

**Outcomes of Approved Special Education
Programs in the Private Sector**

Plans for Exiting Students: 2012-2013

**Report Number 12
NAPSEC Outcomes Project**

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Executive Summary

For over a decade, NAPSEC, a national association of approved private special education centers, has examined the outcomes for the students with disabilities enrolled in the intensely therapeutic programs offered by its members. NAPSEC has taken these steps in order to address a gap in the knowledge base of special education. NAPSEC member programs provide educational therapeutic services to the students who comprise 3% of the population of students with disabilities in our country, those with the most severe disabilities and complex learning needs who cannot access appropriate programs within their local public school districts. The exit studies that NAPSEC has sponsored have consistently focused on the plans made by students at the time they were discharged from a NAPSEC-member's facility due to transferring, graduating, or reaching the legal age limit for receiving educational services. Below are the highlights of the present exit study, one implemented for the 2012-2013 academic year.

Transfer Students

The highly specialized therapeutic programs offered by NAPSEC-member schools were found to provide sufficient educational support to enable students with severe disabilities to strengthen and/or remediate skills so that they could plan to enter or re-enter educational programs within their local public school districts:

- 94% of the students who transferred out of a NAPSEC-member program to another education program were enrolled in the NAPSEC-member program for 5 years or less.
- 53% of students who transferred from a NAPSEC-member program had plans to enroll in an educational program within their local public school district.
- Over 17% of the transfer students made plans to enter regular education settings, including inclusive settings.
- 36% of the transfer students planned to enter other settings within the local district, including self-contained classrooms and alternate school programs.

Graduates/Aged-Out Students

The highly specialized therapeutic programs offered by NAPSEC-member schools provide sufficient instruction, support, and guidance in the transition from school to adulthood to enable students with serious disabilities who graduate or "age out" to make plans to

participate, in accordance with their individual capabilities and capacities, as active adults in their communities:

- 89% of the graduates/aged-out students left a NAPSEC-member program with plans to enter productive and/or engaged adult roles.
- 51% of the graduates/aged-out students planned to enter a mainstream activity. Plans included more than 30% enrolling in 4-year college or 2-year college; 4% entering trade or technical training; and over 16% becoming part of the competitive employment workforce or the military.
- More than 22% had plans to enter vocational rehabilitation, including vocational rehabilitation training, supported employment or sheltered employment.
- 16% made plans to enter an appropriate adult program in the community, including adult partial care or nonvocational day programs.
- Graduates/aged-out students from Learning Disorders programs (80%), Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (64%), and Medical Disorders programs (49%) were the most likely to make plans to enroll in postsecondary education, obtain a competitive job, or enlist in the military.
- Graduates/aged-out students from Developmental Disorders programs were the most likely to plan to participate in vocational rehabilitation (37%) as well as community-based programs (38%).
- 64% of graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, a student population associated with poor outcomes, had plans to enroll in a 4-year college/2-year college (39%), trade/technical school (7%), or to enter the job market or the military (18%).

Introduction

For over a decade, the National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC), an organization of 235 approved private education centers, has sponsored a study of to highlight the discharge plans of the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school students with severe disabilities, who are enrolled in their members' programs. This effort has been undertaken because other studies of students with disabilities, most notably the National Longitudinal Transition Studies (1993, 2004, 2010), have paid little attention to the outcomes for students with the most severe disabilities and complex learning needs who comprise about 3% of all students in our country who require special education services. Due to their severe disabilities and need for intense programs and multiple services, these students cannot access appropriate special education programs within their local public school districts.

From 2000-2004, and again from 2007 to the present, has examined the discharge plans of the students who exited from its members' educational programs. The present report continues to focus on identifying the educational settings to which the younger students planned to transfer and the adult settings to which the graduates/aged-out students planned to enter when they left a NAPSEC-member school during the 2012-2013 school year.

Method

Each NAPSEC-member school was asked to submit discharge information on every student who left a program over the course of the previous academic year. Exiting students were defined as transfer students, students who left the NAPSEC-member program to move on to another educational program, and graduates/aged-out students, those who left a NAPSEC-member school because he/she received a high school diploma, a certificate of completion,

and/or aged out. In addition, demographic and programmatic information was collected on the number of students who dropped out of school during the course of the study.

Each participating school was given a definition of 5 specific types of special educational programs offered by NAPSEC-member schools and was asked to place each exiting student into 1 of these 5 specific types. Instructions stated that only one category was to be used for each student. The programs were defined as follows: 1) Preschool Disorders Programs – for students with any disorder identified at the preschool stage; 2) Developmental Disorders Programs– for students with speech/language impairments, intellectual disability, autism, developmental delays; 3) Emotional/Behavioral Disorders Programs – for students with emotional and behavioral disturbances; 4) Medical Disorders Programs – for students with other health impairments, hearing impairments, visual impairments, orthopedic impairments, deaf-blindness, and traumatic brain injury; and 5) Learning Disorders Programs – for students with specific learning disabilities. This data was collected from each participating school and entered in a database for analysis.

The Participating Programs and Student Demographics

During the 2012-2013 school year, 82 NAPSEC-member schools (35% of the membership), which together offered 186 specialized education programs, volunteered to take part in this study. When the programs offered were examined, 137 (74%) were available for day students, 8 (4%) for residential students, and 41 (22%) for both day and residential students.

Moreover, 50 programs (27%) offered services to students with Emotional/ Behavioral Disorders, 49 (26%) to students with Developmental Disorders, 35 (19%) to those with Medical Disorders, 27 (15%) to those with Learning Disorders, and 25 (13%) to students with Preschool Disorders. Taken together, the participants reported an enrollment of 10,421 students with 7,562 (73%) males and 2,859 (27%) females.

Participating schools were located in 7 of the 10 federal education regions and 15 states. As Table 1 shows, nearly 66% of the schools in the study were located in the Mid-Atlantic region (Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania) with 54 schools represented; over 13% were in the Northeast region (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island) with 11 schools represented; 3 regions each represented about 6% of the distribution, and when taken together, about 18% (the Appalachia region with 5 schools in Tennessee and Virginia; the North Central region with 5 schools in Illinois and Indiana; and the WestEd region with 5 schools in Arizona and California); and 2 regions each represented over 1% of the distribution, and, when taken together, about 2.4% (the Southeast region with 1 school in Florida, and the Southwest region with 1 school in Texas).

Table 1. Participating Schools by Federal Educational Regions

N=82

Federal Regions/Participating States	#	%
<u>Northeast:</u> ¹	11	13.4
Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island		
<u>MidAtlantic:</u> ²	54	65.8
Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania		
<u>Appalachia:</u> ³	5	6.1
Tennessee, Virginia		
<u>Southeast:</u> : 4	1	1.2
Florida		
<u>North Central:</u> ⁵	5	6.1
Illinois, Indiana		
<u>Southwest:</u> ⁶	1	1.2
Texas		
<u>WestEd:</u> ^{7,8,9,10}	5	6.1
Arizona, California		
Total	82	100.0

1 In Northeast Region, no participants from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands.

2 In MidAtlantic Region, no participants from Delaware, Washington, D.C..

3 In Appalachia Region, no participants from Kentucky, West Virginia.

4 In Southeast Region, no participants from Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina.

5 In North Central Region, no participants from Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin.

6 In Southwest Region, no participants from Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma.

7 No participants from Mid-Continent Region (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming).

8 In WestEd Region, no participants from Nevada, Utah.

9 No participants from Northwest Region (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington).

10 No participants from Pacific Region (American Samoa, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Hawaii, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau).

Exiting Students

As Table 2 demonstrates, during the study period, 2,854 students exited from a participating school. Outcome information was available for 2,507 (nearly 88%) of the exiting students, 1,725 transfer students (61%) and 782 graduates/aged-out students (27%). Overall, discharge planning information was not available for 347 students (12%), those who identified themselves as dropouts (132 students¹) and those who left school without making their plans known to the school (215 students). Nonetheless, in many instances the schools did report some demographic characteristics of the exiting students with unknown plans and such instances are included in Table 2. In other words, example, the student's age, gender, type of program was reported, but not the plan.

The sample of all exiting students, those with known and unknown discharge plans, was primarily made up of White (51%), male (about 72%), high school students (66%), aged 12 to 17 years (47%), who attended day programs (71%) with a focus on Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (54%) from 1-5 years (56%), but did not participate in a subsidized lunch program (63%). Transfer students made up 66% of the sample, while graduates/aged-out students made up about 29%.

About 70% of the students who left a NAPSEC-member school were involved in exits that were "planned" as part of the educational program and which had supports in place to enhance the transition. Moreover, almost 76% of the exits were viewed as "positive," indicating that the exiting students were "ready" to move on to the next setting.

¹ Of the 132 dropouts, 99 (75%) were male and 33 (25%) were female. When their race/ethnicity was examined, 43% (57) were White, 32% (42) were Black, 20% (27) were Hispanic, 4% (5) were Asian, and 1% (1) were of Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander.

Table 2. Demographic and Other Relevant Information of Exiting NAPSEC Students

n=2,854

<u>Program Classification</u>	#	%
Emotional/Behavioral Disorders	1,554	54.4
Developmental Disorders	513	18.0
Preschool Disorders	285	10.0
Medical Disorders	290	10.2
Learning Disorders	212	7.4
<u>Program Type</u>		
Day	2,022	70.8
Residential	57	2.0
Day & Residential	775	27.2
<u>Reason for Exit</u>		
Transfer	1,890	66.2
Graduate/Aged-Out	832	29.2
Dropouts	132	4.6
<u>Grade Level</u>		
Preschool	353	12.4
Elementary School	240	8.4
Middle School	373	13.1
High School	1,889	66.1
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>		
White	1,461	51.2
Black	894	31.3
Hispanic	378	13.3
Asian	106	3.7
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific and American Indian/Alaskan Native Islander	15	.5
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	2,045	71.7

<u>Table 2 (continued)</u>		
Female	809	28.3
<u>Ages at Exit</u>		
3-5 years	365	12.8
6-11 years	243	8.5
12-17 years	1,349	47.3
18-21+ years	897	31.4
<u>Length of Stay</u>		
< 1 year	419	14.7
1-5 years	1,628	57.0
6-10 years	261	9.1
11+ years	199	7.0
Not Available	347	12.2
<u>Subsidized Lunch</u>		
Yes	1,062	37.2
No	1,792	62.8
<u>Status of Planning Information</u>		
Available in Records	2,507	87.8
Not Available	347	12.2
<u>Staff Assessment of Exit</u>		
Planned		
Yes	2,005	70.3
No	849	29.7
Positive		
Yes	2,165	75.9
No	689	24.1

The Transfer Students

Demographics

Taken together, 1,725 transfer students left a NAPSEC-member school with a known education plan. Of these, 1,281 students (74%) were male, while 444 (26%) were female. When race/ethnicity was assessed, 830 students (48%) were White, 591 (34%) were Black, 251 (15%) were Hispanic, 42 (2%) were Asian, and the remaining students (1%) were American Indian/Alaskan Native (3 students) and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (8 students).

Grade Level

As Table 3 shows, 260 (15%) of the exiting transfer students attended Preschool, 220 (13%) Elementary School, 330 (19%) Middle School, and 915 (53%) attended High School programs.

Table 3. Transfer Students by Grade Level

n= 1,725

	#	%
Preschool	260	15.0
Elementary School	220	13.0
Middle School	330	19.0
High School	915	53.0
Total	1,725	100.0

Length of Stay

Table 4 shows how long the transfer students were enrolled in a NAPSEC-member school.

Table 4. Length of Stay for Transfer Students

n= 1,725

	#	%
< 1 year	482	28.0
1-5 years	1,141	66.0
6-10 years	102	6.0
Total	1,725	100.0

As Table 4 indicates, while 28% (482 students) attended their special education program for less than 1 year, another 66% (1,141 students) attended for 1 to 5 years. Finally, 6% (102 students) were in their school for 6 to 10 years. When examining the “less than 1 year” and “1-5 years” categories together, it is evident that 94% of these students were in a NAPSEC-member program for 5 years or less before planning to transfer to another educational program.

The Educational Plans by Specialized Program

The plans of the 1,725 students who transferred from a NAPSEC-member program to another educational program during the 2012-13 academic year were examined by the specialized program in which they were enrolled before they exited. Nearly 60% (1,026 students) attended Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs; 15% (260 students) were enrolled in Preschool Disorders programs; 14% (238 students) went to Developmental Disorders programs; 8% (144 students) attended Medical Disorders programs; and another 3% (57 students) attended Learning Disorders programs. Table 5 displays the distribution of these student plans.

Table 5. Educational Plans for Transfer Students by Specialized Program

n=1,725

Education Setting	Preschool n=260		E/BD n=1,026		DD n=238		Medical n=144		Learning n=57		Total n=1,725	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Regular Education, Not Special Education	44	16.9	48	4.7	5	2.1	2	1.4	3	5.3	102	5.9
Regular Education Vocational School	0	0	2	.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	.1
Regular Education, Supported Inclusion	76	29.2	62	6.0	17	7.1	17	11.8	21	36.8	193	11.2
Subtotal: Returns to Regular Education	120	46.1	112	10.9	22	9.2	19	13.2	24	42.1	297	17.2
Alternate School	0	0	117	11.4	11	4.6	8	5.6	7	12.3	143	8.3
Special Education, Self-Contained LEA	113	43.5	249	24.3	71	29.9	29	20.1	9	15.8	471	27.3
Subtotal: Returns to Other In-District Education	113	43.5	366	35.7	82	34.5	37	25.7	16	28.1	614	35.6
Out- of- District Special Education Day School	26	10.0	335	32.7	95	39.9	38	26.4	5	8.8	499	28.9
Residential School	0	0	100	9.7	24	10.1	32	22.2	5	8.8	161	9.3
Home Instruction	0	0	40	3.9	7	2.9	13	9.0	1	1.7	61	3.5
Other	1	.4	73	7.1	8	3.4	5	3.5	6	10.5	93	5.4
Total	260	100	1026	100	238	100	144	100	57	100	1725	100

Results for Transfer Student Educational Plans

As Table 5 indicates, nearly 53% of the transfer students left school with plans to return to an educational program within the local district. While more than 17% had plans to return to regular education classes (6% to regular education classrooms, including vocational school; 11% to classrooms offering supported inclusion), over 35% planned to return to other programs within the public school district (about 8% to alternate school and over 27% to self-contained classrooms.)

Students from Preschool Disorders programs (46%) were the most likely to return to regular education programs. Students from the other disability categories made plans to return to regular educational programs as follows: 42% from Learning Disorders programs; 13% from Medical Disorders programs; 11% from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs; about 9% from Development Disorders programs. Finally, when plans to enter other educational programs within the local school district, such as alternate schools and self-contained classrooms within district were examined by disability, the following emerged. Close to 44% of the students who transferred from Preschool Disorders programs, about 36% from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, nearly 35% from Developmental Disorders programs, more than 28% from Learning Disorders programs, and 26% from Medical Disorders programs had plans to enter “other” in-district educational programs.

When all returns to in-district programs are examined by program type, 90 % of the students from Preschool Disorders programs, 70% of students from Learning Disorders programs, and 47% of students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs planned to return to an in-district program.

Return to In-District Education for 2012-2013

Table 6 summarizes the degree to which the plans of the transfer students reflect a return to an in-district program, including a regular education setting, from 2012-2013.

Table 6 Transfer Student Return to In-District Education: 2012-2013

	In-District Regular Education ^a		Other In-District Education ^b		Total In-District Education		Outside District Education ^c	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
n=1,725 (35% participation)	297	17	614	36	911	53	814	47

^a Regular education, including supported inclusion

^b Resource room, alternate school, self-contained LEA

^c Out-of-district special education day school, residential school, home instruction, other placement (e.g., correctional, psychiatric, medical, or developmental facility)

For the 2012-2013 school year, 53% of all exiting transfer students planned to return to in-district programs. Of these, 297 students (17%) planned to return to regular education classrooms, while 614 students (36%) planned to enter “other” in-district programming, such as, alternate school or self-contained LEA. Finally, 814 students (47%) were discharged with plans to receive their education outside of the district, such as at an out-of-district special education day school or residential school.

Living Arrangements

When the plans for living arrangements were examined, 75% of the students (1,292) reported that they planned to continue to live with their parents or legal guardians. More than 2% (41 students) planned to live independently (23 students) or semi-independently (18 students). Over 9% (159 students) made plans to live in a skill development/ foster home (51 students) or group home (108 students). More than 7% (131 students) planned to live at a residential treatment facility. About 1% planned to go to a developmental (1 student), psychiatric (16 students), or medical (1 student) center. The plans of more than 4% (76

students) called for entry into a correctional facility. Finally, the plans of .5% (8 students) called for another living situation, such as, a drug treatment facility.

The Graduates/Aged-Out Students

Demographics

There were 782 graduates/aged-out students with known plans. Of these, 532 students (68%) were male, while 250 students (32%) were female. Moreover, when race/ethnicity was examined, 450 students (57%) were White, 219 (28%) were Black, 84 (11%) were Hispanic, and 25 (3%) were Asian. The remaining 1% were American Indian/Alaskan Native (2 students) and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (2 students). About 41% (317 students) came from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, 29% (228 students) from Developmental Disorders programs, 17% (132 students) from Learning Disorders programs, and 13% (105 students) from Medical Disorders programs.

Length of Stay

Table 7 shows the length of stay in a NAPSEC-member program for the students who graduated or aged out.

Table 7. Length of Stay for Graduates/Aged-Out Students
n= 782

	#	%
< 1 year	40	5.0
1-5 years	428	55.0
6-10 years	217	28.0
11+ years	97	12.0
Total	782	100

As Table 7 demonstrates, about 5% (40 graduates/aged-out students) were enrolled in their special education program for less than 1 year; 55% (428 graduates/aged-out students) for 1-5 years; 28% (217 graduates/aged-out students) for 6-10 years; and 12% (97 graduates/aged-out students) for 11 or more years. Taking the “less than 1 year” and “1-5 years” categories together, it is clear that 60% (468 graduates/aged-out students) were enrolled in these programs for 5 years or less.

The Postschool Plans by Specialized Program

Table 8 presents an analysis of the postschool plans of the graduate/aged-out students according to the specialized educational programs from which they graduated or aged-out.

Table 8. Postschool Plans of Graduates/Aged-Out Students by Specialized Program

n=782

<u>Postschool Setting</u>	E/BD n=317		DD n=228		Learning n=132		Medical n=105		Total N=782	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Four Year College	27	8.5	5	2.2	30	22.7	4	3.8	66	8.4
Two Year College	96	30.3	9	3.9	44	33.3	22	20.9	171	21.8
Trade/Technical School	22	6.9	3	1.3	5	3.8	1	1.0	31	4.0
Competitive Employment	53	16.7	18	7.9	24	18.2	23	21.9	118	15.1
Military	6	1.9	0	0	2	1.5	1	1.0	9	1.2
Mainstream Activity^a	204	64.3	35	15.3	105	79.5	51	48.6	395	50.5
Vocational Rehabilitation Training Program	27	8.5	34	14.9	12	9.1	15	14.3	88	11.2
Supported Employment	19	6.0	26	11.4	1	.8	5	4.8	51	6.5
Sheltered Employment	4	1.3	25	11.0	6	4.5	1	1.0	36	4.6
Vocational Rehabilitation Activity^b	50	15.8	85	37.3	19	14.4	21	20.1	175	22.4
Adult Partial Care	6	1.9	18	7.9	0	0	0	0	24	3.1
Nonvocational Day Program	4	1.3	70	30.7	0	0	25	23.8	99	12.6
Community-Based Program Activity^c	10	3.2	88	38.6	0	0	25	23.8	123	15.7
Other	31	9.8	4	1.8	2	1.5	0	0	37	4.7
No Education/Training, Job or Program	22	6.9	16	7.0	6	4.5	8	7.6	52	6.6
Total	317	100	228	100	132	100	105	100	782	100

^a Mainstream Activity – 4-Yr./2-Yr. College, Trade/Technical School, Competitive Employment or Military

^b Vocational Rehabilitation Activity – Vocational Rehabilitation Training Programs, Supported or Sheltered Employment

^c Community-Based Programs Activity – Partial Care and Nonvocational Day Programs

Results for Graduate/Aged-Out Student Postschool Plans

As Table 8 shows, about 34% (268 of the graduates/aged-out students) planned to go on to a 4-year/2-year College or a Trade/Technical School. More than 16% (127 graduates/aged-out students) had plans to enter Competitive Employment or the Military. Taken together, more than 50% of the graduates/aged-out students (395) planned to enter a Mainstream Activity by participating in postschool education or technical training, seeking competitive employment, or enlisting in the military.

More than 22% (175 graduates/aged-out students) planned to enter a Vocational Rehabilitation Activity by participating in a vocational rehabilitation training program (11%) or in supported (6%) or sheltered employment (5%), while nearly 16% (123 graduates/aged-out students) planned to enter Community-Based Program Activity by enrolling in an adult partial care (3%) or nonvocational day program (13%). About 5% (37 graduates/aged-out students) planned to enter other adult settings, such as psychiatric, drug rehabilitation, or correctional facilities. Finally almost 7% (52 graduates/aged-out students) were discharged with no plans to enter an educational, vocational, rehabilitative, or supportive program or to obtain a job after completing their secondary program.

One hundred five graduates/aged-out students from Learning Disorders programs (80%) and 204 from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (64%) had plans to enter Mainstream Activity. They were joined by 51 students (49%) from Medical Disorders programs and 35 from programs for students with Developmental Disorders (15%).

Those from Developmental Disorders programs (37%) were the most likely to plan to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activity (15% with plans to receive vocational rehabilitation training, 11% to supported employment, and 11% to sheltered employment) as well as Community-Based Program Activity (39%).

Postschool Plans from 2012-2013

Table 9 shows the postschool plans for graduates/aged-out students for the 2012-2013 school year.

Table 9. Postschool Plans of Graduates/Aged-Out Students by Activity

	Mainstream Activity ^a		Vocational Rehabilitation Activity ^b		Community-Based Program Activity ^c		Total Engagement		Other Engagement/Not Engaged ^d	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2012-2013 (35% participation) n=782	395	51	175	22	123	16	693	89	89	11

^a Mainstream Activity – 4-Yr./2-Yr. College, Trade/Technical School, Competitive Employment or Military

^b Vocational Rehabilitation Activity – Vocational Rehabilitation Training Programs, Supported or Sheltered Employment

^c Community-Based Programs Activity – Partial Care and Nonvocational Day Programs

^d Engaged in other activities or not engaged in any activities

For the 2012-2013 school year, 395 graduates/aged-out students (51%) planned to enter Mainstream Activities; 175 students (22%) made plans to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activities; and 123 students (16%) planned to go to Community-Based Adult Program Activities. Taken together, 89% (693 graduates/aged-out students) made plans to be prosocially engaged as they made the transition from school to adult life in their communities.

Living Arrangements

More than 72% of the graduates/aged-out students (565) planned to live with a parent, other relative, or guardian. About 21% (162) made plans to live independently (12.4%) or semi-independently (8.3%). Approximately 7 % (55) had plans to live in a skill development or foster home (11), group home (34), residential treatment center (3), developmental center (2) or another living arrangement, such as, a medical, psychiatric, or drug treatment facility (5).

Discussion

When compared to the students with disabilities for whom appropriate educational services are available within the local public school district, the students enrolled in NAPSEC-member programs tend to have disabilities that are both more severe and multiple. In short, these students make up a unique subgroup within the population of students with disabilities and require highly specialized, intensive therapeutic services as an integral part of their individualized programs. The present study findings, however, indicate that more than half of these students with severe disabilities, after attending a NAPSEC-member program for 5 years or less, plan to enter or re-enter an education program within their local public school district. Moreover, these plans are made with the support and agreement of the staff at the NAPSEC-member facility. Thus, when these students are enrolled in appropriate highly specialized, individualized programs, such as those offered by the programs affiliated with NAPSEC, and receive the intensive supports needed to remediate and/or strengthen their skills, most will be able to enter or return to the local public school district which sent them to the NAPSEC program in the first place (Gagnon & McLaughlin, 2004). As this study has shown, 94% of the transfer students were enrolled in NAPSEC-member programs for 5 years or less during the 2012-2013 school year, and 53% had plans to return to programs within their local districts

when they exited. Moreover, the staff at the NAPSEC-member schools were, on the whole, in agreement with the discharge plans (70%) and indicated that the exiting students were ready to move on to the next education setting (76%). Clearly, when specialized programs, such as those affiliated with NAPSEC, are available to enter into a partnership with the local school districts, the complex individual needs of the students with severe disabilities can be met and remediated. The findings regarding the plans made by the transfer students, in fact, underscore the importance of the partnership between the public and private sectors of special education. This partnership ensures that children with severe disabilities will receive appropriate services along the continuum of special education as defined in IDEA. In the spirit of IDEA, it is clear that what truly matters is that students with severe disabilities receive appropriate educational services regardless of which sector, public or approved private, houses the programs which offer the critical services which are delineated in each student's IEP (individualized education program).

When the results for the graduates/aged-out students are examined, what emerges is that 89% had plans, taking individual capacities and needs into account, to be appropriately productive and/or engaged in adult roles in their communities. Overall, over 50% made plans for involvement in the mainstream, 22% in vocational rehabilitation, and nearly 16% in community-based adult day programs in which vocational and/or nonvocational needs (such as, medical, psychiatric, social) could be addressed. These results, of course, reflect the wide range of disabilities of the students who are served by NAPSEC-member programs.

That 51% of the graduates/aged-out students had plans to enter the mainstream demonstrates that the NAPSEC-member programs offered appropriate supports and helped

these students acquire the attributes and skills needed by individuals with disabilities to develop successful career trajectories (Burchart, 2004; Lindstrom et al., 2013). Since Shandra and Hogan (2008) point out that future employment is related to previous employment, future studies should investigate the degree to which and the manner in which NAPSEC-member programs expose students with disabilities to vocational training and work experiences.

Among the most encouraging findings relate to the plans made by the students from Emotional/ Behavioral Disorders programs. The literature has consistently reported the poor outcomes for this group in the roles of student as well as adult. (SRI International, 1993; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2001; Wagner & Cameto, 2004; Newman, Wagner, Cameto and Knokey, 2009; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey, and Shaver, 2010). This group has been characterized by low graduation rates, poor work experiences, involvement in antisocial behavior, including criminal activity, and difficulty in establishing stable adult roles.(Chen, Symons, & Reynolds, 2011; Gagnon & McLaughlin; 2004; Malmgren, Edgar, & Neel, 1998; Mattison & Spitznagel, 1998; Reddy, 2001; Sample, 1998; SRI International, 1993; Tobin & Sugai, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2001; Wagner, 1995; Wagner & Cameto, 2004). It is promising, therefore, that 64% of the graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs left a NAPSEC-member program with plans to be involved in positive mainstream adult roles.

More than 34% made plans to attend 4-year/2-year colleges or trade/technical schools. Perhaps these students will be able to maintain stability as adults due to the highly individualized and intensive services they received in the NAPSEC-member programs, services

that were specifically tailored to their unique educational, behavioral, and emotional needs (Lange & Sletten, 2002). As Wagner et al. (2006) report, these students flounder in large public schools where they are likely to have teachers who feel unprepared to work with them and are unlikely to receive academic or other support services to help them succeed. Efforts by specialized staff to form relationships with these students in schools of smaller size with fewer students per classroom may indeed be a catalyst for promoting positive, prosocial behavior and role adaptation (Chen, Symons, & Reynolds, 2011; Carran et al., 2014). Studies that follow the graduates/aged-out students with emotional and behavioral difficulties as they transition into adulthood to determine whether and how they are able to maintain role stability are needed.

Conclusion

The approved private special education facilities with membership in NAPSEC continue to provide an invaluable service to youth who require specialized and intense services. Not every student with a disability is able to access an appropriate, individualized special education program within their local public school. When the discharge plans of students exiting from a NAPSEC affiliate is examined, it is clear that most of the transfer students planned to enter and/or return to attend educational programs within their local public school districts, while the majority of the exiting graduates/aged-out students made plans to be productive and/or engaged, according to their capacities and capabilities, as adults in their communities. NAPSEC-member special education programs continue to fill a critical role as partners to the sponsoring local schools by providing the intensive, individualized, and highly specialized education and support services that are required to implement services mandated by each student's IEP.

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