



Kentucky Post School Outcomes

Annual Report
2021



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Introduction

The Kentucky Post School Outcomes Center (KYP SO) is the Kentucky Department of Education's contractor for the collection of post-school outcome data for students who had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in place at the time they exited high school. This includes data related to the federal requirement for Indicator 14 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other post-school data necessary and appropriate to improve transition services for youth with disabilities throughout Kentucky. Data is collected through the Youth One Year Out (YOYO) former student interview developed by KYP SO and administered by district-level personnel that KYP SO trains. The YOYO is pre-populated with demographic information provided by the state and includes a series of questions related to post-school employment and education; factors contributing to a student's personal experiences; involvement with agencies; living arrangements; and community engagement. The YOYO also asks for general feedback regarding how former students' high schools prepared them for adult life. Attempts were made in the spring and summer of 2021 to interview all former students* who exited a public high school in Kentucky during the 2019-2020 school year with an IEP in place at the time of exit. Because the YOYO includes student identification numbers, KYP SO has the potential to link findings from the YOYO to other databases to identify malleable factors related to post-school success. These other databases include Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) data, pre-Employment Transition Services (ETS) data, Career and Technical Education (CTE) data, etc.

***IMPORTANT NOTE**

As one reads through this report, it is important to remember that for most of these students who responded to the survey, the last quarter of their high school experience changed drastically due to the pandemic, ending their high school career with online/virtual classes and their entire first year out of high school was during the height of the pandemic. Vaccines were not available to this age group during the vast majority of this timeframe.



Response Rate & Representativeness

The number of students who exited high school in the 2019-2020 school year was 4,385, and 2,536 responded to the 2021 YOYO survey, a response rate of 57.8%. Previous administrations of the YOYO have had response rates between 55.2% and 60%.

Response rates had been declining over the last several years, but this year is the exact same as last year, which had seen a slight rise (~3%) over the previous years. Response rates in this range are acceptable for a telephone interview given to young adults, and our rates are favorable compared to other states. In response to interviewer reports that the leading cause of not being able to conduct an interview was the inability to contact former students, KYPSO worked with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), KY Interagency Transition Council (KITC), and school districts to identify strategies for collecting more accurate and up-to-date contact information for exiting students. Two strategies identified were having students complete a new contact information card at the time of exit and using social media to announce the start of the survey. It is too early to tell if these strategies helped increase the response rate for the 2021 administration and beyond.

KYPSO tracks the representativeness of the YOYO by comparing the demographics of our target population (all eligible former students) to that of respondents. The table below (Table 1) displays how close these two groups are proportionally for several important subpopulations. Respondents were representative (within 3 percentage points) of the population in terms of gender, race, and disability; however, students who dropped out were underrepresented in terms of exit from high school. Contacting these students has consistently been a problem when collecting post-school outcome data.

Because the interview is voluntary for former students, there is no way to compel dropouts to respond. Improving contact information will be one potential way of improving responses with this population; however, it is likely that persons who exited



Response Rate & Representativeness

high school by dropping out are less willing to be contacted by their former school district to complete an interview. It is important when reviewing YOYO data to keep in mind that students who drop out typically have poor post-school outcomes relative to their peers, which indicates that the data is likely to indicate better outcomes than what they are for the total population. Therefore, it is important to recognize when a population is under-or over-represented, as this can inform how one interprets their data. We also examined geographic representativeness by comparing response rates to population rates in the state's nine educational cooperative regions. Eight regions had response rates within 3 percentage points of their population. One urban region was under-represented.

Table 1

Kentucky YOYO 2021	Target Group	Respondents	Difference From Target
Female	32.1%	32.4%	0.3%
African American	15.7%	13.9%	-1.8%
Dropped Out	7.2%	2.9%	-4.3%
Mild/Functional Mental Disability	23.5%	23.8%	0.3%
Emotional-Behavioral Disability	8.9%	7.1%	-1.8%
Specific Learning Disability	27.2%	27.3%	0.1%



Indicator 14

Federal data collection requirements mandate that states report the “percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school and were:

A. Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school.

B. Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school.

C. Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program, or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school” (20 U.S.C. 1416(a) (3) (B).

Definitions:

A). *Enrolled in higher education* means youth have been enrolled on a full- or part-time basis in a community college (2-year program) or college/university (4- or more year program) for at least one complete term, at any time in the year since leaving high school.

B). *Competitive employment* means that youth have worked for pay at or above the minimum wage in a setting with others who are nondisabled for a period of 20 hours a week for at least 90 days at any time in the year since leaving high school and had similar wages, benefits, and opportunities for advancement as their coworkers without disabilities. This includes military employment.



Indicator 14

C). *Enrolled in other postsecondary education or training* means youth have been enrolled on a full- or part-time basis for at least 1 complete term at any time in the year since leaving high school in an education or training program (e.g., Job Corps, adult education, workforce development program, vocational-technical school which is less than a 2-year program).

Some other employment means youth have worked for pay or been self-employed for a period of at least 90 days at any time in the year since leaving high school. This includes working in a family business (e.g., farm, store, fishing, ranching, catering services, etc.). It also includes those indicating that they work in a segregated setting or do not receive comparable wages, benefits, and opportunities for advancement as their non-disabled co-workers.

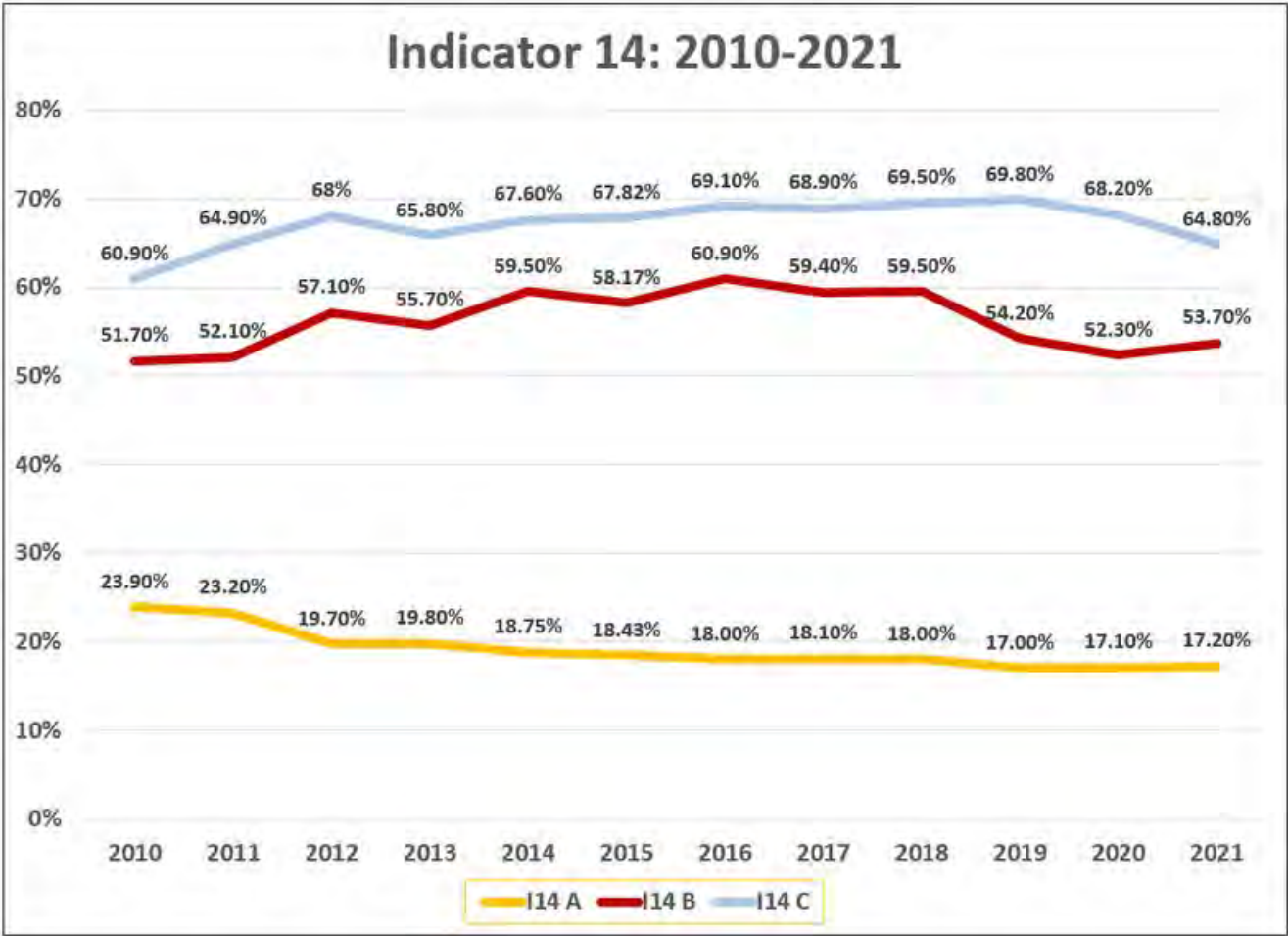
"Former students who received special education" are defined as those students who had an IEP in place at the time of exit and exited school one year previous with a standard diploma, a certificate of attainment, or alternate diploma, or by dropping out or aging out.

The 2021 YOYO data, based on 2,536 respondents, shows a rate of 17.2% for Indicator 14A, 53.7% for 14B, and 64.8% for 14C. Figure 1 shows how Indicator 14 data have changed since 2010.



Indicator 14

Figure 1



Indicator 14

Indicator 14A, which solely represents higher education, has seen a slow but steady decrease over time. However, the last two years have seen a very slight increase. Indicator 14B, which includes both higher education and competitive employment, has seen a decline over the last several years, with the largest drop (5 percentage points) in 2019, but interestingly there was a slight increase during the pandemic (2021 data). This decline in Indicator 14B was expected partly due to added requirements to the definition of competitive, integrated employment beginning with the 2019 YOYO and the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020. Anecdotal responses from students in 2020 from various comment sections of the instrument indicated that the Covid-19 pandemic had contributed to the drop. Although students interviewed in 2021 were in the midst of the pandemic their entire first year out of high school, the percentage increased slightly. In addition to higher education and competitive employment, Indicator 14C includes the percent of former students with IEPs who go on to noncompetitive employment and/or post-secondary education that is not a two or four-year college or university. This category has seen the largest drop (~4%) during the pandemic.

Over the last five years, the percentage of former students who reported being unengaged in any post-school outcome related to education or employment had remained constant at about 30%, however, last year had seen a slight increase to 31.8% and then this year up to 35.2%, which is equivalent (~4%) to the drop in indicator 14C.

KYPSO believes it is important to examine the intersection of education and employment, two important dimensions of post-school success. The chart below (Table 2) shows how education and employment outcomes intersect. As stated earlier, 17.2% of former students went on to higher education. In addition, many of these students were either employed competitively (167) or non-competitively (72) while enrolled in higher education, indicating that over half of former students who went on to higher



Indicator 14

education were also employed in some manner. Alternatively, we can see that a large majority of competitively employed students are not in any school or training program.

The implications for this are clear: if a young person is planning to further their education after leaving high school, instructional personnel should bear in mind that they will likely have a job in some capacity as well. For those with employment as their primary post-school goal, it is more likely that they will not pursue additional education after high school.

Table 2

KENTUCKY (2021)	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	No Employment	<i>Education Totals</i>
Higher Education	167 (6.6%)	72 (2.8%)	196 (7.7%)	<i>435 (17.2%)</i>
Other Education	56 (2.2%)	12 (0.5%)	30 (1.2%)	<i>98 (3.9%)</i>
No Post- Secondary Education	872 (34.4%)	238 (9.4%)	893 (35.2%)	<i>2,003 (79.0%)</i>
<i>Employment Totals</i>	<i>1,095 (43.2%)</i>	<i>322 (12.7%)</i>	<i>1,119 (44.1%)</i>	<i>2,536 (100.0%)</i>



Disaggregated Outcomes

Whenever possible KYP SO aggregates findings by demographics of interest. The following table (Table 3) considers five non-mutually exclusive outcomes: higher education, other education, competitive employment, other employment, and non-engagement based on the demographics of gender, race/ethnicity, disability category, and manner of exit from high school.

Disaggregated Outcomes by Gender

A respondent can, and often does, get counted in both an educational and employment outcome. When examining outcomes by gender we see that females fare about 9% better than males in terms of educational outcomes (this gap has increased by 3 percentage points after a decline over the last 2 years) while males fare about 7.2% better in terms of employment outcomes (this gap has decreased by 2 percentage points from last year). The differences in the percentage of males and females likely to not be engaged one year after exiting high school have seen a decrease of 4.3 percentage points from the last two years. We can tell from our data that there was an increase in the percentage of females who went on to higher education and competitive employment this year over the last two years. In contrast, males maintained approximately the same percentages across the three years. Even with these increases, females are less likely to be competitively employed than males. It is unclear whether these differences in employment outcomes, both the increases for females this year and the continued lag in employment for females compared to males, are related to employment expectations and preparation based on gender, the career clusters offered, or other factors. Over two-thirds of the former students in our population are male.



Disaggregated Outcomes

Disaggregated Outcomes by Ethnicity

Black students continue to fare better in terms of competitive employment and higher education enrollment than white students. This trend has been consistent in our data over the years. African American students were also more likely to be non-competitively employed than were white students. However, this year, this data has flipped, and white students have the highest other employment rates by more than 7 percentage points. Hispanic students have had far better competitive employment outcomes across the years compared to African American and white students. However, this year, Hispanic students have the second-highest percentage in competitive employment, 48.3%, 1 percentage point behind African Americans. Last year saw a comeback of higher education outcomes, up by more than half from the previous year to 15.3%, but those percentages have dropped to 12.1% this year. KYPSO cannot identify the reason for this rise and fall in higher education but believes it is worthy of attention.

Higher education rates for African American students exiting high school in Kentucky with IEPs have exceeded those of white and Hispanic students since the YOYO first began. KYPSO staff have attempted to isolate the cause for this and have not yet been able to do so. One potential hypothesis is that African American students are over-identified for special education and thus have outcomes more representative of students without IEPs. However, our attempts to analyze this have not shown a correlation between identification rates at the district level and outcomes. Further, the phenomenon seems to be specific to higher education as employment levels have historically been very similar across the groups.

Although an analysis of outcomes for students identified as two or more races has not been included in this report in the past due to low numbers, an analysis is included this



Disaggregated Outcomes

year as a result of an increase in representation. This group of students had the highest competitive employment rate at 60.8% this year. Higher education was equivalent to white students at 16.2%.

Non-engagement rates for white students are the highest (37.1%) while rates for African American and Hispanic students are 29.5% and 26.7% respectively. Students identified as two or more races had the lowest unengaged rate at 24.3%.

Disaggregated Outcomes by Disability

Differences in outcomes based on a former student's primary disability classification are striking. Due to student population size, we have included the six largest disability categories in Table 3 below, as other disability categories had too few respondents to make meaningful inferences about their outcomes for this report.

Students with Specific Learning Disabilities and Other Health Impairments fare relatively well in terms of higher education (21%) and competitive employment (59.4% and 51.5%, respectively) and have the lowest percentage of non-engagement (15.6 and 27.7%, respectively).

Students identified as having a Functional Mental Disability (FMD) have continuously fared very poorly in higher education and competitive employment. These students are more likely to engage in "other employment," which is often based in a segregated setting or "other education." The biggest area of concern for students in this disability category is that they consistently report that they are not engaged in any educational or employment outcomes at the highest rates. This has been steadily rising, from two-thirds reporting not to be engaged in 2016 up to 87.9% this year. This is a 12-point jump



Disaggregated Outcomes

from the last three years, which had held steady at around 75%. This increase may be related to the pandemic itself and the increased risk of pursuing work for students considered medically fragile. In terms of higher education, persons with autism have the best outcomes, equal to those students with specific learning disabilities and far above other students in the low incidence categories. For all other disability categories, rates for higher education are much lower than those for competitive employment. Still, for autistic students, higher education rates exceed those of employment, which typically average in the low teens. Surprisingly, employment rates for students with autism increased to 21% this year, up by 7 percentage points from last year. However, there is not enough data yet to know if this indicates more opportunity and acceptance of autistic workers or a result of Covid-19 and the demand for 'essential' employees in minimum wage jobs (grocery, take-out food services, etc.). KYP SO will watch future data to determine if this is the start of a trend.

When the data are further disaggregated for autistic students based on high school exit, those who exit high school with a regular diploma have much higher rates of competitive employment (27%) and attendance in higher education (27%) and lower rates of non-engagement (42%) than students who exit high school with an alternate diploma or age out. 83.1% of students in this subset are not engaged, which is up almost 15 percentage points from last year. This high percentage of unengaged students may reflect the presence or absence of certain indicators of post-school success, such as inclusion in general education, high expectations, paid work experience, or self-determination. The increase this year may also have been impacted by Covid-19, as reported by just over 15% of these students, which correlates to the increase in unengaged students.

It may also reflect an important disparity in how students on the regular vs. alternative diploma track are being prepared for life after high school. Access to additional data



Disaggregated Outcomes

(e.g., LRE, pre-ETS, review of IEPs, etc.) would allow KYP SO to probe more deeply into these factors, their distribution, and their relative impact.

Persons classified as having multiple disabilities report a high un-engagement rate at 72.4%, with only 10.5% reporting competitive employment and half that, 5.3%, attending higher education. When these outcomes were further disaggregated by the manner of high school exit, it was revealed that all students with multiple disabilities who were competitively employed and/or went on to higher education graduated with a regular diploma.

Disaggregated Outcomes by Manner of High School Exit

Manner of exit is the final way in which KYP SO disaggregates outcomes. Because students who exited by aging out or receiving an alternate diploma are indistinguishable based on the way districts collect data, we combine them into a single category. It is reasonable to assume that all members of this group are on the alternate diploma track. Those who graduated with a regular diploma have the best outcomes. No students who exited high school by dropping out in the 2019-2020 school year enrolled in higher education. However, students who drop out have considerably higher competitive employment rates (30%) than those who exited from the alternate diploma track (5.7%). Eight out of ten students on the alternate diploma track are unengaged a year after exiting high school. These trends have remained consistent for several years, indicating a need for data-informed program improvements.



Disaggregated Outcomes

Table 3

Outcome	Higher Ed	Other Ed	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Not Engaged	Totals
<i>Gender</i>						
Male	14.2%	4.4%	45.5%	12.8%	33.8%	1,714
Female	23.2%	2.7%	38.3%	12.5%	38.1%	822
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>						
White	16.8%	3.9%	41.2%	13.2%	37.1%	1,983
African American/Black	20.4%	2.8%	49.3%	9.9%	29.5%	353
Hispanic and/or Latino	12.1%	4.3%	48.3%	14.7%	26.7%	116
<i>Disability Category</i>						
Autism	20.8%	4.2%	21.6%	9.3%	51.7%	259
EBD	10.6%	3.9%	43.6%	9.5%	38.5%	179
FMD	0.0%	1.4%	5.0%	5.7%	87.9%	141
MMD	8.6%	1.5%	39.1%	14.0%	42.3%	463
Multiple Disability	5.3%	5.3%	10.5%	9.2%	72.4%	76
OHI	20.1%	4.0%	51.5%	12.1%	27.7%	602
SLD	21.0%	5.6%	59.4%	17.1%	15.6%	692
<i>Manner of Exit</i>						
Regular Diploma	19.7%	3.8%	48.0%	13.2%	28.9%	2,202
Alternative Diploma	0.8%	3.8%	5.7%	6.9%	84.7%	261
Dropped Out	0.0%	6.8%	30.1%	17.8%	47.9%	73



Follow-Up Questions

One of the strengths of the YOYO is that it allows us to probe deeper into a young person's outcomes. We do this by asking a series of follow-up questions to learn more about one's high school experiences, employment outcomes, post-secondary education, and community living. We will examine the follow-up questions in greater depth. Note that the sample size for each question varies (see Table 4).

Table 4

Response Rate of Text Questions in YOYO 2021.		
Category	Question	Number of Potential Responses
High School Experiences	What are the reasons you left high school without graduating?	314
	What might have helped you stay in school?	314
	Please name the most important thing during high school that helped you in your life right now (e.g., high school programs, classes, agencies).	2536
Employment/ Unemployment	What is the main reason that you are not working, or not working more hours?	1,897
	If "yes," please describe the type of help you are getting (from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation)?	291
Postsecondary Education	If you faced any problems in your post-secondary school/training program, please let us know what they were.	651
	What would you say is the main reason you did not go on to post-secondary education?	1,885
Community Living	Where did you live for most of last year?	2,536
	Do you have a driver's license?	2,536
	Are you registered to vote?	2,536
	How do you spend your time (if not working, attending PSE)?	893
Additional Comments	Is there anything else you would like to add about how things have been going for you since you left school?	2,536

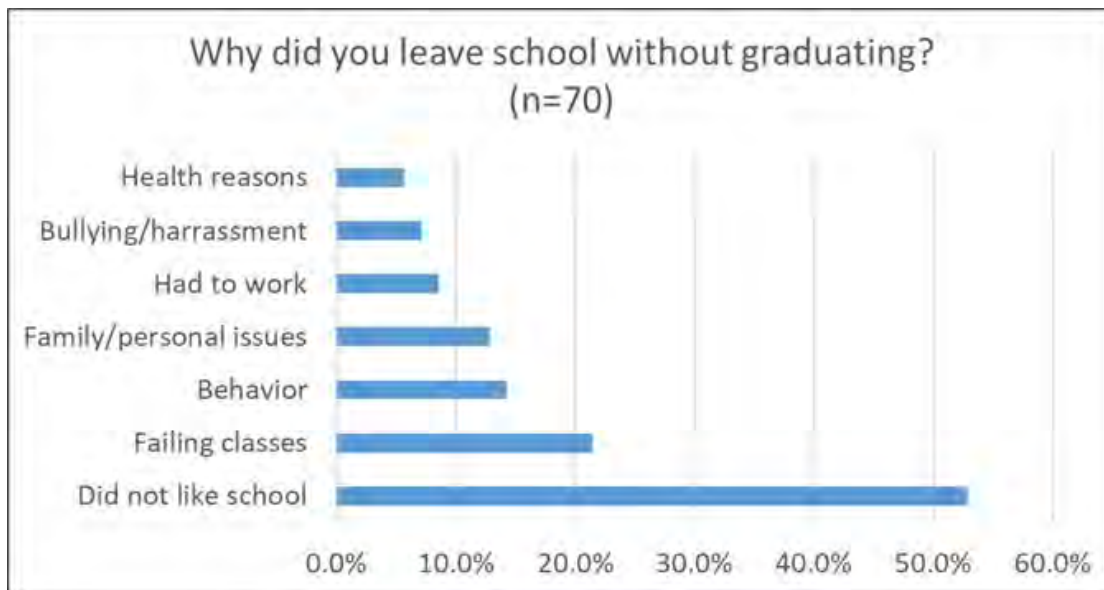


Follow-Up Questions

High School Experience

7% of KY students who exited with an IEP, did so by dropping out of high school (314/4,385) in the 2019-2020 school year. This was down 3 percentage points from the previous year. 73 of the 314 students responded to the survey. We asked them to share why they left high school without graduating. The reasons varied among the 70 respondents; if a respondent provided multiple reasons, all reasons were recorded and counted. Just over half of the respondents indicated that their reason for dropping out was simply that they did not like school, which is consistent with the last several years. One-fifth reported that they were failing their classes; approximately 15% reported that their behavior contributed to dropping out, with half of the respondents specifically mentioning legal issues. Personal or family reasons (12%) included pregnancy, childcare issues, or lack of support. Other responses included the need to work (8%), bullying (6.8%), and health issues (5.4%). The top reasons for leaving high school without graduating are depicted in the figure below (Figure 2):

Figure 2



Follow-Up Questions

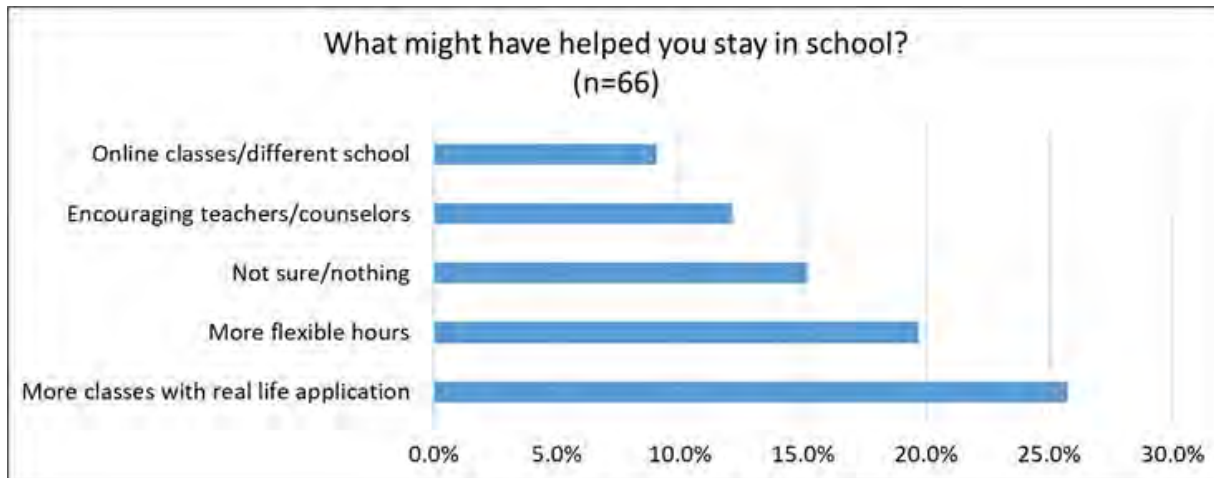
The design of the YOYO allows respondents the ability to provide answers which vary in their degree of specificity, but also clarification for answers that may be too general to be prescriptive. While some reasons for dropping out, such as bullying, may help programs easily identify solutions (i.e., a prevention strategy for 'bullying' may be a bully prevention program), other reasons provided, such as the often-cited reason of "not liking school", does not offer such an apparent remedy. To provide information that may help instructional programs identify strategies to reduce future dropout rates, we asked these former students more specifically, "What might have helped you stay in school?". Of the 66 students who responded to this question, over one-quarter stated more relevant/real-life classes. A suggestion for further research would involve more detailed analyses regarding participation by students who dropped out in vocational classes, pre-ETS, and/or CTE courses. One-fifth of the students indicated that more flexible hours and scheduling, including distance learning, might have helped them stay in school.

Other responses for what might have helped included more encouraging teachers and counselors, and nothing or don't know. The top five responses for what might have helped keep the student in school are depicted in Figure 3. Responses this year were less varied and primarily included don't know or don't like school. Covid-19 may have caused people to feel helpless, impacting their ability to identify helpful solutions during a pandemic.



Follow-Up Questions

Figure 3



Employment and Unemployment

According to the federal definition for employment, a person could be considered employed (either competitively or other) if they have worked for at least 90 days since leaving high school, even if they were not currently employed at the time of the interview. Of the 1,617 respondents who indicated that they had a paying job since leaving high school, just over 88% (1,417) met the federal definition for employment, and of those, 1,231 were still employed. These findings indicate that among all former students in our sample, 56% had been employed for at least 90 days at some point in the year after high school and 49% were still working at the time of the interview. These rates are consistent with last year.

Of the students who met the federal definition for employment, we asked additional questions about the number of hours worked and minimum wage, to determine whether the student fit the definition of competitive, integrated employment, or other employment (Figure 4).

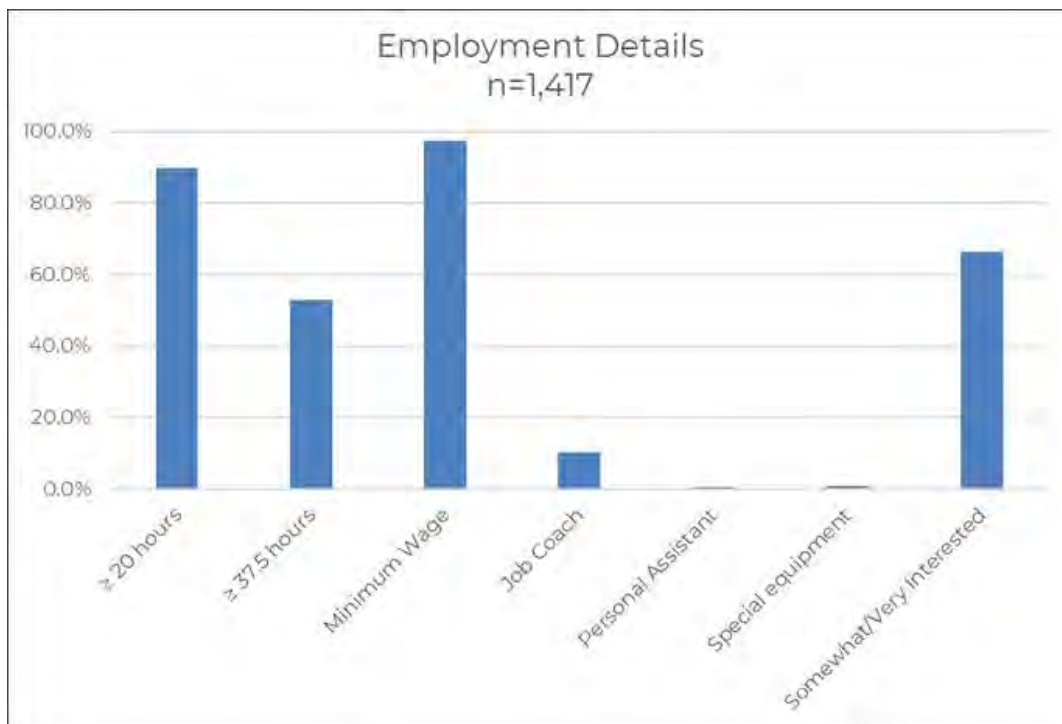


Follow-Up Questions

For a young person with a disability, finding and maintaining a job can be dependent upon employment supports. We asked respondents who indicated that they had been employed (1,417) since leaving high school whether they received any of the following supports/accommodations at their job: job coach, personal assistant, special equipment, or other accommodations. 10% of the respondents who had been employed indicated that they had used a job coach, which is down more than one-third from last year. Very few ($\leq 1\%$) indicated the use of a personal assistant or special equipment.

We also asked respondents who had been employed how interesting they found their job. 66% indicated that they found it very or somewhat interesting, while only 9% indicated that they found it not very interesting or not interesting at all.

Figure 4



Follow-Up Questions

Students who reported that they were not employed, had not been employed for at least 90 days since exiting high school or worked less than full time were asked an additional question, “What is the main reason you are not working or not working more hours?” (Figure 5). Of the 1,679 responses, 19.5% (n=328) chose not to work or not to work more hours because they were going to a university or college. 16.1% reported that their work time was limited by the position they were hired for (summer job, part-time job, on-call job, etc.). Another 9.9% of respondents were not working because they could not find a job, had just lost a job, or were in the process of job hunting. 16% of students who did not work indicated they were negatively impacted by their health, with one quarter reporting the severity of their disability as the reason. In addition, 3.9% of the respondents reported limiting their work time to receive disability benefits. Other respondents mentioned reasons including lack of motivation/readiness, limited resources such as transportation, volunteering without payment, incarceration, and being self-employed.

It is worth noting that 242 respondents reported the impact of Covid-19 on their employment conditions (Figure 6). Among those students, more than half were laid off or lost their jobs, 10% could not find any positions, 8% reduced their working hours, and Covid-19 negatively impacted another 25% in other ways (e.g., waiting, fear/anxiety, could not access services).



Follow-Up Questions

Figure 5

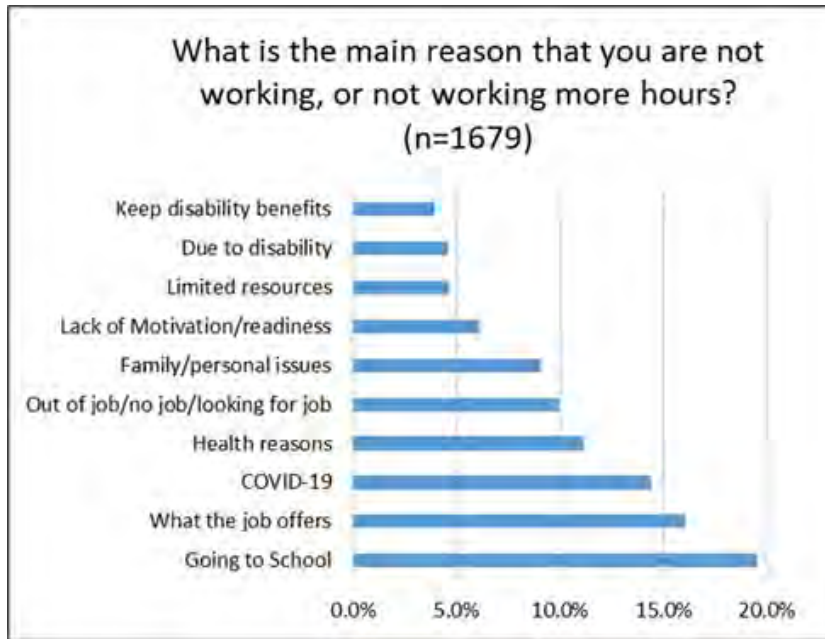
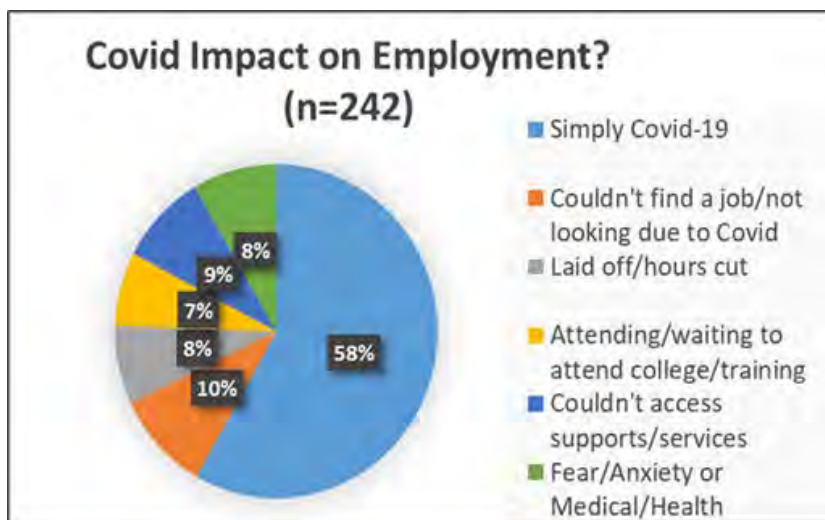


Figure 6



Follow-Up Questions

KYPSO also asked whether respondents had contact with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) since leaving high school. Of the 291 respondents who indicated they had contact with OVR, 268 described the kind of help they received (Figure 7). Almost 25% reported receiving help with further education including enrollment, tuition, books and supplies, and accommodations such as contact with student support services and tutoring.

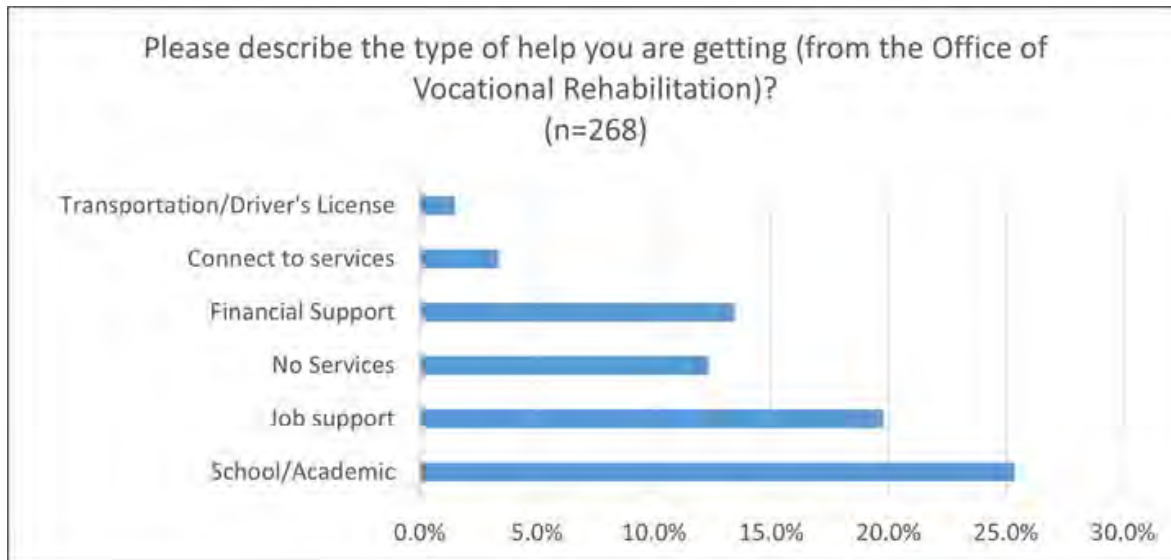
Based on student responses OVR supports for further education had more than doubled last year from the previous year. However, the numbers have dropped 13 percentage points this year, back to pre-Covid-19 levels. During the same period, students reported that supports for employment went down from 40% to 27% last year and are down even more (19.8%) this year. Approximately one in four students reported receiving help from OVR for such services as finding a job, job coaching, and supported employment. Other OVR supports included connecting students to other services such as day programs, helping students get a driver's license, and offering transportation assistance. About 12% of students reported having not obtained any services after contacting OVR, which has been rising for the last two years. Of the students, some did not qualify for services, some decided not to pursue those services, and just over 4% reported having not heard back from OVR since the initial contact. 25% of students who reported they were not receiving services at the time of the interview stated Covid-19 as the impacting factor.

It is unclear why most students did not ask for help from OVR. It might be that students and families do not realize the services offered by OVR. More education and communication about the services provided by OVR with students, parents, and teachers may help improve the utilization of those services.



Follow-Up Questions

Figure 7



Post-Secondary Education

Of the 651 respondents who indicated that they had gone on to some form of post-secondary education, we asked what type of school or training program they had enrolled in (Figure 8). The highest number, 290 (45%), indicated that they had enrolled in a two-year college, 32% indicated a four-year college, 10% indicated enrollment in a vocational school, 8% indicated that they were enrolled in some type of short-term program, while 2% indicated that they were pursuing some form of adult education or GED. We also asked what degree they expected to get when they finished school. 37% indicated a bachelor's degree, and 29% indicated that they were pursuing an associate degree. 16% indicated that they were in a certificate program, while 10% indicated that they were not seeking degree credit, including those who were auditing classes. Of the 651 respondents who went on to some type of further education, 533 (82%) completed an entire term or semester, and less than half contacted disability services.

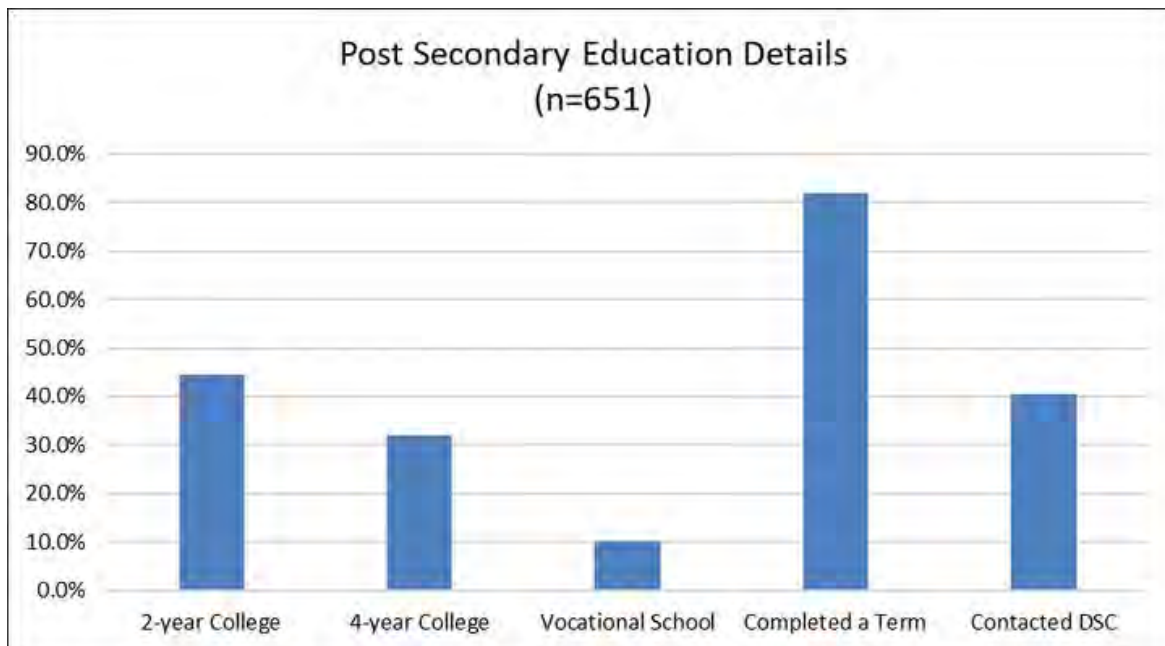


Follow-Up Questions

Figure 6

While the overall number of students who reported to have gone on to further education and completed an entire semester is down almost 20% from last year, the percentage of students reporting that they were pursuing a bachelor's degree is up 10 percentage points and the number of students seeking a certificate and those not pursuing a degree is down by almost the same rate.

Figure 8



To better understand the experiences of students who were attending post-secondary education, we asked the following additional questions:

- If you faced any problems in your post-secondary school/training program, please let us know what they were.
- Have you ever contacted the Disability Service Coordinator (DSC) at your post-secondary school or training program?
- Do you live with your family while you go to school?



Follow-Up Questions

When asked, “If you faced any problems in your post-secondary school/training program, please let us know what they were”, 46.4% of respondents (n=398) reported that they did not experience any problems. This number is down more than 10 percentage points from last year. The top five challenges reported in post-secondary school/training programs were struggles with academics and virtual classes, the impact of Covid-19, transportation, lack of supports and accommodations, and time management (Figure 9). Academic struggles included difficulty with class schedules including virtual classes, coursework, and choosing a major. Virtual classes were also mentioned in relation to Covid-19 and time management. Other challenges impacted by Covid-19 included the cancelation of courses and hybrid classes. Comments related to supports and accommodations included not being provided supports by instructors even though it was in their IEP. This may indicate that students did not understand the differences in the provision of support services between high school and college. Additional difficulties reported included adjusting to college life (e.g., lack of social support, work-school balance, and health and medical issues, including general feelings of stress).

Figure 9



Follow-Up Questions

Many of the difficulties reported by students (i.e., academic struggles, lack of supports and accommodations) may have been mitigated by supports from Disability Services Coordinators. Yet, less than half (40%) of those who went on to post-secondary education contacted their Disability Services Coordinator. This is down 5 percentage points from last year.

We recognize that some students may not be comfortable disclosing their disability or may feel liberated by not disclosing their disability to their college or university. However, it is important for students to realize that services and accommodations are not available when they choose not to disclose. This is an impacting factor educators should be aware of. It is also important to note that students taught about the importance of disclosing their disability and how to access student support services stated during the interview that it was one of the most beneficial learning experiences in high school.

We also asked where young people who enrolled in post-secondary education lived while classes were in session. 72% indicated that they lived with their family. This has increased slightly from the past several years. Therefore, while it is tempting to believe that “going to college” involves a residential experience whereby young persons may learn valuable social skills (e.g., independent living in a relatively safe environment), educators should be aware that for most of this population, their residence is likely the same as it was while they were in high school.

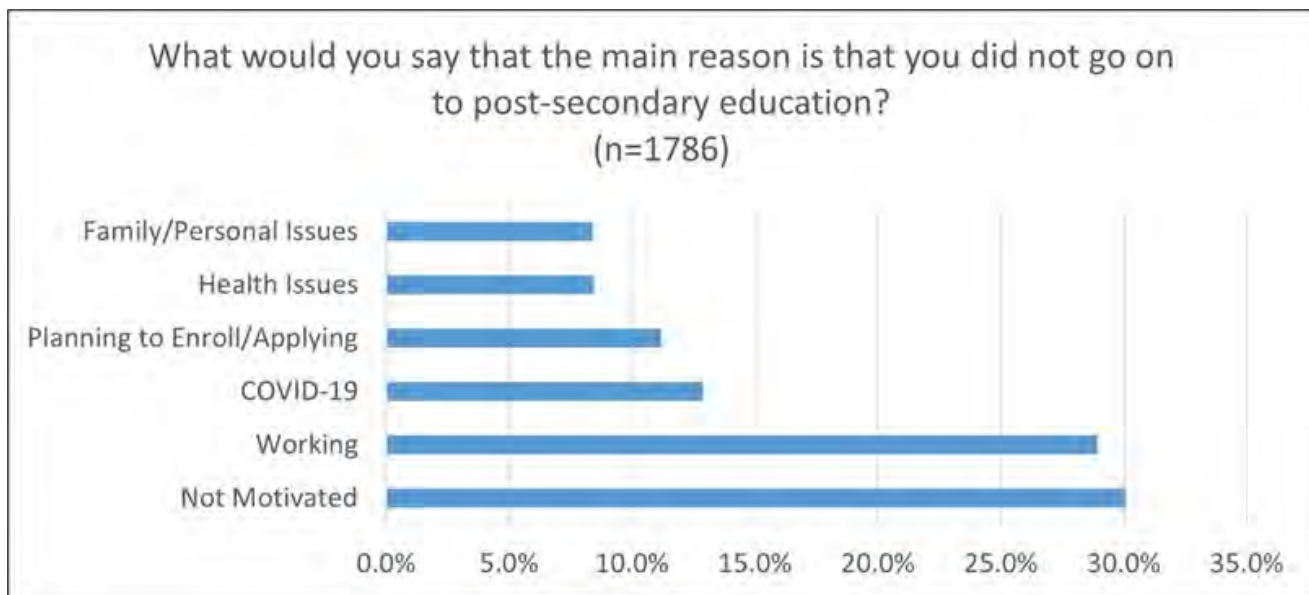
For students who did not go on to post-secondary education, we followed up by asking the reasons for not continuing their education (Figure 10). Among 1,786 respondents who answered this question, approximately 30% of the students chose to directly enter the workforce, and another 30% did not want to go to school. Many students reported



Follow-Up Questions

that school was not for them, they did not like school, and they did not have a good experience with school. 13% of the respondents indicated they did not pursue further education because of Covid-19 due to such things as school closure, online classes, and worrying about catching Covid-19. However, 11% of the students expressed a desire to attend school and were waiting until after the pandemic and were in the process of applying and/or enrolling. Other reasons keeping students from attending higher education included health conditions (behavioral and medical issues), family or personal issues (e.g., taking care of family members, getting married, having children), limited resources (e.g., lack of transportation and financial support), lack of qualifications (e.g., did not graduate, failed entrance exam), feeling they lacked qualifications (not smart enough, needed assistance, the severity of disability), and working on their GED.

Figure 10



Follow-Up Questions

As stated above, some students reported that they were not qualified to go to college because of their disability or believed they were not smart enough. Some students reported that their parent or guardian did not want them to go to school.

One predictor of positive post-school outcomes is parent and teacher expectations. This is an area where schools and districts can work with parents by addressing the barriers and fears associated with student safety and success after high school. Parents may need to be informed of the availability of accommodations, support services, and the importance of including their child in the larger community to become independent and productive members of that community. To ensure students are prepared for the transition to higher education, as with employment, more instruction and practice utilizing self-determination and self-advocacy skills paired with structured career planning may be needed throughout the high school years, to increase enrollment in post-secondary education and make it a successful experience. Additionally, mentorship and encouragement from teachers and counselors during high school may improve self-efficacy and increase young people's interest in pursuing higher education.

Community Participation

The format of the YOYO allows us to gather details on community participation that, along with employment and post-secondary education, gives us a broader picture of students' post-school outcomes. Two items relevant to community participation addressed in the YOYO are whether a young person has a driver's license and is registered to vote.

Just under half (48%) of respondents indicated that they had a driver's license.



Follow-Up Questions

Although the national trend for young persons with driver's licenses has been dropping for years and the rate of our respondents (students with an IEP) has consistently been below the overall (students with and without disabilities) national average, that gap is getting smaller. The percentage of respondents with driver's licenses has remained consistent for the past two years, while the national average for students aged 18, with and without disabilities, has dropped from 62.1% in 2016 (FHWA, 2017) to 58% in 2018 (FHWA, 2020).

Respondents to the YOYO indicated that they are slightly less likely to be registered to vote than the general population. 59% of respondents indicated that they were registered to vote, while Kentucky's general population of 18-24-year-olds reported a 61% registration rate (US Census Bureau, 2021). Registration among the general population of 18-24 year-olds in KY and those who responded to the YOYO survey is higher than the national average (55.8%) for 18-24 year-olds. A larger percentage of students in KY who exit HS with an IEP in place may be less engaged in post-school education and employment than their non-disabled counterparts, but our data suggest that they are not less engaged in this form of civic participation.

Another question asked in the YOYO regarding community participation is where students have lived for most of the past year. The vast majority (81%) indicated that they live with their family, 5% indicated that they live with a spouse or partner, 4% indicated that they live with friends, while another 4% indicated that they live alone. 5% indicated that they lived most of the previous year in a college dormitory or military housing. Roughly 1% indicated that they lived in a foster/group home or a shelter/correctional facility. These percentages have remained consistent over the last several years.



Follow-Up Questions

Benefits of High School

To gather more information about the benefits of high school, students were asked to “Name the most important thing during high school that helped you in your life right now” (Figure 11). 2,098 respondents answered this question with a response rate of 82.7%. Many students (41.5%) reported that the support and encouragement they received from teachers and other staff (e.g., coaches, guidance counselors, speech therapists, principals) were most helpful, as well as support from friends (4.7%) and family members (1.5%). Some students specifically indicated that they benefited from educational supports (16.4%), such as extra time for testing, one-on-one instruction, small classes, and hands-on learning. Others stated that they liked the benefits of the social aspect of high school, including support from friends, social interactions, and involvement in extracurricular activities, as well as earning their high school diploma or alternative diploma.

One-fifth of the respondents (20.8%) mentioned many of the transition programs designed to prepare students for life after high school as the most important, including vocational education and training programs such as the Community Work Transition Program (CWTP), Career and Technical Education (CTE), Future Farmers of America (FFA), Job’s for Kentucky’s Graduates (JAG), United Parcel Service (UPS), job exploration, job coaches/employment specialists, and paid work experience, as well as military development programs such as Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) and ROTC.

About 16.3% of students reported that the academic courses in high school not only prepared them for their pursuit of further education but also offered basic math, science, and computer skills used in daily life.

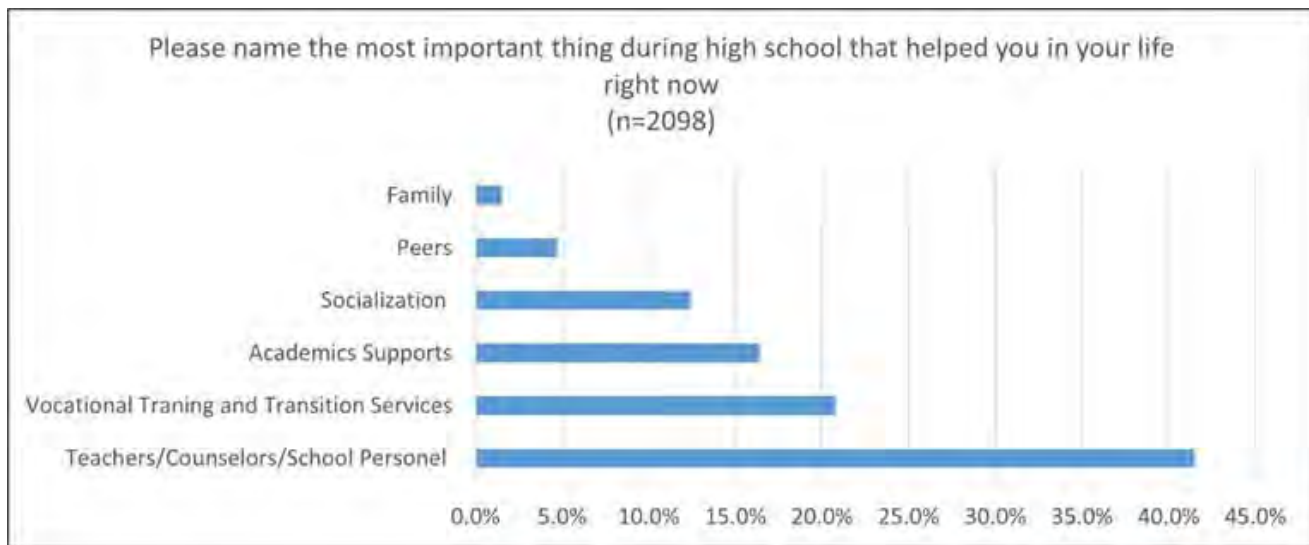


Follow-Up Questions

It is interesting to note that 18.4% of students who exited high school with an alternate diploma or aging out mentioned transition activities as the most beneficial. These activities related specifically to CWTP, job coach, and job exploration. A few students identified vocational programs and career and technical education as the most beneficial, which had not been reported in past YOYOs.

KYPSO is interested not just in documenting the frequency with which students with IEPs take CTE courses, but with the impact that doing so has on their post-school outcomes. More information regarding CTE and students with disabilities can be found on page 35.

Figure 11



Follow-Up Questions

Students who had not been employed or enrolled in further education since high school were asked how they spent their time. Of these students, the majority (81%) indicated that they spend their time simply “at home”, and half of the students who noted spending their time at home indicated that they help with family chores or caring for family members. Since students could give multiple answers, just over half of the respondents reported spending time on hobbies, including community organizations and church groups. Others reported spending time at appointments (17%) and working without pay outside the home (5%). These percentages have remained fairly consistent over the last several years.

Part of the YOYO involves the interviewer having the opportunity to share information with the respondent. We asked interviewers to note at the end of the interview what information they shared with the interviewees. Information about Vocational Rehabilitation was shared with 44% of the participants, almost double that from last year. This is encouraging because contact with OVR may help transitioning students get the supports that they may be lacking. It indicates that school systems may be more familiar with OVR services and contacts and that their personnel are invested in their former students with disabilities. Contact information for a regional Special Education Transition Consultant was shared with 20% of the participants, which KYPSO recommends as the “go-to” resource when an interviewer is unsure where to direct a respondent.

The information provided about higher education and employment was similar to last year, 15.3% for higher education and 13.8% for employment. Information was also provided about the Michelle P. Waiver and Medicare/Medicaid at a much smaller rate (3.1%). Interviewers voluntarily shared their own information as a resource with 32.4% of the respondents. This is consistent with last year, which had more than tripled from



Follow-Up Questions

previous years, possibly indicating that YOYO interviewers feel more knowledgeable about the types of resources available and more confident in their ability to share those resources. Directors of Special Education (DOSE's) may also be identifying interviewers who are knowledgeable in these areas and personally invested in the outcomes of their former students.

Additional Comments

When asked, "Is there anything else you would like to add about how things have been going for you since you left school?" respondents provided additional insight into the transition experience of youth with disabilities. Several quotes are presented on the next page (Page 34).



Follow-Up Questions

Support from teachers. I didn't realize how much teachers have supported me through the years until I got to college and had some who don't support me.

The parent said the information available to her for post secondary options was the most helpful (sic.)

I did not contact the Disabilities Office at first, but they helped me once I contacted them.

I moved around a lot and I didn't like school or my teachers.

Mrs. ____ let us ask questions about life after high school and taught me about how to manage my finances and living with roommates. She also taught me about how to have good credit. I wished I would have learned more about finances.

Being in high school with my friends and being able to make memories helped me to get through the four years and be able to graduate.



CTE Data and Students with Disabilities

Due to increased levels of collaboration with staff in the Division of Career and Technical Education (CTE), KYPSO was able to align CTE coursework with post-school outcomes. To do so, we examined four categories of involvement that CTE routinely uses to designate each student’s level of CTE training. We assigned a value of “1” to those students considered “explorers” (typically taking one CTE class during high school). A value of “2” was assigned to “concentrators” meaning students who have taken multiple CTE courses within a particular career cluster. A value of “3” indicates a “completer” meaning a student completed all CTE courses needed in a career cluster. We also assigned a value of “0” to those students who took no CTE classes during high school.

Our results are included in Table 5. The mean level of CTE involvement for students with IEPs was 1.7, indicating somewhere between an explorer and a concentrator. However, large discrepancies exist between disability groups both in the level of CTE involvement and in its benefit.

Table 5

Disability	CTE Level (0-4)	% Taking None	Correlation to Competitive Employment	Correlation to Higher Education	N
Autism	1.4	29%	.15*	.16*	259
EBD	1.3	29%	0.03	.16*	179
FMD	0.7	54%	0.13	-	141
Hearing Impairment	2	17%	-0.17	0.08	24
MMD	1.8	18%	.14**	0.08	463
Multiple Disabilities	1.1	46%	.31**	0.09	76
Orthopedic Impairment	2	23%	-0.5	.66*	13
OHI	1.8	18%	0	0.05	602
SLD	1.9	14%	0.05	.07*	692
SLI	1.8	16%	0.18	0.08	51
TBI	1.3	27%	0.37	0.37	15
Visual Impairment	1.7	24%	.57**	0.14	21
All w/ IEP	1.7	22%	.15**	.14**	2,536

**=p<.01, *=p<.05



CTE Data and Students with Disabilities

While overall the CTE mean score was 1.7, 22% of students with IEPs took no CTE classes at all during high school. Students with Functional Mental Disabilities (FMD) took the fewest on average, with only 46% taking any such classes and yielding a mean score of 0.7. At the other extreme, students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) nearly all took at least one class (86%) and had a mean score of 1.9. While smaller in population, both those with Hearing and Orthopedic Impairments scored the highest in terms of taking CTE classes with mean scores of 2.0.

KYPSO is interested not just in documenting the frequency with which students with IEPs take CTE courses but the impact that doing so has on their post-school outcomes. While there is no perfect way to measure causation, we used bivariate correlations to at least show the relationship between CTE involvement and our two primary outcomes: competitive employment and higher education. Other statistical tests may be more appropriate for data of this type, but we believe this is most useful for an easy examination of the relationship between these variables. We have also compared different types of analysis and found similar results.

Reported correlation statistics are known as Pearson's R, and can range in value from -1.0 (a perfectly negative correlation) to 1.0 (a perfectly positive correlation). Asterisks indicate the likelihood that the true value (the point estimate surrounded by its margin of error) does not contain the value of zero (or no correlation), with * indicating a 95% chance that it does not and ** indicating a 99% or greater chance that it does not. We can see positive correlations for the full sample between the level of CTE involvement and competitive employment (.15) as well as enrollment in higher education (.14). What we find most surprising is the "Multiple Disabilities" group, which has the second-lowest level of involvement in CTE courses, but among the greatest correlation to competitive employment (.31). Other groups for which this relationship is



CTE Data and Students with Disabilities

strong include those with visual impairments (.57), MMD (.14), autism, and perhaps Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). We should not overlook the impact that CTE involvement can have on advancing to higher education. As noted, there is an overall positive correlation for students with IEPs. This appears to be strongest among students with Orthopedic Impairments, as well as autism, Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD), and SLD.

While this should not be taken as definitive regarding the benefit (or lack thereof) of CTE on post-school outcomes, it does show overall that CTE training can benefit students with disabilities. It also calls attention to the fact that those who stand to benefit the most from such involvement are often not receiving this training. At present, we cannot identify the reason for this disconnect. It may simply be a function of time spent in the Least Restrictive Environment (an area that should be examined), or it may reflect expectations, scheduling conflicts, a lack of perceived value of CTE, or any combination, or something else entirely.



Conclusion

Given the number of years for which we have consistent data, we could typically speak with greater certainty about developing trends. However, the introduction of the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020 has impacted these trends. Prior to last year, the trend seemed to be that young persons are more and more likely to go on to competitive employment outcomes while they are somewhat less likely to go on to education outcomes. However, last year we saw a drop in employment outcomes and a slight rise in education outcomes, and this year employment rose about 3 percentage points to 43.2%, while post-secondary education remained consistent at 17%. Interestingly, the employment rates increased for students who exited high school at the height of the pandemic. Although KYPSO does not have information on the types of jobs obtained, it would be interesting to see if this increase is related to the demand for employees in the service industry and whether those types of jobs are more prominent in transition activities for students with disabilities vs. all students.

Disparities continue to exist in many outcomes related to gender, disability type, and exit from high school. This report highlights some of the disparities and draws some conclusions and assumptions. Students who exit high school with an alternate diploma or age out continue to have the lowest percentage of successful outcomes and the highest rates of non-engagement. These rates of non-engagement had not changed significantly over the previous four years, averaging 68%, until this year, when it increased over 11 percentage points to 84.7%. Likely, the Covid-19 pandemic impacted this increase, as 19% of this group reported that they were not working because of the pandemic. However, this still does not explain why this population of students continues to be unengaged in post-school employment and education at such high rates for over 5 years. This continues even though there has been an increased emphasis on career readiness and the availability of pre-employment transition services.



Conclusion

Of these students, approximately 40% report that they do not work because of their disability. This may suggest that parents, educators, and/or students may not be aware of employment and further education possibilities for individuals with significant disabilities, therefore lacking a vision and expectation for employment.

The data continues to suggest a need to help parents and educators form a vision of the future for their children and identify the supports and services needed to pursue that vision. Students may need more opportunities and instruction in self-determination and self-advocacy skills across the grade levels so that students with disabilities learn how to advocate for needed supports, resources, and accommodations in education, employment, and community involvement. Research consistently demonstrates that these factors can improve outcomes for students with significant disabilities. Transition programs may also want to analyze the opportunities students with low incidence disabilities have for paid work experience, as this is the number one indicator of positive post-school outcomes in employment. Much of this will need to be done collaboratively between education (special education, general education, and CTE) and vocational service providers. KYPSSO may also be able to analyze the effectiveness of many of these programs.

Access to additional data (LRE, OVR services, student in-school surveys, IEP review, etc.) alongside YOYO data would allow for a deeper analysis of student outcomes and which, if any, specific indicators of positive post-school outcomes are influencing student success and which ones are not provided to students, especially those students who are unengaged. KYPSSO is well-positioned to evaluate the relative impact of many initiatives related to post-school outcomes if data on students participating in programs can be shared.

We hope this report highlights some findings that will allow educators to make



Conclusion

informed decisions that help students succeed. KYPSO staff are available to work with districts, co-ops, and the state to identify best practices based on data.

The changes KYPSO made to its reporting system in 2017 gave educators and representatives from other agencies (as well as parents, students, and the public) greater access to data from which to make decisions. Trends and changes in data can be analyzed in relation to the implementation of services such as pre-employment transition services and/or changes in instructional programs. Statewide data, which show the intersection of education and employment outcomes, are publicly available on our website (kypso.org). These data can be disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, disability category, and manner of exit. For those administrators who have created accounts within our system and are eligible to view more granular data, we have made reports available at the district and co-op levels, including a detailed analysis of the items in this report. Districts can now also review their data across three years to see if changes are noted over time.

Our staff has worked with regional educational cooperatives and districts on how to use this reporting system, analyze the results, and make data-based decisions to improve transition programs and instruction.

Although our data are unique to the state of Kentucky, many of the best practices related to secondary transition hold true throughout the United States and elsewhere. Our national partners have praised us as being among the most innovative in terms of data collection and reporting. We rely heavily on the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) for our knowledge regarding best practices. KYPSO has led the effort to pull together a collaborative state transition planning team with an emphasis on sharing transition-related data across state agencies.



Conclusion

We have a great deal of expertise both within KYPSO and the Human Development Institute (HDI) working with schools and school systems, as well as other stakeholders, and we hope that we will continue to have opportunities to work at all levels to improve transition outcomes for students exiting high school with disabilities.

If you would like to discuss the findings presented in this report, please contact Tony LoBianco, KYPSO Project Director, at tflobil@uky.edu.

