

Outcomes of Approved Special Education Programs in the Private Sector

Plans for Exiting Students: 2003-2004

**Report Number 5, Part A
NAPSEC Outcomes Project**

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Executive Summary

Study Period 2003-2004

During the 2003-2004 school year, 2,562 transfer students and 939 graduates with available plans exited from 133 NAPSEC schools (51% of the membership) operating 236 educational programs in 21 states and 9 federal educational regions. In total, about 15,990 students were enrolled in the schools that participated in the study.

Highlights for Transfer Students include:

1. 93% of the transfer students attended a NAPSEC school for 5 years or less.
2. 55% of these students left a NAPSEC school with plans to attend an educational program in their home district. Of these, 26% had plans to attend a regular education classroom within district.

Highlights for Graduates include:

1. About 67% of the graduates were enrolled in a NAPSEC school for 5 years or less.
2. 58% of the graduates planned to enter the mainstream (2-year/4-year college or trade/technical training, competitive employment, or military service).
3. 30% planned to enter a vocational rehabilitation activity (vocational rehabilitation training, supported or sheltered employment).
4. 8% had plans to enter an adult program in the community (adult partial care or nonvocational day program).
5. Graduates from Emotional/Behavioral Disorder programs (80%) and Learning Disorder programs (59%) were the most likely to have plans to enter the mainstream.

Study Period 1999-2000 to 2003-2004

The Exit Study of student plans has been carried out for the 5-year period encompassing academic years 1999-2000 through 2003-2004.

Highlights of the 5-Year Findings include:

1. The 5-year average for transfer students to plan to leave a NAPSEC school to attend an in-district program is 55.6%.
2. The 5-year average for graduates to leave a NAPSEC program with plans to enter mainstream adult roles is 53%.
3. At 74%, graduates from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs were the most likely to plan to enter mainstream adult roles during the 5-year period.

Introduction

Most studies regarding students receiving special education services focus on students who are able to receive these services within their local public school district. Information about special education students who receive their educational services in the private sector remains scarce, even though the students educated in these settings, about 1% of all special education students nationwide, are often the most disabled of all special education students.

In order to learn more about this segment of the special education population, the National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC), an association of 262 approved private special education schools and agencies, conducted a study of the students who exited from its member schools during the 2003-2004 academic year. Information about the educational settings to which transfer students planned to move as well as the plans made by the graduates/aged-out students who left a NAPSEC program was gathered. NAPSEC has studied the exit plans of these students for five years. The findings from the previous NAPSEC studies of the plans made by the transfer and graduates/aged-out students in school years from 1999-2000 through 2003-2004 were compared (NAPSEC, 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004).

Method

Each NAPSEC school was asked to supply information on every student that exited from a program over the course of the previous academic year. Exiting students were defined as transfer students, students who left the NAPSEC program to move on to another educational program, and graduates/aged-out students, those who left a NAPSEC school because of receiving a high school diploma, a certificate of completion, or aging out. Demographic and program information was collected on the students who dropped out of school during the course of the study. Dropouts, however, were excluded because their plans were not available.

The exiting students were further identified as attending one of five specific special educational programs. The schools were given a definition for each program category and were asked to classify the program from which each student exited by using one predominant program category. The programs were defined as follows:

- 1) Preschool Disorders Programs – for students with any disorder identified at the Preschool stage;
- 2) Pervasive Developmental Disorders Programs – for students with speech/language impairments, mental retardation, 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.

The Participating Programs and Students

During the 2003-2004 academic year, 133 NAPSEC schools (51% of the membership) operating 236 education programs volunteered to participate. The participating schools reported that 15,884 students were enrolled in their programs. Of those enrolled, 13,480 (85%) were day students and 2,404 (15%) were residential students. Of the day students, 9,531 (71%) were male and 3,949 (29%) were female. Of the residential students, 1,869 were male (78%) and 535 (22%) were female. One hundred forty-two students dropped out of school in the 2003-2004 academic year. Of these, 117 were male and 25 were female; 77 were White, 44 Black, 19 Hispanic, 1 Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 from an "Other" racial/ethnic background.

Participating schools were located in 9 of the federal education regions and 21 states. As Table 1 shows, about 67% of the schools were located in the Mid-Atlantic region (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania), while a little more than 19% were in the Northeast region (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont). While 6% were in the Appalachia region (Tennessee and Virginia), the remaining 8% were in the North Central (about 2% from Illinois and Minnesota), the Southwest (nearly 1% from Texas), the Southeast (1.5% from Georgia and Mississippi), the Mid-Continent (close to 1% from Kansas), the Western region (1.5% from Arizona and California), and the Northwest (about 1% from Washington) regions.

Table 1

Participating NAPSEC Schools by Federal Educational Region¹

n=133

<u>Region/Participating State</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Northeast:</u> ² Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont	26	19.5
<u>Mid-Atlantic:</u> ³ Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania	89	66.9
<u>Appalachia:</u> ⁴ Tennessee, Virginia	8	6.0
<u>Southeast:</u> ⁵ Georgia, Mississippi	2	1.5
<u>North Central:</u> ⁶ Illinois, Minnesota	3	2.2
<u>Southwest:</u> ⁷ Texas	1	.8
<u>Mid-Continent:</u> ⁸ Kansas	1	.8
<u>Western:</u> ⁹ Arizona, California	2	1.5
<u>Northwest:</u> ¹⁰ Washington	1	.8
Total	133	100.0

¹ No participants from the Pacific Region² No participants from Maine, Puerto Rico, or Virgin Islands³ No participants from the District of Columbia⁴ No participants from Kentucky or West Virginia⁵ No participants from Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, or South Carolina⁶ No participants from Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, or Wisconsin⁷ No participants from Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, or Oklahoma⁸ No participants from Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, or Wyoming⁹ No participants from Nevada or Utah¹⁰ No participants from Alaska, Idaho, Montana or Oregon

Students exited from 190 day programs (81%) and 46 residential programs (19%). About 34% of these programs were Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (81 programs); 30% were Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs (70 programs); 14% were Medical Disorders programs (34 programs); 13% were Learning Disorders programs (31 programs); and 9% were Preschool Disorders programs (20 programs).

The Exiting Students

Description

As Table 2 shows, during the study period, 4,239 students exited from a NAPSEC program. The exiting students tended to be male (73%), White (56%), High School students (61%) between the ages of 12 and 17 years (51%) from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (60%). These students were in a NAPSEC program for 1-5 years (58%) and the majority (63%) did not receive subsidized lunch. Transfer students accounted for a little more than 73% of the exiting students; graduates/aged-out students were slightly more than 23%; and dropouts were a little more than 3%. According to NAPSEC school staff, close to 74% of the exiters experienced a “planned” exit. In short, student, family/guardian, NAPSEC program staff, and local district staff concurred and planned that the student move to a new educational program. NAPSEC school staff rated the exits as “positive” in 78% of the cases.

The demographic and other relevant characteristics of these students are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

**Demographic and Other Relevant Information
of Exiting NAPSEC Students**

n=4,239

Characteristic	n	%
<u>Program Classification</u>		
Emotional/Behavioral Disorders	2,554	60.3
Pervasive Developmental Disorders	591	13.9
Preschool Disorders	414	9.8
Medical Disorders	272	6.4
Learning Disorders	408	9.6
<u>Program Type</u>		
Day	3,395	80.1
Residential	844	19.9
<u>Reason for Exit</u>		
Transfer	3,105	73.2
Graduate/Aged-Out	992	23.4
Dropouts	142	3.4
<u>Grade Level</u>		
Preschool	416	9.8
Elementary School	567	13.4
Middle School	651	15.4
High School	2,605	61.4
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>		
White	2,391	56.4
Black	1,131	26.7
Hispanic	581	13.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	77	1.8
"Other"	59	1.4
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	3,084	72.8
Female	1,155	27.2
<u>Ages at Exit</u>		
Birth to 5 years	468	11.0
6-11 years	541	12.8
12-17 years	2,150	50.7
18-21+ years	1,080	25.5

<u>Length of Stay</u>		
< 1 year	546	12.9
1-5 years	2,479	58.5
6-10 years	337	7.9
11+ years	139	3.3
Not Available	738	17.4
<u>Subsidized Lunch</u>		
Yes	1,559	36.8
No	2,680	63.2
<u>Status of Planning Information</u>		
Available in Records	3,501	82.6
Not Available	738	17.4
<u>Staff Assessment of Exit</u>		
Planned		
Yes	3,119	73.6
No	1,120	26.4
Positive		
Yes	3,317	78.2
No	922	21.8

Planning information was available for 3,501 students (83% of the exiting students). Of these students with known plans, 2,562 were transfer students and 939 were graduates/aged-out students.

The Transfer Students

Description

There were 2,562 transfer students with known plans. Of these, 1,927 students (75%) were male, while 635 (25%) were female. Approximately 53% were White, 30% were Black, 14% were Hispanic, 2% were Asian/Pacific Islander and the remaining 1% were of “Other” racial/ethnic backgrounds. While 1,943 (76%) of the transfer students attended day programs, 619 students (24%) attended residential programs. Day students tended to be male (74%) and White (55%) or Black (28%). Residential students also tended to be male (79%) and White (47%) or Black (38%).

By Grade Level

Approximately 46% attended High School, 20% Middle School, 20% Elementary School, and 15% Preschool. See Table 3.

Table 3

NAPSEC Transfer Students by Grade Level

n=2,562

	#	%
Preschool	374	14.6
Elementary School	502	19.6
Middle School	512	20.0
High School	1,174	45.8
	2,562	100.0

By Length of Stay

Table 4 presents the length of stay for the transfer students for the duration of their enrollment in a NAPSEC program. As this table shows, about 74% of the transfer students attended a NAPSEC program for between 1 and 5 years. Another 19% were in attendance for less than 1 year. Taken together, about 93% of these students were in a NAPSEC program for less than 1 year to 5 years.

Table 4

Length of Stay for Transfer Students

n=2,562

	#	%
< 1 year	489	19.1
1-5 years	1,901	74.2
6-10 years	152	5.9
11+ years	20	.8
Total	2,562	100.0

The Educational Plans By Program

When the transfer students are examined according to the programs in which they were enrolled, the following emerges. About 60% (1,532 students) attended Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs; 14% (364 students) were enrolled in Preschool Disorders programs; 11% (276 students) went to Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs; 9.5% (245 students) attended Learning Disorders programs; and 5.5% (145 students) were in Medical Disorders programs. See Table 5 for the distribution of the plans made by these students.

Table 5

Educational Plans for Transfer Students from NAPSEC Programs

n=2,562

Education Setting	Preschool n=364		PDD n=276		Medical n=145		ED/BD n=1,532		Learning n=245		Total n=2,562	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Regular Education, Not Special Education	136	37.4	14	5.1	13	9.0	132	8.6	52	21.2	347	13.5
Regular Education, Vocational	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	22	1.4	9	3.7	31	1.2
Regular Education, Supported Inclusion	72	19.8	21	7.6	27	18.6	150	9.8	21	8.6	291	11.4
Subtotal: Returns to Regular Education	208	57.2	35	12.7	40	27.6	304	19.8	82	33.5	669	26.1
Resource Room	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	53	3.5	8	3.3	61	2.4
Alternate School	0	0.0	7	2.6	6	4.1	120	7.8	6	2.4	139	5.4
Special Education, Self Contained LEA	108	29.7	82	29.7	32	22.1	305	20.0	23	9.4	550	21.5
Subtotal: All Returns to In-district Programs	316	86.9	124	45.0	78	53.8	782	51.1	119	48.6	1,419	55.4
Out of District Special Education	46	12.5	111	40.2	41	28.2	340	22.2	100	40.8	638	24.9
Residential	0	0.0	23	8.3	11	7.6	216	14.1	11	4.5	261	10.2
Home Instruction	1	.3	8	2.9	2	1.4	91	5.9	6	2.4	108	4.2
Other	1	.3	10	3.6	13	9.0	103	6.7	9	3.7	136	5.3
Total	364	100.0	276	100.0	145	100.0	1,532	100.0	245	100.0	2,562	100.0

Results for Transfer Students

As Table 5 indicates, more than 55% of the transfer students left a NAPSEC school with plans to return to an educational program within the local district. About 26% of the students planned to return to Regular Education classes (Regular Education, Not Special Education, 13.5%; Regular Education, Vocational, 1.2%; Regular Education, Supported Inclusion, 11.4%), while another 29.3% planned to return to other programs within the district (Resource Room, 2.4%; Alternate School, 5.4%; or Self-contained classroom, 21.5%). When the plans to return to regular education are examined by disability, the following emerges. Students from Preschool Disorders Programs (57.2%) were the most likely to plan to return to regular education classrooms. Students from the other categories made plans to return as follows: from Learning Disorders programs, 33.5%; from Medical Disorders programs, 27.6%; from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, 19.8%; from Pervasive Development Disorders programs, 12.7%. Altogether, about 87% of the students who transferred from Preschool Disorders programs, 45% from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs, 54% from Medical Disorders programs, 51% from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, and 49% from Learning Disorders programs had plans to enter educational programs within their local districts.

Conclusions for Transfer Students

About 16% of the transfer students stay in a NAPSEC program for less than 1 year, while about 71% stay for 1-5 years. Taken together, more than 86% of these students remain in a NAPSEC program from less than 1 year to 5 years. About 55% of the students who attend and then transfer out of a NAPSEC program develop

plans to return to educational programs within their local districts. Close to 26% are able to return to regular education classrooms. Of those who plan to return to regular education classrooms, students from Preschool Disorders programs (about 57%) and Learning Disorders programs (more than 33%) are the most likely, while students from Pervasive Development Disorders programs (close to 13%) are the least likely.

5-Year Comparison of Findings: Transfer Student Exit Plans

Table 6 shows the degree to which the plans of the transfer students reflect a return to an in-district program, including a regular education setting, for the five academic years 1999-2000 through 2003-2004.

Table 6

5-Year Comparison of Transfer Student Exit Plans

	Regular Education ^a		Other In-district ^b		Total In-district	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1999-2000 (25% participation) n = 1,232	248	20	314	26	562	46
2000-2001 (42% participation) n = 2,853	700	25	1,000	35	1,700	60
2001-2002 (40% participation) n = 2,344	501	21	848	36	1,349	57
2002-2003 (51% participation) n = 2,579	541	21	1,017	39	1,558	60
2003-2004 (51% participation) n = 2,562	669	26	750	29	1,419	55

^a Regular education, including supported inclusion

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

The results for plans to return to regular education settings indicate: 20% in 1999-2000; 25% in 2000-2001; 21% in 2001-2002; 21% in 2002-2003; and 26% in 2003-2004. The 5-year average for plans to return to regular education is 22.6%. The plans to return to “other” in-district programming indicate that: 26% planned to return in 1999-2000; 35% in 2000-2001; 36% in 2001-2002; 39% in 2002-2003; and 29% in 2003-2004. The 5-year average for plans to return to “other” in-district programs is 33%. Finally, plans to return total in-district programming are: 46% in 1999-2000; 60% in 2000-2001; 57% in 2001-2002; 60% in 2002-2003; and 55% in 2003-2004. The 5-year average for plans to return to all in-district programming is 55.6%.

The Graduates/Aged-Out Students

Description

There were 939 graduates/aged-out students with known plans. Of these, 66% were male, while 34% were female. Approximately 65% were White, 22% were Black, 10% were Hispanic, 2% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% were “Other” racial/ethnic backgrounds. About 53% (495 students) from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, approximately 24% (226 students) came from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs, 13% (123 students) from Learning Disorders programs, and 10% (95 students) from Medical Disorders programs. Finally, 85% (797 graduates/aged-out students) came from day programs, while 15% (142 graduates/aged-out students) came from residential programs.

Length of Stay

Table 7 shows the length of stay in a NAPSEC program for the graduates/aged-out students who exited.

Table 7

Length of Stay for Graduates/Aged-Out Students

n= 939

	#	%
Graduates/Aged-out Students		
< 1 year	57	6.1
1-5 years	578	61.5
6-10 years	185	19.7
11+ years	119	12.7
Total	939	100.0

As Table 7 demonstrates, slightly more than 6% of the graduates were in a NAPSEC program for less than 1 year; 61.5% for 1-5 years; almost 20% for 6-10 years; and nearly 13% for 11 or more years. Thus, most of the graduates/aged-out students (67.6%) were in a NAPSEC program for less than 1 year to 5 years.

The Postschool Plans By Program

See Table 8 for an analysis of the postschool plans made by these students.

Table 8

NAPSEC Postschool Plans for Graduates/Aged-Out Students by Program

n=939

Postschool Setting	Pervasive Developmental n=226		Medical n=95		ED/BD Programs n=495		Learning n=123		Total n=939	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Four Year College	2	.9	5	5.3	43	8.7	22	17.9	72	7.7
Two Year College	11	4.9	9	9.5	166	33.6	30	24.4	216	23.0
Trade/Technical School	4	1.8	1	1.0	65	13.1	8	6.5	78	8.3
Competitive Employment	34	15.0	5	5.3	112	22.6	11	8.9	162	17.3
Military	0	0.0	0	0.0	12	2.4	2	1.6	14	1.5
Mainstream Activity^a	51	22.6	20	21.1	398	80.4	73	59.3	542	57.8
Vocational Rehabilitation Training Program	21	9.3	18	18.9	44	8.9	7	5.7	90	9.6
Supported Employment	49	21.7	15	15.8	19	3.9	31	25.2	114	12.1
Sheltered Employment	54	23.9	7	7.4	10	2.0	5	4.1	76	8.1
Vocational Rehabilitation Activity^b	124	54.9	40	42.1	73	14.8	43	35.0	280	29.8
Adult Partial Care	22	9.7	8	8.4	1	.2	5	4.1	36	3.8
Nonvocational Day Program	16	7.1	21	22.1	3	.6	0	0.0	40	4.3
Community-Based Program Activity^c	38	16.8	29	30.5	4	.8	5	4.1	76	8.1
Other	6	2.6	4	4.2	10	2.0	0	0.0	20	2.1
No Education/Training, Job or Program	7	3.1	2	2.1	10	2.0	2	1.6	21	2.2
Total	226	100.0	95	100.0	495	100.0	123	100.0	939	100.0

^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 Graduates/Aged-Out Students

As Table 8 shows, 39% of the graduates/aged-out students planned to go on to a 4-year/2-year College or a Trade or Technical School. Nearly 19% had plans to enter Competitive Employment or the Military. Taken together, about 58% of the graduates/aged-out students planned to enter a Mainstream Activity by participating in postschool education or technical training, seeking employment, or enlisting in the military. Almost 30% planned to enter a Vocational Rehabilitation Activity by participating in a vocational rehabilitation training program (9.6%) or in supported (12.1%) or sheltered (8.1%) employment. Slightly more than 8% planned to enter Community-Based Program Activity by enrolling in an adult partial care (3.8%) or nonvocational day program (4.3%). More than 2% planned to enter another setting, such as a medical or psychiatric facility. Finally, about 2% of the graduates/aged-out students made no plans to enter an educational, vocational, rehabilitative, or supportive program or to obtain a job after completing a secondary program in a NAPSEC school.

Moreover, graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (more than 80%) and Learning Disorders programs (more than 59%) were the most likely to make plans to enter Mainstream Activity; those from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs (almost 55%) and from Medical Disorders programs (about 42%) were the most likely to plan to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activity; and those from Medical Disorders programs (30.5%) and Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs (16.8%) were the most likely to plan to enter Community-Based Program Activity.

Living Arrangements

Almost 71% of the graduates/aged-out students had plans to live with a parent, other relative, or guardian. Nearly 18% planned to live independently (14.3%) or semi-independently (3.5%). Approximately 12% planned to live in a skill development home, foster home, developmental center, group home, residential treatment center, an “other” living arrangement, such as entry into a medical or psychiatric facility.

Conclusions for Graduates/Aged-Out Students

NAPSEC programs appear to help the vast majority of the graduates/aged-out students make transitional plans for entering productive adult roles. While the majority of the graduates/aged-out students had plans to live in the community, primarily with a parent, other relative, or guardian, close to 18% had plans to live independently (14.3%) or semi-independently (3.5%). About 58% of the graduates/aged-out students planned to enter a 4-Year/2-Year College, Trade/Technical School, or Competitive Employment/Military. Overall, 96% of these students planned to enter Mainstream Activity (4-Year/2-Year College, Trade/Technical School, Competitive Employment or Military), Vocational Rehabilitation (Vocational Rehabilitation Training Programs or Supported/Sheltered Employment), or Community-Based Program Activity (Partial Care or Nonvocational Day Programs). A high percentage of those from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders and Learning Disorders programs had plans to enter Mainstream Activity; those from Pervasive Developmental Disorders and Medical Disorders programs tended to plan to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activity; those from Medical Disorders programs and Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs were the most likely to plan to

enter a Community-Based program activity after leaving a NAPSEC secondary school.

5-Year Comparison of Graduates/Aged-Out Students' Postschool Plans

As Table 9 indicates, when the postschool plans of graduates/aged-out students from all programs are compared for the 5-year period that encompasses academic years 1999-2000 through 2003-2004, the following emerges.

Table 9

NAPSEC Graduates/Aged-Out Students: 5-Year Comparison of Postschool Plans

	<u>Mainstream^a</u>		<u>Voc. Rehab.^b</u>		<u>Comm.-Based^c</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1999-2000 n=400 (25% participation)	186	46	161	40	27	7	374	93
2000-2001 n=643 (42% participation)	322	50	237	37	57	9	616	96
2001-2002 n=751 (40% participation)	430	57	230	32	40	5	700	93
2002-2003 n=993 (51% participation)	556	56	291	29	83	8	930	94
2003-2004 n=939 (51% participation)	542	58	280	30	76	8	898	96

^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

Plans to participate in Mainstream Activity have occurred at the respective rates of 46% (1999-2000), 50% (2000-2001), 57% (2001-2002), 56% (2002-2003), and 58% (2003-2004). The 5-year average for Mainstream Activity is 53.4%. Plans to become involved in Vocational Rehabilitation Activity were reported as 40% (1999-2000), 37% (2000-2001), 31% (2001-2002), 29% (2002-2003), and 30% (2003-2004). The 5-year average is 33.4%. Finally, plans to enter Community-Based Program Activity were found to be 7% (1999-2000), 9% (2000-2001), 5% (2001-2002), 8% (2002-2003), and 8% (2003-2004). The 5-year average is 7.4%.

Over the course of the five specific academic years studied, the plans of graduates/aged-out students from NAPSEC-member programs appear to reflect the intention of these young adults to lead productive lives upon leaving the private approved school. The rates of their planned postschool productivity are: 93% (1999-2000), 96% (2000-2001), 93% (2001-2002), 93% (2002-2003), and 96% (2003-2004). The 5-year average is 94.2%.

Comparison of Plans by Program

Tables 10A, 10B and 10C compare the plans of the NAPSEC graduates/aged-out students for the four academic years 2000-2001 through 2003-2004 by program and activity category.¹¹

Table 10A focuses on the plans for postschool Mainstream Activity for graduates/aged-out students who entered 4-Year/2-Year college, Trade/Technical School, Competitive Employment, or the Military.

¹¹ Because a more narrow disability classification system was used in the 1999-2000 study year, the data for these tables could not be extracted. Thus, only a 4-year comparison is available for the graduates/aged-out students.

Table 10A

**4-Year Comparison of Plans of
NAPSEC Graduates/Aged-Out Students
by Program: Mainstream Activity**

	Pervasive Developmental Disorders		Medical Disorders		Emotional/ Behavioral Disorders		Learning Disorders		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2000-2001 n=643 (42% participation)	11	12	26	33	201	62	84	54	322	50
2001-2002 n=751 (40% participation)	28	25	46	53	254	77	102	46	430	57
2002-2003 n=993 (51% participation)	38	16	50	46	348	77	120	62	556	56
2003-2004 n=939 (51% participation)	51	23	20	21	398	80	73	59	542	58

Plans for Mainstream Activity for students from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs vary from 12% (2000-2001) to 25% (2001-2002) to 16% (2002-2003) to 23% (2003-2004) with an average of 19%. The rate of these plans for students from Medical Disorders programs were 33% (2000-2001), 53% (2001-2002), 46% (2002-2003), to 21% (2003-2004) with an average of 38%. For graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, plans for Mainstream Activity range from 62% (2000-2001) to 77% (2001-2002) to 77% (2002-2003) to 80% (2003-2004) with an average of 74%. Finally, for graduates/aged-out students from Learning Disorders programs, the rates were 54% (2000-2001), 46% (2001-2002), 62% (2002-2003), and 59% (2003-2004) with an average of 55%.

Table 10B

**4-Year Comparison of Plans of
NAPSEC Graduates/Aged-Out Students
by Program: Vocational Rehabilitation Activity**

	Pervasive Developmental Disorders		Medical Disorders		Emotional/ Behavioral Disorders		Learning Disorders		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2000-2001 n=643 (42% participation)	51	58	23	29	101	31	62	40	237	37
2001-2002 n=751 (40% participation)	57	50	11	13	58	18	104	47	230	31
2002-2003 n=993 (51% participation)	138	59	30	28	68	15	55	28	291	29
2003-2004 n=939 (51% participation)	124	55	40	42	73	15	43	35	280	30

Table 10B sets forth the data for the graduates/aged-out students who planned to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activity (vocational rehabilitation training programs; supported or sheltered employment). The students from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs planned to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activity at the rates 58% (2000-2001), 50% (2001-2002), 59% (2002-2003), and 55% (2003-2004) with an average of 55.5%. For those from Medical Disorders programs, plans to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activity were 29% (2000-2001), 13% (2001-2002), 28% (2002-2003), and 42% (2003-2004) with an average rate of entry of 28%. The rate of planned entry for graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs was 31% (2000-2001), 18% (2001-2002), 15% (2002-2003), and 15% (2003-2004) with an average of 19.7%.

Graduates/aged-out students from Learning Disorders programs made plans to enter this type of postschool activity at the rate of 40% (2000-2001), 47% (2001-2002), 28% (2002-2003), and 35% (2003-2004) with an average of 37.5%.

Table 10C

**4-Year Comparison of Plans of
NAPSEC Graduates/Aged-Out Students
by Program: Community-Based Activity**

	Pervasive Developmental Disorders		Medical Disorders		Emotional/ Behavioral Disorders		Learning Disorders		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2000-2001 n=643 (42% participation)	23	26	25	32	4	1	5	3	57	9
2001-2002 n=751 (40% participation)	20	18	13	15	2	.5	5	2	40	5
2002-2003 n=993 (51% participation)	45	19	19	17	12	3	7	4	83	8
2003-2004 n=939 (51% participation)	38	17	29	30	4	.8	5	4	76	8

Table 10C shows the plans of the graduates/aged-out students who intended to enter Community-Based Program Activity, such as partial care and nonvocational day programs. Students from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs made such plans at the rates of 26% (2000-2001), 18% (2001-2002), 19% (2002-2003), and 29% (2003-2004) with an average of 23%. Those from Medical Disorders programs had plans to access these services at 32% (2000-2001), 15% (2001-2002), 17% (2002-2003), and 30% (2003-2004) with an average of 23.5%. For

graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, the rates were reported as 1% (2000-2001), .5% (2001-2002), 3% (2002-2003), and .8% (2003-2004) with an average of 1.3%. Finally, the rates for graduates/aged-out students from Learning Disorders programs with plans to enter Community-Based Program Activity were 3% (2000-2001), 2% (2001-2002), 4% (2002-2003), and 4% (2003-2004) with an average of 3.2%.

Conclusions for 4-Year Comparison by Program of Graduates/Aged-Out Student Postschool Plans

The graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (62% in 2000-2001, 77% in 2001-2002, 77% in 2002-2003, and 80% in 2003-2004, with a 5-year average of 74%) were the most likely to plan to enter Mainstream Activity adult roles after leaving a NAPSEC program. Students from Learning Disorders programs were the next group who tended to make such plans with rates of 54% in 2000-2001, 46% in 2001-2002, 62% in 2002-2003, and 59% in 2003-2004 with a 5-year average of 55%.

Graduates/aged-out students from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs were most likely to plan to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activity with rates of 58% (2000-2001), 50% (2001-2002), 59% (2002-2003), and 55% in 2003-2004 and a 5-year average of 55.5%. They are followed by those from Learning Disorders programs with rates of 40% (2000-2001), 47% (2001-2002), 28% (2002-2003), and 35% (2003-2004) and a 5-year average of 37.5%.

Finally, graduates/aged-out students with plans to enter Community-Based Program Activity tended to come from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs (26% in 2000-2001, 18% in 2001-2002, 19% in 2002-2003, and 17% in 2003-2004)

or from Medical Disorders programs (32% in 2000-2001; 15% in 2001-2002, 17% in 2002-2003, and 30% in 2003-2004 with a 5-year average of 23.5%).

Discussion

In 2003-2004, with more than 86% of the transfer students in a NAPSEC program for less than 1 year to 5 years, 55% had plans to leave the NAPSEC program to return to their home districts and, in 26% of the cases, to enter the less restrictive educational environment of a regular classroom. In fact, over the 5-year period of 1999-2000 to 2003-2004, on average, 22.6% of the transfer students had plans to return to regular education classrooms and 33% to “other” in-district programs. Taken together, on average, 55.6% of these students planned to return to programs in their local districts. These findings suggest that many students with a wide range of disabilities utilize the highly specialized and intensive NAPSEC programs to learn to cope with their disabilities so that they are eventually able to return to and benefit from a program in their home district.

It is encouraging that such a high proportion of the graduates/aged-out students with severe disabilities who exited from a NAPSEC program in 2003-2004 had transitional plans in place to pursue careers in Mainstream Activity (58%), Vocational Rehabilitation Activity (30%), or Community-Based Program Activity (8%), and further that about 96% of all of the graduates/aged-out students had plans to engage in productive postschool activities. Outcome studies of special education have shown that when students in the general public school population are compared to public school special education students, the special education students are less likely to complete high school or receive further education or

vocational training (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Johnson, McGrew, Bloomberg, Bruininks & Lin, 1997; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996).

When the outcomes for special education students with serious emotional and behavioral difficulties who attend programs within the public school are investigated, the low graduation rates, poor work histories, and involvement in the criminal justice system underscore the problematic transition of these students into stable adult roles (Reddy, 2001; Malmgren, Edgar, & Neel, 1998; Mattison & Spitznagel, 1998; Sample, 1998; SRI International, 1993; Tobin & Sugai, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2001; Wagner, 1995; Wagner & Cameto, 2004). That 96% of the graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs left a NAPSEC program in 2003-2004 with plans for pursuing productive postschool roles appears very encouraging. In fact, 81% of graduates/aged-out students exiting from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs planned to enter Mainstream Activity (39% to 4-year/2-year college or trade/technical school; 19% to competitive employment/military); 30% had plans to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activity (10% to vocational rehabilitation training programs, 12% to supported employment and 8% sheltered employment); and 8% had plans to enter Community-Based Program Activity (adult partial care and nonvocational day programs). Only 4% left without any definitive plans.

Moreover, few graduates/aged-out students from the other program categories (Medical Disorders programs, 6.3%; Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs, 5.7%; and Learning Disorders programs, 1.6%) left a NAPSEC program without plans to engage in productive postschool activity.

Furthermore, from 1999-2000 to 2003-2004, the 5-year average for graduates/aged-out students planning to enter the mainstream is more than 53%; the 5-year average for plans for entering vocational rehabilitation activities was 33.4%; the 5-year average for planning to participate in an appropriate adult program in the community was 7.4%. With an overall 5-year average of 94.2%, fewer than 6% of the disabled students who graduate or age-out of a NAPSEC program leave without plans. Moreover, the vulnerable graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs were the most likely over the 5 years to enter the mainstream (5-year average of 74%).

As IEP partners with the sending districts, NAPSEC's approved private special education centers continue to provide programs to assist a broad and diverse range of students. For some students, NAPSEC's intensive programs are the temporary, but necessary, educational setting in which students can shore up the skills needed to succeed in programs available in their local public school district. For other special education students, NAPSEC's education programs offer the optimal programs to meet special needs that cannot be met elsewhere.

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