

WHAT ARE OUR DIRECTIONS FROM HERE? HOW DO WE BUILD AN EVEN BETTER SCHOOL?

- There is an alumni link to the school's Facebook page and alumni have their own page.
- The rigor of college preparation courses has been increased. Stricter timelines for assignment completion have been imposed.
- Do a better job of helping students apply and be accepted into post-secondary schools.
- A secondary analysis of the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS-2) showed a positive connection between parent expectations and student outcomes. Our transition program will work with families to support appropriate post-secondary expectations.
- We have added Academies to push students further in technology, performing arts, and health careers.
- We have added an adult social club for graduates (Harbour Alumni Social Club).
- We continue to offer an after-school social skills class and social skills for all students during the school day.



CONCLUSION

At The Harbour School, we believe in the law of physics that nothing stays the same. We either get better or not. We are definitely committed to getting better. The Harbour School has just completed its 34th year as a school. We have achieved a great deal. And there is much left to do. It is clear from this year's responses that we need to do a better job educating our families so that they understand the post-secondary challenges for their children and the importance of good soft work skills and social skills in meeting those challenges. Too often, our families buy into the academic standards approach and neglect what will really impede their children from taking the next step into adulthood until the entitlements run out.

We believe that our fledgling birds will fly further and faster if they are not only well fed, but also have a clear focus on where they are going. We are a fine, fine school with fine, fine students and fine, fine teachers! It is no wonder we all just love this school!

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POST-SECONDARY SCHOOLS & INTERESTING JOBS

4 YEAR COLLEGES

American University
Arizona State University
Bowie State
Cabrillo
Culinary Institute of Jerusalem
Delaware State University
Delaware Technical Institute
Elizabeth State University
Frostburg State University
Full Sail University
Leslie College
Lincoln Tech
McDaniel College
North Idaho College
Salisbury State University
St. Mary's College
Towson University
University of Hawaii
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
University of Maryland, College Park
Washington Adventist University
Washington College

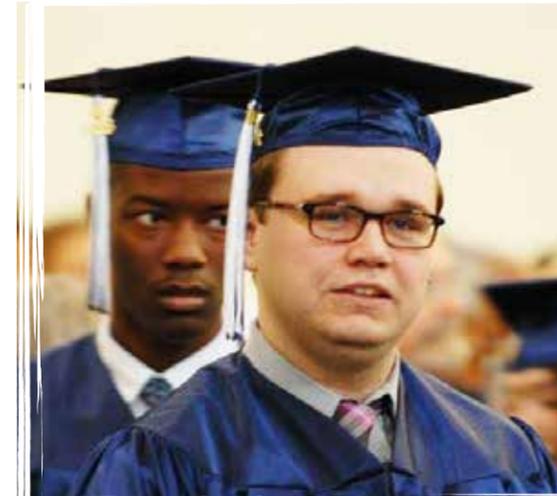
2 YEAR COLLEGES

Anne Arundel Community College
Brevard College
Carroll Community College
Chesapeake College
College of Southern Maryland
Community College of Baltimore County
Harrisburg Area Community College
Howard Community College
Jefferson Community College
Montgomery College
Paradise Valley Community College
Prince George's Community College

COOL EMPLOYERS

Anne Arundel County P.S.
Apple Call Center
ATK Space Systems
Baltimore City
Darcars
Dept. of Corrections
Dept. of the Interior
Dept. of Health & Human Services
Dept. of Juvenile Services
Dept. of Transportation
Dept. of Veterans Affairs
Federal Aviation Admin.
Howard County Public Schools
Infologics Corp.
Library of Congress
Lifebridge & Courtland Gardens
Maryland State Dept. of Education
Montgomery County, Maryland
Montgomery County Public Schools
NASA Goddard Space Center
National Institute for Science & Technology
National Institutes of Health
Norris Ford
RGIF
United States Army
Vermont State
World Bank

2016 GRADUATE OUTCOME SURVEY



Sometimes you need a third chance...

BY DR. JACOBS

A boy started in our middle school. His name is Patrick. Things did not go well for Patrick and The Harbour School. Patrick had lots of difficulty with inappropriate vocabulary and disrespectful behavior toward other kids. Very shortly Patrick entered high school. Vocabulary expanded and not for the better. There were lots of work refusals; poor attendance became the norm. Patrick kept insisting that he didn't need a school like Harbour. There was "nothing" wrong with him. He wanted to return to public school where he was sure all of his behavioral issues would go away.

So he did return to the public schools. The first semester life was good for Patrick in co-taught classes. Then teachers and administrators started having expectations that Patrick was not interested in meeting. He went so far as to threaten a teacher. Not a good idea. Before too long it was recommended that Patrick leave the public school and perhaps get a job and try the adult classes in the evenings to earn his high school diploma. Patrick tried that but the same expectations of conformance and homework kept popping up. It was suggested that Patrick take the GED exam and get his diploma that way. The GED exam is not a walk in the park and though Patrick really is a smart guy, you don't pass that test without some solid preparation.

Then Patrick decided he did need The Harbour School after all. So he made an appointment to see the Executive Director and he pled his case for a third shot. Patrick left Harbour with lots of bad memories on the part of the staff. He could not be re-directed and was sure he knew more than staff. Definitely not Mr. Congeniality. The Executive Director told Patrick he would need to make his argument for a return to the staff he had insulted when he was a student at Harbour.

The teachers who would be working with Patrick if he returned were convened. Patrick was scared but he made his pitch. Staff were not totally believing and set out strict guidelines for expectations. They wrote a contract. Patrick signed it. Patrick returned to Harbour.

Did everyone live happily ever after? Not exactly. But things were much better. Patrick even worked with some younger students and told them that he had been where they were now. Then Patrick tried out and earned the star role in *Fiddler On the Roof*, the spring musical. He was a sensation. He performed at the luncheon for the Maryland Association of Non-public Special Education Facilities. People were over the top impressed. At the end of the year, Patrick graduated at earned two scholarships for his next step in his education. One of the things he got out of his public school experience was his love of sign language. So that is where he is heading, he wants to be a sign language interpreter. Will he get there? We hope so. He has already achieved the goal of his high school diploma.

HOW MANY GRADS DID WE REACH?

Through June 2016, 449 students have graduated from The Harbour School. Six of our alumni are deceased. Through mail solicitation and follow-up phone calls we were able to reach 365 of our graduates or 82.3%, about the same as last year. This survey goes all the way back to 1991, our first graduating class.

GRADS LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

News is good. Overall, 24.9% of grads are living independently; a slight increase over last year. According to a 2013 study by Shaun Heasley reported in Disability Scoop, only 17% of people with autism ages 21–25 have ever lived independently. The current majority of our students has autism.

WHAT DOES THE LITERATURE TELL US?

A recent study reported in *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, a publication of the Council for Exceptional Children, reports on the significant value of teaching social skills in preparing students with disabilities for the working world. Their article reports that employment of people with disabilities has remained "unconscionably" low. This situation exists despite a hiring initiative on the federal level. The authors of this study (Agran, Hughes, Thorma and Scott, 2014) report that the overwhelming reason for people with disabilities not being employed is not because the individual cannot do the required job tasks. The primary reason is difficulty fitting socially in the workplace. Despite this consistent finding over a **thirty-year period of study**, schools are continually asked by legislators, parents and state school personnel to emphasize grade level academic skills to the exclusion of teaching soft workplace skills and social skills.

This study, "Employment Social Skills: What Skills Are Really Valued?" has similar findings to the studies that have gone before. This particular study asked professionals working with high school students to identify the social skills they believed would be conducive to employment. Here is the good news: The responses from these professionals were consistent with the findings of multiple other studies of what employers want. Here is the frightening news: Overwhelmingly, these professionals reported that these were not the skills they were allowed or encouraged to teach. There is a notion that democracy requires that all students regardless of learning challenges (or learning strengths) be taught the same grade level academic content.

Our position on this topic does not mean we believe in neglecting academic achievement. In this past school year, one of our students, Jacob, completed his bachelor's degree from St. Mary's College in Southern Maryland in the requisite four years. Another grad, James, was awarded the Gross Regents Scholar award. This young man achieved a 4.0 GPA in completing his Associates Degree. He has earned a University System of Maryland Board of Regents scholarship to attend the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. The Harbour School believes strongly in meeting students where they are and taking them to whatever heights their talents allow. We do NOT believe in putting students in any predetermined mold.

The dropout rate nationally and in Maryland is significantly higher for students with disabilities than it is for students not diagnosed. Smith, Manuel and Stokes (*Learning Disabilities* vol18.no2) indicate that, on average, 14% of students with disabilities drop out of high school. The *mdreportcard.org* reports that the annual event drop-out rate for students with disabilities is 5.4% and 3.0% for nondisabled students. The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates show 20.3% of students with disabilities not completing their program and 10.2% of plain students not completing the program over 4 years. The disabilities network recently reported that 77% of people with autism were NOT working.

Harbour students do NOT drop out. Over the last 25 years of the high school program only 2 students have not completed the high school program. We believe this low drop-out rate is due to the appropriateness of the curriculum to student need.

HOW DO WE COMPARE:

	THS	MANSEF	NTLS2
# of students:	365	210	12,000
Post-secondary	26.3%	57%	31.9%
Employed	85.2%	53%	48%
Criminal involvement	.2%	13%	Unknown

WHAT DO OUR GRADUATES TELL US?

Not surprisingly, the survey revealed a good bit of "too soon old, too late smart". A number of comments concerned the wish that the alumni had taken better advantage of opportunities while still in school.

Alumni wanted more structured opportunities to be with each other post-graduation.

Grads wanted more assistance in finding college placement.

Alums wanted more rigorous training for college preparation, such as deadlines, heavier workloads, more experience with doing job interviews.

Many families and graduates expressed appreciation for the program they received. "Really good and brilliant teachers. She's reaching her fullest potential," a parent noted.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS:

- Can't think of anything. The Harbour School taught me a lot. I feel confident in my job and feel comfortable with co-workers.
- Harbour School provided a nurturing and caring environment, keep doing what you do.
- More challenging work to prepare for college.
- Better prepared for adult services. Can't remember if we were warned or not about how hard it would be to get things moving.
- Give him life skills (cooking, cleaning, bills).
- I will always spell Harbour with a "u"
- Harbour was fabulous for my son
- Didn't want to leave Harbour. Harbour helped me become more independent and social.
- The Harbour School gave me the tools to go out in the real world and become independent at so many things. I have to still work on myself to get fully independent and I am doing that every day.
- Increase homework load so I would be better prepared for college.

Continued on reverse



**Number of
Harbour School
grads in
post-secondary
education, working,
or a combination:
93.1%**