



PART III: The End of the Journey

Chapter 8: Public Exams

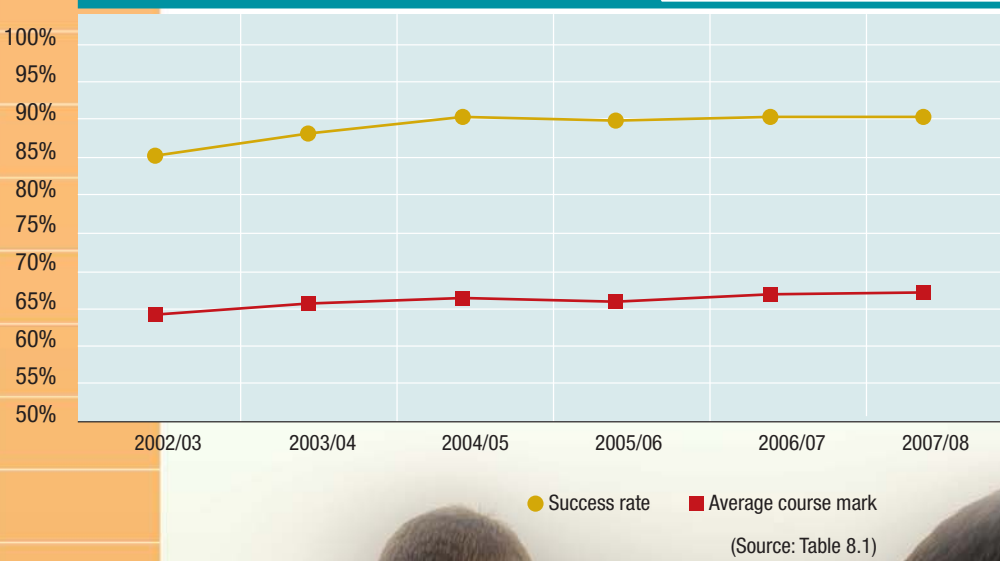
This chapter will examine how students fared in public examination courses over the past six years. Public examinations are required in selected academic/advanced Level III courses in mathematics, sciences, social studies and languages. These public exams differ from school-based exams in that all students registered in the course write the same exam. Once completed, exams are returned to the Department of Education for grading by a panel of teachers.

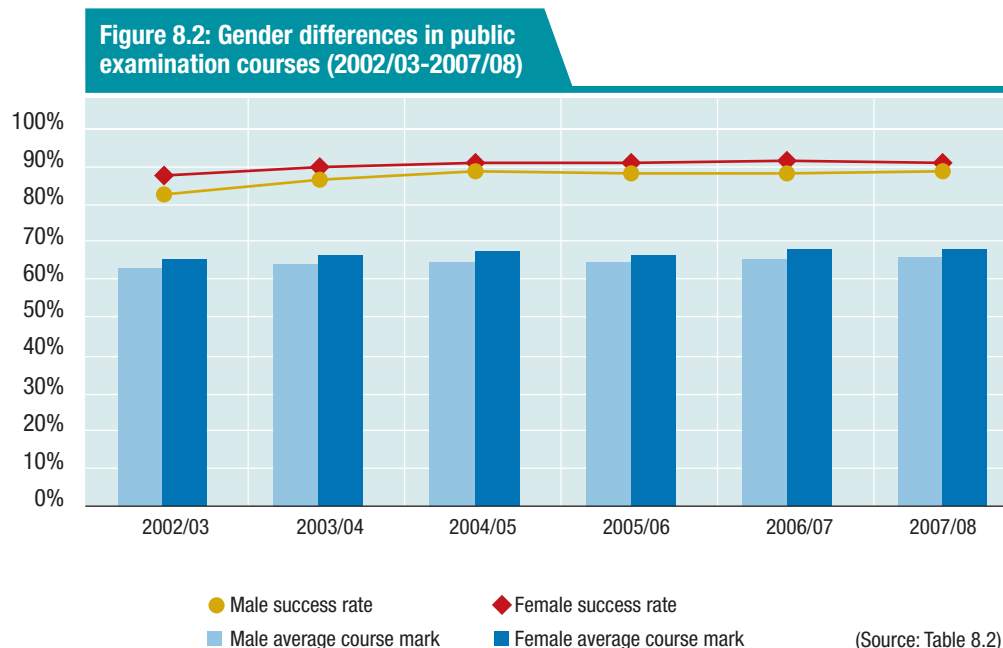
Overall student performance

Provincially, both the average course mark and student success rate⁸ in all public examination courses gradually increased between 2002/03 and 2007/08 (see *figure 8.1*). Girls consistently demonstrate higher success rates and achieve higher average marks in public examination courses. While this difference is small, girls continually perform at a higher level (see *figure 8.2*).

⁸ The student success rate in provincial public examination is calculated by dividing the total number of public examinations written in a given year into the number of students who scored 50 or above in the course.

Figure 8.1: Public examinations (2002/03-2007/08)





June 2008 public examinations in focus

In June 2008, 21,755 public examinations in 14 courses were written by senior high school students. These public exam courses can be grouped into four categories - languages, mathematics, sciences and social studies. There were two courses only offered in the province's Francophone school district - mathématiques 3231 and biologie 3231. The results of these two courses are not included in the following sections due to the small number of students (nine in each course) who completed these examinations.

Social studies

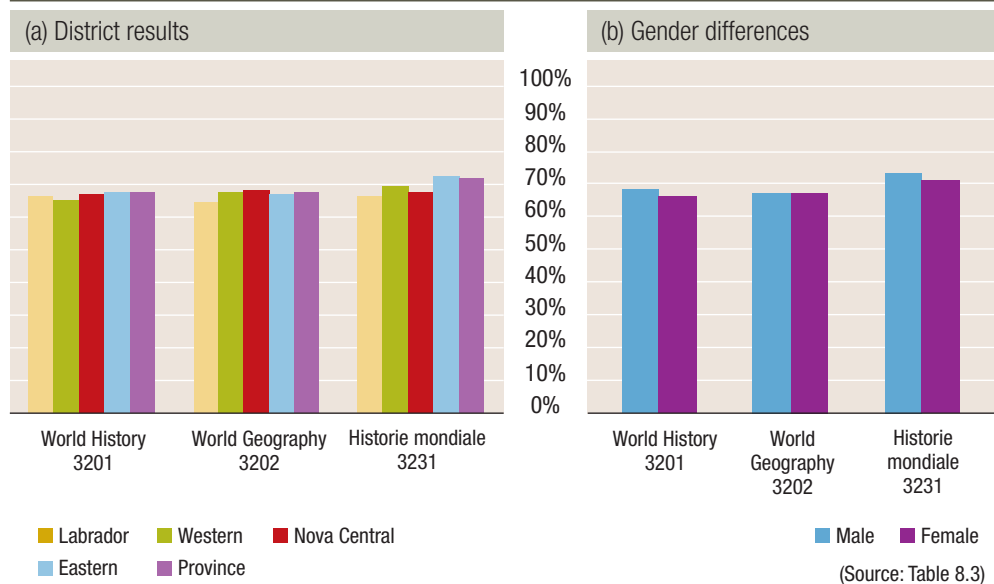
Student performance has remained fairly consistent in the three social studies courses during 2007/08 with very little variation occurring across the districts. Overall, students achieved slightly higher



grades in Histoire mondiale 3231 (see *figure 8.3a*). Along gender lines, boys achieved slightly higher grades in World History 3201 and Histoire mondiale 3231. There was virtually no difference in performance in World Geography 3202 (see *figure 8.3b*).



Figure 8.3: Student performance in social studies courses (2007/08)

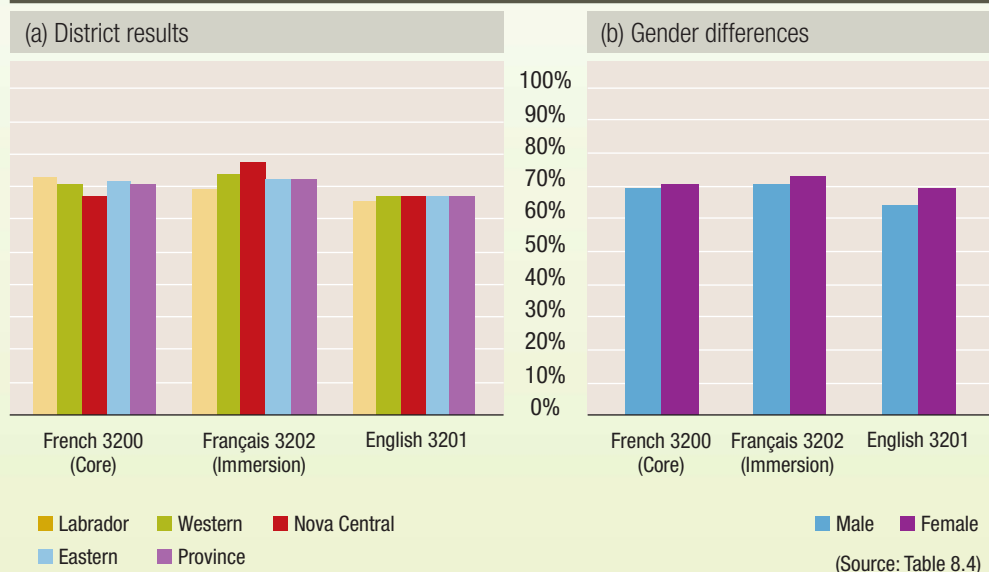


Languages

Three language courses have public examinations - French 3200 (Core), Français 3202 (Immersion) and English 3201. Provincially, student performance ranged between approximately 67% and 72%. On a district level, little variation was evident in the English 3201 average course mark, but the results in the two French courses were

somewhat more varied. The lowest average course mark in French 3200 (Core) and the highest in Français 3202 (Immersion) was found in the Nova Central district (see *figure 8.4a*). Girls achieved higher average course marks in each of the three language courses with the largest difference (4.9 percentage points) found in English 3201 (see *figure 8.4b*).

Figure 8.4: Student performance in language courses (2007/08)

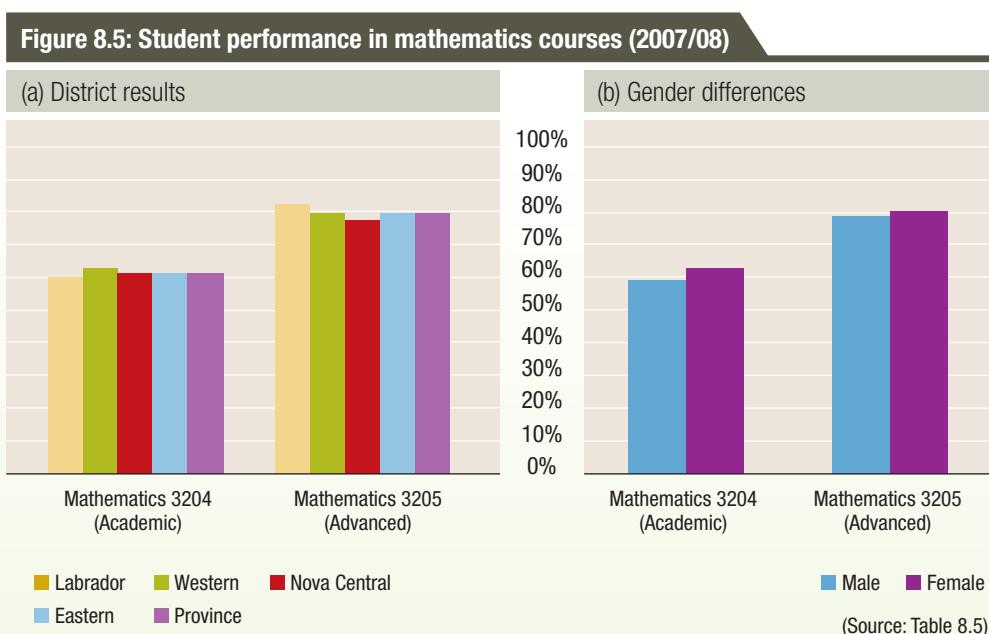


Mathematics

Two mathematics courses have public examinations - Mathematics 3204 (Academic) and Mathematics 3205 (Advanced). Provincially, the average course marks were 61.1% in Mathematics 3204 (Academic) and 79.6% in Mathematics 3205 (Advanced). The average course marks in the two mathematics courses were similar in the four districts (see *figure 8.5a*). Girls achieved slightly higher course marks in both mathematics courses scoring 3.2%

higher in Mathematics 3204 (Academic), and 1.6% higher in Mathematics 3205 (Advanced) (see *figure 8.5b*).

Differences in achievement for these two courses must be interpreted with caution. Students who excel in mathematics or who plan on studying mathematics at the post-secondary level are typically encouraged to select advanced mathematics courses in high school rather than the academic mathematics courses. This attributes to the higher course average seen in Mathematics 3205 (Advanced).



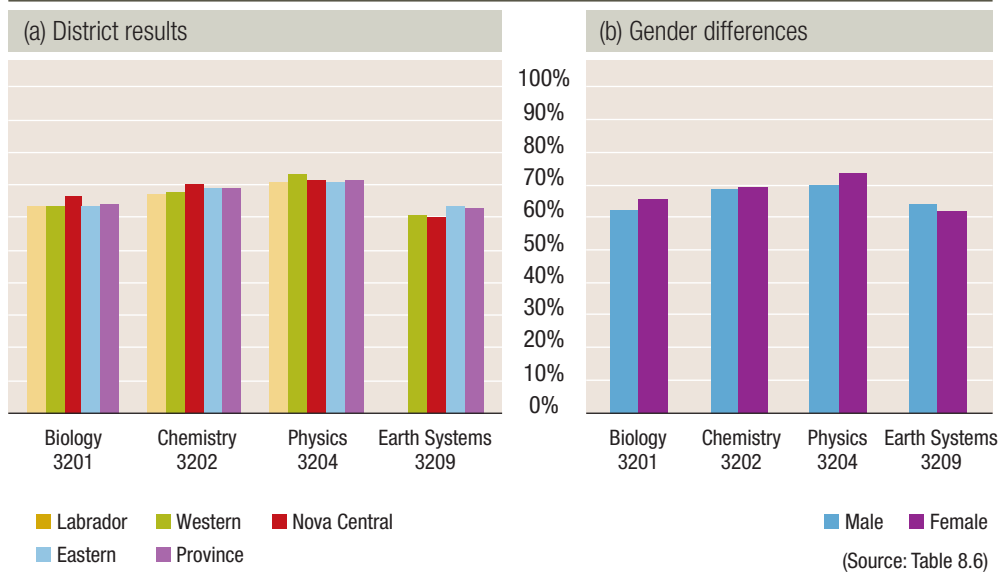
Sciences

There were four science courses with public examinations - Biology 3201, Chemistry 3202, Physics 3204 and Earth Systems 3209. Overall, student performance ranged from 62.8% to 71.3% with higher course averages seen

in chemistry and physics. This trend is also seen at the district level (see *figure 8.6a*). Along gender lines, it is only in Earth Systems 3209 where boys achieved a higher average course grade compared to girls. In the other three sciences, girls performed slightly better than boys (see *figure 8.6b*).



Figure 8.6: Student performance in science courses (2007/08)

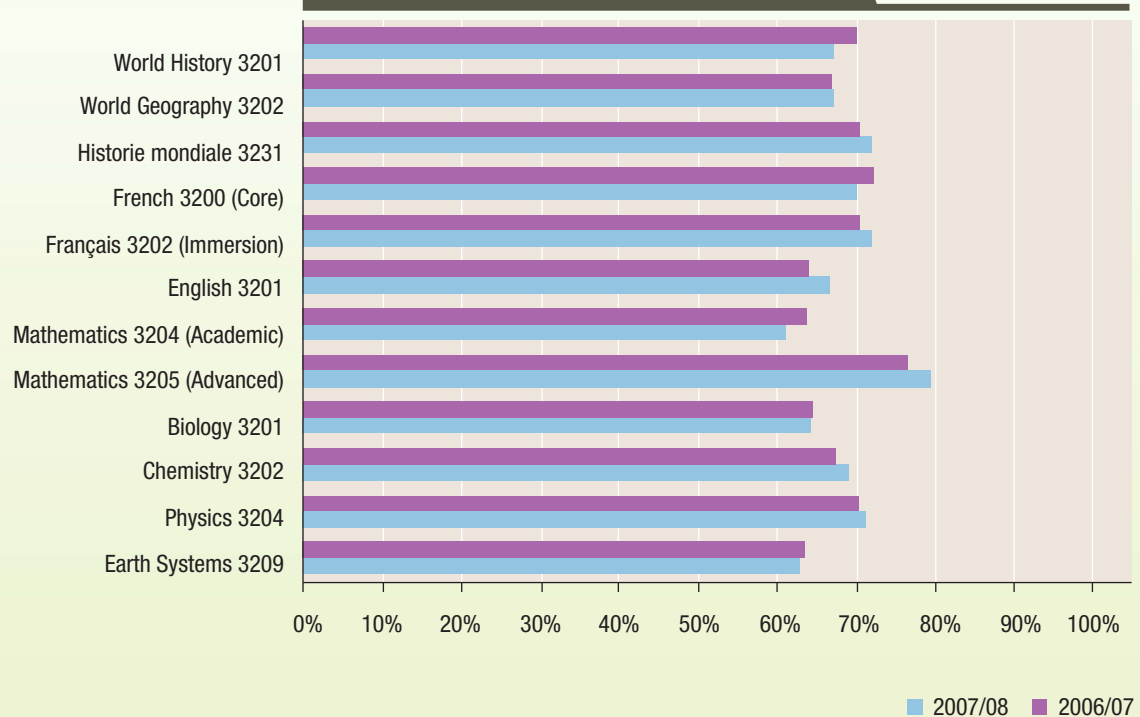


Comparison to June 2007

There was little variation in student performance in public examination courses from the previous year. Seven courses experienced slight

gains (between 0.4 and 3.0 percentage points) and slight declines were seen in five courses (ranging from -0.3 and -2.8 percentage points, see *figure 8.7*).

Figure 8.7: Comparing student performance in public examination courses (2006/07-2007/08)



(Source: Table 8.7)