

Annual Report

2024



Kentucky Post School Outcomes Center

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KYPSO Mission

The mission of the Kentucky Post School Outcomes Center (KYPSO) is to increase the capacity of Local Education Agencies (LEAs), teachers, parents, and adult service providers to implement exemplary transition planning and increase post-school success for students who graduated a year ago. To distinguish between individuals who are enrolled in school and those who completed the YOYO a year after graduation, we will refer to those who completed the YOYO as “exiters”. KYPSO works closely with these units as well as Special Education Regional Technical Assistance Centers (SERTACs) and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to provide data and training related to improving transition outcomes for youth with disabilities. KYPSO develops and oversees the Youth One Year Out former student interview (YOYO), which collects valuable post-school outcome data. This data includes measures of employment, post-secondary education, and training for students with disabilities one year after exiting high school. The employment data includes their experiences and the degree to which their work might be considered integrated and competitive. This data is often used for research by both KYPSO and its partners, and to inform recommendations for supports, services, and professional development aimed at improving post-school outcomes for people with disabilities.

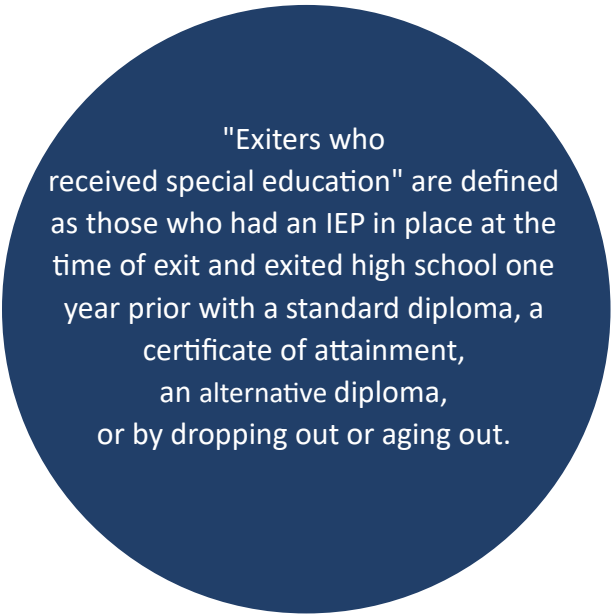
Introduction

KYPSO is KDE’s contractor for the collection of post-school outcome data for exiters 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 YOYO former student interview developed by KYPSO and administered by district-level personnel whom KYPSO 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 an exiter's personal experiences; involvement with agencies; living arrangements; and community engagement. The YOYO also asks for general feedback regarding how former exiters' high schools prepared them for adult life. Attempts were made in the spring and summer of 2024 to interview all former students who exited a public high school in Kentucky during the 2022-2023 school year with an IEP in place at the time of exit. Because the YOYO includes exiter identification numbers, KYPSO has the potential to link findings to other databases to identify malleable factors related to post-school success. These other databases include Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), pre-Employment Transition Services (pre-ETS), and Career and Technical Education (CTE) data, etc. To learn more about how KYPSO can help use YOYO data along with other databases to further investigate program effectiveness, contact Dr. Tony Lobianco, KYPSO’s Principal Investigator and Project Director at tflobi1@uky.edu.



Indicator 14

The number of students who exited high school in the 2022-2023 school year with an IEP in place at the



time of exit was 4,904. Of these, 3,015 responded to the 2024 YOYO survey, yielding a response rate of 61.5%. This rate represents a 4.5% decrease in respondents from 2023, yet remains on the higher side of response rates for the YOYO. Previous administrations of the YOYO have had response rates between 55.2% and 66%. Response rates in this range are acceptable for a telephone interview given to young adults, and our rates are favorable compared to other states.

As a result of interviewer reports that the leading cause of not being able to conduct an interview was the inability to contact former students, KYP SO worked with KDE, the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council (KITC), and school districts to

identify strategies for collecting more accurate and up-to-date contact information for exiting students. Each LEA is now encouraged to have students complete a new contact information card at the time of exit and use social media to announce the start of the survey. Frequent contact by KDE staff with district leaders regarding the importance of the YOYO has also been identified as an effective means of improving response rates. KYP SO tracks the representativeness of the YOYO by comparing the demographics of our target population (all eligible former exiters) to that of respondents. It is important to recognize when a population is under- or over-represented, as this can inform how one interprets data. The table below (Table 1) displays how close these two groups are proportionally for several important subpopulations. Respondents were representative (within three percentage points) of all the populations targeted, in terms of gender and disability category. African American exiters and students that exited by dropping out of high school were under-represented.



Table 1- Response Rates by Subgroups

Kentucky YOYO 2024	Target Group	Respondents	Difference from Target
Female	32.8%	32.9%	0.1%
African American	14.9%	11.1%	-3.8%*
Dropped Out	9.5%	4.3%	-5.1%*
Mild Mental Disability	16.2%	16.4%	0.2%
Functional Mental Disability	4.4%	5.0%	0.6%
Emotional Behavioral Disability	8.4%	6.3%	-2.1%
Specific Learning Disability	28.0%	28.0%	0.0%

One asterisk (*) = 3% different from target group.

When data is representative of the population, it is possible to extrapolate information about the population in general. When the difference between the target group and respondents is more than 3%, the data is less representative of the target group, and we have marked this in Table 1 with one (*) asterisk. It is important to note that the demographic representation of the YOYO respondents is, in most cases, reflective of the target exiter population of Kentucky. The data in this report related to African Americans and exiters who dropped out might be better or worse than it really is. The objective of disaggregating data is to identify trends and determine any potential inequities related to post-school outcomes.

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:


Indicator 14

Post-school outcomes are reported to the Federal Government one year post-graduation.

1 year


14a

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




14b

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



14c

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.



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).



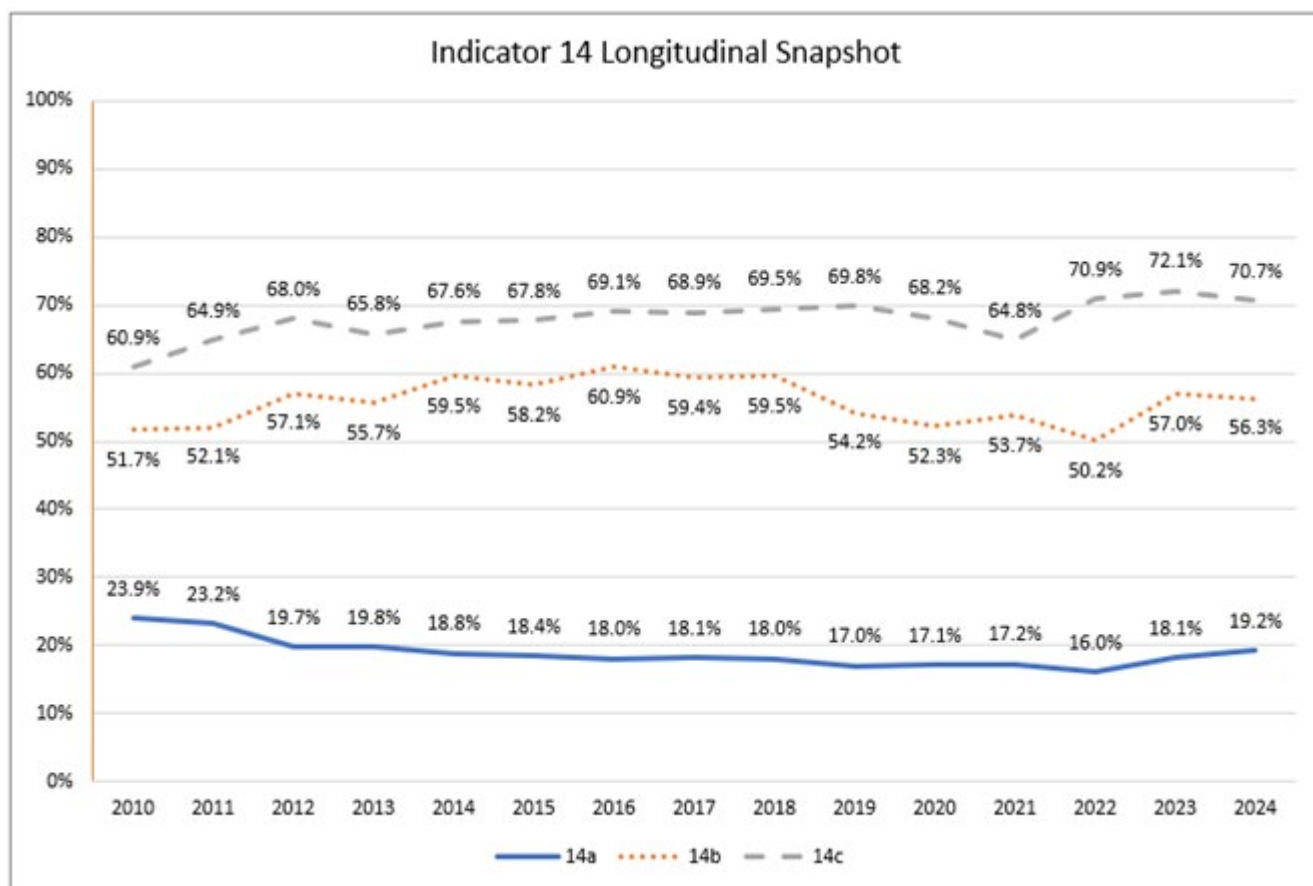
Indicator 14 Definitions

- 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.
- 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).
- d) *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; otherwise known as “sheltered workshops”.

The 2024 YOYO data, based on all 3,015 respondents, shows a rate of 19.2% for Indicator 14a, 56.3% for 14b, and 70.7% for 14c. Figure 1 shows how Indicator 14 data have changed since 2010.



Figure 1 - Indicator 14 Longitudinal Snapshot



Indicator 14b, which includes both higher education and competitive employment, has a less than 1% decrease from 2023 and remains at 56.3%. It is important to note that the decline in Indicator 14b in 2019 was expected in part due to the added requirements to the definition of competitive, integrated employment beginning that year, as well as the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020.

14c includes the percent of exiters with IEPs who go on to other employment and/or postsecondary education that is not a two or four-year college or university. This category has remained fairly stable and currently stands at 70.7%.

“I am still not sure what I want to become. I am trying to figure that out.”

Ideally, exiters are engaged in some way with education or employment. However, there are some exiters who are not engaged in any post-school outcome related to education or employment. Non-engagement in 2024 increased slightly from 2023. In 2023, 27.9% of exiters were unengaged, while in 2024, 29.4% were unengaged. This increase is concerning and should continue to be monitored. Disaggregating the data below provides a deeper understanding of the information.



KYPSO believes it is important to examine the intersection of education and employment, two important dimensions of post-school success. The table below (Table 2) illustrates the intersection of education and employment outcomes. As stated earlier, 18.0% of former students went on to higher education. In addition, many of these exiters were either employed competitively (240) or otherwise employed (125) while enrolled in higher education, indicating that over half of former exiters who went on to higher education were also employed in some manner. Alternatively, we can see that the largest group (33.6%) of competitively employed exiters are not in any school or training program. The implications for this are clear: If a young person plans 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 in their first year out of high school.

Table 2 - Overview for Indicator 14 Data

Kentucky (2024)	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	No Employment	Education Totals
Higher Education	240 (8.0%)	125 (4.1%)	215 (7.1%)	580 (19.2%)
Other Education	105 (3.5%)	34 (1.1%)	68 (2.3%)	207 (6.9%)
No Postsecondary Education	1,013 (33.6%)	330 (10.9%)	885 (29.4%)	2,228 (73.9%)
Employment Totals	1,350 (45.0%)	489 (16.2%)	1,168 (38.7%)	3,015 (100%)

Disaggregated Outcomes

Disaggregating education data is an important part of ensuring the education system is meeting the needs of a diverse set of exiters. This section reports on different subsets of the population from the YOYO data.

Whenever possible, KYPSO disaggregates findings by demographics of interest. The following tables and figures (Tables 3-8 and Figures 2-8) consider 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

Table 3 - Disaggregated Outcomes by Gender

Gender Outcomes	Higher Ed.	Other Ed.	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Not Engaged	Total (3,015)
Male (n= 2,022)	15.6%	7.7%	47.4%	16.2%	28.2%	2,022
Female (n= 993)	26.6%	5.1%	40.2%	16.3%	31.6%	993

The percent of females enrolled in higher education increased 4.2% from 2023, while other employment decreased by 2.2%. That is a hopeful shift. The data for males, however, demonstrated slight but concerning decreases in competitive employment and other employment, and a 2% increase in non-engagement.

It is helpful to delve deeper into the data to identify trends over time. When further disaggregated by male and female, there is a trend of more females enrolling in higher education than males. Figure 2 presents Kentucky's longitudinal disaggregated data for exiters with disabilities.

Comparing data trends over time is important. The data in Figure 2 shows that male and female enrollment have been relatively parallel since 2018. While the male trend line has remained fairly flat, the female higher education trended up this year by 3.8 percentage points.



Figure 2 - Post-Secondary Education By Gender

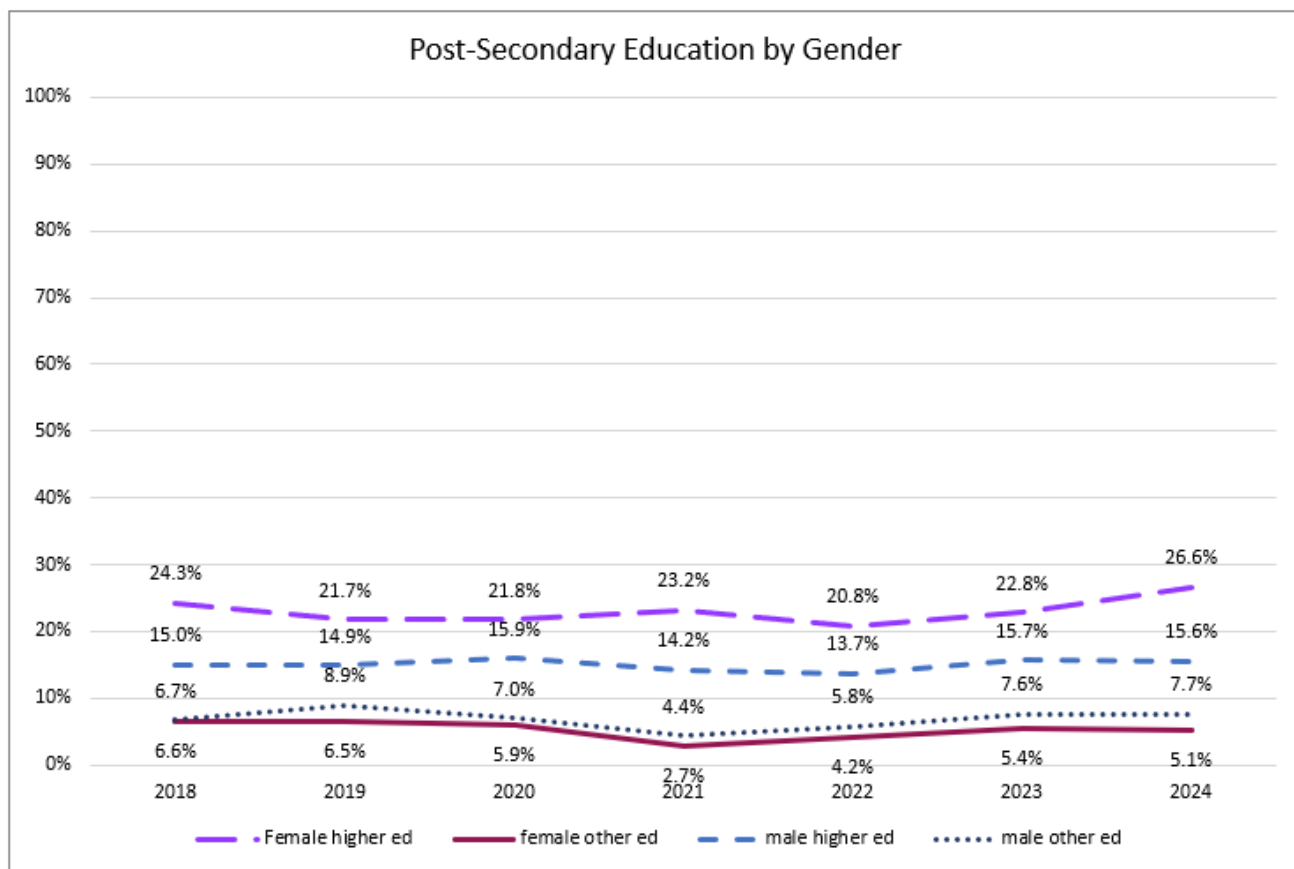
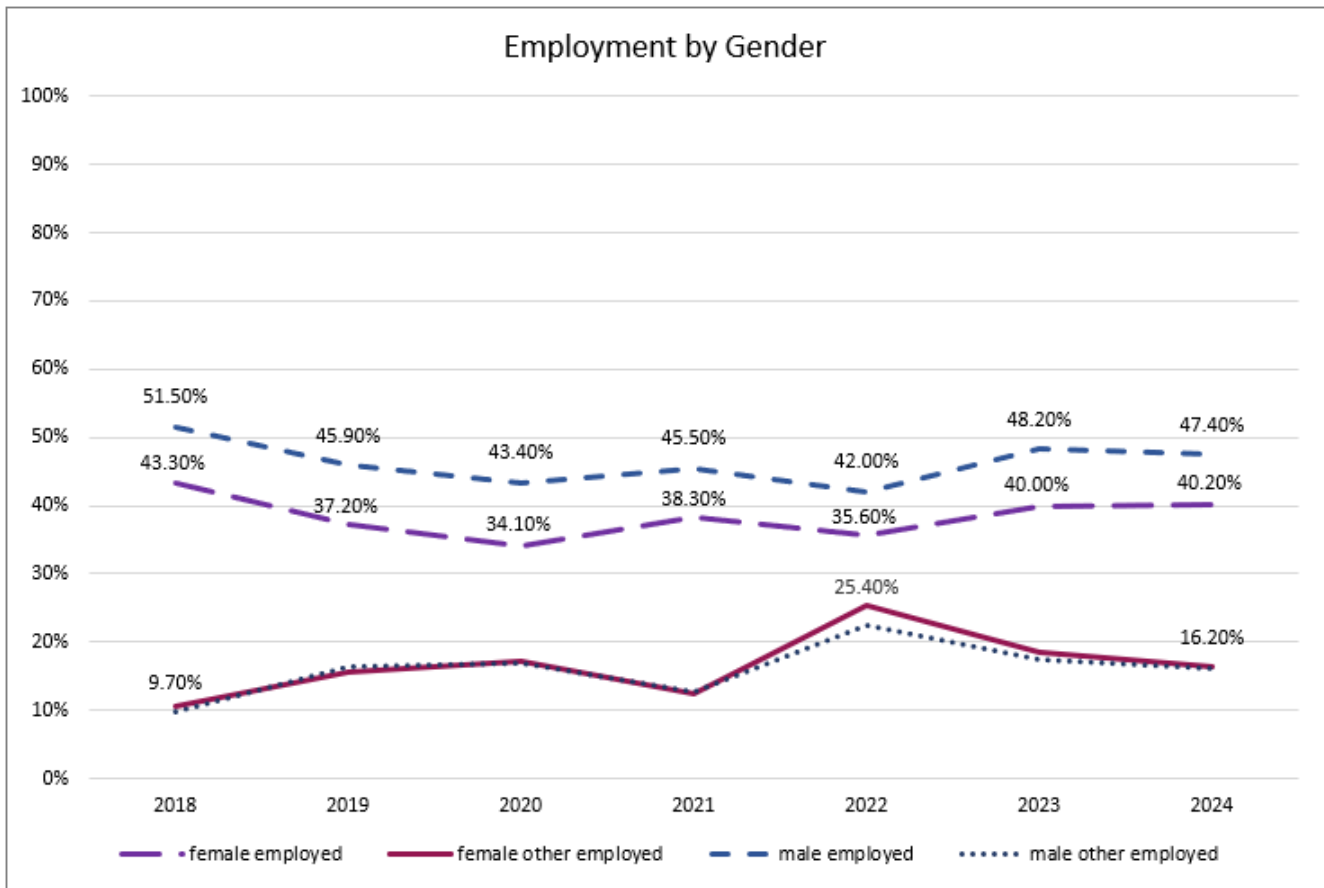


Figure 3 demonstrates that overall, males are slightly more likely than females to be competitively employed one year out of high school, with 7.4% more males competitively employed compared to females. The likelihood that females are both competitively employed and in higher education has increased at a higher rate than that of males. Preparing students to succeed in higher education while working requires teaching them the explicit skills and strategies to balance work and school. This increase indicates some potential instructional level changes at the high school that have a positive impact on students. The rates for other employment are concerning. While other employment can include working on a farm or a family business, it also includes segregated settings and/or not receiving comparable wages, benefits, and opportunities for advancement as their non-disabled co-workers. This category has more than doubled between 2018 and 2022 and is now continuing a downward trend. This could be an indication of better preparing youth for integrated post-school outcomes.



Figure 3 - Employment by Gender



Disaggregated Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity

This section disaggregates data by ethnicity and race. Data is only reported for groups of 20 or more exiters, meaning exiters who are Asian, Native American, or Pacific Islanders are not included in this disaggregated data. The population of exiters who identify as two or more races has increased from 85 in 2023 to 111 in 2024. In 2024, 159 exiters identified as Hispanic/Latino, 335 identified as African American/Black, and 2,388 exiters identified as White. While the sample sizes are proportionally appropriate to the overall population of Kentucky, a change of a few exiters in groups with small sample sizes makes a disproportionately large difference in the percentages. Table 4 disaggregates outcomes by race and ethnicity.



Table 4 - Disaggregated Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity Outcomes	Higher Ed.	Other Ed.	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Not Engaged	Total (3,015)
White	18.3%	7.6%	45.1%	15.4%	30.2%	2,388
African American/Black	22.1%	3.9%	42.4%	20.9%	26.0%	335
Hispanic and/or Latino	22.6%	5.0%	49.7%	23.3%	19.5%	159
Two or more races	26.1%	4.5%	45.9%	10.8%	32.4%	111

Exiters who identify as White, Hispanic, Black/African American, and two or more races have similar rates of enrollment in postsecondary education (25.9-30.6%). Those who identified as two or more races had the highest rate (30.6%), while those who identified as White had the lowest rate (25.9%). All groups have a trend of increasing enrollment across time. Exiters who are Asian, Native American, Hawaiian Native, or Pacific Islander are not included due to the sample size being too small.

Figures 4 and 5 compare the longitudinal employment data by race/ethnicity. It is broken into competitive and other employment. Competitive employment tends to provide adults with more financial freedom, while other employment could mean sheltered workshops or other jobs that pay less than minimum wage.



Figure 4 - Competitive Employment By Race/Ethnicity

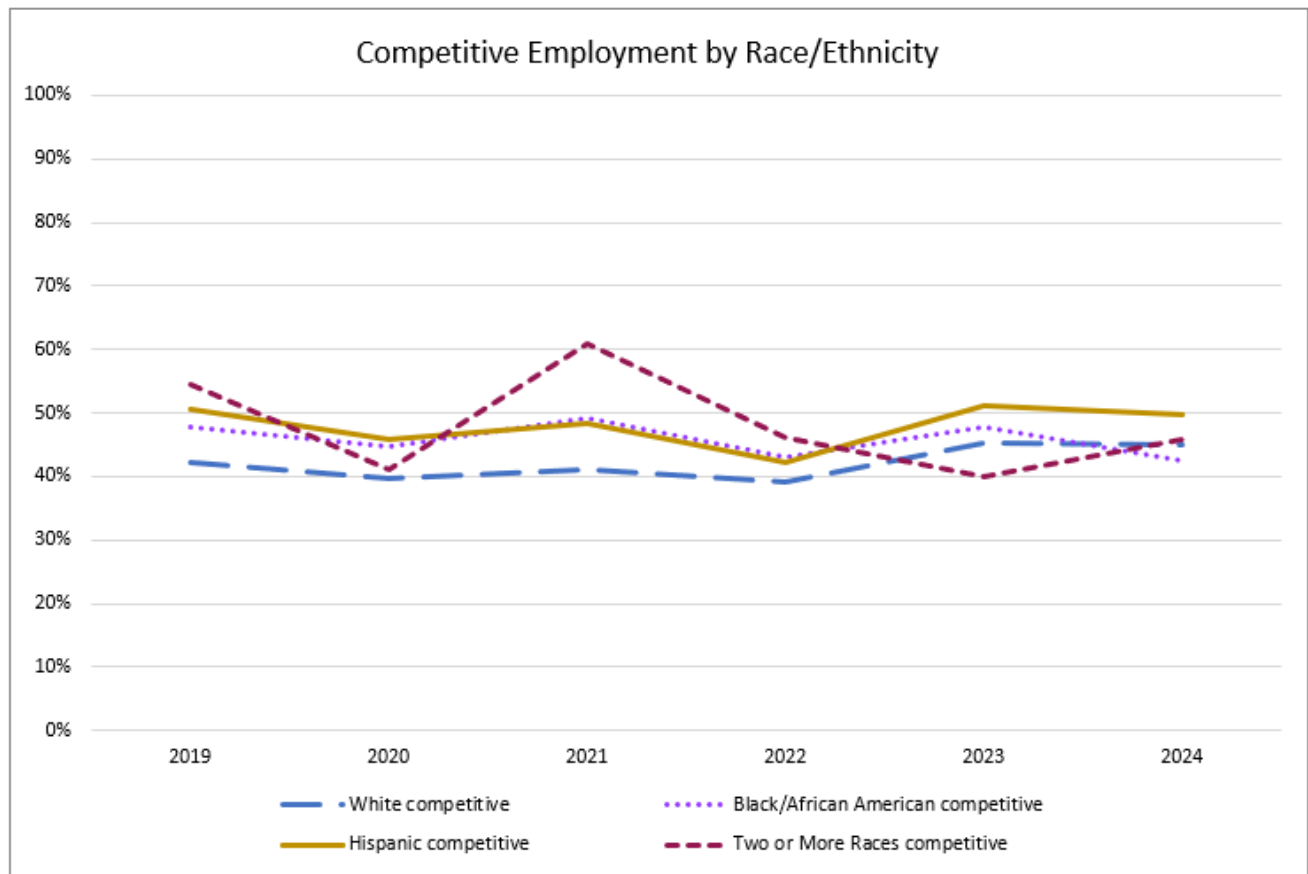
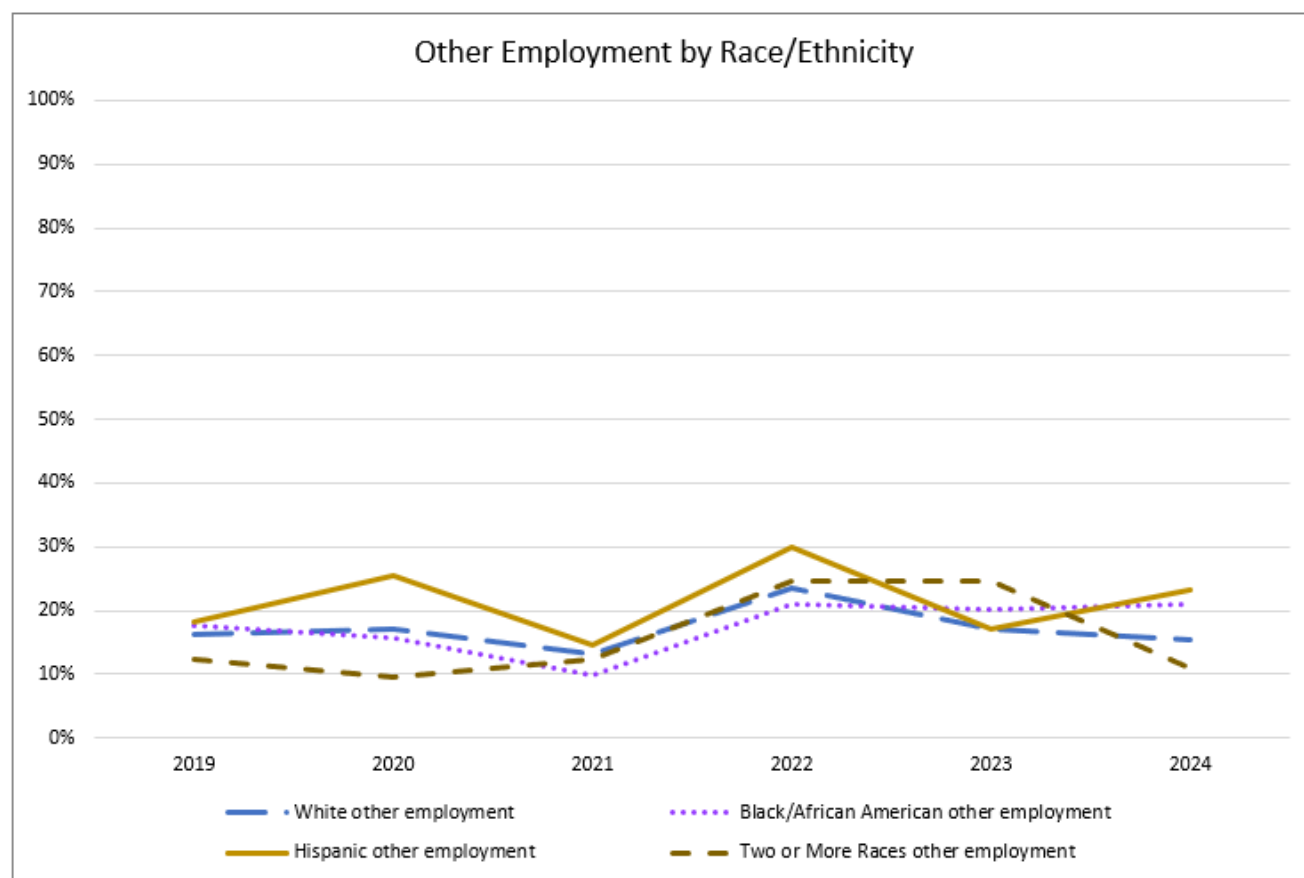


Figure 5 - Other Employment by Race/Ethnicity



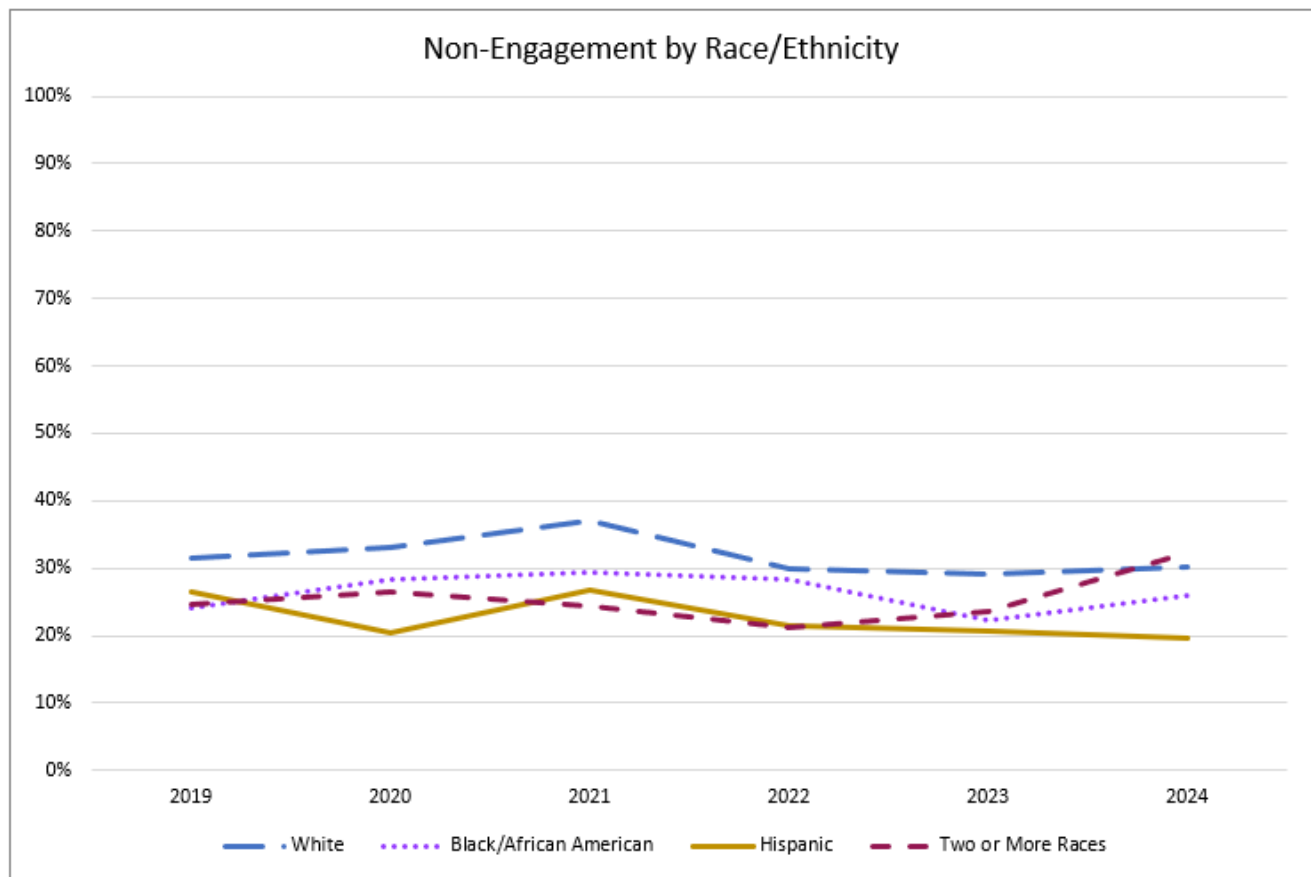
In 2023, exiters who identified as Hispanic /Latino exiters had the highest rate of competitive employment (51.1%), which continued in 2024, though the overall rate decreased slightly (49.7%). The only subgroup that demonstrated an increase in competitive employment from 2023 to 2024 was those who identified as two or more races. Exiters who identified as Black/African American and White had decreases in competitive employment rates. However, the decrease for White exiters was not meaningful (.1%) while Black/African American exiters had a 5.3% decrease in competitive employment rates. Prior to 2023, Black/African American exiters had the highest rates of competitive employment. Now, these exiters have the lowest competitive employment rates. This is an area SERTACs might want to examine more deeply to identify changes that might be influencing these results.

Exiters of two or more races had a 13.9% decrease in other employment and a 5.9% increase in competitive employment. This trend is fantastic, and KDE might want to explore other characteristics of these exiters to identify common factors that might account for these positive shifts. Another trend to monitor is the 6.3% increase in non-competitive employment for Hispanic/Latino exiters.

Non-engagement is a significant concern as a post-school outcome. Figure 6 provides a visual of the non-engagement rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity.



Figure 6 - Non-Engagement by Race/Ethnicity



Over time, exiters who are White tended to have higher non-engagement rates than other groups. However, this year exiters who identify as two or more races had a higher non-engagement rate than any other subgroup. They also demonstrated a significant increase in non-engagement from 23.5% in 2023 to 32.4% in 2024. This is another reason for KDE and SERTACs to dig deeper into their data for this population of exiters. White and Black/African American subgroups also showed increases in non-engagement, though the increase for White exiters was only 1% while the increase for Black/African American exiters was 3.8%. The one highlight of non-engagement data is that exiters who identified as Hispanic/Latino were the first subgroup to have under 20% of their exiters non-engaged (19.50%) in at least six years.

Disaggregated Outcomes by Disability

Differences in outcomes based on a former exiter's primary disability classification are striking. Due to exiter population size, we have included the seven largest disability categories in Table 5 as other disability categories had too few respondents to make meaningful inferences about their outcomes for this report. Where differences are greater than 2%, we have marked positive changes with two asterisks (**) and negative changes with one asterisk (*).



Table 5 - Disaggregated Outcomes by Disability

Disability Category Outcomes	Higher Education	Other Education	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Not Engaged	Total (3,015)
Autism	19.1% *	6.7%	18.2%	13.2%*	52.8%**	341
Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD)	13.7%*	6.3%	44.2%	13.7%	33.7%**	190
Functional Mental Disability (FMD)	0.7%	2.0%*	6.6%	10.5%*	81.6%**	152
Hearing or Vision	44.2%**	7.0%*	37.2%**	16.3%	9.3%*	43
Mild Mental Disability (MMD)	11.7%**	7.9%**	43.5%**	15.8%	32.8%*	494
Multiple Disability	9.5%**	3.2%	10.5%*	9.5%	70.5%	95
Other Health Impairment (OHI)	22.5%**	7.7%	54.0%**	18.3%	19.1%	823
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	23.7%	7.4%	60.7%	18.6%	13.2%	843
Speech or Language Impairment	52.9%**	0%*	47.1%*	11.8%*	17.6%**	17

One asterisk (*) = greater than 2% lower than last year.

Two asterisks (**) = greater than 2% higher than last year.

Exiters with traumatic brain injury are not included in this table because the n is under 20. Exiters with sensory impairments have the highest enrollment rates in higher education (44.2%) compared to every other subgroup. The next highest subgroup is exiters with learning disabilities (23.7%) and those with Other Health Impairments (22.5%). Exiters with learning disabilities increased enrollment in higher education from 18% in 2022 to 21.8% in 2023 and continued to increase in 2024 to 23.7%. This steady upward trend is promising. Exiters with functional mental disability have the lowest higher education rates of those subgroups reported at only 2.7% of exiters attending higher education programs or other education opportunities. Exiters with autism and Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD) had a decrease in higher education enrollment from 2023 to 2024. Exiters with autism went from the second-highest enrollment after those with sensory impairments to the fourth-highest. Autism decreased enrollment by 3.5%, and EBD decreased enrollment by 2.6%. Exiters with mild mental disabilities had an increase of 4.1% in enrollment in higher education.

Exiters with Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and Other Health Impairment (OHI) have the highest competitive employment rates (60.7% and 54.0%, respectively). Those individuals with EBD and Mild Mental Disability (MMD) are the next highest percentage of competitively employed exiters (44.2% and



43.5%). This represents a 1.7% decrease for EBD and a 2.8% increase for MMD. The highest rates of non-engagement continue to be those individuals with Functional Mental Disability (FMD) (81.6%), multiple disabilities (70.5%), and autism (52.8%). For individuals with FMD and autism, these rates are a jump from the 2023 non-engagement rates. The rates for FMD increased 7.5% in one year, while rates for autism non-engagement increased 6.3% from 2023. For individuals with multiple disabilities, there was a 1.3% decrease in non-engagement. In 2024, 70.5% of students with multiple disabilities were not engaged.

Disaggregated Outcomes by Manner of High School Exit

Manner of exit is the final way in which KYP SO disaggregates outcomes. Because exiters who exited by aging out or receiving an alternative diploma are indistinguishable based on how districts collect data, we combine them into a single category. It is reasonable to assume that all members of this group are on the alternative diploma track. Table 6 provides information about all students with IEPs who were a part of the YOYO data and graduated with a standard diploma.

Table 6 - Disaggregated Outcomes by Manner of High School Exit

Manner of Exit Outcomes	Higher Education	Other Education	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Not Engaged	Total (3,015)
Regular Diploma	22.2%	7.1%	50.2%	16.8%	22.7%	2,588
Alternative Diploma	1.0%	5.7%	4.7%	12.2%	78.7%	296
Dropped Out	1.5%	4.6%	35.1%	14.5%	48.9%	131

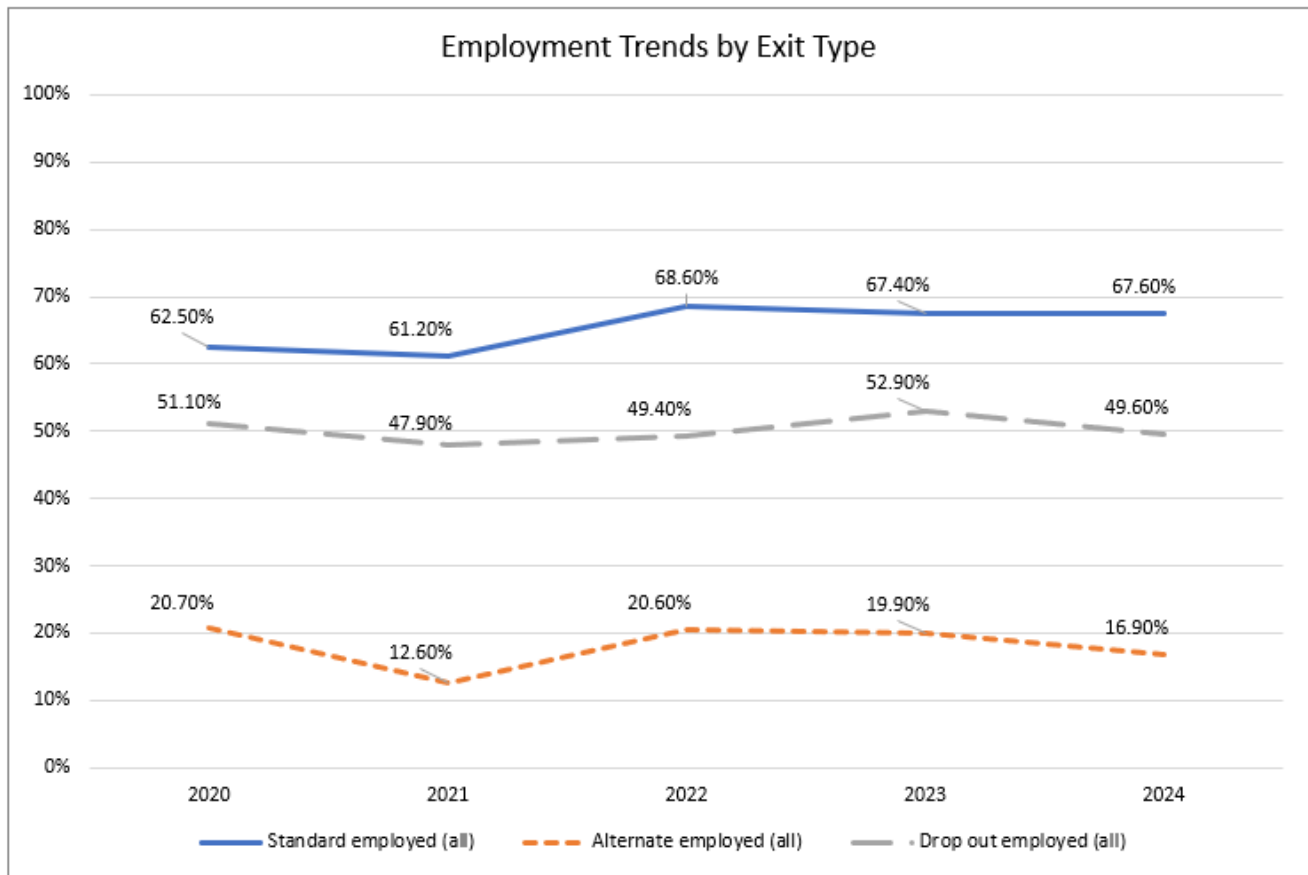
Those who graduated with a regular diploma have the best outcomes across all categories and the lowest non-engagement rate. The number of exiters who dropped out in 2024 increased by 156% from 2023. This is a significant change in dropout rates and should be examined. A little under 50% of exiters who dropped out (49.6%) were employed either competitively or not one year after exiting, while 48.9% were unengaged. For exiters who dropped out, there was a 10% decrease in competitive employment rates and a 6.7% increase in other employment. There was also a 3.8% increase in non-engagement for this subgroup.

“[I had] anxiety and difficulty with stable home. Chose to do GED now and didn't see a purpose at the time.”

Employment trends across years by exit type are shown in Figure 7. This figure includes aggregated data for all types of employment.



Figure 7 - Employment Trends by Exit Type

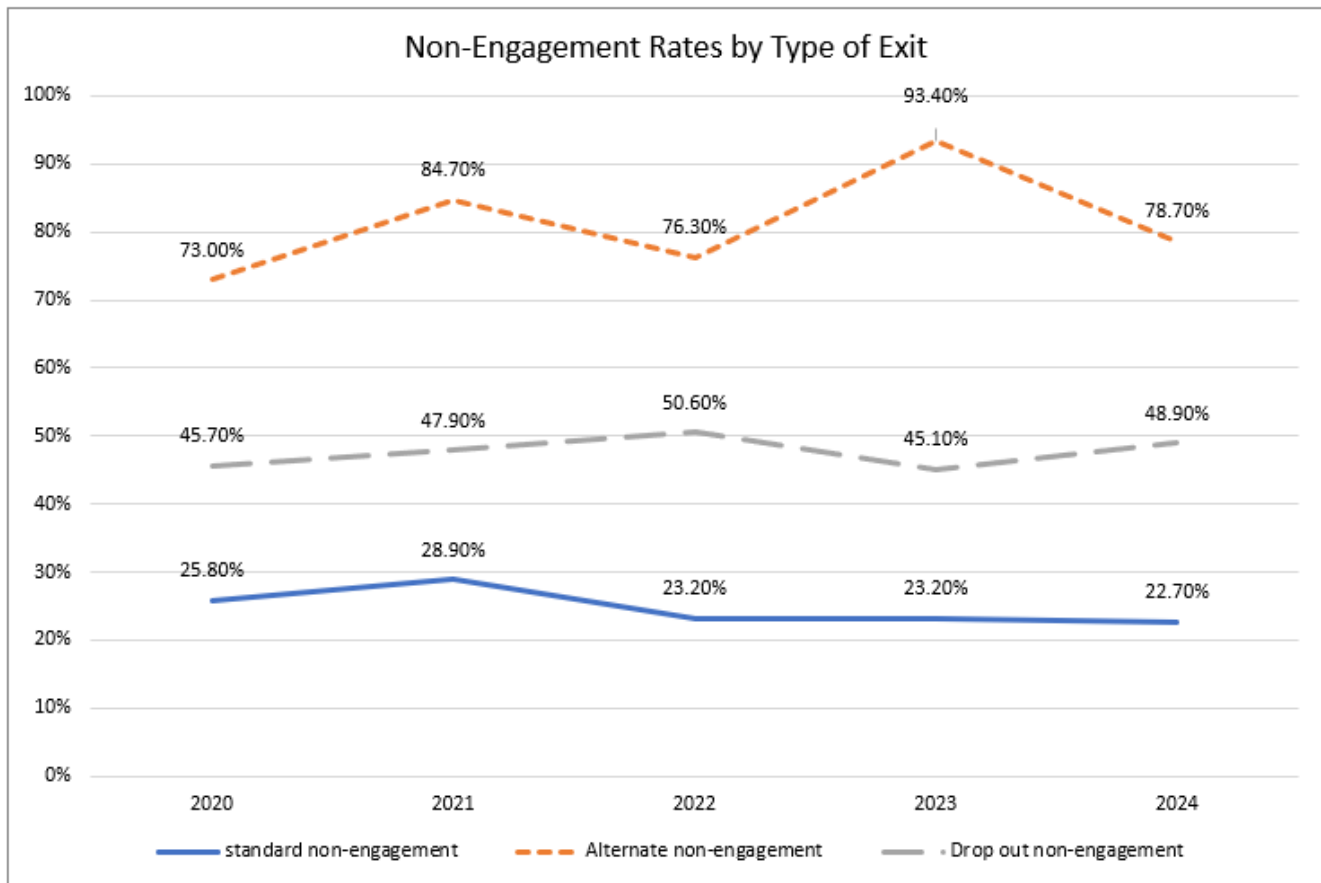


For those who exited with a standard diploma, the rate of employment has remained fairly consistent since 2022. Students who leave school with a regular diploma are the most likely to be employed, while those who graduate with an alternative diploma are the least likely to be employed. Rates of employment for those who graduated with an alternative diploma decreased by 3% in 2024. Those students who dropped out experienced an increase in employment in 2023 and have now returned to within 0.2% of the 2022 rates.

Figure 8 shows that while exiters who dropped out had high rates of non-engagement (48.9%), those who graduated with an alternative diploma had even higher rates (78.7%). Only 16.9% were employed in some way, and 6.7% were involved in some form of education. For exiters who left with an alternative diploma, there was a 3.6% decrease in competitive employment and a 0.6% increase in other employment. The nonengagement rate for this subgroup increased 3.1%. More than seven out of ten exiters on the alternative diploma track are not engaged a year after exiting high school. These trends have remained consistent for several years, indicating a need for data-informed program improvements.



Figure 8 - Non-Engagement Rates by Type of Exit



This high percentage of unengaged exiters might 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 skills. The increase may reflect an important disparity in how exiters on the regular vs. alternative diploma track are being prepared for life after high school. Access to additional data (e.g., Individualized Learning Plan (ILP), pre-ETS, review of IEPs, etc.) would allow KYPSO to probe more deeply into these factors, their distribution, and their relative impact.

Tables 7 and 8 highlight the difference between all exiters with IEP's who graduated with a regular diploma (Table 7) and those who graduated with alternative diplomas (Table 8). Exiters who were Hispanic/Latino had the lowest rates of non-engagement (12.5%), and exiters who identified as two or more races had the highest rate of non-engagement (28.2%). Exiters who were Hispanic/Latino also had the highest rates of competitive employment, as well as the mid-range of enrollment in higher education.



Table 7 - Employment and Education Exiters with Regular Diplomas Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity

Regular Diploma	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Higher Ed	Other Ed	Not Engaged
Black/African American	46.20%	22.40%	25.50%	4.50%	19.00%
Hispanic/Latino	56.60%	23.50%	25.70%	4.40%	12.50%
Two or More Races	48.50%	11.70%	28.20%	4.90%	28.20%
White	50.30%	15.80%	21.10%	7.80%	23.80%

The data for exiters who graduated with an alternative diploma by race/ethnicity is found in Table 8. This table does not include information for subgroups of less than 20.

Table 8 - Alternative Diploma Data Disaggregated by Race

Alternative Diploma Only	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Higher Ed	Other Ed	Not Engaged
Black/African American	3.60%	14.30%	0%	0%	82.10%
White	5.40%	12.10%	1.30%	6.30%	77.80%

Across all subgroups, exiters who graduated with an alternative diploma had the highest rates of non-engagement. The range of non-engagement across subgroups was 68.8% to 100%.

Follow-Up Questions

One of the strengths of the YOYO is that it enables us to probe deeper into a young person's outcomes, allowing us to evaluate services more effectively and identify their needs. We achieve this by asking a series of follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding of one's high school experiences, employment outcomes, postsecondary education, and community involvement. Each question is depicted in Tables 9-12. Note that the sample size for each question varies. We will examine the follow-up questions in greater depth.

Table 9 - High School Experiences

High School Experiences	Number of Potential Responses
What are the reasons you left high school without graduating?	131
What might have helped you stay in school?	131
Please name the most important thing during high school that helped you in your life right now (e.g., high school programs, classes, agencies).	3,015



Table 10 - Employment/Unemployment

Employment/Unemployment	Number of Potential Responses
What is the main reason that you are not working, or not working more hours?	1,874

Table 11: Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary Education	Number of Potential Responses
If you faced any problems in your postsecondary school/training program, please let us know what they were.	930
What would you say is the main reason you did not go on to postsecondary education?	2,017

Table 12: Additional Comments

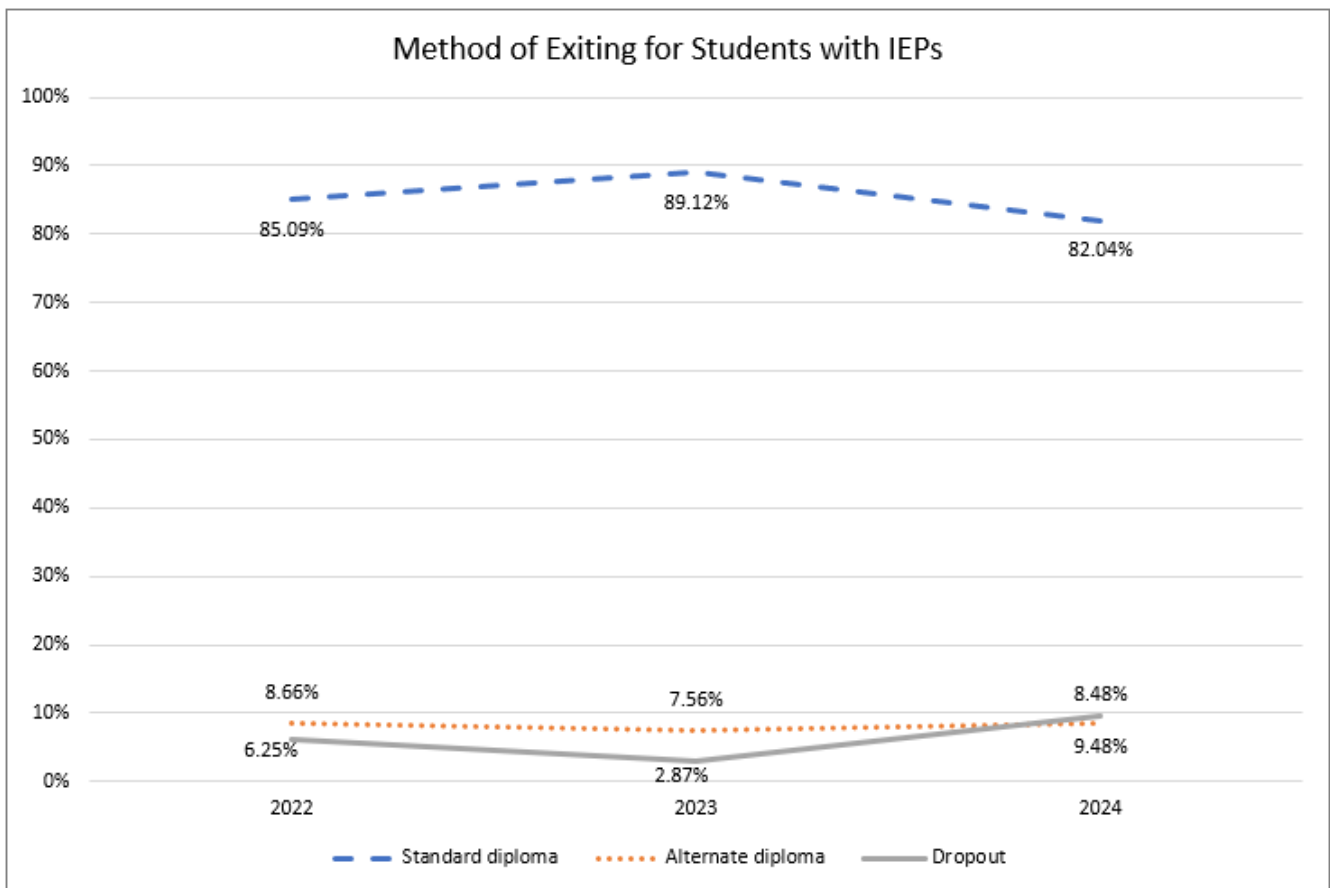
Additional Comments	Number of Potential Responses
Is there anything else you would like to add about how things have been going for you since you left school?	3,015

High School Experience

Of the 3,015 Kentucky students who exited high school during the 2023-2024 school year with an IEP in place at the time of exit, 131 did so by dropping out. Figure 9 provides longitudinal data of exiting types.



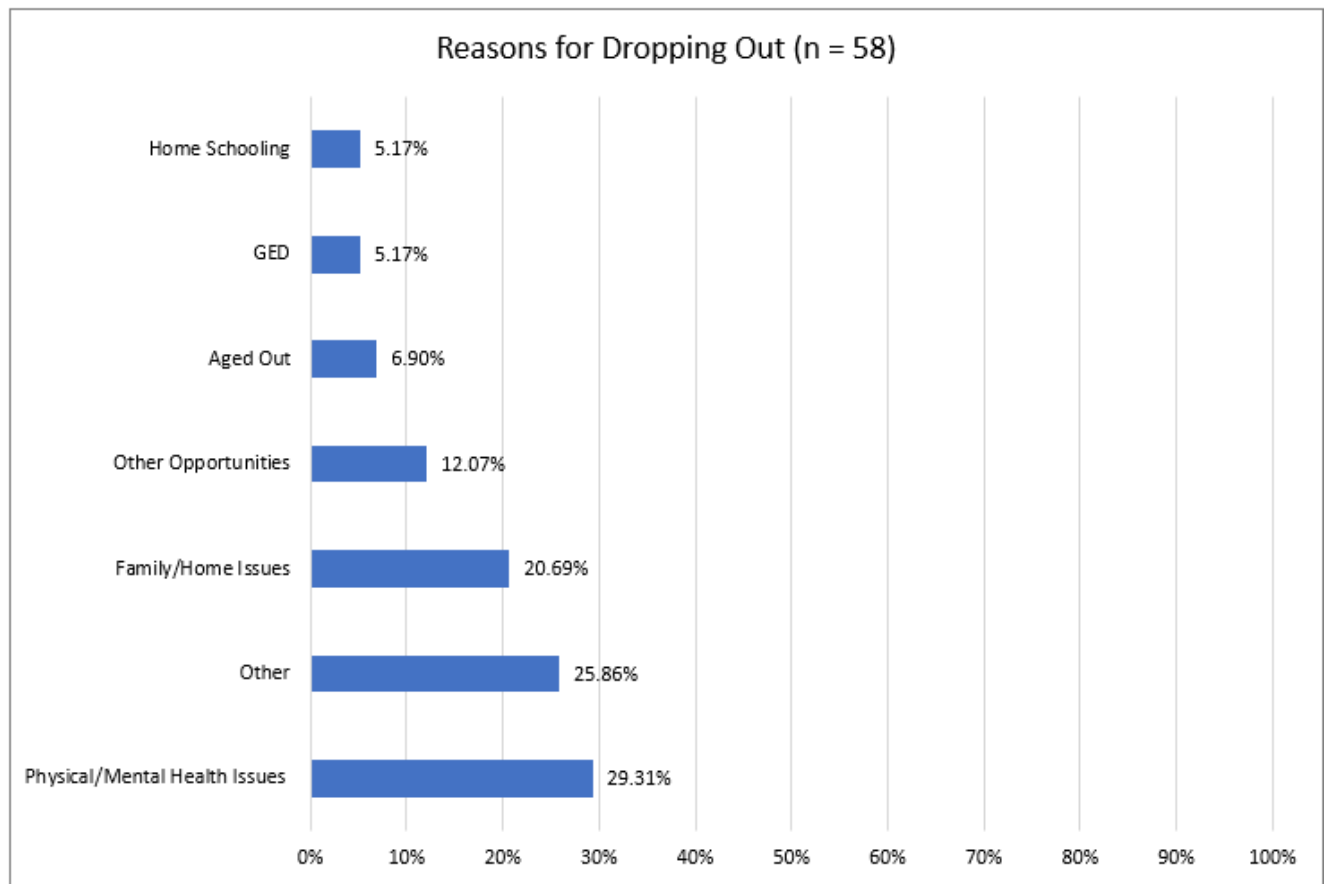
Figure 9 - Method of Exiting for Students with IEPs



Of the exiters listed as having dropped out, 58 shared why they left high school without graduating. The reasons varied among the respondents, and if a respondent provided multiple reasons, all reasons were recorded and counted. The two most prevalent reasons for dropping out were due to physical or mental health issues (29.31%) and “other” (25.86%). The top reasons for leaving high school without graduating are depicted in the figure below (Figure 10).



Figure 10 - Reasons for Dropping Out



Mental or physical health reasons were mentioned more often in 2024. In 2023, 19.35% of respondents cited mental or physical health reasons, and in 2024, the percentage increased to 29.31%. Anxiety was mentioned by students as a reason for dropping out of school. The percentage of students who dropped out due to not liking school decreased from 40% to 33.87% this year. This continues a downward trend from 2022.

We asked these former exiters, "What might have helped you stay in school?" Of the 62 exiters who responded to this question, 53.23% indicated that personal reasons such as, "All my teachers, counselors, and friends tried to convince me to stay but my mind was made up to get my GED" and "...just didn't care anymore. [They were] offered several options to finish but chose not to complete high school" were the reasons for dropping out. Some exiters (29.03%) stated that external supports or influences might have helped them stay in school. Over a quarter of the exiters (30.19%) stated that more practical/real-life or hands-on classes might have helped. This reason is higher than last year's percentage of 25%.

Adult encouragement was identified only 5.66% of the time. While "nothing or don't know" continued to be the second highest response for this item, a small number of respondents also mentioned issues

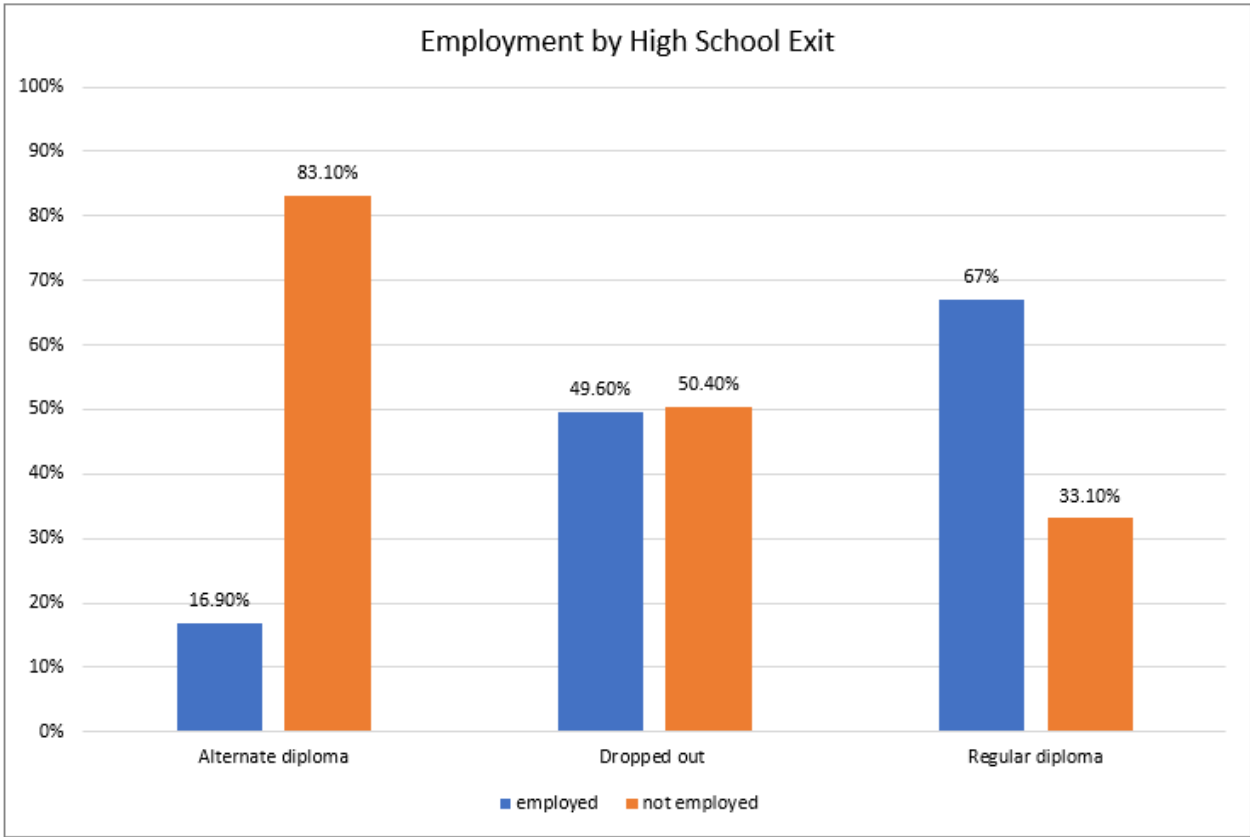


related to support with afterschool care, changing the distance to the bus stop, or “...student didn’t try as hard as needed”. A suggestion for further research would involve more detailed analyses as to what may have influenced the reduction in the drop-out rate and whether these exiters participated in vocational classes, pre-ETS, and/or CTE courses prior to dropping out.

Employment and Unemployment

According to the Indicator 14 definition for employment, a person would 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 exiters who were employed per the Indicator 14 definition, we asked additional questions about the number of hours worked and pay to determine whether the exiter fit the definition of competitive, integrated employment, or other employment. A total of 1,847 exiters were employed at some point after exiting, and 1,606 had jobs as of the YOYO interview (Figure 11).

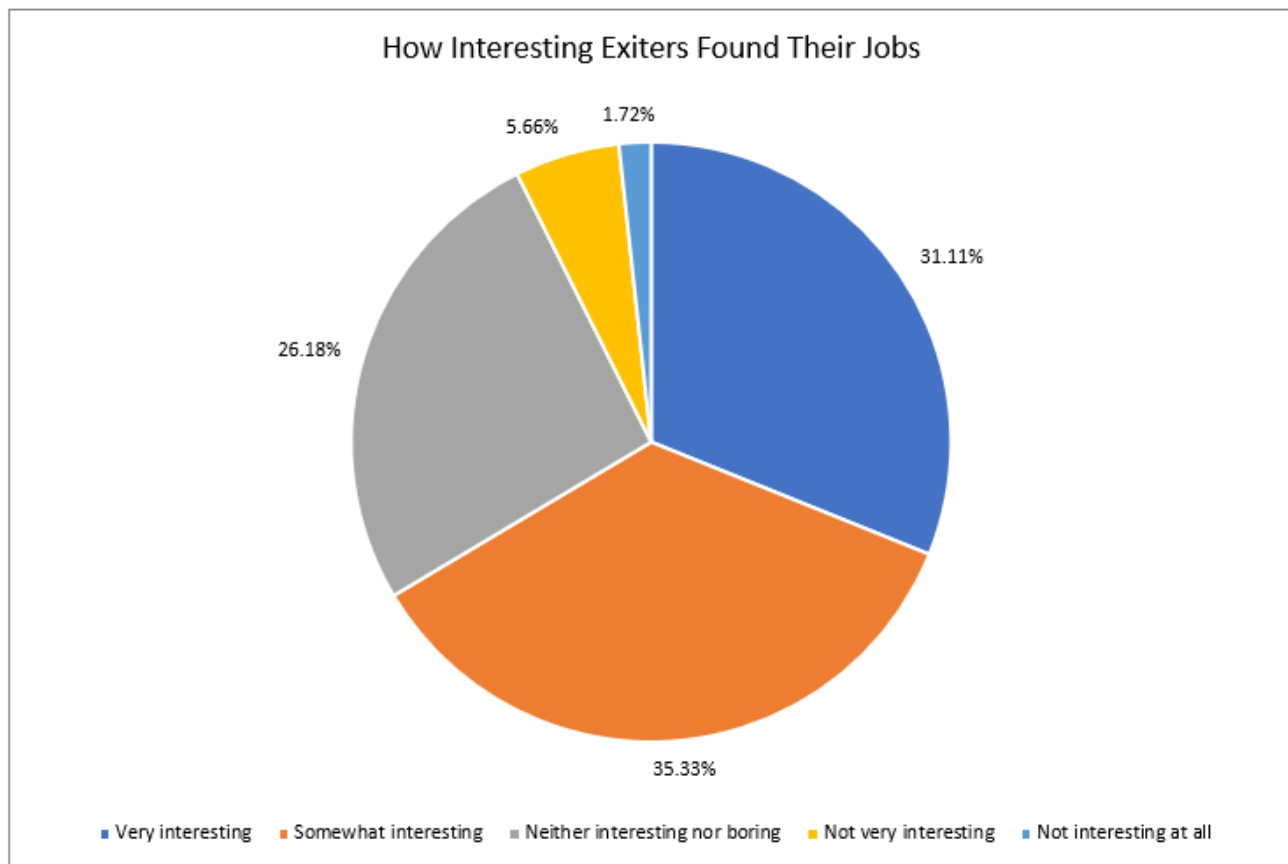
Figure 11 - Employment by High School Exit



Of those exiters who were employed, 53.75% worked full-time (37.5+ hours), 33.17% worked 20-37.5 hours, and 13.11% worked less than 20 hours. An overwhelming majority (97.79%) of those employed were paid at least minimum wage. We also asked about exiters' interest in their jobs (Figure 12).



Figure 12 - How Interesting Exiters Found Their Jobs



Most students (35.33%) found their work somewhat interesting, followed by 31.11% who found their jobs very interesting. Less than 2% found their jobs not interesting at all, and 5.66% found their work not very interesting. The remaining 26.18% indicated they were neutral about their jobs.

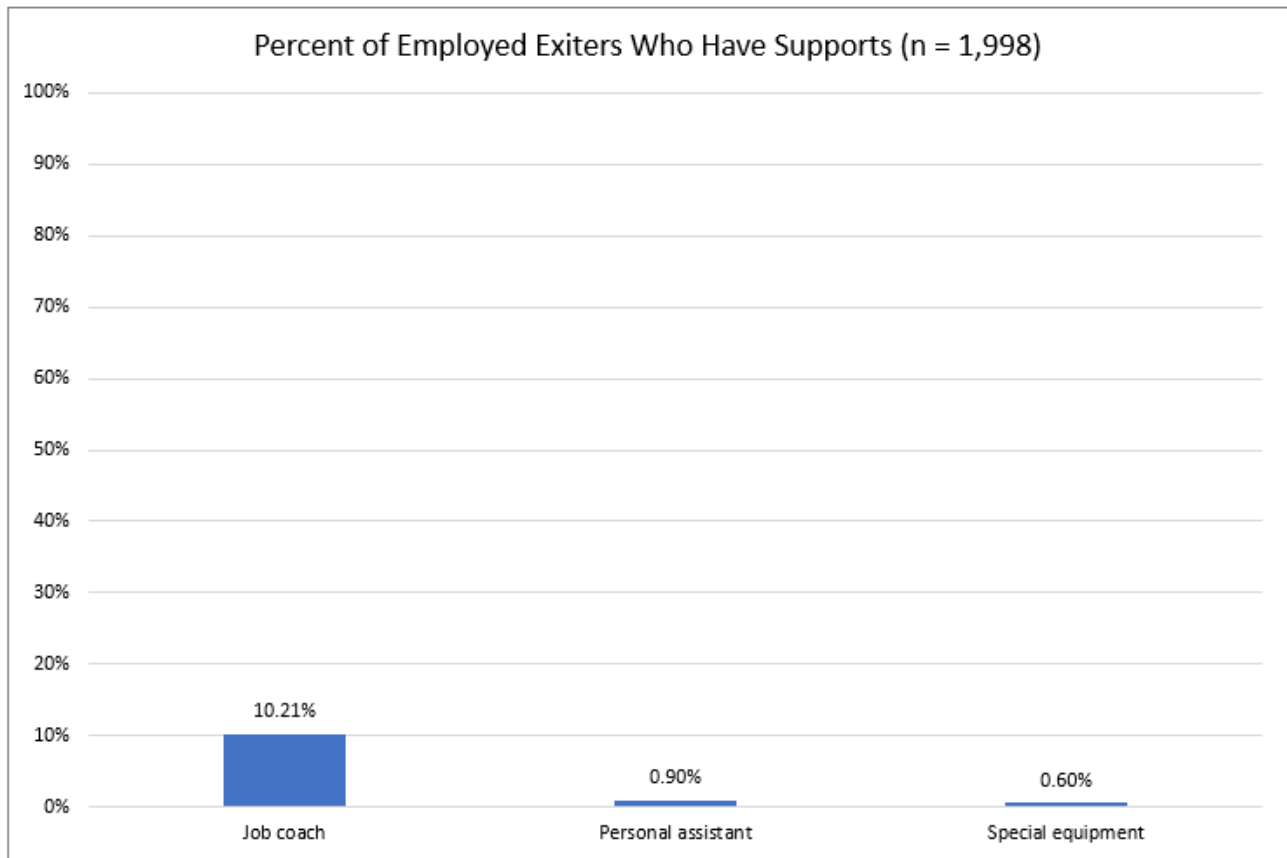
“Did transition program with CWTP and OVR. Unable to find placement due to lack of supported employment professionals.”

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 (1,998) since leaving high school whether they received any of the following supports or

accommodations at their job: job coach, personal assistant, special equipment, or other accommodations. 10.21% of the respondents who had been employed indicated that they had used a job coach, and very few respondents ($\leq 1\%$) indicated they had used a personal assistant or special equipment. These percentages have been relatively consistent over the years.



Figure 13 - Percent of Employed Exiters Who Have Supports



The percent of exiters who report using any type of employment supports is extremely low. Most exiters (99%) who were employed made at least minimum wage. Of the 17 exiters who did not make minimum wage, 70% graduated with a regular diploma and 30% graduated with an alternative diploma. Exiters with a job coach reported that they were still employed at the time of the interview. It appears that exiters might be underutilizing job coaches and other types of employment supports.

Exiters 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

"I'm working hard to get financially independent so I can move out and get my own place."

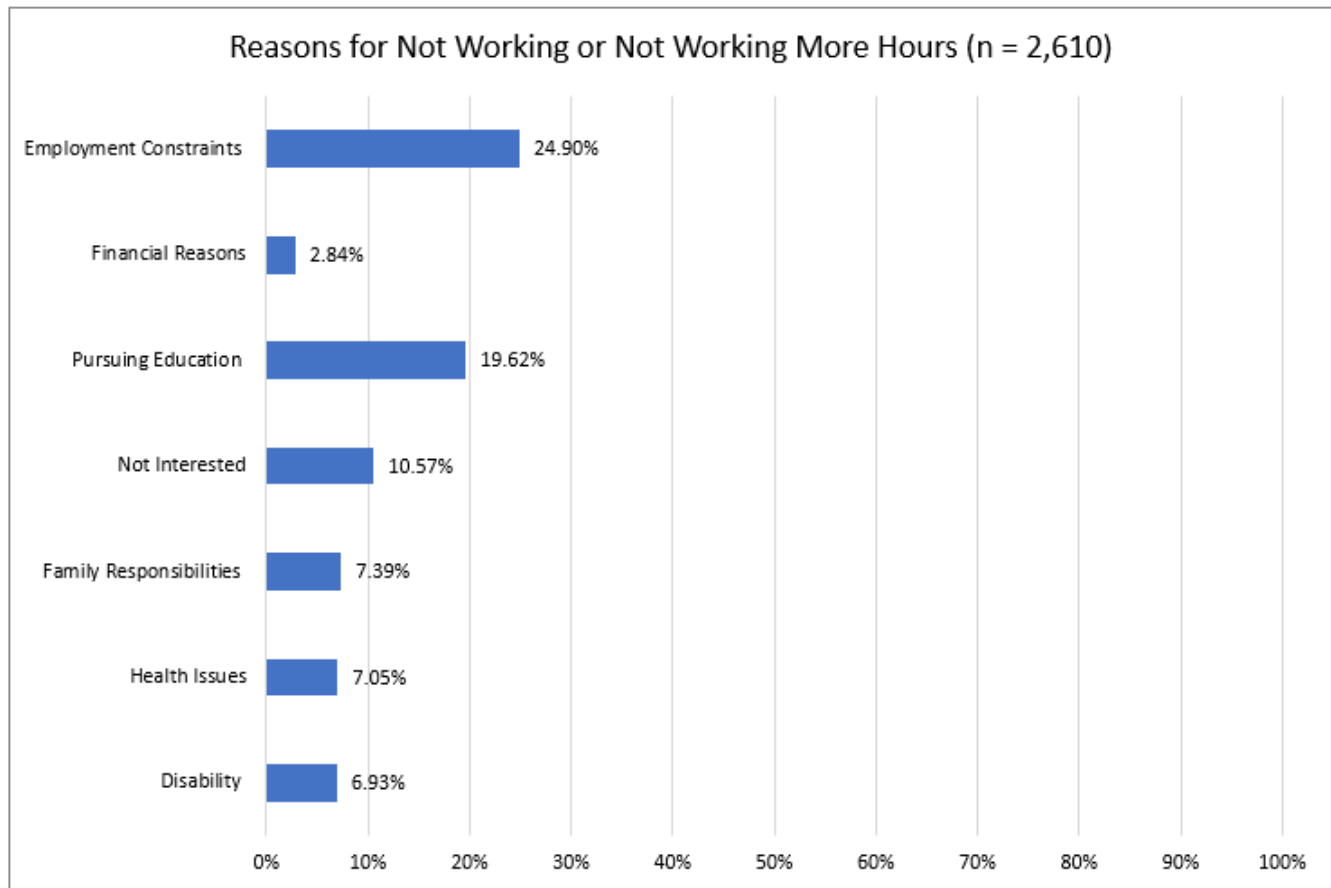
reason you are not working or not working more hours?" (Figure 14). Of the 2,610 responses, most (24.90%) indicated they did not work more hours due to job constraints (e.g., limited hours offered, seasonal work). Next, 19.62% chose not to work

or work more hours because they were pursuing further education or training, including attending a university, college, or trade school. 10.57% of respondents stated they were not working or were not working more hours because they were just not interested. 13.98% of exiters who did not work indicated they could not work because of the severity of their disability, mental, or physical health



issues. Some respondents (7.39%) stated they did not work or have more hours due to personal issues such as taking care of a child or dealing with legal trouble. In addition, 2.84% of the respondents reported they did not work or limited their work hours because they were receiving disability benefits or were afraid of losing their benefits. 2.99% of respondents identified transportation as a barrier to work.

Figure 14 - Reasons for Not Working More Hours



Postsecondary Education

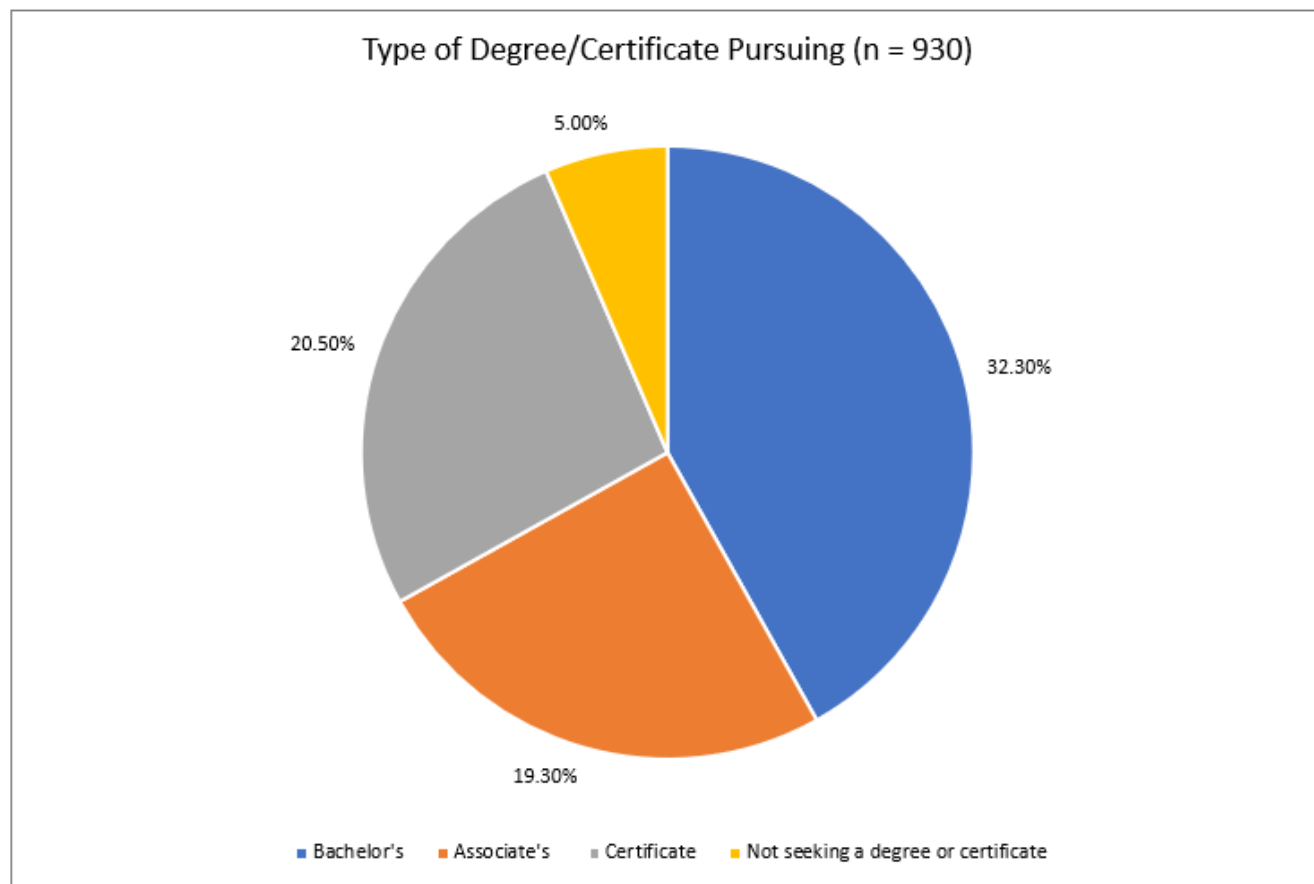
Of the 930 respondents who indicated that they had gone on to some form of postsecondary education, 787 (or 85%) completed at least one entire session or semester, which is consistent with previous years. We also asked what type of school or training program they enrolled in (Figure 15). Most exiters who went on to post-secondary education 304 (32.6%) attended a four-year college, 276 (29.6%) indicated they had enrolled in a two-year college, 118 (12.6%) indicated enrollment in a vocational school, 78 (8.3%) indicated that they were enrolled in some type of short-term program or were pursuing some form of adult education or General Education Diploma (GED). Of those who responded, 32.3% indicated they were pursuing a

"...everyone should use voc rehab's services."



bachelor's degree, 19.3% indicated an associate degree, 20.5% stated they were in a certificate program, and 5% indicated that they were not seeking degree credit, such as auditing classes.

Figure 15 - Type of Degree/Certificate Pursuing



We also asked those who enrolled in postsecondary education where they lived while classes were in session. The majority of students (54.9%) lived with their family while in school. Disaggregating that information by type of post-secondary education showed that students in four-year colleges or universities, 54.2% (165), did not live at home, and 43.0% (131) did live at home. A much higher percentage (87.3%) of students pursuing a 2-year degree or certificate lived at home. 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 higher education or the costs of living.

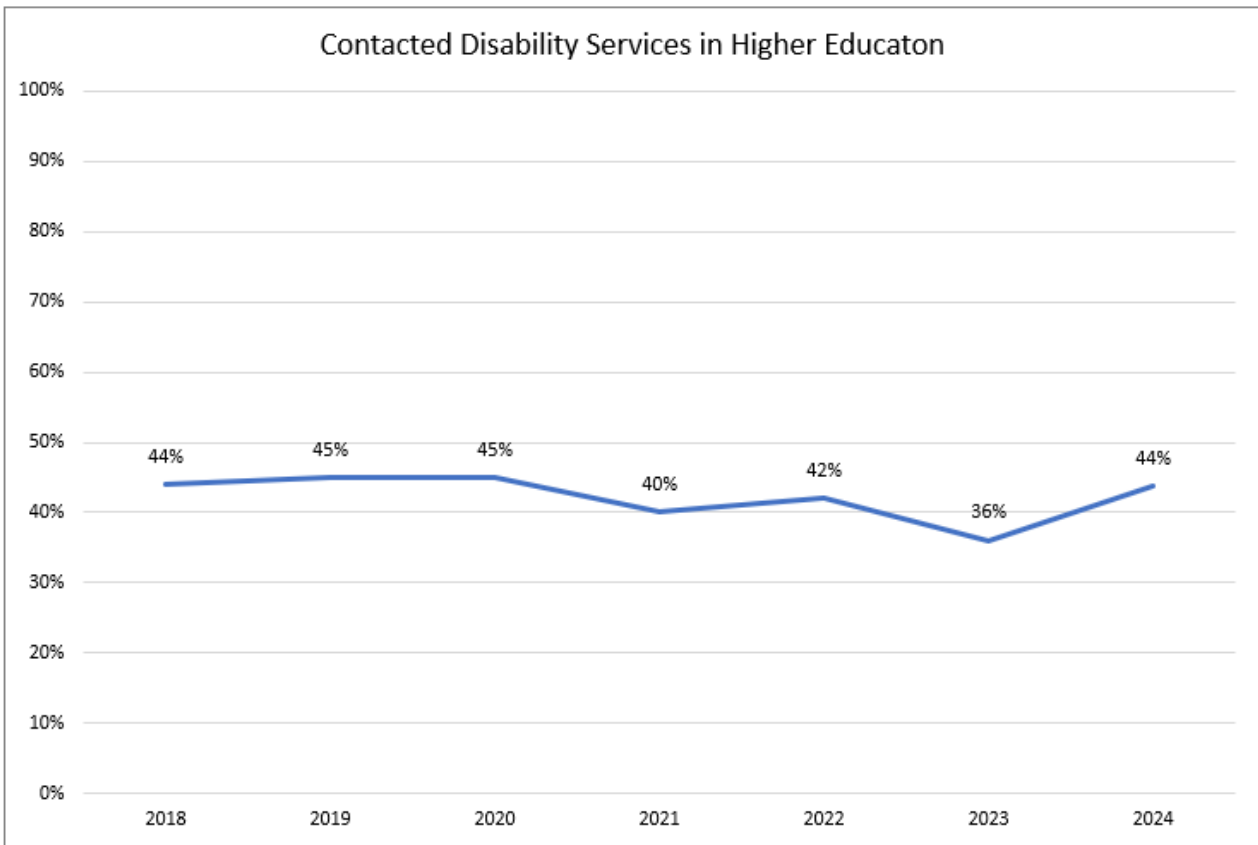
Finally, we wanted to know whether an exiter who was pursuing further education had contacted the Disability Services Coordinator (DSC). This is important because it has been shown to help students stay in school, and it is an indicator of self-advocacy. From 2016 to 2020, just under 50% of the respondents reported that they had

"It took some time to learn time management [skills], but mobility has not been as big of an issue as he anticipated."



contacted the DSC. Since 2021, this rate has remained lower than pre-pandemic levels; however, this year, the rate of contacting DSC increased by 8%, with 44% of respondents asking for help. (Figure 16).

Figure 16 - Contacted Disability Services in Higher Education



Comments related to supports and accommodations included not contacting disability services initially, not being provided supports by instructors, and lacking transportation. This may indicate that exiters did not understand the differences in the provision of support services between high school and college, in that they must disclose their disability and request support services.

"...at first she struggled because she could not turn in late work, but she made some adjustments and received some assistance."

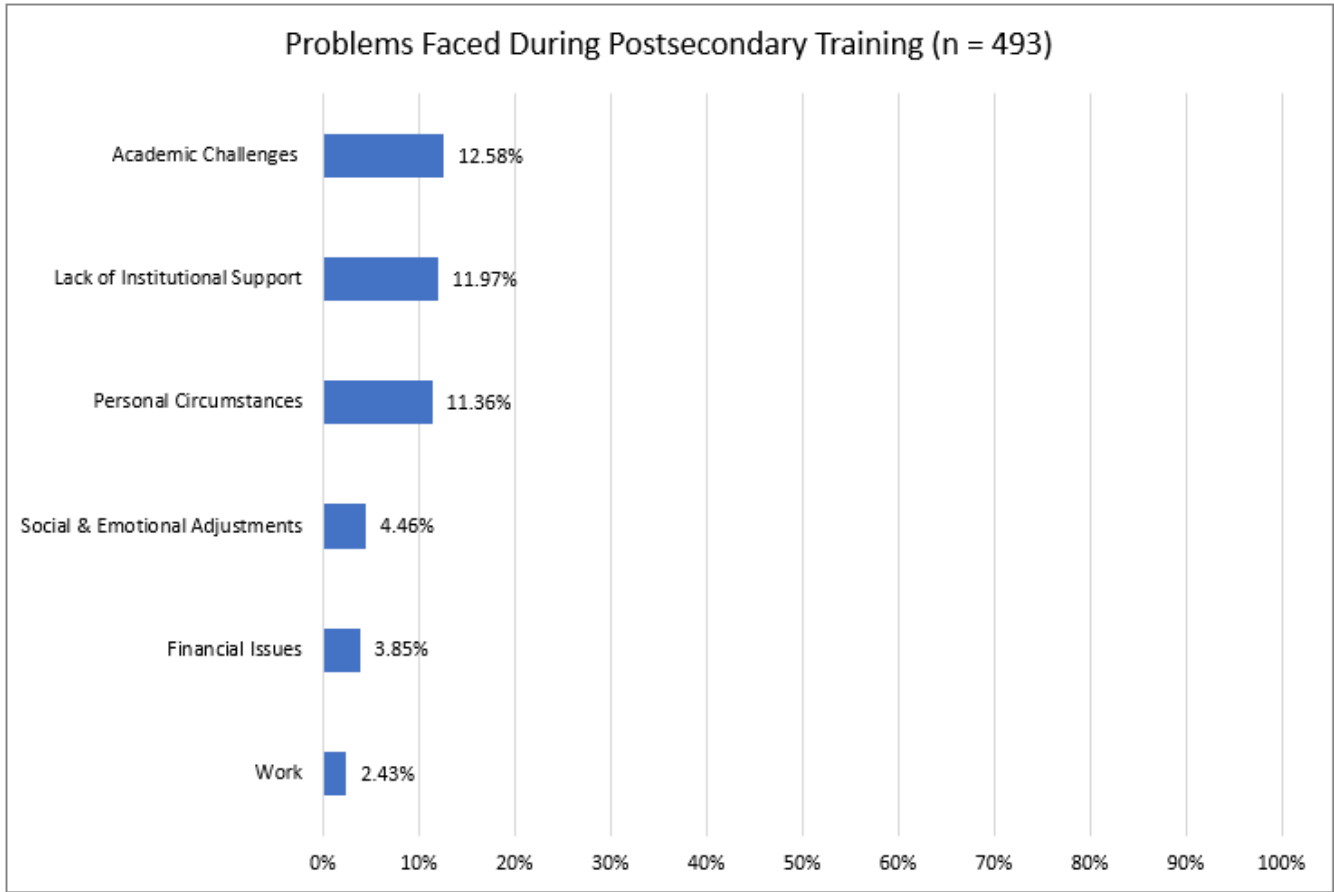
Identifying patterns in struggles or strengths related to transitioning to postsecondary education can better align services and programs with student needs. Four hundred and ninety-three (493) people answered the question of whether they faced any problems with postsecondary school/training. Of those,

47.06% reported no difficulties. Some of the areas where YOYO participants indicated they were struggling included the fast pace of assignments and courses, adjusting to the workload, getting



academic assistance, finances, and the social aspects of postsecondary education. More information is available in Figure 17.

Figure 17 - Problems Faced During Postsecondary Education/Training



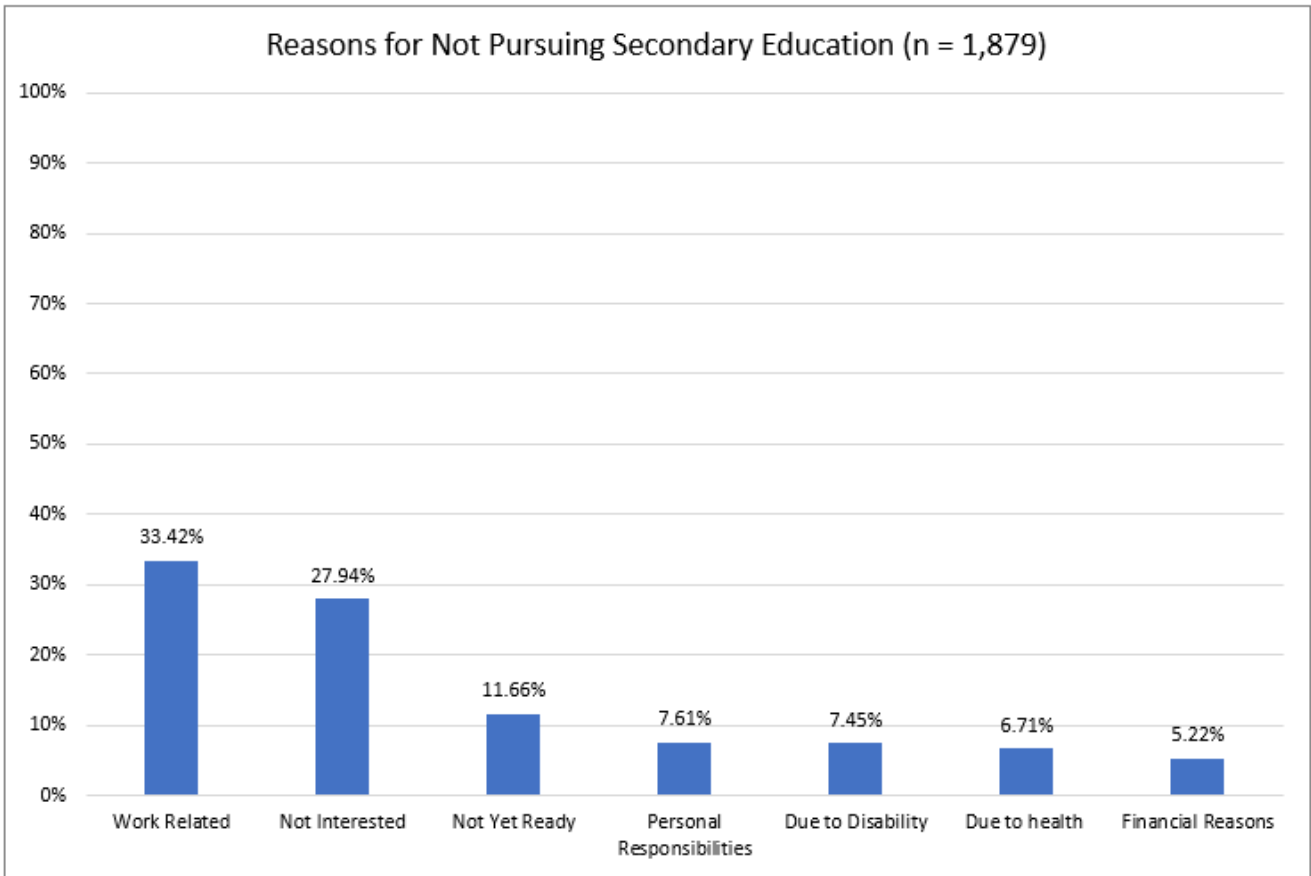
Of the 493 responses, 68.70% reported no problems and/or positive experiences in postsecondary education/training. Those who shared the problems that they faced reported the following: 12.60% experienced academic struggles, 12% noted a lack of institutional support, and 11.40% identified personal circumstances, such as being unmotivated. Many of the difficulties reported by exiters (i.e., academic struggles, lack of supports and accommodations, and adjustment to college demands) might have been mitigated by supports from DSCs, but as stated earlier, only 44% of those who went on to postsecondary education contacted their DSC.

Deciding whether to disclose a disability can be difficult. Disclosing that you have a disability might help result in supports and accommodations. However, it could also feel freeing to some postsecondary students not to disclose. However, having access to needed services and accommodations can mean the difference between a successful postsecondary career and an unsuccessful one. Students need to be taught during secondary school, if not earlier, how to advocate for themselves, what supports and services best meet their needs, and how to access them.



For exiters who did not go on to postsecondary education, we followed up by asking the reasons for not continuing their education (Figure 18). Among the 1,879 respondents who answered this question, the majority (33.42%) indicated that they had work-related reasons for not attending, including engaging with OVR or the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training. 94% indicated they had no interest in postsecondary education, and 11.66% said they were not ready to continue their education. Further, 14.16% of these respondents indicated they did not continue with postsecondary education opportunities due to their disability or mental/physical health complications. Another reason for not attending was coded as “personal reasons,” which included taking care of their own children or a family member. This was the case for 7.61% of respondents. Other reasons exiters reported for not enrolling in higher education included financial and transportation issues, earning an alternative diploma, and lack of qualifications. Lack of qualifications was often cited as being due to having a disability.

Figure 18 - Reasons for Not Pursuing Secondary Education

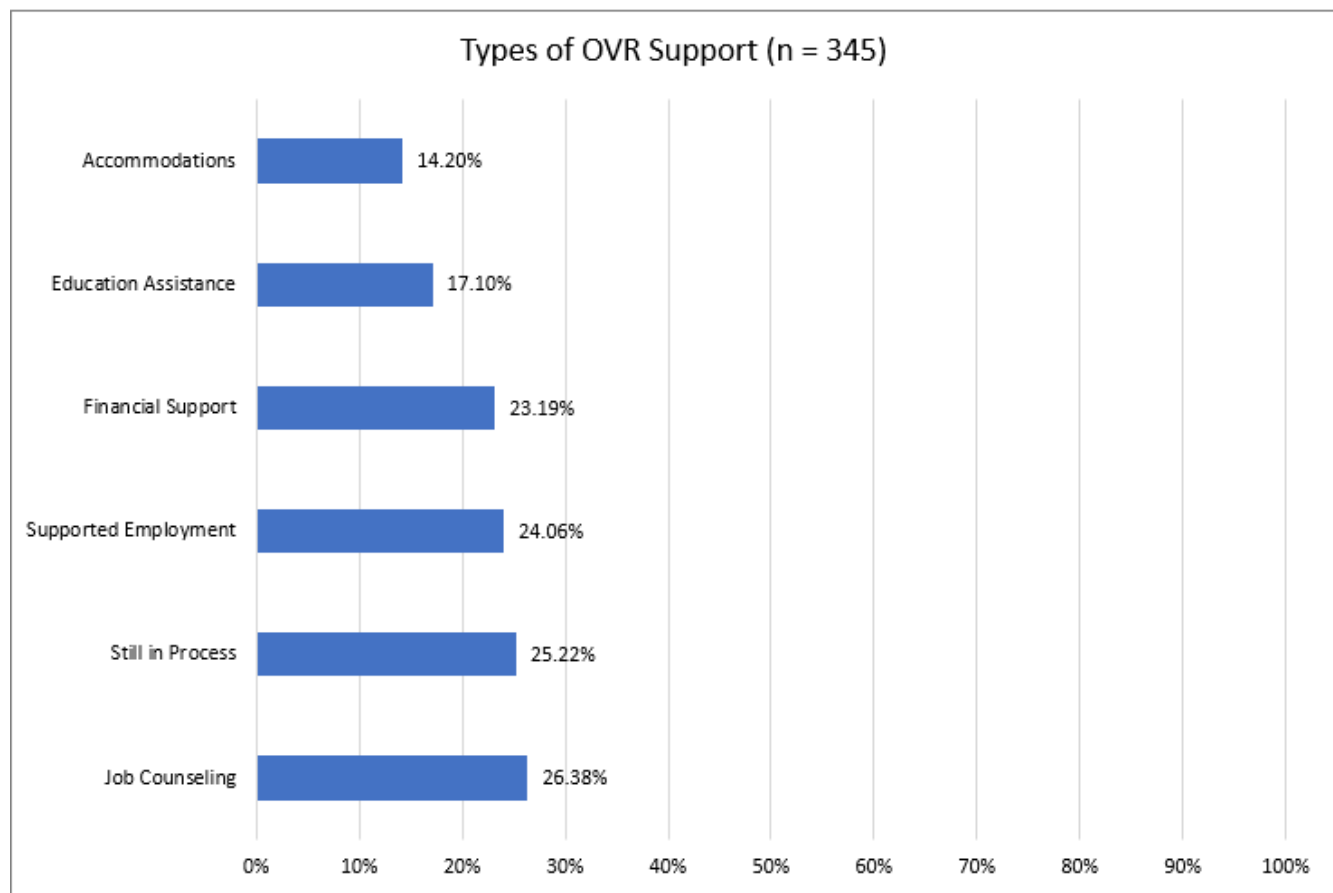


Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

KYPSO also asked respondents if they had contact with the OVR since leaving high school. 377 people responded that they had contact with OVR, and 345 shared what type of support they received. Figure 19 provides information about the most common types of support reported.



Figure 19 - Types of OVR Support



Accommodations support included helping the student access vision and hearing, as well as other types of job or educational supports. Education assistance included guidance counseling, especially around completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). It also included helping students register for classes or connecting with vocational schools. Financial support included connecting students with scholarship opportunities, as well as paying for tuition and books. The category of "supported employment" involved workers receiving the Supports for Community Living (SCL) Waiver and job coaches, while "job counseling" indicated OVR had helped the student with job counseling and/or finding a job.

Similarly to 2023, just under 5% (4.9%) of respondents specifically mentioned receiving information and help with attending the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center. It is unclear why most exiters did not ask for or accept help from OVR. It might be that exiters and families do not realize the services offered by OVR. It is also possible that educators and/or families are unsure of the process of accessing OVR. Providing more education and communication about the services offered by OVR to exiters, parents, and teachers may help improve the utilization of these services.



Community Participation

The YOYO format enables us to gather details on community participation, which, along with employment and postsecondary education, provides a broader picture of exiters' 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.

Although the national trend for young persons with driver's licenses has been dropping for years, and the rate of our respondents (exiters with an IEP) has consistently been below the overall (exiters with and without disabilities) national average, that gap is getting smaller. This year, almost half (49%) of respondents indicated that they had a driver's license. According to the Federal Highway Administration, 68% of all 19-year-olds in Kentucky have their driver's licenses.

Respondents to the YOYO indicated that they are slightly less likely to be registered to vote than the general population. 53% of respondents indicated that they were registered to vote, a seven-percentage-point drop from 2023, while Kentucky's general population of 18-24-year-olds reported a 61% registration rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). While many people register to vote when getting their licenses, 21.8% of the respondents with licenses were not registered to vote.

Comparing data on participants with guardians to those with licenses and/or registered to vote revealed that if a guardian had been appointed, the exiter was much less likely to drive or vote. For those exiters without guardians, 24% did not have licenses, and 40% had not registered to vote. 72% of exiters with a guardian did not have a license, and 72% had not registered to vote.

Another question asked in the YOYO regarding community participation is where exiters have lived for most of the past year. The vast majority (78%) indicated living with their family, while 5% indicated living alone. Another 6% indicated they lived most of the previous year in a college dormitory or military housing. 5% indicated that they live with a spouse or partner, and another 4% indicated that they live with friends. These percentages have remained consistent over the last several years. Roughly 2% indicated that they lived in a foster home, group home, shelter, or correctional facility. Although this is a small percentage, it is double that of last year. Exiters who had not been employed or enrolled in further education since high school were asked how they spent their time and were able to report multiple ways. Of the 703 exiters who responded to the question, the majority (96%) indicated that they spend their time "at home," and 38% of the exiters who noted spending their time at home indicated that they helped with family chores or caring for family members.

Being an active member of the community and enjoying a higher quality of life involves having hobbies and participating in community or religious groups. Only 1,062 people responded to this question. Of those, only 43.8% indicated they were engaged in the community or had a hobby. Since exiters could give multiple answers, just over half of the respondents reported spending time on hobbies, including



community organizations and church groups. Other responses included spending time at appointments (17%) and working without pay outside the home (8.7%). These percentages have remained consistent over the last several years.

Exiters' Perceptions of Effective High School Practices

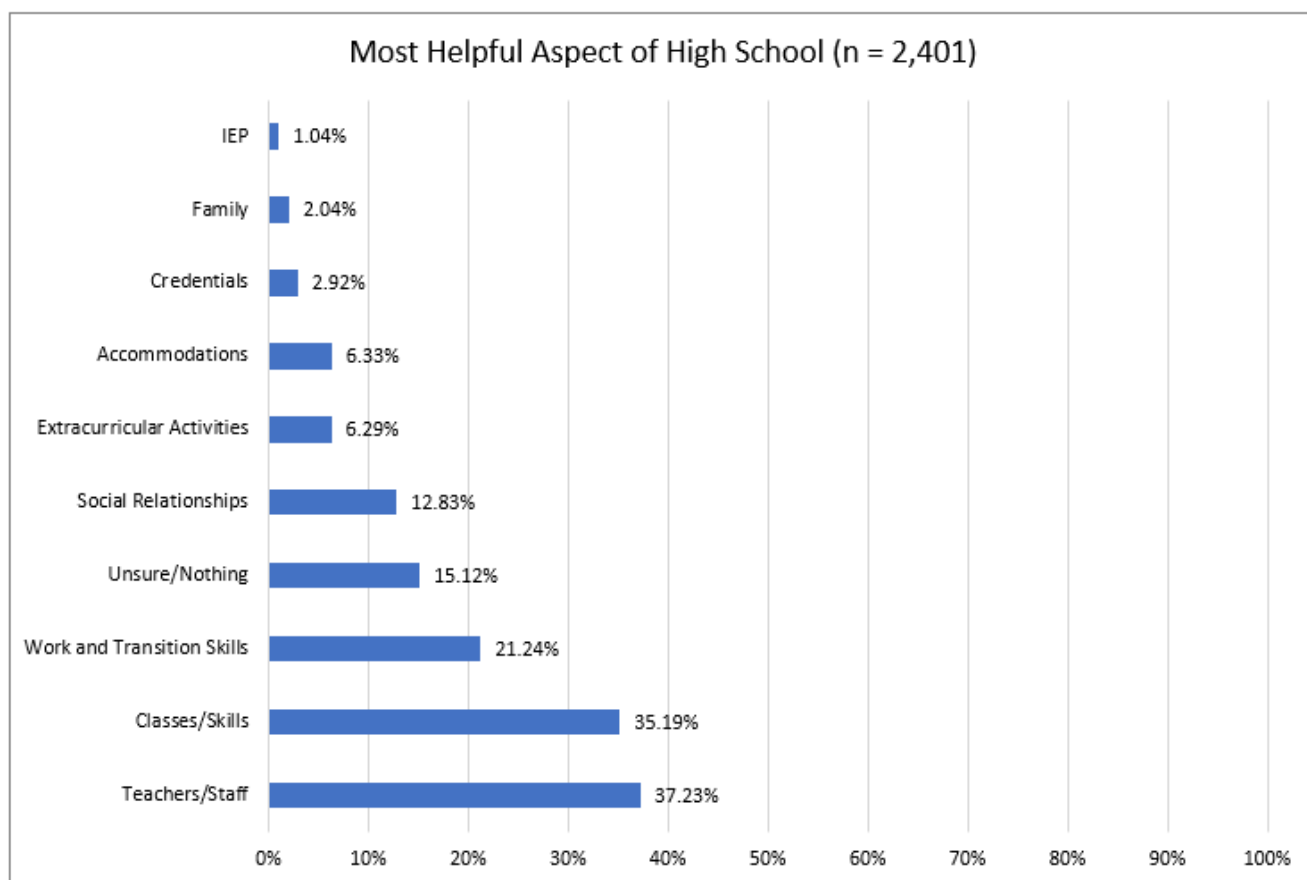
To gather more information about the exiters' experiences in high school, exiters were asked to "Name the most important thing during high school that helped you in your life right now" (Figure 20). 2,401 respondents answered this question with a response rate of 79.67%. Many exiters (37.1%) reported that the support and encouragement they received from teachers and other staff (e.g., coaches, guidance counselors, speech therapists, and principals) were most helpful. The second most common response was that 35.1% of the respondents mentioned specific classes, educational skills, or specific subject areas (e.g., math, welding). Transition programming mentioned included OVR, the Community Work Transition Program (CWTP), and the Career and Technical Education (CTE).

Very few exiters (1.0%) specifically indicated that they benefited from their IEP; however, 6.3% identified specific accommodations, such as extra time for testing, one-on-one instruction, and small classes, as important to their learning. Extracurricular activities, such as sports, art programs, band, and clubs, were cited as important by 6.28% of the respondents. It is also worth noting that 15.1% of the respondents stated that nothing was important or they did not know what was most important to their post-school life.

"School has helped him advocate for himself. He wouldn't be the person that he is without school and all the teachers that have helped him".



Figure 20 - Most Helpful Aspect of High School



It is interesting to note that of the students who exited high school with an alternative diploma or aging out and responded to this question, 23% were employed and 7.4% pursued further education. Of these respondents, 19.5% specifically mentioned transition activities as most helpful, but of those employed and/or pursuing further education, 40% specifically mentioned this. Activities identified included Community Work Transition Program (CWTP), Employment Specialists, on-the-job training, vocational classes, and job exploration.

"Being a part of the marching band helped me with social skills."

Exiters were allowed to identify multiple factors that were helpful to them. 22.8% of these respondents specifically mentioned friends, social relationships, and/or peers as most helpful. 9% mentioned daily living skills, and one-fourth said that teachers were the most important.



It is important to clarify that exiters who did not specifically mention transition activities as the most helpful did not mean they did not participate in those programs. KYP SO has been interested in documenting the actual frequency with which exiters with IEPs take CTE courses and, more importantly, the impact that doing so has on their post-school outcomes. This year, KYP SO, with the help of KYSTATS, was able to gather more information regarding CTE and exiters with disabilities. This information can be found in the Findings from Data Synthesis section of this report.

At the end of the YOYO, the interviewer asks the respondents if they would like more information regarding transition and transition services discussed throughout the survey. If so, they would provide corresponding contact information. Interviewers then note what information was shared. Just over 300 YOYO participants indicated they would like additional information. One-fourth requested local school contact information, including that of the interviewer, school counselors, and the special education office, to request copies of transcripts and IEPs, and to find out more about employment and education services available.

Interviewers often voluntarily share their own information as a resource with respondents, 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 (DOSEs) may also be identifying interviewers who are knowledgeable in these areas and personally invested in the outcomes of their former exiters.

Information on how to access resources for the college they were attending or interested in attending was requested by 16% of the respondents. Information requested included topics such as the application process, identifying majors and choosing classes, and accessing the DSC. This supports the data already discussed regarding the low percentage of exiters who contact their DSC and the importance of providing instruction in self-determination during high school to access and advocate for support services post-high school.

15.6% received information on employment resources and trade schools (frequently mentioned were Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Kentucky Career Center, mynextmove.org, and

Key transition activities for exiters who graduated with an alternative diploma and were employed:

- CWTP
- Employment Specialists
- On-the-job training
- Vocational Classes
- Job Exploration



local employment offices), and information about OVR was shared with 14% of the participants. Another 7% wanted to know about community programs such as adult day programs, transportation and driver's license offices, the Social Security Office (e.g., SSI, Medicaid), guardianship, and other community agency resources.

Findings from Data Synthesis

KYPSO continues to be interested in the impact of inclusion in the general education environment on post-school outcomes. This year marks the second year in which we are able to measure this. To do so, we collected individual-level data on the amount of time exiters spent in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). These data were provided to KYPSO by KDE. When viewed in aggregate, data regarding time spent in the LRE is encouraging, with only a slight decrease (69.9%) from last year, as exiters with IEPs spent at least 80% of their school day in the LRE. Higher incidence disabilities, such as Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and those with Other Health Impairment (OHI), skew these numbers to look very favorable. 89% and 79.5% of exiters with these disability labels are included in the general education setting for at least 80% of the school day. However, lower incidence disabilities, such as exiters with FMD (5.5%) and Multiple Disabilities (31.8%), spend far greater amounts of their day in segregated settings, although this is an improvement over last year. Another meaningful way to analyze this data is to examine LRE by type of high school exit (our proxy for diploma track). Overall, of those who received regular diplomas, 78% spend at least 80% of their day in general education classes. Among those who received alternative diplomas, 7% spent at least 80% of their day in general education, while 57% spent less than 40% in inclusive settings. While these numbers are lower than ideal, they do show an improvement from last year. Because these data were provided for the full population, this includes persons who did not respond to the YOYO.

It might be assumed that exiters with more involved disabilities would spend more time in segregated settings. However, it is useful to examine how placement impacts outcomes. When we examine those exiters who are on the alternate assessment, we see differences in employment outcomes based on LRE data. Even though very few exiters who received alternative diplomas spend 80% or more time in general education, 24% of those exiters were employed in the year since their exit. On the other hand, 19% of those exiters who received alternative diplomas and spent less than 40% of their time in general education were employed in any manner in the year following exit. In 2024, both groups (LRE >80% and LRE <40%) showed improvement in employment outcomes, with a far greater share of those with less time in the LRE being employed than in 2023. Still, students who spend more time in the LRE consistently have better employment outcomes, which is corroborated by national research (e.g., Mazzotti et al., 2021). While this is not a perfect control group, and there are undoubtedly differences in the exiters, we believe that this is compelling evidence for the value of inclusion in general education settings.



When we look at exiters who received alternative diplomas, overall, 76% spend 40% or less of their day in general education. The issue of placement in inclusive settings demonstrates disparities by race or ethnicity. When we look at exiters who received alternative diplomas, we find that 70% of White exiters spent less than 40% of their school day in general education settings. However, for Hispanic exiters, this figure is 77%, and for Black exiters, this figure is 82%. These percentages are disproportionately higher than expected.

Similar to last year, we find that the high rate of exiters with autism going on to higher education (19.1%) is almost entirely driven by those exiters with autism who are included in general education settings for at least 80% of the day. 86% of those exiters with autism who went on to higher education were included in general education for at least 80% of the school day. In comparison, only 12% of those who were included between 40 and 80% of the school day went to higher education, and 2% of those who spent less than 40% of their time in general education went on to higher education.

59% of exiters with autism who spent at least 80% of their day in inclusive settings went on to some other form of postsecondary education, while fewer than 14% of exiters who spent less than 40% of their day in separate settings went on to other postsecondary education. Similar trends are observed for employment outcomes, where 28% of exiters with autism were competitively employed if they spent 80% or more of their day in the LRE, while only 5% of those with under 40% time in the LRE were competitively employed. Only 57% of exiters with autism were found to spend at least 80% of the average school day in a general education setting.

Career and Technical Education

For the second year, KYSTATS helped us obtain data regarding the level of CTE involvement of former students. We linked these to YOYO outcomes. As can be seen in Table 13 and Figure 21, employment outcomes aligned very favorably with CTE status. A CTE Concentrator is defined as a person who has taken at least two CTE courses in a single field of study. A CTE Explorer is someone who has taken at least one CTE course. Among those who were considered CTE completers, 55% went on to competitive employment, while another 16% went on to other employment. It is encouraging to see that students with IEPs are well represented among CTE Completers, with 30% of students with IEPs in this category, and 32% considered Concentrators. It would be useful to examine which disability types are most highly involved with CTE programs to ensure that students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities receive the same level of instruction and gain the same benefits from these courses.

This is a limitation of our reliance on the aggregate data, which we receive from KYSTATS. However, we have requested CTE items to be added in the dataset we receive from KDE directly so that we can disaggregate these outcomes more fully. The relationship between CTE and postsecondary education was not as striking. However, it did show a higher likelihood of going on to postsecondary education for those more involved with CTE programs. In instances of both employment and postsecondary

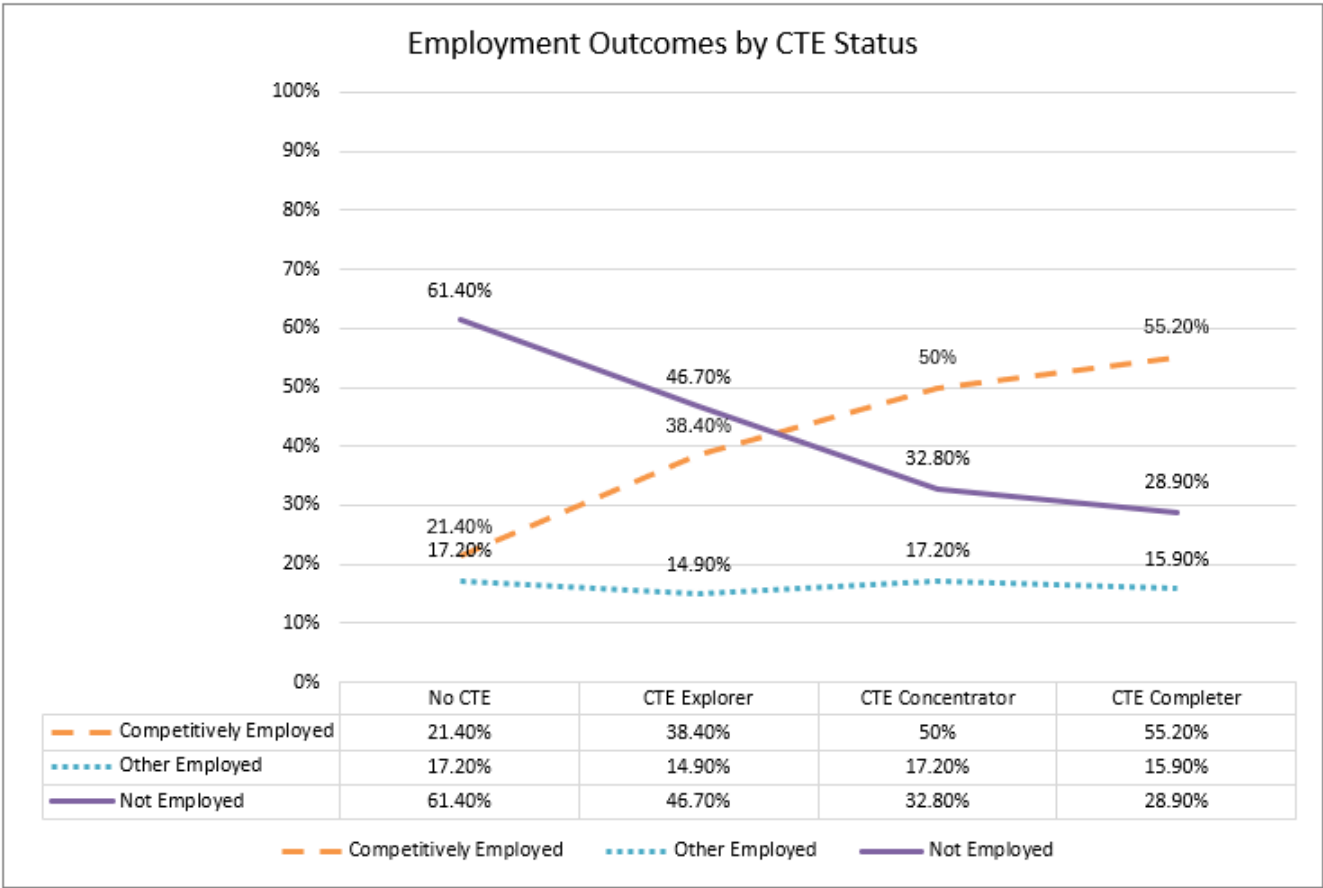


education, the relationship between CTE status and positive post-school outcomes appears to be even stronger than in 2023.

Table 13- Employment Outcomes by CTE Status

Employment Outcomes by CTE Status	Competitively Employed	Other Employed	Not Employed
CTE Completer	55.2	15.9%	28.9%
CTE Concentrator	50%	17.2%	32.8%
CTE Explorer	38.4%	14.9%	46.7%
No CTE	21.4%	17.2%	61.4%

Figure 21 - Employment Outcomes by CTE Status



Postsecondary Readiness

We continue to examine the relationship between the state’s definition of Postsecondary Readiness and actual post-school outcomes as measured by the YOYO. The actual definition for Postsecondary Readiness from KDE is “...the attainment of the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions for an exiter to successfully transition to the next level of his or her educational career” (KDE, 2024). To demonstrate Postsecondary Readiness, the exiter must meet one type of readiness (Academic or Career).

Actual measures include meeting academic benchmarks, industry certifications, or work-based experiences. With data provided by KYSTATS, we are able to examine this. As can be seen in Table 14, postsecondary education aligns fairly well with the state’s definition of college readiness. Among those who were deemed to be both College Ready and Career Ready, 46.8% reported going on to higher education in the year since exiting high school. This is nearly identical to last year’s rate. Those who are deemed College Ready have a postsecondary enrollment rate of 32.9%, down almost ten points from 2023. The number drops off dramatically for those not in these categories. Those deemed to be Career Ready go on to higher education 16.2% of the time, and those who are identified as neither College Ready nor Career Ready only go on to higher education 9.3% of the time. In terms of other postsecondary education, there is little variance in outcomes based on College and Career Readiness measures. It should be noted that over half of exiters with IEPs are not deemed to be College Ready or Career Ready at all.

Table 14 - Postsecondary Readiness by Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary Readiness by Postsecondary Education	Higher Education	Other Education	No Education
Academic and Career Ready	46.8%	8%	45.2%
Academic Ready Only	32.9%	6.2%	60.8%
Career Ready Only	16.2%	9.9%	73.8%
Not Academic or Career Ready	9.3%	5.6%	85.1%

Employment outcomes tell a somewhat different story. Although the numbers do support better employment outcomes for those deemed Career Ready, the magnitude of difference is not as great. In Table 15, those who were deemed solely Career Ready go on to competitive employment 59.8% of the time in the year following high school, which is the highest of all groups. Those who are deemed to be both College Ready and

“Postsecondary Readiness is the attainment of the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions for a student to successfully transition to the next level of his or her educational career.”

-Kentucky Department of Education, 2024



Career Ready obtain competitive employment 47.9% of the time. However, there is less of a negative impact of not being Career Ready on employment outcomes. Among those who were solely deemed College Ready, 47.6% still obtained competitive employment, and those who were deemed neither College Ready nor Career Ready obtained competitive employment 38.2% of the time. We might take these findings to suggest that College Readiness is universally beneficial to both types of outcomes, while Career Readiness more specifically impacts employment.

Table 15 - Postsecondary Readiness by Employment

Postsecondary Readiness by Employment	Competitively Employed	Other Employed	Not Employed
Academic and Career Ready	47.9%	18.3%	33.8%
Academic Ready Only	47.6%	18%	34.4%
Career Ready Only	59.8%	17.4%	22.7%
Not Academic or Career Ready	38.2%	14.8%	47.1%

As in the previous year, we do not have data that disaggregates Postsecondary Readiness scores by type of disability. We would strongly suspect that there is significant variation in the degree to which Postsecondary Readiness is predictive of post-school outcomes. We find it both surprising and somewhat encouraging that a large number of exiters who are not considered to be Career Ready go on to find competitive employment. However, the reasons for this need to be explored. Perhaps exiters with IEPs who are finding jobs are doing so largely without the help of traditional job preparation programs through the school.

Homelessness

We continue to examine outcomes for exiters experiencing homelessness. Approximately 3% of all exiters in Kentucky are considered to be homeless (National Center for Homeless Education). For exiters with disabilities, this number is slightly higher, with our own research indicating that 4.4% of high school exiters in the 2022-2023 school year were considered to be homeless, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This includes any exiter who does not have a fixed, stable, and adequate nightly residence. We were particularly concerned that we were not capturing the exiters in our post-school outcomes research due to the transient nature of their lives, but until now, we had no way to know if this was the case or not. We also wanted to examine what their post-school outcomes were in terms of employment and education.

As in 2023, we found that homeless exiters are not underrepresented in our population for the YOYO. Our sample includes 4.4% of exiters identified as being eligible for McKinney-Vento services, which is almost identical to the percentage in the population under study. While we have no way of knowing why this seemingly counterintuitive result occurs, we might speculate that for youth experiencing



homelessness, having a stable telephone number might be more important to them than it is to others. It is also possible that, due to the McKinney-Vento services, including those of local homelessness coordinators, schools may have more effective ways of contacting these exiters. For whatever reason, this is a promising finding and may serve as a model for increasing response rates for other groups that do not face the same challenges as this one.

We examined trends in employment for homeless exiters. 43% of homeless exiters reported being competitively employed within one year of exiting high school. This is similar to the 45% of exiters who are not homeless and report competitive employment. While these rates are similar, the rate of competitive employment for homeless exiters was 54% in 2023, much higher than for both non-homeless and homeless individuals in our 2024 findings.

Education outcomes among homeless exiters were also similar to those of the non-homeless. 16% of homeless exiters went on to higher education, compared to 19% of the housed. The McKinney-Vento program assists with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms and aims to promote postsecondary education among homeless youth. Higher education rates rose 5 points since last year for the homeless, which we take as an encouraging sign.

Guardianship

The “school to guardianship pipeline” has been frequently noted in recent literature (American Bar Association 2025; Martinis et al. 2024; Smith-Hill et al. 2022), with the consensus being that alternatives to guardianship, such as Supported Decision-Making, foster greater self-determination, leading to more positive outcomes. We again asked the YOYO respondents a question, asking whether they had a legal guardian. Understanding that this could be a difficult question for young people to answer, we instructed interviewers to note if the respondent did not know the answer, marking the interview accordingly.

As was the case last year, only about 5% of respondents did not respond to this question. Meanwhile, 71% indicated that they did not have a legal guardian, while 24% stated that they did. There was a huge variation between disability types in who did and did not report having a legal guardian. See Table 16 for a full breakdown by disability regarding who reported having a legal guardian. The questions do not delve into whether the guardianship was a full guardianship, a limited guardianship, or involved some type of conservatorship. Nevertheless, the findings regarding the outcomes of exiters who reported having legal guardians are striking.



Table 16 - Guardianship by Disability

Disability Type	% Reported Having Guardian
Autism (N=341)	46%
Emotional Behavioral Disability (N=190)	13%
Functional Mental Disability (N=152)	64%
Hearing Impairment (N=19)	11%
Mild Mental Disability (N=494)	22%
Multiple Disabilities (N=95)	67%
Orthopedic Impairment (N=15)	20%
Other Health Impairment (N=808)	15%
Specific Learning Disability (N=843)	19%
Speech or Language Impairment (N=17)	18%
Traumatic Brain Injury (N=8)	50%
Visual Impairment (N=24)	25%
Total (N=3,015)	24%

Because guardianship is a phenomenon most closely associated with more severe disabilities, most of our analysis of post-school outcomes and guardianship focuses on those students who exited with alternative diplomas. Upon request, we could also examine different disability types or other breakdowns; however, we believe that the diploma track is the most robust proxy for the severity of disability. It also allows us to make a close comparison between similar exiters with and without guardians. Among exiters who exited high school with an alternative diploma, 74% reported having guardians, while 21% did not.



Earlier in this report, we discussed the low levels of employment for students who have exited on the alternative diploma. The discrepancy between exiters on the alternative diploma who go on to competitive employment one year after high school varies greatly between those with and without guardians. For those with guardians (which, again, represents 74% of this group), less than 3% obtained competitive employment. Of the 21% of exiters on the alternative diploma who reported not having guardians, 13% achieved competitive employment within a year after exiting high school. Both numbers are down from last year.

While we would in no way argue that guardianship alone is the sole factor contributing to a young person's inability to become competitively employed, we cannot ignore the fact that the rate of competitive employment is over four times higher for exiters without guardianship compared to a




similar group of exiters who have guardians. This finding is consistent over the two years we have asked this question.

If we assume that the ‘guardianship effect’ is real, and use a statistical model to predict what employment outcomes would look like if students on the alternative diploma had half the rate of guardianship that they currently do, we would see eight more students competitively employed.

Supported decision-making is gaining traction within the disability community as a person-centered alternative to guardianship, allowing individuals with disabilities to make choices about their lives (Blanck, P. 2023). The [My Choice Kentucky](#) project at HDI is a Kentucky-specific initiative focused on discovering alternatives to guardianship for individuals with disabilities.

The more schools and other community members incorporate principles of self-determination into transition planning, the more positive outcomes we can expect to see for this group (Shogren and Ward, 2018).



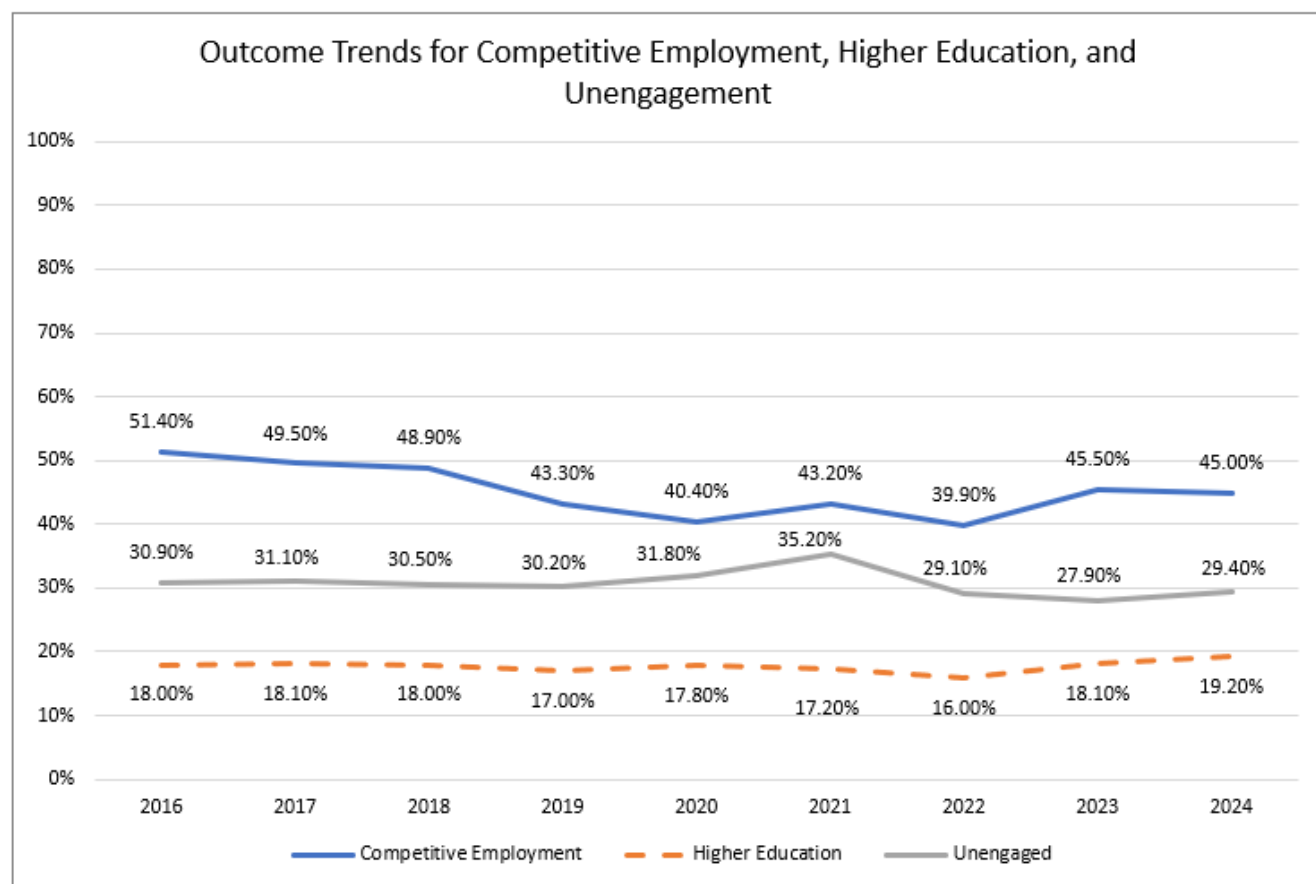
Supported decision-making is the use of trusted friends, family members, and professionals to get the help we need to make our own decisions. This help can come in many forms, including but not limited to evaluating a situation, weighing pros and cons, exploring options, offering advice based on experience, and/or explaining complicated documents or concepts.

Conclusion

Reviewing data trends as well as specific yearly data helps improve the effectiveness and validity of using the data to make programmatic decisions. When appropriate, we have provided longitudinal data. The figure below (Figure 22) presents an overarching picture of Indicator 14 outcomes from 2016 to 2024.



Figure 22 - Outcome Trends for Competitive Employment, Higher Education, and Unengagement



Competitive employment rates were highest in 2016 and have not yet fully rebounded back to these levels. However, the significant dip in 2022 appears to have corrected to 45% and remains in that area. The results for 2021 and 2022 clearly illustrate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and related educational, cultural, and financial changes. In 2023 and 2024, outcomes rebounded. 2024 has surpassed all enrollment data since 2016. If we ignore the 2021 data, nonengagement rates present a fairly flat data line.

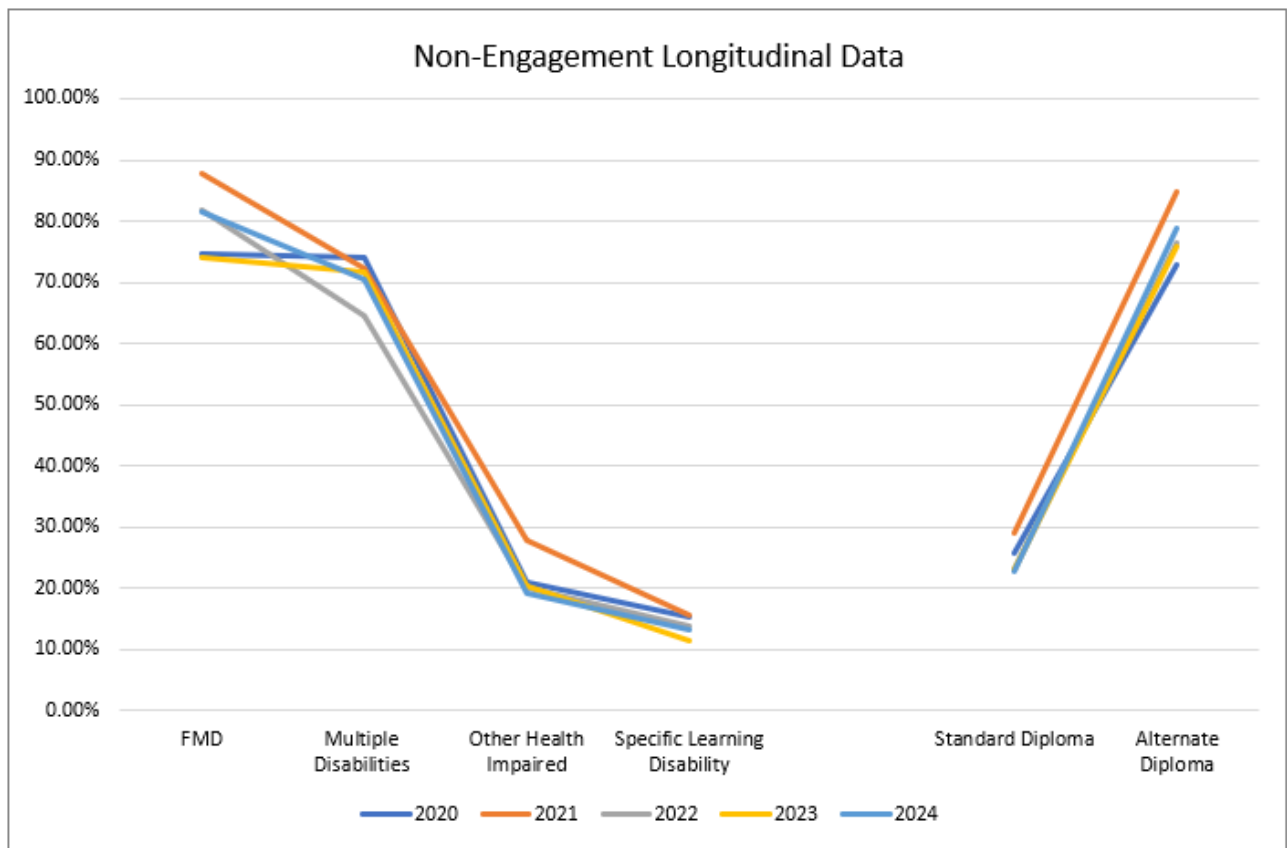
Disparities continue to exist in many outcomes related to race/ethnicity, disability type, and exit from high school. Black/African American exiters experienced a 5.3% decrease in competitive employment rates, marking the end of this group having the highest rates of competitive employment. Non-engagement is increasing among nearly all ethnic groups. However, it is highest among multi-race and Black exiters. It has decreased for Hispanics.

When data is disaggregated by disability type, it demonstrates that students with high incidence disabilities such as SLD and OHI continue to do comparatively well when compared against other disability groups, although students with any disability continue to have poorer outcomes than those without a disability. For those groups of exiters that have persistently had the worst outcomes, such as



those with Functional Mental Disability (FMD) who are on the alternate diploma track, there is little sign that outcomes are improving. Figure 23 provides longitudinal data for nonengagement by disability labels and diploma type.

Figure 23 - Non-Engagement Longitudinal Data



For instance, in 2024, 81.6% of exiters with FMD are non-engaged, compared to 74.1% in 2023 and 81.8% in 2022. On the other hand, students with a label of Other Health Impairment (OHI) had non-engagement rates of 19.1% in 2024, 20.5% in 2023, and 20.1% in 2022.

Surveys for educators, families, and individuals with disabilities can help identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement in services and programs, thereby enhancing outcomes for those who graduate with an alternative diploma or age out of the special education system.

We have consistently received very small numbers of exiters who report using accommodations at work. While this may indicate that requests for accommodations are either not needed or not requested, it may also be an opportunity for KYP SO to expand its examples of accommodations. In the coming year, we plan to include new accommodations such as flexible schedules, screen readers, and remote or hybrid work options, to more fully explore the types of support that young people with disabilities access.



High expectations and awareness of transition supports are vital components of positive post-secondary outcomes, such as being engaged in the community and having a job. Data indicated that 40% of exiters who graduated with an alternative diploma or aged out of the special education program did not work because of “their disability.” These findings indicate the need to evaluate key attitudes, beliefs, programs, and supports in place for exiters, their families or guardians, and their educators.

Educators and administrators need to review their practices and supports. First, ensure all educators and administrators are aware of supports and services available. Second, determine to what degree evidence-based and research-based practices that align with positive outcomes are being implemented in all grades, and finally, review biases that might be unintentionally limiting outcomes for students due to a disability label, assessment score, or type of assessment. Using evidence, research, and promising practices identified in Mazzotti et al., (2020), along with the data from the YOYO, indicates the following practices should be reviewed to ensure they are implemented with fidelity.

1. Inclusive education practices for students who have extensive support needs or disability labels such as autism, mild and moderate mental disabilities, or functional mental disabilities.
2. The consistent and effective use of aided language modeling for students who are building their communication skills, especially if that student uses an alternative or augmentative communication device.
3. Practices related to assigning students to different large-scale assessments. Placing a student on the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards should not dictate the student’s placement in general education classes. Nor should it remove access to the general education curriculum and content, even though the student might be responsible for performing at different levels of difficulty and complexity, they should still have full access to the general education curriculum.
4. The explicit teaching and use of self-determination and advocacy skills so students, regardless of disability label, are able to identify supports, resources, and services that best meet their needs in and out of school.
5. Opportunities for paid work for all students, but especially for students with low-incidence disabilities and those who have extensive support needs.
6. Family, student, and educator outreach and development around evidence- and research-based practices such as those noted above. This outreach could also include examples of students with all types of disabilities being engaged as adults with agency in their own lives and how that might look different for different people. Much of this will need to be done collaboratively between education (special education, general education, and CTE), parents, and vocational service providers. KYP SO is uniquely positioned to analyze the effectiveness of many of these programs if data were to be made available.



7. Access and support for CTE courses for all students with disabilities.

One of the common themes across time has been the request for or appreciation of hands-on, real-world classes. Taking CTE courses correlates positively with competitive employment. CTE completers have the highest rating of competitive employment (55.2%), while CTE concentrators are close with 50% of respondents competitively employed. Even CTE exploration correlates with higher rates of competitive employment compared to not taking any CTE courses at all. Those with no CTE courses have the highest rate of unemployment (61.4%), more than double that of CTE completers and almost double that of CTE concentrators. Programs should investigate who has access to CTE courses and what is needed for students to successfully complete them.

KYPSO Support

The ability to obtain individual-level CTE data would allow for the disaggregation of both the distribution and the relationship of CTE services to post-school outcomes. As outlined earlier in this report, CTE appears to be a valuable program for students with disabilities, but limited inferences can be made about its implementation and effectiveness across disability groups. This has been added to our data agreement for upcoming years. Other data, including student in-school surveys, IEP review, and transition program involvement, would allow for a deeper synthesis with YOYO data and help to further identify successful practices being conducted throughout the state. KYPSO is well-positioned to evaluate the relative impact of many initiatives related to post-school outcomes if data on exiters participating in programs can be shared, and we regularly encourage transition service providers, including districts, SERTACs, and the state, to more fully utilize our services.

In the upcoming year, KYPSO plans to make extensive changes to its reporting system. Our current system utilizes Microsoft Report Builder, which Microsoft is dropping support for. As we switch to Power BI, we will ensure our continued ability to provide educators and representatives from other agencies (as well as parents, exiters, and the public) with greater, faster, and more visual 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-ETS and/or changes in instructional programs. Statewide data showing the intersection of education and employment outcomes is and will be publicly available on the [KYPSO website](#). These data can be disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, disability category, manner of exit, and year (for the past five years, as well as the cumulative total for the past five years). 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 SERTAC levels, including a detailed analysis of the items in this report.

Our staff has collaborated with SERTACs and districts to utilize this reporting system, analyze the results, and make data-driven decisions to enhance transition programs and instruction. We have also begun sharing monthly one-sheet infographics that highlight aspects of YOYO data at the SERTAC level,



and we provide resources to help improve in these areas. After receiving feedback from SERTAC Directors and others who shared these monthly reports, we have refined the focus and structure to mirror the latest data on evidence- and research-based and promising practices that have been shown to have positive impacts on education, independent living, and employment. SERTAC administrators indicated that this structure would better enable them to review their outcomes and make improvements.

Although our data are unique to Kentucky, many of the best practices related to secondary transition hold true throughout the United States and elsewhere. Our national partners have praised us for being among the most innovative in terms of data collection and reporting. We work with the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) to enhance our knowledge regarding best practices.

We have extensive expertise working with schools and school systems, as well as other stakeholders, both within KYPSO and the Human Development Institute (HDI). We hope to continue having opportunities to work at all levels to improve transition outcomes for students with disabilities who are exiting high school.

If you would like to discuss the findings presented in this report, please contact Tony LoBianco, KYPSO Project Director, at tflobi1@uky.edu



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