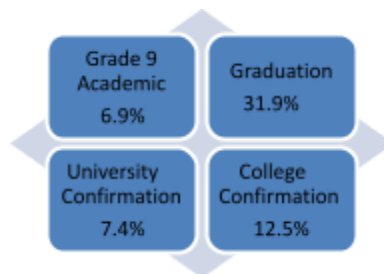
Diagnostic Kindergarten Program

One of the Intensive Support Programs (ISPs) that the TDSB provides is the Diagnostic Kindergarten Program. This program serves Kindergarten students who have complex and/or medical needs in intellectual, communication, and fine/gross motor skills, including persistent challenges in daily living. Prior to Grade 1, students go through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process to determine if the student is an exceptional learner and what supports will be required for the upcoming school year.

Within the 2016-21 Grade 9 cohort, we were able to identify 216 students who were in the Diagnostic Kindergarten Program in Junior or Senior Kindergarten.

- Virtually all of these students would later be identified as having SEN excluding gifted or non-identified/IEP-only.
 - o 90% of students were in special education ISPs and 3% were non-identified or had an IEP-only in Grade 6.
- Nearly all of these students (94%) would go on to have a reported exceptionality by Grade 6 - the most frequent being autism (36%), followed by developmental disability (23%), and mild intellectual disability (20%).
- Academic trajectories and outcomes for these students were generally lower than students without SEN. The graduation rate was lower than other students in ISPs (-11.0%), however, despite a lower graduation rate, university confirmations were slightly higher (+3.8%) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Academic Trajectories and Outcomes for Students in the Diagnostic Kindergarten Program (2016-21 Grade 9 cohort)





Secondary School Outcomes by Exceptionality Category

Out of 15,699 students in the Grade 9 cohort of 2016-2021, 13,023 or 83% could be matched to Grade 6. The other 2,676 students or 17% entered the TDSB after Grade 6 and are therefore excluded from this analysis. From those 13,023 students, outcomes were examined for the six exceptionality categories which account for 97% (as of the 2023-24 school year) of students with SEN at TDSB (developmental disability, mild intellectual disability, autism, learning disability, gifted, and behaviour).

Within the 2016-21 Grade 9 cohort, we were able to identify 134 students with autism, 45 students with developmental disability, 138 students with mild intellectual disability, 614 students with learning disability, 601 gifted students and 71 students with a behaviour exceptionality.

Table 2 highlights key differences in pathways and post-secondary access for students.

- Nearly all students with a gifted exceptionality achieved Levels 3/4 in EQAO testing, took academic programming in Grade 9, and graduated within 5 years. The vast majority also confirmed post-secondary with over three-quarters confirming university.
- Around half of students within the four largest exceptionality categories outside of gifted and developmental disability (learning disability, mild intellectual disability, autism and behavioural) achieved Levels 3/4 in EQAO testing, while far fewer took academic programming in Grade 9.
- Graduation rates varied greatly, from 34% for students with mild intellectual disability to 77% for students with a learning disability. Less than half of students with exceptionalities (excluding gifted) confirmed post-secondary.



Table 2: The Grade 9 Cohort 2016-2021 - Outcomes for Students with a Gifted, Autism, Developmental Disability, Mild Intellectual Disability, Learning Disability or Behaviour Exceptionality

Exceptionality (Grade 6 Status)	Gr 6 EQAO Math level 3/4	Gr 6 EQAO Writing level 3/4	Gr 6 EQAO Reading level 3/4	Grade 9 Academic	Graduated	Confirmed University	Confirmed College	Confirmed Post-Secondary
Gifted (N=601)	98.5%	95.9%	95.4%	99.5%	96.0%	77.3%	3.5%	80.8%
Autism (N=134)	64.4%	54.9%	62.7%	24.6%	55.6%	16.1%	17.7%	33.9%
Developmental Disability (N=45)	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Mild Intellectual Disability (N=138)	67.9%	55.9%	59.0%	2.2%	34.4%	1.6%	15.6%	17.2%
Learning Disability (N=614)	62.4%	51.4%	61.1%	30.8%	76.8%	21.6%	25.1%	46.7%
Behaviour (N=71)	52.2%	45.1%	43.6%	15.5%	46.3%	7.5%	9.0%	16.4%
Students without SEN (N=9,561)	81.7%	77.8%	80.5%	91.0%	92.9%	65.3%	14.3%	79.6%



Secondary School Outcomes by Exceptionality and Placement

Table 3 highlights key differences in pathways and post-secondary access for students in regular classes versus special education classes:

- Nearly all students with a gifted exceptionality took academic courses in Grade 9, as did a majority (53%) of students with SEN in regular classes. In contrast, only one in twenty students in ISP and one in five students in Home School Program (HSP) took academic Grade 9 courses.
- Almost all students with a gifted exceptionality (96%) graduated, as did most students with SEN in regular classrooms (79%) and HSP (73%). Conversely, less than half (43%) of those in ISP had graduated by 2021, although many were still in the TDSB in secondary Year 6.
- Most students with a gifted exceptionality transitioned to university (65%). Over half (58%) of students with SEN in regular programming in Grade 6 also went directly to post-secondary, but their pathways were split between college (27%) and university (31%).
- Post-secondary was not the direct pathway for most students in ISPs in Grade 6: only 16% of those in ISP and 44% of those in HSP made the transition, generally into the Ontario community college system. We also know from previous research² that for students with SEN, those who do transition to college are generally from higher-income neighbourhoods.

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² Robson, K. L., Anisef, P., Brown, R. S., & Parekh, G. (2014). The Intersectionality of Postsecondary Pathways: The Case of High School Students with Special Education Needs. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie*, 51: 193–215. doi:10.1111/cars.12044



Table 3: The Grade 9 Cohort 2016-2021 - Students with SEN in Grade 6 (2013-14) and Status up to Grade 12 (2020-21)

Subgroups (Grade 6 Status)	Grade 9 Academic	Graduated	Confirmed University	Confirmed College	Confirmed Post-Secondary
Gifted - regular and special education classes (N=601)	99.5%	96.0%	77.3%	3.5%	80.8%
Students without SEN (N=9,561)	91.0%	92.9%	65.3%	14.3%	79.6%
ISP excluding Gifted (N=460)	5.4%	42.9%	3.6%	12.6%	16.2%
HSP* excluding Gifted (N=488)	19.3%	73.3%	11.8%	31.7%	43.5%
Students with SEN in regular classrooms excluding Gifted (N=1,913)	53.4%	79.4%	31.2%	27.0%	58.1%

*Given the unfavourable outcomes stemming from HSP, the TDSB has phased out HSP as of 2022-23 in a shift towards more inclusionary practices³.

³ Special Education Plan 2020 (2020). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.





Summary

The intersections between gender, race, SES, and SEN highlighted earlier in this appendix, combined with these findings regarding academic pathways and outcomes illustrates how some groups of TDSB students are disproportionately and negatively impacted relative to other groups of students.

EQAO mathematics results demonstrated marked differences in achievement between gifted students, students with SEN excluding gifted and students without SEN. Students in ISPs (particularly students with SEN excluding gifted) achieved at lower levels than students in regular classes.

Data from the 2016-21 Grade 9 cohort revealed that students in the Diagnostic Kindergarten Program and/or ISP were far less likely to take academic courses in Grade 9, to have graduated after 5 years of secondary education, or to confirm an offer from a post-secondary institution. Outcomes for students in HSP were also generally negative. These students were overwhelmingly male, racialized, and from lower SES backgrounds, which led to the TDSB phasing out HSP as of 2022-23.

Special Education and Inclusion 2023-2024 Annual Report Executive Summary

Introduction

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is committed to providing welcoming, safe, nurturing and inclusive learning environments for students. We believe in ensuring equity of access and equity of outcome for all students, including students with disabilities and special education needs. We recognize that students develop and learn in different ways, have different strengths and needs, and require different levels of support which includes special education programs and services.

The work of the Special Education and Inclusion Department, as outlined in the report, is guided by the goals outlined in the Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP), which specifically focus on improving learning experiences for students with special education needs.

This school year (2023-24), there are 41,075 students of a total 238,106 students (17% of total TDSB student population) with special education needs (formally identified as well as having an Individual Education Plan or IEP only). Of the 41,075, 17,501 or 43% are formally identified with exceptionalities as defined by the Ontario Ministry of Education, while 23,574 or 57% have IEPs, but no exceptionality.

Ontario Regulation 181/98 requires school boards to consider placing students with exceptionalities into regular classes with appropriate special education supports before considering placement in special education classes. Students who are welcomed, included and supported in neighborhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes are able to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of school life. Other students in these classes also benefit from students with special education needs being in the regular classroom by having increased interactions with, and understanding of, students with disabilities (Gupta et al., 2014)¹. In addition, research shows that academic achievement is the same or higher in inclusive settings for students without special education needs and better social interactions are exhibited due to this increased understanding of diverse populations of students (Salend & Garrick Duhaney, 1999)².

In the TDSB, we continue to be responsive to the understanding that some students may require more specialized or intensive programs and services. This school year, of the 17,501 students with exceptionalities, 41% (7,193 students) are in regular

¹ Gupta, S. S., Henninger IV, W. R., & Vinh, M. E. (2014). How do children benefit from inclusion? *First steps to preschool inclusion: How to jumpstart your program wide plan*, 33-57.

² Salend, S. J., & Garrick Duhaney, L. M. (1999). The impact of inclusion on students with and without disabilities and their educators. *Remedial and special education*, 20(2), 114-126.

classes, while 59% (10,308 students) are in special education classes. When all students with SEN are considered (i.e., including the 23,574 IEP-only students), 75% (30,767 students) are in regular programming, while 25% (10,308 students) are in special education classes

Outline of Report

The Special Education and Inclusion Department has continued to expand on the work outlined in the 2022-2023 Special Education and Inclusion Annual Report by creating coherence and alignment of special education and inclusion practices, programs and structures across the TDSB. The department has been focusing on the following areas:

- Challenging and Dismantling Oppressive Structures;
- Capacity Building;
- Changing Mindsets; and
- Communication and Engagement.

These focus areas are interconnected and reflect the need for shared responsibility and shared accountability of staff at all levels in serving students with special education needs, and all students.

Furthermore, the team has been working to disrupt the following assumptions which can lead to attitudinal barriers to student success and which contribute to ableism:

- All students in early years classes who demonstrate learning challenges have special education needs;
- Students with special education needs are better served elsewhere; and
- Students with special education needs are best served by special education teachers.

This report outlines these areas:

Context

- Introduction
- Multi-Year Strategic Plan
- Inclusion

Action Plans and Associated Timelines

Creating Coherence and Alignment to Support Student Success

- Changing Mindsets:
 - Ableism in Education Book Study
 - Early Years
 - Students on a Modified Day Schedule

- Challenging and Dismantling Oppressive Structures:
 - The Referral Process
 - Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) Review
 - Employability Skills for Students with Special Education Needs

- Capacity Building:
 - Teaching and Learning
 - Mathematics
 - Drop-In Learning Sessions
 - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
 - Partnership with Apple Canada
 - Additional Qualification (AQ) Subsidy
 -

- Communication and Engagement:
 - Fact Sheets
 - Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Webinar Sessions
 - Parents and Caregivers as Partners Conference
 - Grade 8-9 Transition Information Session
 - Guides for Parents/Guardians/Caregivers
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) After School Skills Development Program
 - Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) K-12 Working Group

Conclusion

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) continues to focus on ensuring that students with special education needs are served through our commitment to challenging and dismantling oppressive structures, capacity building, changing mindsets, and communication and engagement. Through shared responsibility and shared accountability, we will create a more equitable school system where the achievement and well-being of each and every student with special education needs is fostered in welcoming, inclusive and accepting environments.

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The information found in this report suggests TDSB practices are dissimilar to other school districts. The TDSB Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) seeks to better understand resource allocation and placement trends for students with disabilities and special education needs. Additional support for students and professional learning is often sought. These reflections and others indicate that a review of the special education model within the TDSB may lead to recommendations to strengthen programs, supports and services. A Review of Special Education Programs, Supports and Services will be initiated in the 2024-2025 school year.