

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

Plans for Exiting Students: 2009-2010

**Report Number 9
NAPSEC Outcomes Project**

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National Association of Private Special Education Centers
601 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 900 - South Building
Washington, DC 20004
202.434.8225 Phone 202.434.8224 Fax
E-mail: napsec@aol.com Web Site: www.napsec.org

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Executive Summary

Since its inception in 1974, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has recognized that students with special education needs require services along a continuum. If special education programming within the local district stands at one end of this continuum, programming within approved nonpublic facilities is at the other. When the needs of students with the most severe disabilities cannot be met within the public sector, local school districts place students in approved private special education facilities that can offer highly specialized, intensive, and individualized programs. In these instances, the approved nonpublic special education facility functions as a partner with the sending public school district in implementing the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Studies have generally ignored the outcomes for the students with severe disabilities who are enrolled in these nonpublic special education facilities. For the past decade, therefore, NAPSEC, a national association of approved nonpublic special education centers, has studied their discharge plans in order to understand their outcomes. Below is a summary of the results for students who left an approved nonpublic special education center with membership in NAPSEC during the 2009-2010 academic year.

Highlights for Transfer Students include:

1. 93% of the transfer students attended the approved nonpublic special education center for 5 years or less.
2. 60% of these students left their special education school with plans to attend an educational program in their local, home district (22% to a regular education classroom and 38 % to “other” in-district programs, such as, resource room, alternate school, or self-contained LEA).
3. On average, from 2007-08 to 2009-10, 63% of the students planned to return to in-district programs (22% to regular education classrooms and 41% to “other” in-district programs, such as, resource room, alternate school, or self-contained LEA).
4. The special needs of the transfer students are reflected in their living plans. Although 75% of these minors plan to live with their parents or legal guardians, the other 25% require specialized treatment and care in skill development/foster homes, group homes, residential treatment centers, psychiatric or medical facilities, or correctional institutions.

Highlights for Graduates/Aged-Out Students include:

1. About 64% of the graduates/aged-out students were enrolled in an approved nonpublic special education school affiliated with NAPSEC for 5 years or less.
2. About 54% of the graduates/aged-out students planned to enter the mainstream (2-year/4-year college or trade/technical training, competitive employment, or the military)
3. Slightly more than 25% planned to enter a vocational rehabilitation activity (vocational rehabilitation training program, supported or sheltered employment).
4. Close to 11% had plans to enter an appropriate adult program in the community (adult partial care or adult nonvocational day program).
5. Graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (76%) and Learning Disorders programs (70%) were the most likely to plan to enter the mainstream.

Introduction

For nearly a decade, the National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC) has been reporting about the postschool outcomes of students served by its members, children, adolescents, and young adults with severe disabilities who attend approved private special education programs. These students with severe disabilities and complex educational needs make up about 1% of all students in our country who receive special education services.

From 2000-2001 through 2003-2004, NAPSEC, an association of about 280 approved private special education schools and agencies, conducted an annual study of the students who exited from the schools of its members. During the 2007-2008 and 2008-09 academic years, this effort began again. The present report for the 2009-10 academic year adds to this knowledge base by 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.

Method

Each NAPSEC-member school was asked to supply information on every student who exited from 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, 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. Unfortunately, since these students dropped out, information could not be gathered on their postschool plans.

Each participating school was given a definition of and asked to place each exiting students into 1 of 5 specific special educational programs. Instructions made clear that only one category was to be used. 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 Student Demographics

During the 2009-2010 academic year, 83 NAPSEC-member schools (30% of the membership) that offered 194 education programs volunteered to participate in the study. Of these programs, 159 (82%) were available for day students, 6 (3%) for residential students,

and 29 (15%) for both day and residential students. Moreover, 54 schools (28%) offered programs to students with Pervasive Developmental Disorders (which include disorders on the Autism spectrum), 50 (26%) to students with Emotional/ Behavioral Disorders, 36 (18%) to those with Medical Disorders, 29 (15%) to those with Learning Disorders, and 25 (13%) to children with Preschool Disorders.

Taken together, the participants reported an enrollment of 10,455 students with 7,700 (74%) males and 2,755 (26%) females.

Participating schools were located in 5 of the federal education regions and 11 states. As Table 1 shows, about 75% of the schools were located in the Mid-Atlantic region (Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania); about 11% were in the Northeast region (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York); 6% in the Appalachia region (Virginia), about 5% in the North Central region (Illinois and Minnesota); and about 4% were in the Western region (Arizona and California).

Table 1. Participating Schools by Federal Educational Region

N=83

Region/Participating State	#	%
<u>Northeast:</u> ¹		
Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York,	9	10.8
<u>MidAtlantic:</u> ²		
Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania	62	74.7
<u>Appalachia:</u> ³		
Virginia	5	6.1
<u>North Central:</u> ^{4,5}		
Illinois, Minnesota	4	4.8
<u>Western:</u> ^{6,7,8}		
Arizona, California	3	3.6
Total	83	100.0

¹ No participants from Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine, Vermont, Puerto Rico, or Virgin Islands

² No participants from the Delaware or Washington, D.C.

³ No participants from Kentucky, Tennessee or West Virginia

⁴ No participants from Southeast Region

⁵ No participants from Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio or Wisconsin

⁶ No participants from Southwest or MidContinent Regions

⁷ No participants from Nevada or Utah

⁸ No participants from Northwest Region

⁹ No participants from Pacific Region

The Exiting Students

As Table 2 demonstrates, during the study period, 3,043 students exited from a participating private approved special education center with membership in NAPSEC. Outcome information was available for 2,636 (87%) of the exiting students. Drop outs and students who left without revealing their plans accounted for the remaining 13%.

The exiters tended to be male (75%), White (47%) or Black (37%), day program (77%), High School students (65%) between the ages of 12 and 17 years (50%) who attended an Emotional/Behavioral Disorders program (56%) from 1-5 years (55%) and did not receive subsidized lunch (71%). Transfer students made up for 72.9% of the sample; graduates/aged-out students accounted for 23.6%; and dropouts for 3.5%.¹ According to school staff, 72% of all of the students who left were involved in “planned” exits with supports in place for the transition, while 78% of the exits were viewed as “positive.”

¹ There were 106 dropouts. Of these, 79 (75%) were male, 27 (25%) were female. When race/ethnicity was examined, 46 (43%) were White, 41 (39%) were Black, and 19 (18%) were Hispanic.

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

n=3,043

Characteristics	#	%
<u>Program Classification</u>		
Emotional/Behavioral Disorders	1,694	55.7
Pervasive Developmental Disorders	615	20.2
Preschool Disorders	369	12.1
Medical Disorders	204	6.7
Learning Disorders	161	5.3
<u>Program Type</u>		
Day	2,331	76.6
Residential	712	23.4
<u>Reason for Exit</u>		
Transfer	2,220	72.9
Graduate/Aged-Out	717	23.6
Dropouts	106	3.5
<u>Grade Level</u>		
Preschool	420	13.8
Elementary School	228	7.5
Middle School	410	13.5
High School	1,985	65.2
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>		
White	1,442	47.4
Black	1,142	37.5
Hispanic	397	13.0
Asian	54	1.8
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	.1
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	7	.2
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	2,284	75.1
Female	759	24.9
<u>Ages at Exit</u>		
3-5 years	426	14.0
6-11 years	250	8.2
12-17 years	1,513	49.7
18-21+ years	854	28.1

<u>Length of Stay</u>		
< 1 year	586	19.3
1-5 years	1,673	54.9
6-10 years	290	9.5
11+ years	87	2.9
Not Available	407	13.4
<u>Subsidized Lunch</u>		
Yes	896	29.4
No	2,147	70.6
<u>Status of Planning Information</u>		
Available in Records	2,636	86.6
Not Available	407	13.4
<u>Staff Assessment of Exit</u>		
Planned		
Yes	2,194	72.1
No	849	27.9
Positive		
Yes	2,369	77.9
No	674	22.1

Among the 2,636 students for whom discharge planning information was available, 1,955 were transfer students and 681 were graduate/aged-out students. This report will now focus on those students whose plans were known.

The Transfer Students

Demographics

There were 1,955 transfer students whose exits were planned. Of these, 1,521 students (78%) were male, while 434 (22%) were female. Approximately 868 (44%) were White, 771 (39%) were Black, 273 (14%) were Hispanic, 32 (2%) were Asian, 6 (1%) were either American Indian/Alaskan Native (1 student) or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (5 students).

Grade Level

More than 51% attended High School, nearly 20% Middle School, about 10% Elementary School, and close to 19% Preschool. See Table 3.

Table 3. Transfer Students by Grade Level

n= 1,955

	#	%
Preschool	365	18.7
Elementary School	200	10.2
Middle School	383	19.6
High School	1,007	51.5
	1,955	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= 1,955

	#	%
< 1 year	543	27.8
1-5 years	1,280	65.5
6-10 years	132	6.7
Total	1,955	100.0

More than 65% of the transfer students attended their special education program from 1 to 5 years. Almost 28% were in attendance for less than 1 year. Taken together, about 93% of these students were in a NAPSEC-member program between less than 1 year and 5 years.

The Educational Plans By Specialized Program

The transfer students were examined according to the programs in which they were enrolled. About 57% (1,138 students) attended Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs; about 19% (372 students) were enrolled in Preschool Disorders programs; almost 14% (274 students) went to Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs; about 6% (118 students) attended Learning Disorders programs; and another 4% (93 students) attended Medical Disorders programs. Table 5 displays the distribution of these student plans.

Table 5. Educational Plans for Transfer Students by Specialized Program

n=1,955

Education Setting	Preschool n=372		E/BD n=1,138		PDD n=274		Learning n=118		Medical n=93		Total n=1,955	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Regular Education, Not Special Education	76	20.4	51	4.5	6	2.2	5	4.2	4	4.3	142	7.1
Regular Education, Vocational	0	0	1	.1	2	.7	0	0	0	0	3	.2
Regular Education, Supported Inclusion	110	29.6	135	11.8	17	6.2	9	7.7	14	15.1	285	14.3
Subtotal: Returns to Regular Education	186	50.0	187	16.4	25	9.1	14	11.9	18	19.4	430	21.6
Resource Room	0	0	40	3.5	2	.7	11	9.3	2	2.1	55	2.7
Alternate School	0	0	76	6.7	4	1.5	7	5.9	5	5.4	92	4.6
Special Education, Self-Contained LEA	169	45.4	296	26.0	111	40.5	29	24.6	12	12.9	617	30.9
Subtotal: All Returns to In-district Programs	355	95.4	599	52.6	142	51.8	61	51.7	37	39.8	1,194	59.8
Out of District Special Education	16	4.3	299	26.3	100	36.5	44	37.3	29	31.2	488	24.5
Residential	0	0	131	11.5	12	4.4	3	2.5	4	4.3	150	7.5
Home Instruction	1	.3	39	3.4	7	2.6	5	4.2	12	12.9	64	3.2
Other	0	0	70	6.2	13	4.7	5	4.2	11	11.8	99	5.0
Total	372	100	1,138	100	274	100	118	100	93	100	1,955	100

Results for Transfer Student Educational Plans

As Table 5 indicates, about 60% of the transfer students left school with plans to return to an educational program within the local district. Moreover, more than 21% of the students planned to return to regular education classes (Regular Education, Not Special Education, about 7%; Regular Education, Vocational, .2%; Regular Education, Supported Inclusion, 14%), while 38% planned to return to other programs within the district (Resource Room, about 3%; Alternate School, more than 4%; or Self-contained Classroom, 31%). When the plans to return to regular education are examined by disability, the following emerges. Students from Preschool Disorders programs (50%). Students from the other categories made plans to return as follows: from Medical Disorders programs, 19%; from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, 16%; from Pervasive Development Disorders programs, 9%. Altogether, 95% of the students who transferred from Preschool Disorders programs, about 53% from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, 52% from Learning Disorders programs, 52% from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs, and 40% from Medical Disorders programs had plans to enter educational programs within their local school districts.

Return to In-District Education

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 2007-2008 through 2009-2010.

Table 6 Transfer Student Return to In-District Education

	Regular Education ^a		Other In-District ^b		Total In-District	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
2007-2008 (37% participation) n= 2,881	554	19	1,311	46	1,865	65
2008-2009 (38% participation) n=2,575	616	24	1,008	39	1,624	63
2009-2010 (30% participation) n=1,955	430	22	764	38	1,194	60

a Regular education, including supported inclusion

b Resource room, alternate school, self-contained LEA

For the 2009-2010 school year, 1,194 students (60%) planned to return to in-district programs. Of these, 430 students (22%) planned to return to regular education classrooms, while 764 students (38%) planned to enter “other” in-district programming, such as, resource room, alternate school, or self-contained LEA. On average, over this 3-year period, 63% of the students had plans to return to in-district programs, 22% to regular education classrooms and 41% to “other” in-district programs.

Living Arrangements

About 75% of the transfer students reported that they planned to continue to live with their parents or legal guardians. Slightly more than 1% planned to live independently (3 students) or semi-independently (21 students). About 11% had plans to live in a skill development/ foster home (5.6%) or group home (5.7%). The plans of 7% were to live at a residential treatment facility. More than 1% planned to go to a psychiatric (20 students) or

medical (7 students) facility. Nearly 3% were to enter a correctional facility. Finally, the plans of another 1% called for living in another situation, such as, a drug treatment facility.

Conclusions for Transfer Students

The transfer students tended to be White (44%) or Black (39%) males (78%) who remained in their approved nonpublic special education center from less than 1 year to 5 years (93%). About 60% of the students who transferred out of the approved nonpublic special education setting did so with plans to return to educational programs within their local school districts. Students from Preschool Disorder programs (50%) were the most likely to plan to return to regular education classrooms. Taken together, 95% of the students from Preschool Disorders programs, 53% from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, 52% from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs, 52% from Learning Disorders programs, and 40% from Medical Disorders programs had plans to return to their local, home districts.

Not surprisingly, the vast majority (75%) of these minors planned to live with their parents or other legal guardians. About 1% planned to live independently or semi-independently. The plans of over 11% indicated that they would be in the legal custody of others in skill development homes, foster homes, or group homes. An additional 10% planned to live in situations where specialized treatment was offered such as, residential treatment centers, psychiatric hospitals, medical facilities, drug addiction treatment centers. The plans for another 3% indicated placement in correctional facilities.

The special needs of the transfer students are reflected in their living plans. Although 75% of these minors plan to live with their parents or legal guardians, the other 25% require specialized treatment and care in skill development/foster homes, group homes, residential treatment centers, psychiatric or medical facilities, or correctional institutions.

The Graduates/Aged-Out Students

Demographics

There were 681 graduates/aged-out students with known plans. Of these, 473 students (69%) were male (69%), while 208 students (31%) were female. Moreover, 338 students (57%) were White, 218 (32%) were Black, 63 (9%) were Hispanic, and 12 (2%) were Asian. About 50% (343 students) came from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs, about 31% (213 students) from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs, 12% (82 students) from Medical Disorders programs, and 6% (43 students) from Learning Disorders programs. Finally, 92% (625 graduates/aged-out students) came from day programs, while 8% (56 graduates/aged-out students) came from residential 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= 681

	#	%
< 1 year	43	6.3
1-5 years	393	57.7
6-10 years	159	23.4
11+ years	86	12.6
Total	681	100.0

As Table 7 demonstrates, about 6% of the graduates/aged-out students were involved in their special education program for less than 1 year; 58% for 1-5 years; 23% for 6-10

years; and about 13% for 11 or more years. About 64% of the graduates/aged-out students were enrolled in their programs from less than 1 year up to 5 years.

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/aged-out.

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

n=681

<u>Postschool Setting</u>	E/BD n=343		PDD n=213		Medical n=82		Learning n=43		Total N=681	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Four Year College	35	10.2	5	2.4	6	7.3	4	9.3	50	7.3
Two Year College	130	37.9	15	7.1	11	13.4	9	20.9	165	24.2
Trade/Technical School	18	5.2	2	.9	4	4.9	6	14.0	30	4.4
Competitive Employment	70	20.4	25	11.7	9	11.0	11	25.6	115	17.0
Military	9	2.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	1.3
Mainstream Activity^a	262	76.3	47	22.1	30	36.6	30	69.8	369	54.2
Vocational Rehabilitation Training Program	27	7.9	23	10.8	12	14.6	4	9.3	66	9.7
Supported Employment	18	5.2	45	21.1	12	14.6	3	7.0	78	11.5
Sheltered Employment	2	.6	23	10.8	2	2.5	2	4.6	29	4.2
Vocational Rehabilitation Activity^b	47	13.7	91	42.7	26	31.7	9	20.9	173	25.4
Adult Partial Care	1	.3	7	3.3	12	14.6	0	0	20	2.9
Nonvocational Day Program	2	.6	42	19.7	7	8.5	2	4.6	53	7.8
Community-Based Program Activity^c	3	.9	49	23.0	19	32.1	2	4.6	73	10.7
Other	4	1.2	5	2.4	3	3.7	1	2.3	13	1.9
No Education/Training, Job or Program	27	7.9	21	9.8	4	4.9	1	2.3	53	7.8
Total	343	100	213	100	82	100	43	100	681	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, 36% (245) of the graduates/aged-out students planned to go on to a 4-year/2-year College or a Trade/Technical School. About 18% (124 graduates/aged-out students) had plans to enter Competitive Employment or the Military. Taken together, 54% 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.

About 25% (173 graduates/aged-out students) planned to enter a Vocational Rehabilitation Activity by participating in a vocational rehabilitation training program (10%) or in supported (12%) or sheltered (4%) employment, while close to 11% (73 graduates/aged-out students) planned to enter Community-Based Program Activity by enrolling in an adult partial care (3%) or nonvocational day program (8%). Finally, 2% (13 graduates/aged-out students) planned to be a homemaker (2 students) or to enter another adult setting, such as, a psychiatric, drug rehabilitation, or correctional facility (11 students). Finally, about 8% 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 their secondary program.

Graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs (76%) and Learning Disorders programs (70%) were the most likely to have plans to enter Mainstream Activity; those from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs (43%) were the most likely to plan to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Activity; and those from Medical Disorders programs as well as Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs were equally the most likely to plan to enter Community-Based Program Activity (23%).

Postschool Plans Over Time

Table 9 shows the postschool plans for graduates/aged-out students from 2007-08 through 2009-2010.

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

	<u>Mainstream^a</u>		<u>Voc.Rehab^b</u>		<u>Comm.-Based^c</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2007-2008 (37% participation) n=930	563	61	227	24	75	8	865	93
2008-2009 (38% participation) n=900	520	58	195	22	87	10	802	90
2009-2010 (30% participation) n=681	369	54	173	25	73	11	615	90

^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

For the 2009-2010 school year, 369 graduates/aged-out students (54%) planned to enter the mainstream; 173 (25%) to enter Vocational Rehabilitation; and 73 students (11%) to gain admission to adult partial care and nonvocational day programs that were community-based. On average, over this 3-year period, 58% of the students who graduated or aged out planned to enter the mainstream; 24% to engage in some type of vocational rehabilitation activity; and 10% to enter supportive community-based programs for adults with disabilities.

Living Arrangements

About 85% of the graduates/aged-out students planned to live with a parent, other relative, or guardian. Nearly 10% made plans to live independently (8%) or semi-independently (2%). More than 5% had plans to live in a skill development home, foster home, developmental center, group home, residential treatment center, or an “other” living arrangement, such as, 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 with severe disabilities make transitional plans to enter productive adult roles. While the majority of the graduates/aged-out students planned to live in the community, primarily with a parent, other relative, or guardian, about 10% had plans to live independently or semi-independently. About 54% of the graduates/aged-out students planned to enter a 4-Year/2-Year College, Trade/Technical School, or Competitive Employment/Military. Overall, 90% 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 Program or Supported/Sheltered Employment), or Community-Based Program Activity (Partial Care or Nonvocational Day Program). A high percentage of those from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (76%) programs and Learning Disorders programs (70%) had plans to enter the mainstream ; those from Pervasive Developmental Disorders programs (51%) to enter vocational rehabilitation activities; and those from Medical Disorders programs (23%) and Learning Disorders programs to access supportive services based in the community (23%).

Discussion

Students with special education needs who attend approved nonpublic special education programs represent only about 1% of all special education students in the United States. In fact, they comprise a unique subgroup within the population of students with disabilities. When compared to their special education peers who are able to receive services in their local public school districts, the students who attend school in the approved nonpublic sector present with more severe educational, medical, and psychiatric disorders and are more likely to have multiple and complex disorders that are characterized by their chronicity.

The fact that about 93% of the transfer students were enrolled in their programs for up to 5 years or less during the 2009-2010 school year shows that the vast majority of these special education students with severe disabilities are in their nonpublic highly specialized educational placements on a temporary basis. That 60% of these students left a NAPSEC-member school with plans to return to programs within their home districts, while 22% planned to enter the less restrictive educational environment of a regular classroom upon this return to the local district demonstrates that a high proportion of students who attend these intensive nonpublic special education programs ultimately participate in the programs offered within their local school districts. Clearly, NAPSEC-member schools are a part of the continuum of special education. Once students with serious disabilities are given the supports to remediate or strengthen their skills in the highly specialized programs offered in the nonpublic special education sector, many are able to transfer to and be integrated into their local district's educational programs. This is compatible with Gagnon & McLaughlin's findings (2004). Future studies to track these students after they have left the more protective setting of the nonpublic facility to move through the special education programming of the

public school could prove informative in regard to the process and progress of their student careers.

Although several national studies of postschool outcomes for students receiving special education programming have been carried out, the outcomes of students with severe disabilities who graduated from or aged out of a nonpublic therapeutic school have mostly been ignored by these studies (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). Such studies neither acknowledge the need for a continuum of special education nor the benefits students with severe disabilities derive from receiving highly individualized and intensive services that are specifically tailored to their unique educational needs in programs offered by the nonpublic special education sector (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Few studies focus on the barriers faced by adults with disabilities as they age and move from the supports of youth entitlement programs to the eligibility requirements of adult programs.

Given the severity of the disabilities of the graduates/aged-out students in this study, it is promising that, taken together, 90% of these graduates/aged-out students made plans to enter productive adult roles reflective of their respective optimal capacities to function. Thus, 54% planned to enroll in postsecondary education, competitive employment, or the military; 25% planned to enter a vocational rehabilitation training program, supported employment, or a sheltered workshop; and 11% had plans to participate in an adult partial care or nonvocational day program in their community.

Much attention has been placed on the outcomes of special education students in public schools with emotional and behavioral difficulties because of their low graduation rates, poor

work histories, involvement in the criminal justice system, and difficulty establishing 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; Gagnon & McLaughlin, 2004). It is encouraging, therefore, that during the 2009-10 school year, 76% of the graduates/aged-out students from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders programs left a NAPSEC-member program with transitional plans that call for the pursuit of adult roles in the mainstream (53% with plans for 4 year/2 year college or trade or technical school and 23% with plans for competitive employment or military service).

The approved nonpublic special education facilities that belong to NAPSEC remain focused on assuring success along the continuum of special education for students with severe disabilities and special needs. The majority of the exiting transfer students were able to subsequently plan to enter educational programs within their local public school districts. The majority of the exiting graduates/aged-out students were able to plan to enter productive adult roles. The approved nonpublic special education sector continues to play a vital role in assisting public school districts to educate students with a wide range of severe disabilities.

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