

PSE ACCESS: RISK FACTORS ESTABLISHED IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Implications for policy, equity and human
rights

Dr. Kelly Gallagher-Mackay,
Dr. Robert S. Brown, and Dr. Gillian Parekh

Questions:

Looking at elementary school...

- what proportion of students who do not apply to university possess a given risk factor?

And conversely,

- what proportion of students possessing each 'risk factor' does not apply to post-secondary?

And – NOW WHAT, SO WHAT – if we can discover key risk factors:

- Are there proven policies or strategies to address them?
- What are the implications for equity and human rights?

Operationalizing key factors:

Based on the 1999-2000 cohort of kindergarten students in legacy Toronto and North York School Boards (n=3091)

Individual factors:

- Vulnerability at school entry (low score on 2+ EDI domains)
- Low academic achievement in grade 3 (EQAO score of level 1 in reading, writing and/or math)
- Demographics: gender, parental education, race, month of birth, family structure -- from TDSB Student Census

Operationalizing key factors (2)

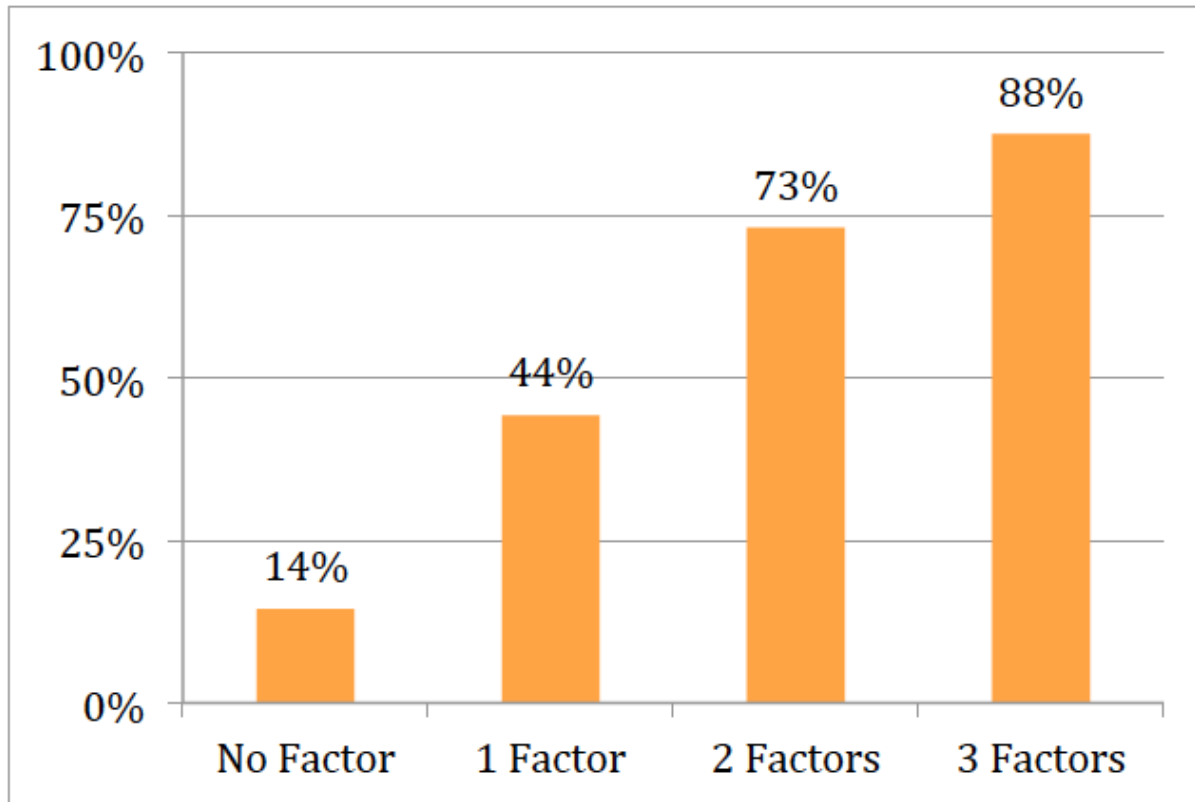
School factors:

- Significant absenteeism (>10% of days missed in grade 4)
- Identification with Special Education Needs in grade 6
- Placement in Special Education Setting for >50% of day
- School discipline – Suspension in elementary school

Percentage of students with identified risk factors not applying to PSE

| | % of all students who do not apply to PSE | % of students with this identified risk factor who do not apply to PSE |
|--|---|---|
| All Students | | 23% |
| Elementary (JK to Grade 8) | | |
| EDI high risk (2 or more domains) | 18% | 40% |
| Grade 3 EQAO Level 1 or below (3 subjects) | 38% | 34% |
| More than 10% Absenteeism Grade 4 | 18% | 52% |
| Congregated Special Education Needs (Grade 5) | 16% | 56% |
| Integrated Special Education Needs | 15% | 39% |
| Suspended during elementary | 32% | 54% |
| Demographic | | |
| Parents without university education | 70% | 26% |
| Male | 60% | 27% |
| Other than 2 parent family structure | 35% | 36% |
| Black/Aboriginal/Latino students | 22% | 37% |

Percentage of students not applying by number of key risk factors



Now what, so what?

Actually, quite good news!

Factors *most predictive* of PSE access are ones on which school policy and organization has a significant influence.

Absenteeism can be reduced with concerted action.

Demonstrated evidence of positive results from programs such as:

- Post-card nudges
- School-based pediatric health centres
- Interagency task force strategy in NYC – relative to comparison, 2 weeks of school gained; biggest impact in poorest communities

Many strategies to meet Special Education Needs -

Congregated Special Education associated with worse outcomes

- Often results in fewer curricular opportunities, less instruction time, lowered teacher expectations
- Students in congregated settings more likely to be streamed into applied courses even with identical academic achievement
- TDSB -- very high levels of use of congregated settings relative to other Ontario Boards
- Other provinces – e.g. N.B. – have moved to full integration

Changing pipeline from 'school to PSE'

Suspensions

- Widely recognized as an issue affecting long-term outcomes: 'school to prison pipeline'
- Lost educational opportunity for students out of school
- Black students three times as likely to be suspended
- Growing number of schools achieving non-exclusionary supports as a response to discipline
- Wide variability in suspension practices even in demographically similar schools

Equity and human rights

Equity



Human Rights:
Enforceable
rights to be free
from
discrimination

Implications:

- Adds to body of evidence suggesting much more involved in school and life success than test scores in a few subjects.
 - Focus on PSE access appropriately redirects attention to school as social, developmental environment – need for holistic supports
- Risk factors identified in this study intersect with other forms of disadvantage, including race and disability.
 - Both direct and systemic (unintentional, system-driven barriers) discrimination on human rights grounds are forbidden and these adverse impacts may be subject to review for human rights compliance

We look forward to your questions

Kelly Gallagher-Mackay

Assistant Professor, Law and Society

Wilfrid Laurier University kgallaghermackay@wlu.ca

Robert S. Brown

Research Coordinator, Toronto District School Board

Robert.Brown@tdsb.on.ca

Gillian Parekh

Assistant Professor, Education

York University parekhg@edu.yorku.ca