

*Programs of Study and the Dangerous
Discourses around (Dis)Ability:
Lessons from a Project in De-streaming*

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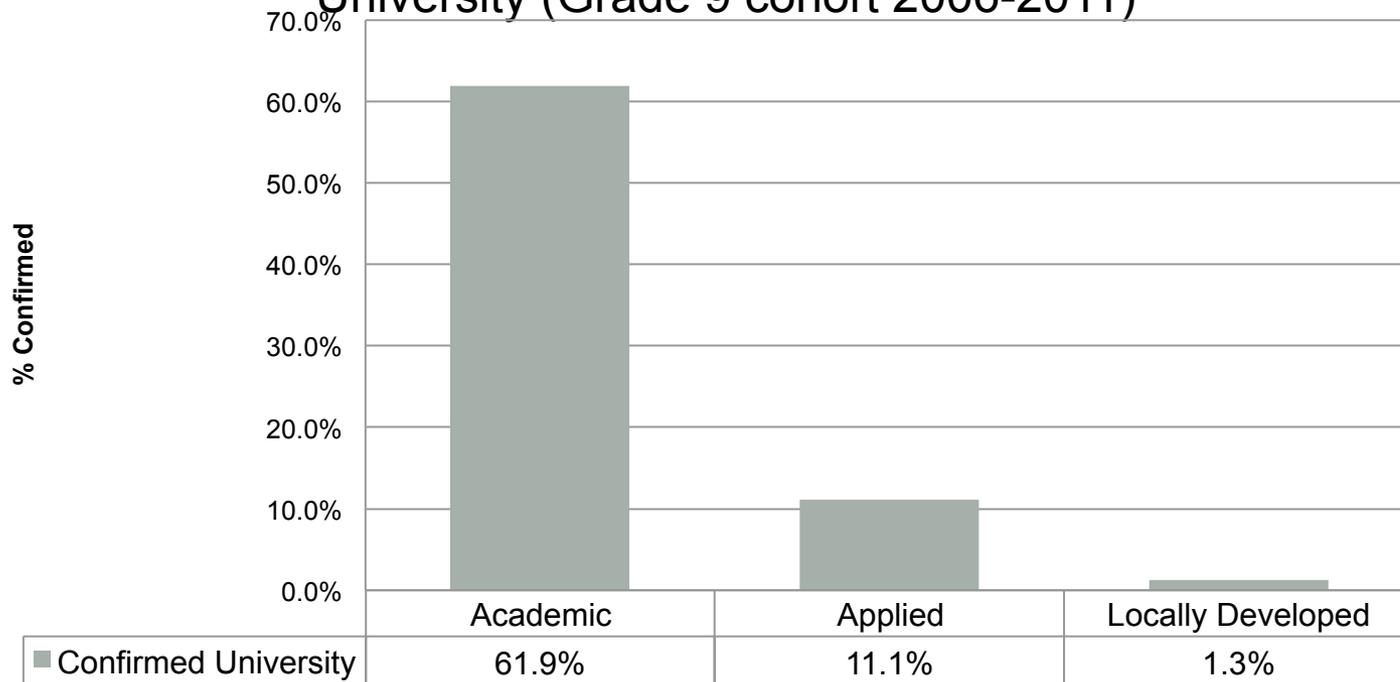
While our research shows that students identified with special education needs encounter greater barriers in reaching post-secondary education, there has never been a time where post-secondary is more critical.

Access to post-secondary has become of increasing importance and ensuring that students graduate secondary school with post-secondary options is a board priority.

Research has shown that unless students take the majority of their secondary courses at the academic and university level, very few will access post-secondary education.

Most TDSB students going to both university and college, take Academic courses in Grade 9; **while most of those who take Applied and Locally Developed will not go to post-secondary.**

Example: Relationship between Grade 9 Program of Study and Confirming University (Grade 9 cohort 2006-2011)

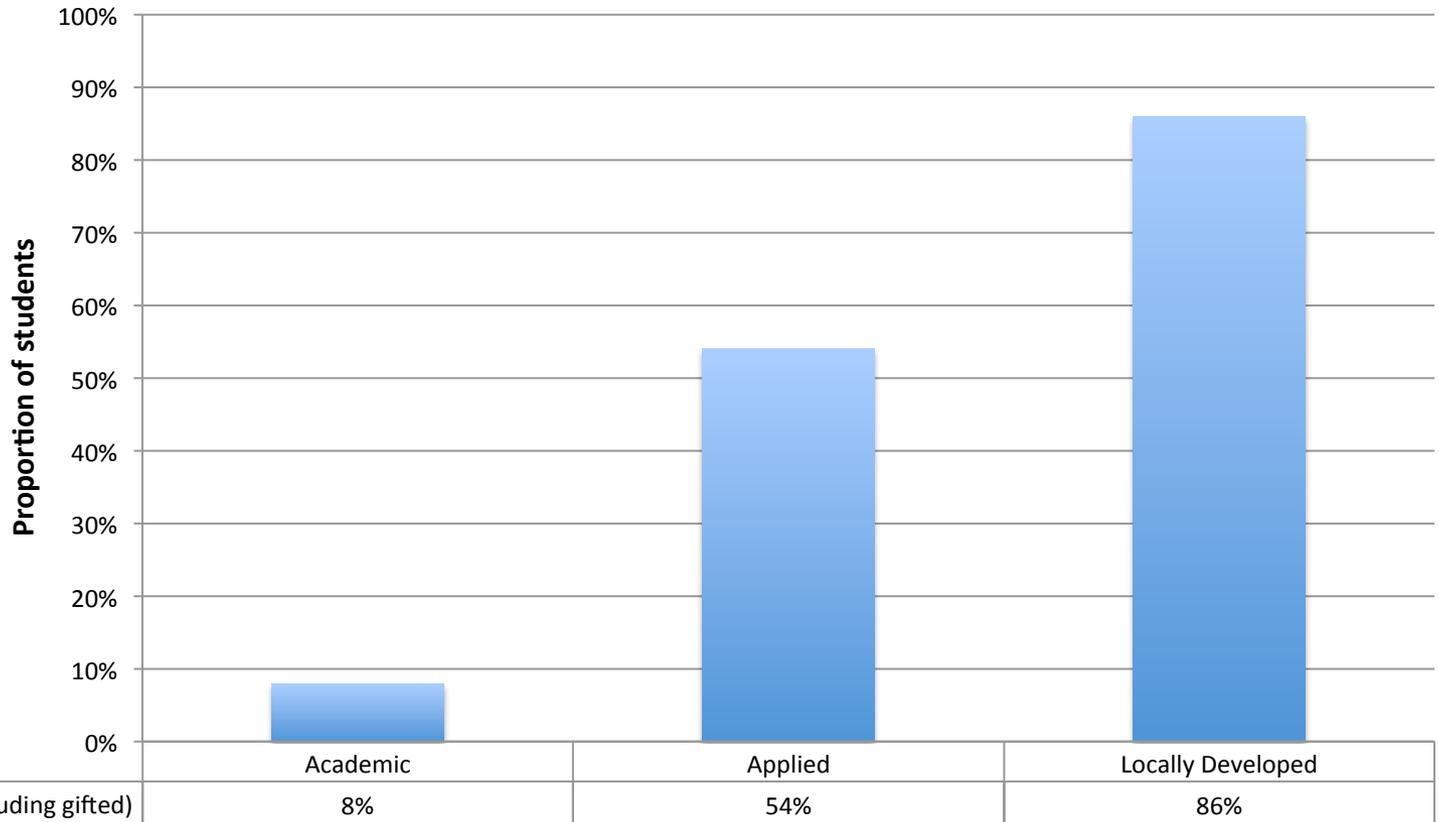


Note: Program of Study refers to the majority of courses taken in Grade 9

Proportion of Students Identified Across Secondary Programs of Study, 2011-12

Identified students (excluding gifted) in Grade 7 across secondary programs of study

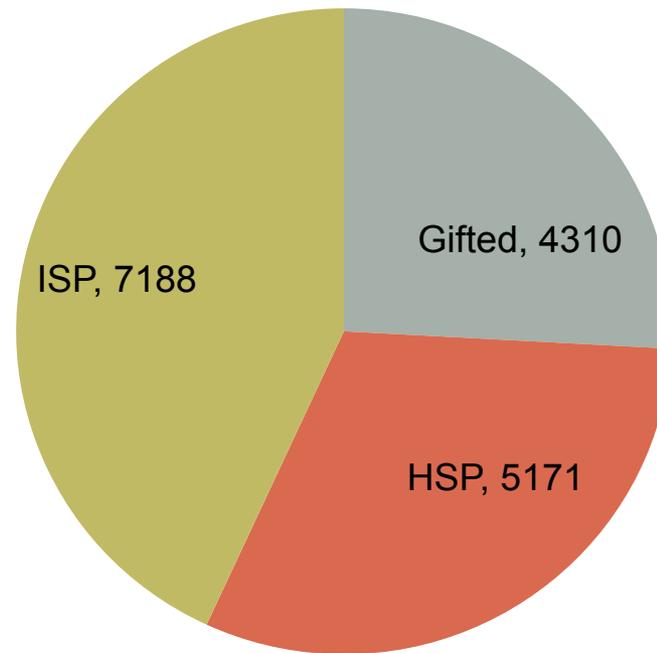
However, we have recently found that **most** students taking Applied and Locally-developed courses in Grade 9 are students with Special Education Needs.



Focus on HSP (Home School Program)

- HSP is the single largest Special Education program in the TDSB.

TDSB Special Education/Congregated Classes, 2014-15



N = 16,669 students. TDSB students account for 80% of Ontario students without an exceptionality in Special Education classes in 2014-15, and most are in the HSP program.

ISP refers to fully self-contained (100%) Special Education programs .g. LD, MID.

Intuitively, the Home School Program (HSP) was **intended to:**

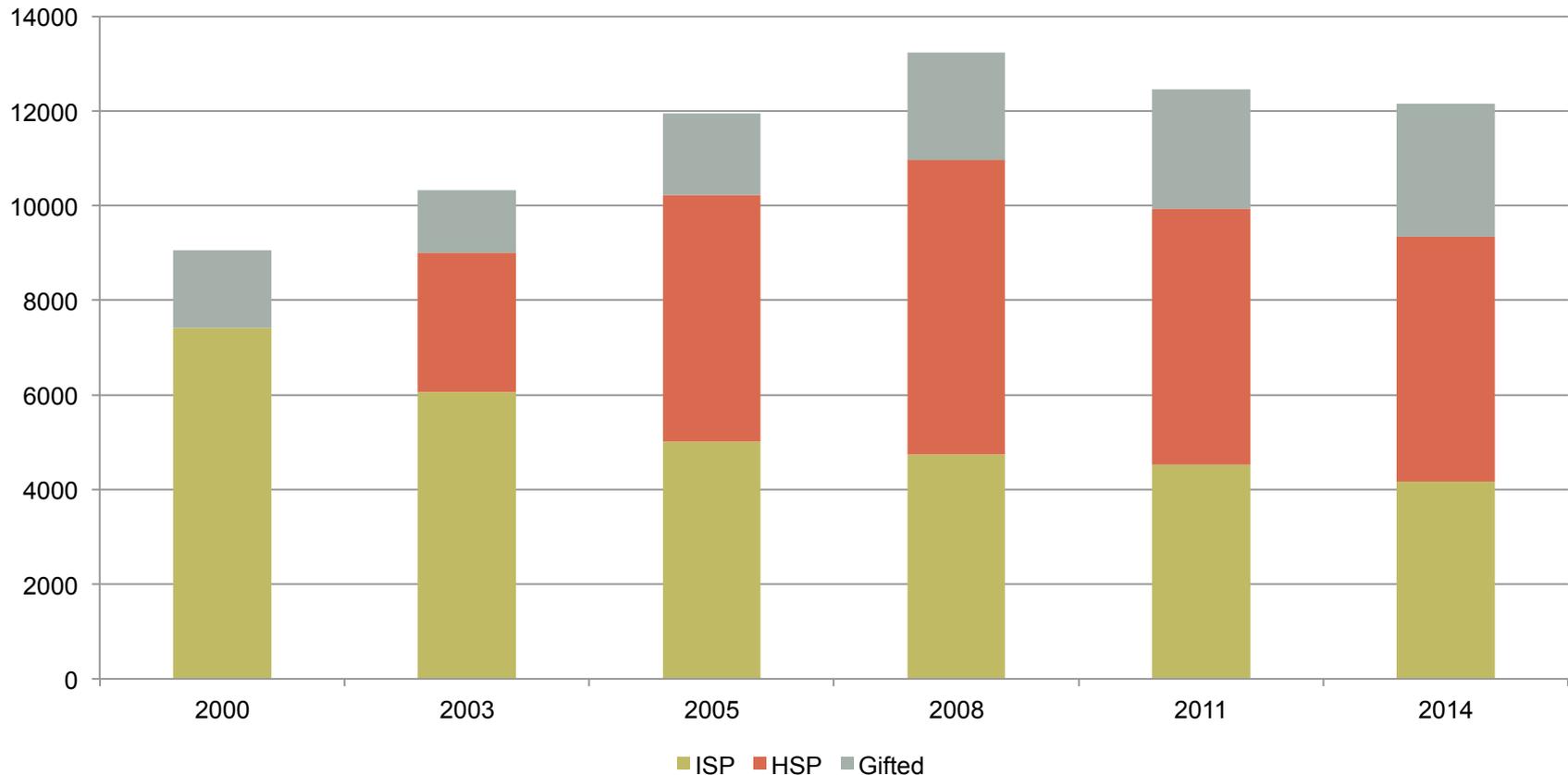
- Support students within a **small class instructional approach**
- Be an intervention within each school to help **keep students within their local home school**
- **Minimize the stigma** of being pulled out of their school
- Serve as a setting to **better support the reintegration of students** into the regular program after a timed, tiered intervention
- Be a program **accessed** either through an **IPRC process** or through the **In-School Team (IST)** or **School Support Team (SST)**

However, this is not what it has become...

- Instead, the HSP program often functions as a segregated program for up to **50% of the day**.
- Students are often placed in HSP for **core subjects** like Language and Math.
- HSP classes often span **a number of grades** (eg. Grades 4-6, Grade 6-8). The majority of students are in Grades 5-8.
- Students **do NOT need an IPRC decision** to access this program
- Roughly **60% of students** currently in HSP programs are there without a formal identification.

Trend: Over the past decade, the number of TDSB students in HSP has remained stable at something above 5,000 students.

Elementary Students with Special Education Needs in Special Education (Congregated) Classes, 2000-01 to 2014-15



- There has been some discussion as to whether **student achievement or program placement** in elementary presents the **largest barriers** to academic programming in Grade 9.
- **In order to better understand the relationship** between achievement and placement in elementary school to secondary streaming, **an analysis exploring the trajectory of students** identified with exceptionalities across various placements and achievement levels was conducted.
- **If achievement was accounted for, what kind of relationship does placement have to academic streaming in Grade 9?**

The first question:

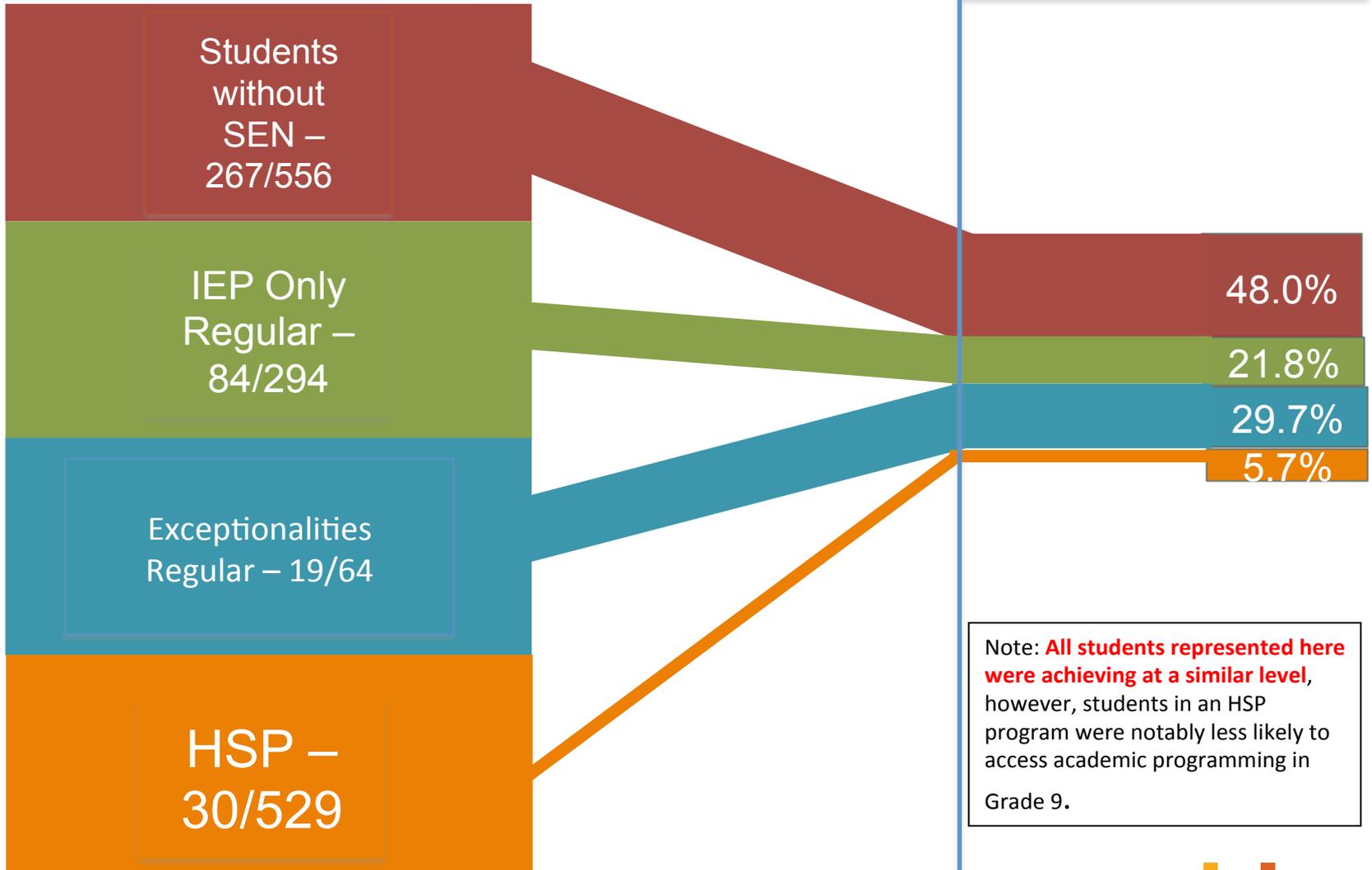
Is it **student achievement** that is keeping students out of Academic programming or are there **barriers embedded** within special education structures that lead to this stratified outcome?

Grade 6 cohort of 2010-11, followed into 2013-14.

Sources: TDSB students with Special Education Needs (2011-12); EQAO Mathematics Grade 6 dot scores (2010-11); and Grade 9 Program of Study (2013-14).

2010-11 Grade 6 EQAO
Level 1 or below

2013-14 Grade 9
Academic



Note: **All students represented here were achieving at a similar level,** however, students in an HSP program were notably less likely to access academic programming in Grade 9.

2010-11 Grade 6 EQAO
Level 2.0-2.5

Students
without
SEN –
681/1033

IEP Only
Regular –
112/322

Exceptionalities
Regular – 32/88

HSP –
33/168

2013-14 Grade 9
Academic

65.9%

34.8%

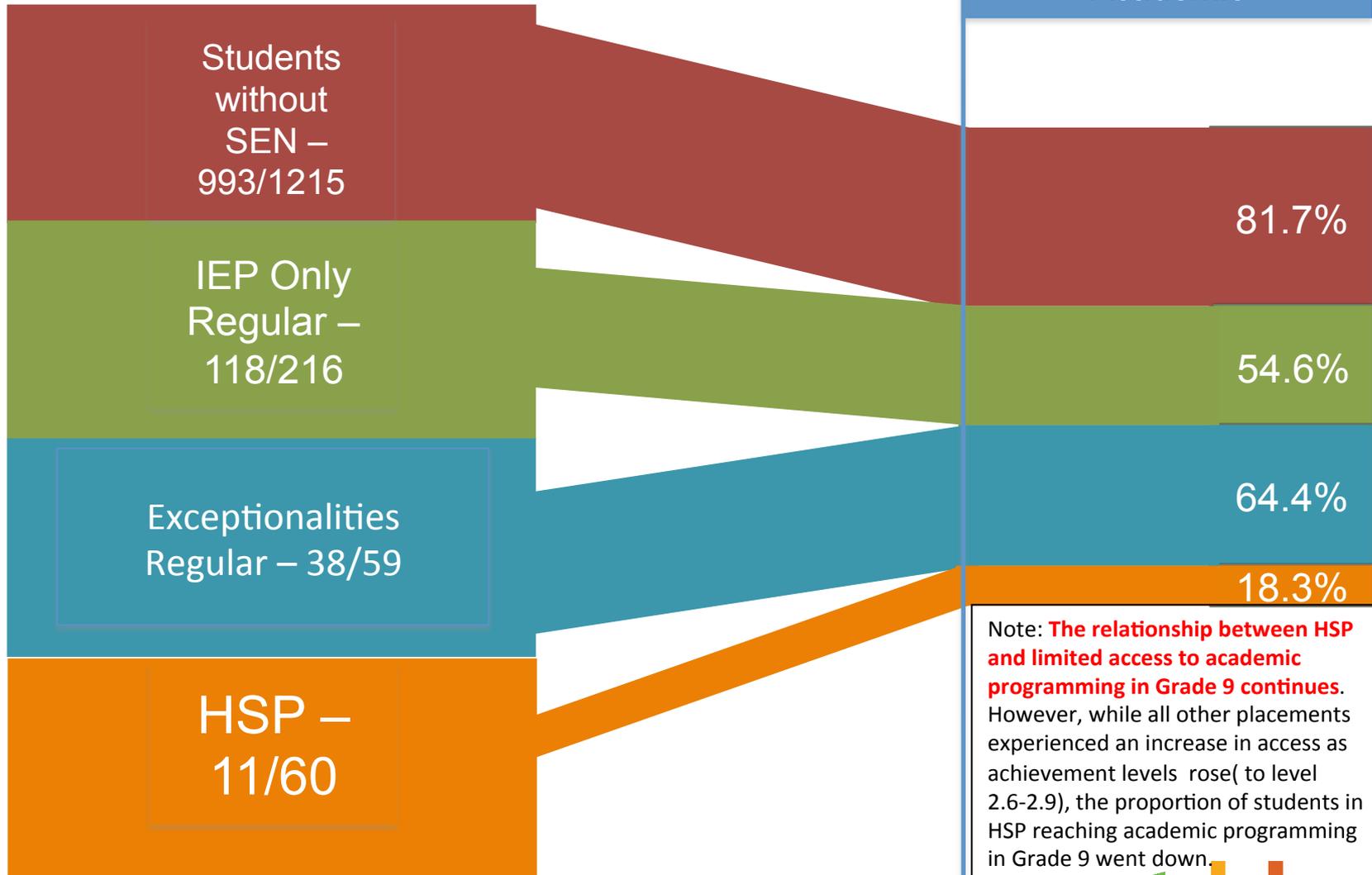
36.4%

19.6%

Note: **Similar to the previous chart,** students in HSP were much less likely to access academic programming in Grade 9. However, all placements experienced an increase in access as achievement levels rose (from level 1 to level 2-2.5).

2010-11 Grade 6 EQAO
Level 2.6-2.9 (TDSB Average Performance)

2013-14 Grade 9
Academic



Note: **The relationship between HSP and limited access to academic programming in Grade 9 continues.** However, while all other placements experienced an increase in access as achievement levels rose (to level 2.6-2.9), the proportion of students in HSP reaching academic programming in Grade 9 went down.

2010-11 Grade 6 EQAO
Level 3.0-3.49

2013-14 Grade 9
Academic

Students
without
SEN –
1811/2020

IEP Only
Regular –
92/162

Exceptionalities
Regular – 59/70

HSP –
7/37

89.7%

56.8%

84.3%

18.9%

Note: All students represented here achieved at the provincial average, yet only 18.9% of students in **HSP went on to academic programming in grade 9 – remarkably less than all other groups.** There is also a notable disparity between students who are formally and informally identified and taught in the regular class.

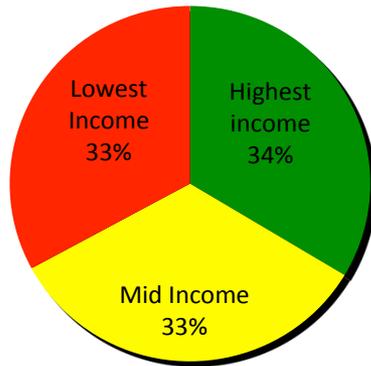
The second question:

What are the relationships of key Special Education programming to socio-economic and demographic variables?

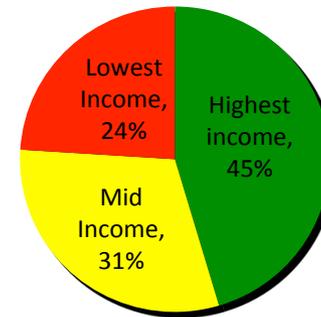
TDSB Elementary Students, 2011-12

Sources: TDSB students with Special Education Needs (2011-12); TDSB Parent and Student Censuses (2011-12).

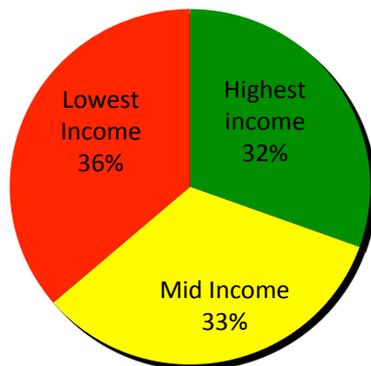
No SEN



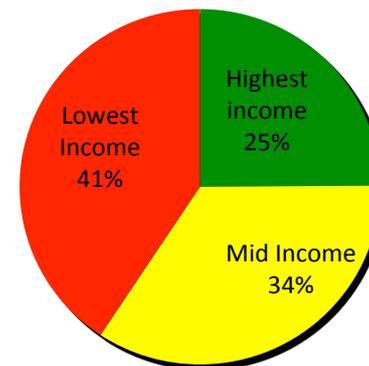
Exceptionalities- Regular Classes



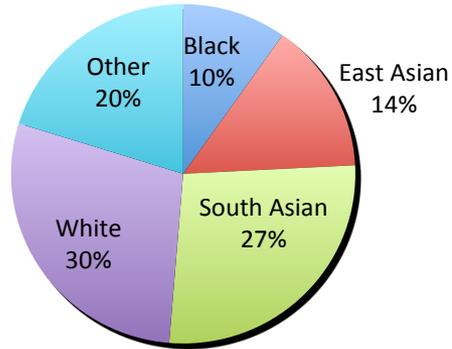
IEP only- Regular Classes



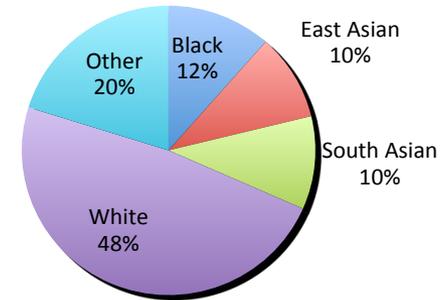
HSP



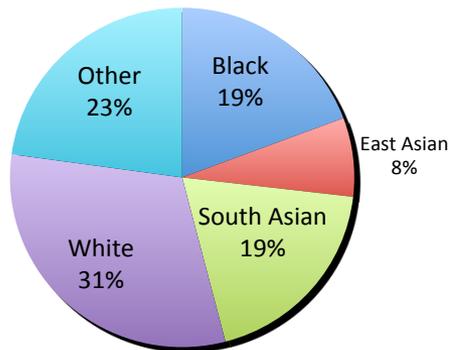
No SEN



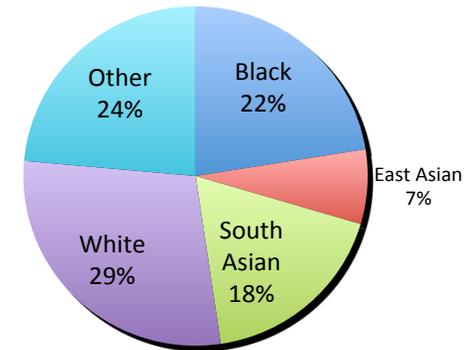
Exceptionalities- Regular Classes



IEP only- Regular Classes

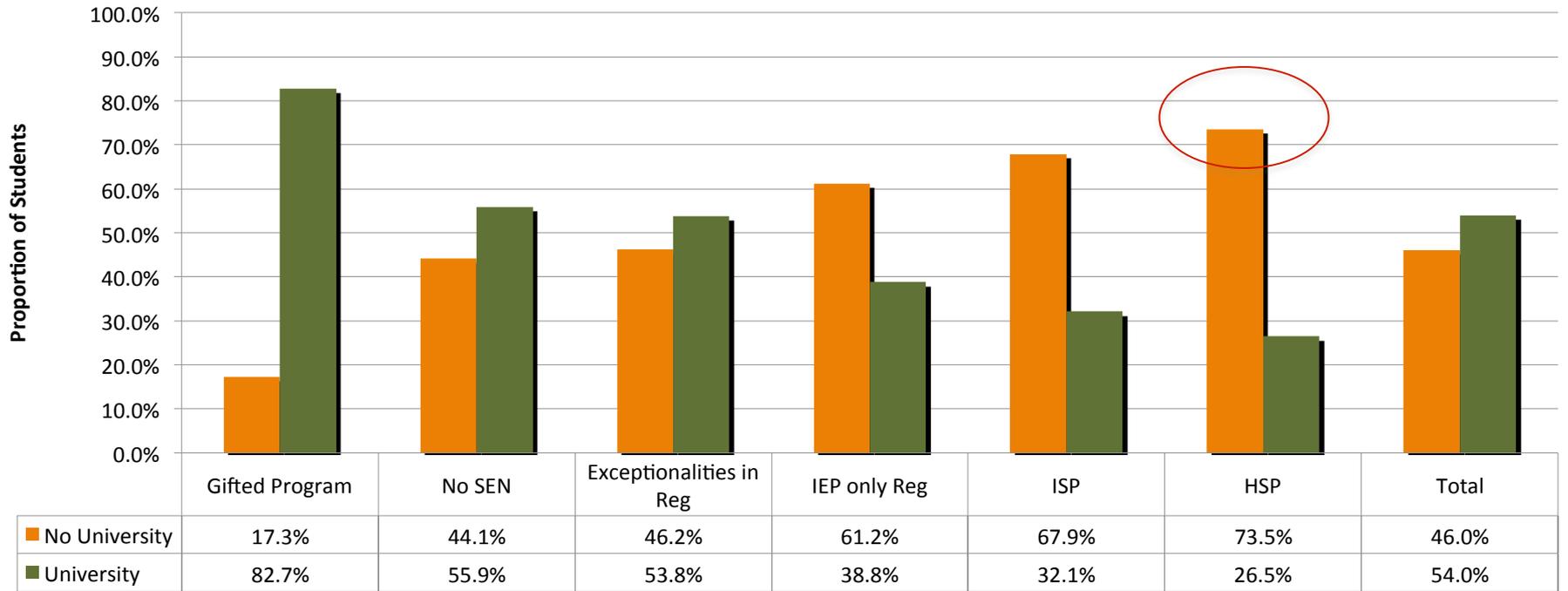


HSP



2011-12 Elementary Students - Relationship between Program and Parent Education

Parent Education across Special Education Categories



- There is a **strong relationship** between **special education identification and placement** in elementary school to secondary streaming.
- **Access to academic** programming in Grade 9 is **severely restricted** (relatively fixed) for students placed within an **elementary HSP** program and **streamed** towards **non-academic programming** regardless of student achievement.
- Students in the **lowest income tertile, students self-identified as Black, and students whose parents have not gone to university** are disproportionately over-represented in the HSP program and are at the greatest risk for encountering academic restrictions in secondary and post-secondary access.

What we take away...

- Again, constructs of ability appear to be used to segregate students and create homogenous groups that, in this case, reproduce structural disadvantage.
- These outcomes challenge our conceptions of disability and the role ability plays or does not play in these trajectories.
- Reveals ways in which special education processes can function as mechanisms that enact racism, classism, and ableism in schools.
 - "One result of perceiving "different" others through this technical-rational lens (i.e., as defective) is that it seems natural...that students of color, the poor, and immigrants lie outside the predominant norm and, therefore, belong in *special education*" (Reid & Knight, 2006, p. 19)...I would argue **out** of Academic...
- Results urge us to reconsider current practices and models as well as re-envision new alternatives.



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