

The dilemmas and consequences in assessing students' learning skills

Gillian Parekh, Robert Brown, & Samuel Zheng

HEQCO

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Learning Skills

- An essential component of the provincial report cards for both elementary and secondary school students in Ontario:

*“The development of learning skills and work habits is an integral part of a student’s learning...the evaluation of learning skills and work habits...should **not** be considered in the determination of a student’s grades. Assessing, evaluating, and reporting on the achievement of curriculum expectations and on the demonstration of learning skills and work habits separately allows teachers to provide information to the parents and student that is specific to each of the two areas of achievement.”*
(*Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools, 2010*)

Learning Skills (from 2010-11)

- In 2010-11, the Ontario Ministry of Education made changes to have the same six learning skills for both elementary and secondary school students:

Learning Skills and Work Habits		E – Excellent G – Good S – Satisfactory N – Needs Improvement		
Responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fulfils responsibilities and commitments within the learning environment. Completes and submits class work, homework, and assignments according to agreed-upon timelines. Takes responsibility for and manages own behaviour. 			Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devises and follows a plan and process for completing work and tasks. Establishes priorities and manages time to complete tasks and achieve goals. Identifies, gathers, evaluates, and uses information, technology, and resources to complete tasks. 	
Independent Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independently monitors, assesses, and revises plans to complete tasks and meet goals. Uses class time appropriately to complete tasks. Follows instructions with minimal supervision. 			Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepts various roles and an equitable share of work in a group. Responds positively to the ideas, opinions, values, and traditions of others. Builds healthy peer-to-peer relationships through personal and media-assisted interactions. Works with others to resolve conflicts and build consensus to achieve group goals. Shares information, resources, and expertise, and promotes critical thinking to solve problems and make decisions. 	
Initiative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looks for and acts on new ideas and opportunities for learning. Demonstrates the capacity for innovation and a willingness to take risks. Demonstrates curiosity and interest in learning. Approaches new tasks with a positive attitude. Recognizes and advocates appropriately for the rights of self and others. 			Self-Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets own individual goals and monitors progress towards achieving them. Seeks clarification or assistance when needed. Assesses and reflects critically on own strengths, needs, and interests. Identifies learning opportunities, choices, and strategies to meet personal needs and achieve goals. Perseveres and makes an effort when responding to challenges. 	

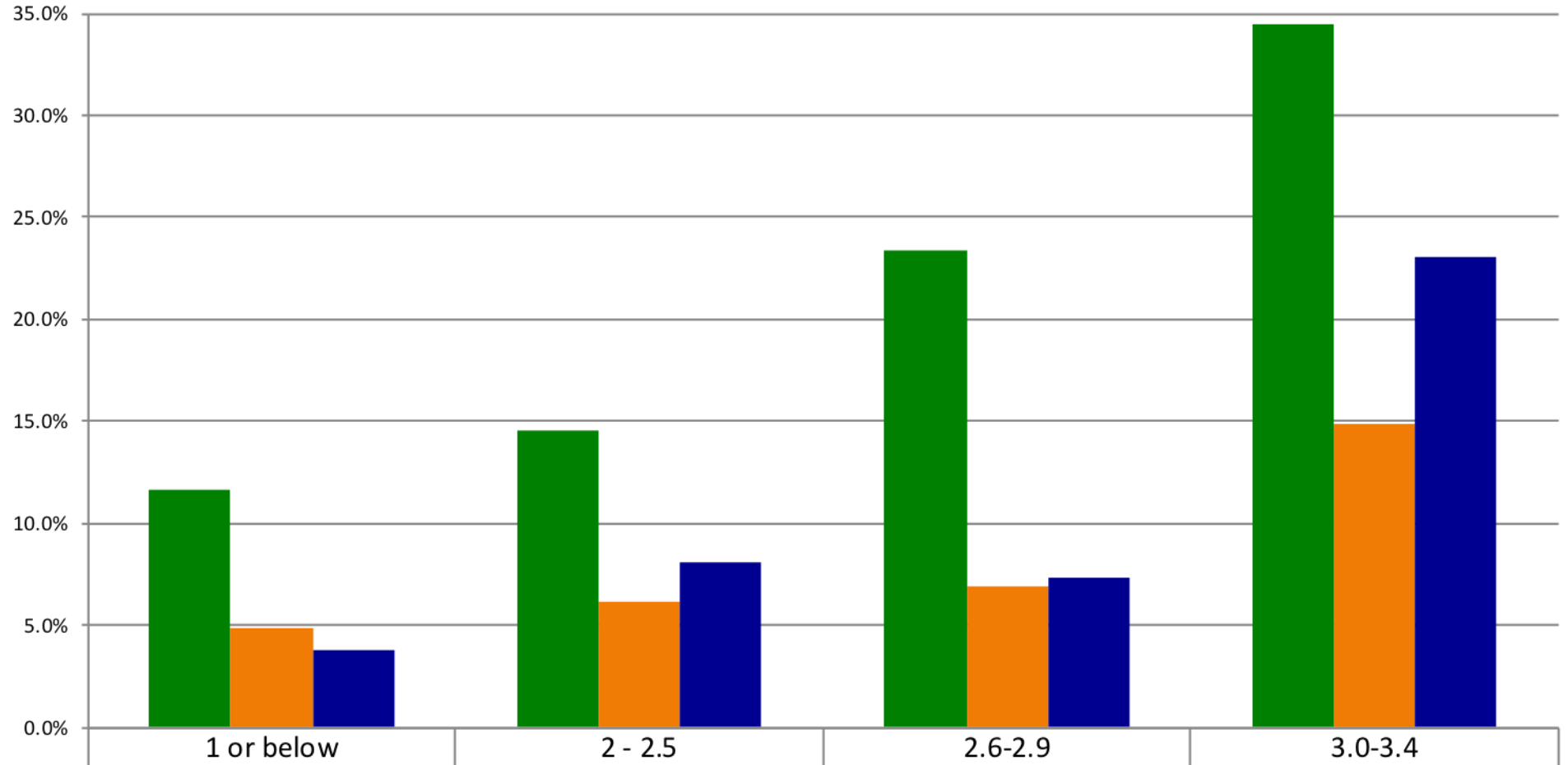
Research Question

- Assumption: Better learning skills should be correlated to higher achievement.
- If we held achievement constant, would we find demographic differences between groups?
- If we did, what would that mean?

Methodology

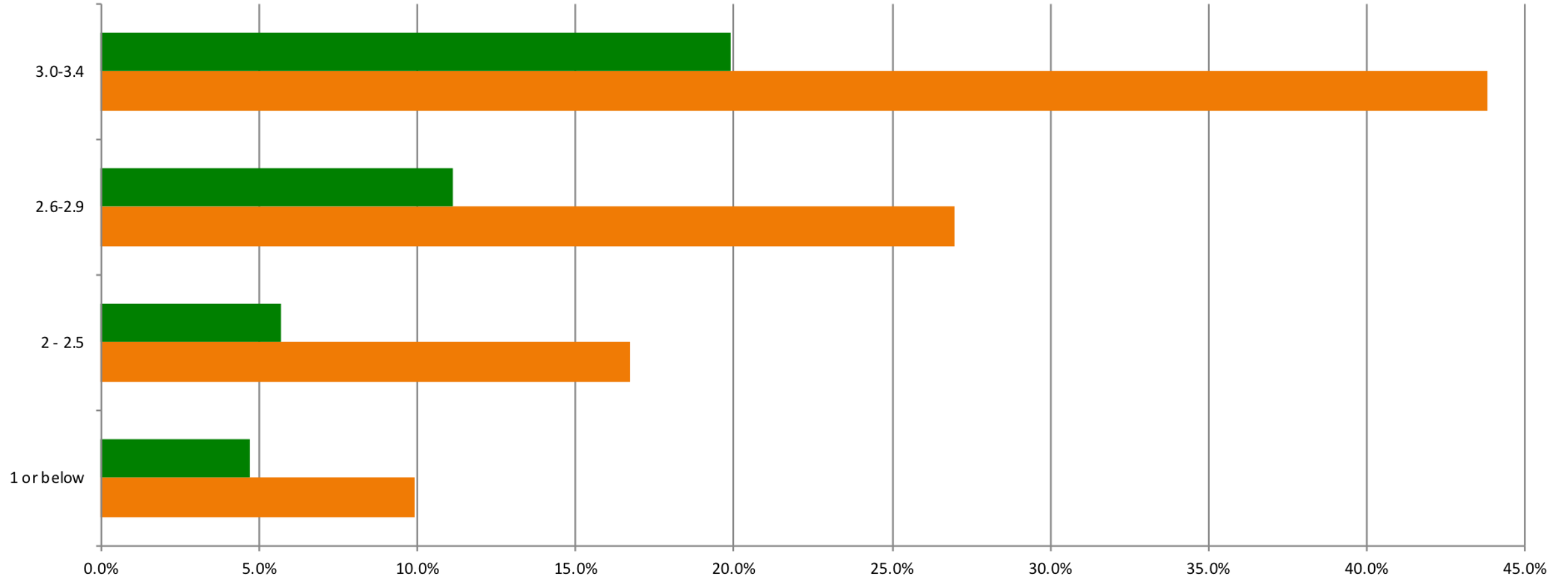
- We looked at Grade 6 Learning Skills and Grade 6 EQAO Mathematics dot scores (2009-10), and how they intersected with selected socio-demographic groups.
- Graphs show Grade 6 EQAO Mathematics from Level 1 and below, to Levels 3-3.4.

Figure 1: 'Excellent' Evaluation on Learning Skills across Special Education and Achievement



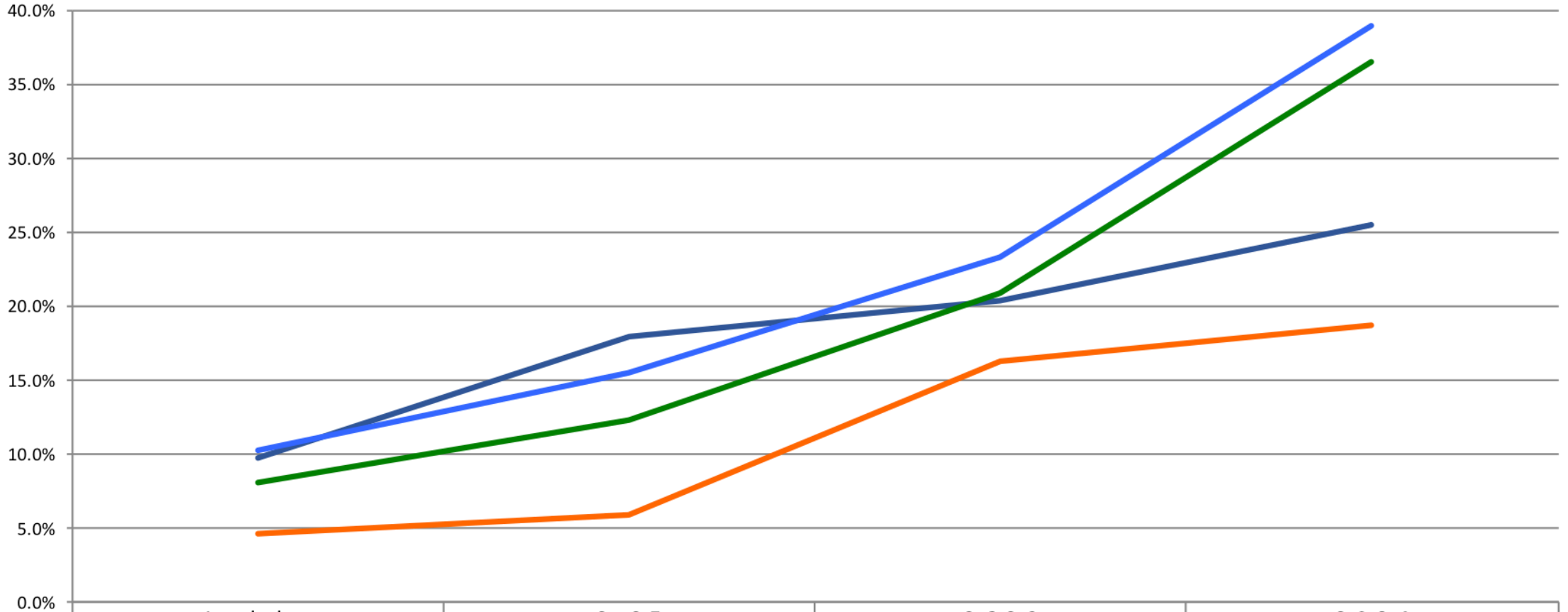
■ Students without SEN	11.6%	14.6%	23.4%	34.5%
■ HSP	4.9%	6.2%	6.9%	14.9%
■ SEN excluding Gifted Regular	3.8%	8.1%	7.4%	23.1%

Figure 2: 'Excellent' Evaluation on Learning Skills across Gender and Achievement



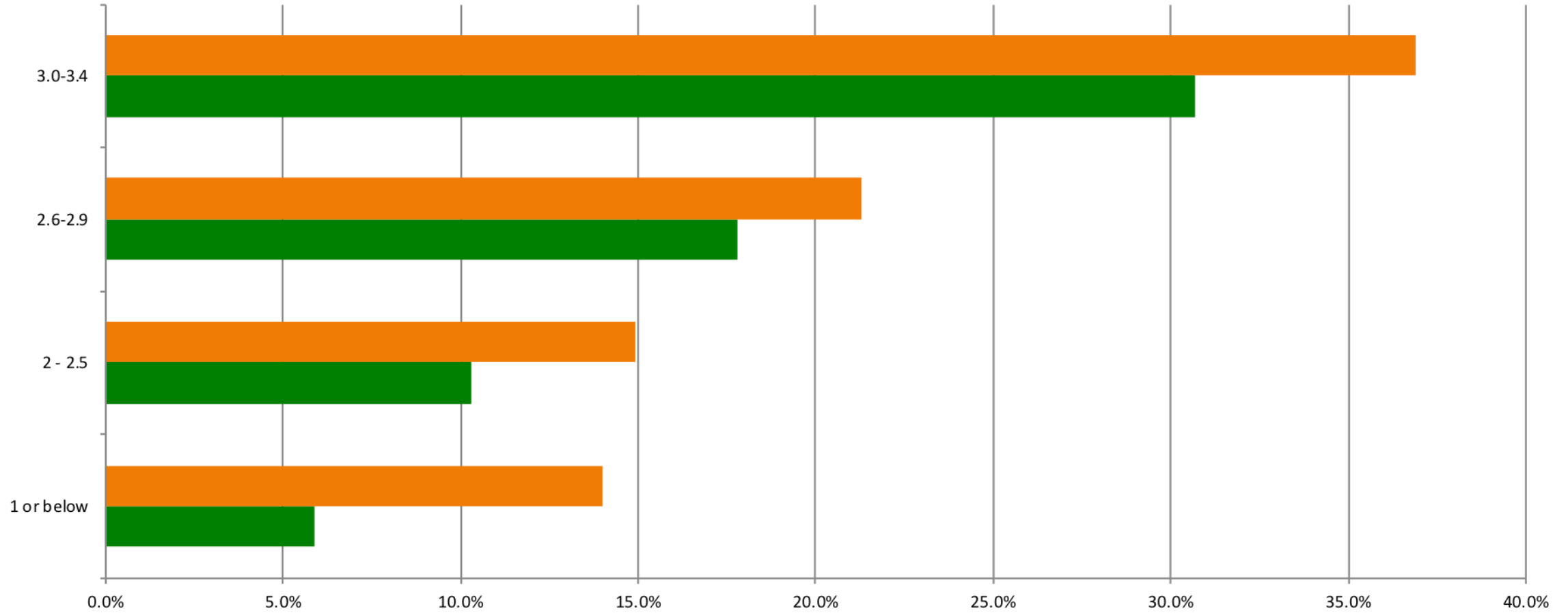
	1 or below	2 - 2.5	2.6-2.9	3.0-3.4
■ male	4.7%	5.7%	11.1%	19.9%
■ female	9.9%	16.7%	27.0%	43.8%

Figure 3: 'Excellent' Evaluation of Learning Skills Across Race and Achievement



	1 or below	2 - 2.5	2.6-2.9	3.0-3.4
Black	4.6%	6.0%	16.3%	18.7%
East Asian	9.8%	18.0%	20.4%	25.5%
South Asian	8.1%	12.3%	20.9%	36.6%
White	10.3%	15.6%	23.3%	39.0%

Figure 4: 'Excellent' Evaluation on Learning Skills across Parental Education and Achievement



	1 or below	2 - 2.5	2.6-2.9	3.0-3.4
University	14.0%	14.9%	21.3%	36.9%
No University	5.9%	10.3%	17.8%	30.7%

Conclusions

- Analysis suggests that there is a systemic perception that students who are:
 - White
 - Female
 - Non-identified/educated within the regular class
 - Children of university educated parents
- ...have better learning skills.
- ...even in situations when their counterparts (racialized, male, identified/self-contained class, non-university educated parents) have the same level of achievement.

Thanks!

- Gillian Parekh
- Faculty of Education, York University (parekhg@edu.yorku.ca)

- Robert S. Brown
- Research and Information Services, Toronto District School Board (rob.brown@tdsb.on.ca)

- Samuel Zheng
- Research and Information Services, Toronto District School Board (Samuel.Zheng@tdsb.on.ca)