
Where Did They Go?

**Post-Secondary Experiences, Attitudes & Intentions of
2005/06 BC High School Graduates Who Did Not Pursue
Public Post-Secondary Education in British Columbia by
Fall 2007**

Co-funded and Prepared by: The Canadian Council on Learning

Executive Summary

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The “**Where Did They Go?**” study, co-funded by the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) and the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), was designed to complement research undertaken under the auspices of the Student Transitions Project (STP) which has tracked the public post-secondary participation of BC high school graduates from 2002/03 to the present. The co-funders were interested in better understanding (a) other post-secondary destinations outside of the BC public system, and (b) the intentions of high school students who have *not continued* on to post-secondary education after graduation from high school.

Forty-two percent of British Columbia’s 2005/06 high school graduation cohort had not registered at a public post-secondary institution by the end of the fall term of 2007. Of these, 2,018 were surveyed in March 2008 by R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. in order to learn more about these graduates. This was done under contract with the Ministry of Education which provided Malatest with the graduate data necessary to conduct a random sample. The survey was modelled on one developed by the Fraser Region Consortium (FRC)¹ with their permission. That study examined the further education destinations, intentions, and attitudes of 2003/04 BC high school graduates from the Fraser Region of the province who did not transition to public post-secondary education in BC by the following year (Heslop, 2006). A small subcommittee guiding the “Where Did They Go?” study² made modifications to the original survey instrument (see Appendix F), which was then implemented across the province with a sampling strategy based on six regions.

This report describes the survey methodology, the sample, and key research findings. When interpreting the results, the reader should be aware that the provincial level findings are statistically significant; however, those at the regional level are not. A number of appendices augment information in the body of the report.

¹ The FRC partners included Douglas College, Kwantlen University College, Simon Fraser University, and the University College of the Fraser Valley, as the institutions were named at the time.

² The High School Graduate Survey Subcommittee was comprised of Joanne Heslop (Student Transitions Project), Tracy Lavin (CCL), Mario Mazziotti (BCIT), and Devron Gaber and Jean Karlinski from BCCAT.

Highlights

By March 2008, or nearly two years since high school graduation, an estimated 78.4% of 2005/06 BC high school graduates had transitioned to public or private post-secondary education at institutions within BC or elsewhere. The rate of transition to BC public post-secondary institutions alone was 62.1%.^a

Although they had not transitioned directly to public post-secondary studies in BC, most survey respondents (96%) were pursuing or were interested in pursuing further education: only 4% indicated that they had no intention of ever pursuing post-secondary studies.

An estimated 6.9% of 2005/06 high school graduates had enrolled at private post-secondary institutions in BC and 6.2% had left the province to pursue their studies elsewhere in Canada. Among transitioners outside of the BC public system, students with high GPAs tended to leave the province, while students with lower GPAs were more likely to be found in BC private post-secondary institutions.

Financial concerns were the primary barrier to pursuing post-secondary studies reported by survey respondents.

^a This is consistent with preliminary STP information extracted in November 2008: 61.9% of 2005/06 BC high school graduates had transitioned to BC public post-secondary education within two years of graduation.

Major Findings

Based on the survey of 2,018 respondents who graduated from a BC high school in 2005/06 and were not registered in a BC public post-secondary institution by the end of the fall term of 2007, it was determined that:

- The majority (62%) of respondents had, by March 2008, registered at or applied to a post-secondary institution:
 - 49% had registered; and
 - 13% had applied.
- A further 22% intended to apply to a post-secondary institution:
 - 20% intended to apply within the next two years; and
 - 2% intended to apply at some point in the future.
- Of those respondents who had registered by March of 2008 (N=987), their registration status was as follows:
 - 25% completed their short program;
 - 66% were still actively registered; and
 - 9% were no longer registered;

- and their post-secondary destinations were as follows:
- 22% went to BC public institutions (between Fall 2007 and March 2008);
 - 34% of attendees went to BC private institutions;
 - 30% registered elsewhere in Canada; and
 - 7% registered outside of Canada.
- Among respondents who applied but had not registered (N=267), application destinations were largely in BC:
 - 75% applied to BC public institutions;
 - 8% applied to BC private institutions; and
 - 12% applied to institutions outside of BC.
 - Only 4% of the survey respondents had never applied for admission, had never considered doing so, and probably never would.
 - By extrapolating the survey results and integrating them with prior research conducted by the Student Transitions Project (STP)³, this study was able to quantify the post-secondary destinations of the 44,978 BC graduates of 2005/06:
 - 50.8% registered at BC public post-secondary institutions in Academic Year 2006/07;
 - a further 6.9% registered at BC public post-secondary institutions in the fall of 2007; and
 - 20.7% registered later (by March 2008) or elsewhere, including:
 - 4.4% at BC public post-secondary institutions;
 - 6.9% at BC private post-secondary institutions;
 - 6.2% at post-secondary institutions elsewhere in Canada;
 - 1.4% at post-secondary institutions outside of Canada; and
 - 1.3% in Adult Basic Education.
 - 298 of the respondents (15%) had achieved high (80% or above) academic grade point averages in high school: 69% of these respondents were registered at post-secondary institutions outside of BC.
 - Just under one-third (32%) of the respondents pursued an academic route through high school, completing English 12 and at least three other academic courses. Among those who had not pursued an academic route, only 38% had taken any further education; 44% of these were at BC private institutions.

³ The Student Transitions Project (STP) uses Personal Education Numbers (PENs) to link data about students in the BC public post-secondary system with data from their kindergarten to Grade 12 years.

- Many of those who did not pursue an academic route through high school indicated that they struggled in high school: fewer than half were interested in what they were learning (48%), were motivated as students (48%), or had a clear academic direction (47%). Only a small fraction (16%) had expected to go on to post-secondary studies immediately after high school.
- The majority of respondents (84%) was either attending school full-time, working full-time or splitting their time between working and attending school. Most (82%) were satisfied with their current activities, but a little over half anticipated a change within the next two years.
- The most frequently reported reason for delaying or opting out of further education was to earn money. Among those who intended to apply to a post-secondary program but had not yet done so, the main reasons were uncertainty regarding goals and financial concerns. Financial resources were most frequently cited as a factor affecting future decisions to pursue post-secondary education.
- Among groups of respondents who were least likely to pursue further education (e.g., males, Aboriginal graduates, those who had not pursued an academic route through high school), there was significant interest in pursuing training and accreditation in the trades.

Post-secondary Status: Experiences, Attitudes and Intentions

Each of the 2,018 respondents was classified into one of eight mutually exclusive post-secondary status categories, based on their post-secondary experiences, attitudes and intentions at the time of the survey:

- Active Registrants had pursued post-secondary studies and were still attending at the time of the survey (n = 656, 33%);
- Completed Registrants had completed a post-secondary program or course(s) (n = 244, 12%);
- Accepted Applicants had applied for admission to a post-secondary program but had not registered, often because their program had not yet started (n = 166, 8%);
- Pending Applicants had applied for admission to a post-secondary program and were still waiting for an admissions decision (n = 77, 4%);
- Rejected Applicants had applied and were denied admission to a post-secondary program (n=24, 1%)
- Former Registrants had pursued post-secondary studies but left before completing their program (n=87, 4%);
- Postponers had not applied for admission but had considered it or might consider it at some point in the future (n = 690, 34%);
- Opposers had never applied for admission, had never considered doing so, and probably never would (n = 74, 4%).

Beyond their post-secondary experiences, attitudes and intentions, there were a number of distinguishing features across the eight post-secondary status categories.

Active Registrants (n = 656)

Nearly half of these respondents had mothers and/or fathers with a post-secondary education. The majority reported that they were motivated students in high school, completed their assignments on time, had a clear academic direction, and expected to continue on to post-secondary education directly after graduation. These respondents were more likely than any other group to have taken an academic route through high school and to have achieved a university eligible GPA. Although they were less likely to be employed, earned lower wages and often worked as retail sales staff or restaurant staff, most of these respondents were satisfied with their current situation.

Completed Registrants (n = 244)

After completing a short post-secondary program, most of these respondents were employed full-time, but over a quarter were still studying. This group did not express particularly high satisfaction levels with their current activities and one-third anticipated a change within the next year.

Accepted Applicants (n = 166)

Most of these respondents had expected to take a break between high school and post-secondary studies. They reported fewer failing grades than other respondents but very few of these respondents achieved university eligible GPAs. Most of these respondents were employed full-time but more than half expected to be doing something different within the year.

Pending Applicants (n = 77)

These respondents reported a mix of positive and negative high school experiences: they were less satisfied with their grades and less likely to complete their homework assignments, but they were less likely to face learning difficulties. These respondents were in flux: nearly two-thirds expected to be doing something different within the year.

Rejected Applicants (n = 24)

These respondents were less satisfied with their current circumstances than any other group. This group did not perceive learning in high school to be difficult, but did not generally enjoy their high school experiences: they were bored, unmotivated, and less likely than others to get on well with their teachers or to complete their homework assignments. Most expected to be doing something different within one or at most two years.

Former Registrants (n = 87)

These respondents also reported relatively low levels of satisfaction with their current circumstances. While the majority expected their circumstances to change within a year or two, fewer than one-third planned to resume their post-secondary studies. These respondents had relatively good grades in high school but, while the majority expected to

pursue post-secondary studies immediately after high school, they were less likely than others to consult guidance counsellors or teachers for information about post-secondary education.

Postponers (n = 690)

Men outnumbered women almost two to one in this group. Postponers reported having a difficult time learning course material. Many had failing grades and few had a clear academic direction. These respondents were less likely than others to consult family members regarding post-secondary programs. The majority were employed but earning relatively low wages. They were less likely than others to be working in the skilled trades and more likely to be working as retail sales staff.

Opposers (n = 74)

Most of this group (71%) was composed of men. These respondents reported negative high school experiences: were bored, uninterested, and unmotivated. Many had a difficult time learning course material, had failing grades, and lacked a clear academic direction, and few expected to pursue further education after high school. These respondents were more likely than others to have fathers who did not complete high school and were least likely to consult family members regarding post-secondary programs. In contrast to their mostly negative attitudes toward education, this group of respondents was generally very satisfied with their current situation and felt that they were doing well without any further education. Most were employed and the majority were earning at least \$13 per hour. Many were employed in the trades, and they were less likely than others to be employed as restaurant or retail sales staff.