



2009 GRADUATE OUTCOME SURVEY



Founded on August 30, 1982 as Innovative Learning Center, Inc, The Harbour School is comprised of campuses in Annapolis and Baltimore serving more than 260 students with learning disabilities, high functioning autism, Asperger's Syndrome and other disabilities in the first through twelfth grades from Maryland, Washington DC, Virginia and Pennsylvania. The school owes its success to the exceptional leadership and vision of its founder Dr. Linda Jacobs who serves as the school's Executive Director.

Dr. Jacobs' vision is supported by highly qualified faculty and staff at both campuses. The school's Village Curriculum is widely recognized in Maryland for its innovative approach, alignment with state standards, and the unqualified success of the students with diverse learning needs who have been exposed to it. In August 2004, the Village Curriculum became a part of the permanent collection of The Library of Congress.

The Harbour School is approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to receive funding from local boards of education in Maryland to provide special education programming as a nonpublic special education school. Our goals are to provide students with education, social skills training, job training and/or preparation for college.

Mission Statement

To provide a supportive, caring and individualized education to learning disabled and multi-disabled children. The program is tailored to meet the individual needs of the children rather than asking the child to adapt to an existing program. The child's learning style dictates our program.

It is our mission to assist each child to attain a feeling of academic and personal achievement and success commensurate with the child's abilities. Personal achievement includes success in social and vocational skills.

Our purpose is to keep The Harbour School a safe place where children with learning disabilities become successful learners.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE HARBOUR SCHOOL
Call us at 410-974-4248 or visit us online: www.harbourschool.org

Recession Hits, Harbour Grads Stay the Course

Beginning in 1997, The Harbour School has surveyed our graduates each year to determine how well they are making the transition to adulthood and to see how adequately we have done our job of preparing students for the next stage of their lives. The survey collects data on employment, post-secondary education, independent living, and services being received from community agencies. Our students continue to exceed the achievements of other students with disabilities and in some instances exceed those of students without disabilities.

Method:

Through June 2009, 243 students have graduated from The Harbour School at Annapolis and Baltimore. One of those students has deceased. In the late spring of each year a survey is mailed to the last known address of each alumni. Follow-up calls are made to each former student who does not mail in his/her survey. All follow-up work was completed by the end of July 2009. Data were compiled and tabulated in August. During the school year contact information on students is kept current through the school's alumni club, informal meetings with students, school activities and their visits to our school and email contacts. Whenever possible staff members spoke directly to the former students. In some instances information was obtained from the graduate's parent. Using these methods staff were able to obtain information from 177 or 72.8% of the 242 living graduates. This represents a decrease of 4% over last year. As with all Americans our students are moving about the country making it increasingly difficult to reach them.



Results:

Employment/Post Secondary Education/Vocational Programs:

Of the alumni providing information for this survey 138 (77.9%) were working. This number is an increase in both the number and the percentage of students working from last year's survey. The distinct difference between the employment rates of older graduates and more recent graduates continues. Students graduating in 1991-2005 were employed at a rate of 90.1 %; those of the later cohort (2006-2008) were employed at a rate of 61.3%. The falling economy of the last several years seems to be hurting our graduates. It is often the case that people with disabilities are the last hired.

The number of students in post-secondary education has increased. The percentage of our graduates attending post secondary education has decreased again to 26.5%. This percentage represents a decrease of more than 5% over last year and is a concern. Again a larger percentage (42.6%) of more recent graduates are in post secondary education programs than are the earlier graduates (20.6%). Considering that our first graduating class was in 1991, it is entirely possible that older graduates have completed their post secondary experience. The percentage of students attending school and not working has decreased again over last year from 11.6% to 10.7% this year. The percentage of recent graduates in post secondary education and not working have decreased from 19.6% last year to 16% this year. The number of students in vocational day programs has increased with 6.7% of graduates or 12 alumni in vocational day programs. Both the number and percentage have increased. There are 5 (6.6%) recent graduates in vocational day programs.

Overall the percent of alumni employed, in post-secondary education or attending vocational day training is 95.4% (169). This is up a full percentage point from last year's survey. These data are all the more impressive when one considers that The Harbour School serves students with a wide variety of disabilities and cognitive levels. The Harbour School continues to exceed what all other studies have shown; it is also an increase from last year's survey results. There are several explanations. A few female graduates are returning to the job market. While the global economy has sent many non-college jobs to other national markets, our students are finding a niche in the service sector, as are many of their fellow citizens. The service economy is doing well; and our graduates are learning the hard way, in some cases, that good social skills will be required for them to be successful. More of our students are finding success in post-secondary education facilities. A few of our students are taking advantage of vocational training opportunities. Additionally, funds for adult services have been reduced.

Utilization of Adult Services:

Utilization of adult services by Harbour School graduates has been relatively steady over the years. Our transition programs have placed strong emphasis on having students connect with the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) and the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) prior to completing their Harbour School programs. However, the agencies themselves have been plagued with limited funds, high staff turnover and heavy caseloads.

DDA is currently providing services to 32.2% of our alumni. Percentage of utilization of DDA services is very similar between older grads and more recent ones. (1991-2005, 32.3%, 2004-07, 32%). This similarity is different from previous years when a greater percentage of more recent grads was served. One can only guess that older grads are returning for re-training. The percentage of graduates receiving service from DORS is 59.8%. Here more recent grads (2006-08-81.3%) seem to be using the service more than older grads (1991-2005-44.1%) The current economy seems to have increased the training benefits of DORS as well as our transition program has worked hard to

ensure that our graduates make this connection.

No current alum is reporting using the services of the Mental Hygiene Administration. This lack of use may be the result of differing eligibility standards and reduced funds for mental health services over all. In the past we have had as many as 4 grads using MHA services. This agency has never been a major resource for our students.

A significant minority of our students is receiving social security benefits. Sixty-seven of our grads are receiving benefits (37.8%). More recent grads are more likely to make that connection. Almost half of the alumni receiving benefits are from the last three graduating classes (37 grads, 49.3%)

Living Independently:

Living independently continues to be a challenge for our alumni. The economy, the high cost of housing, and insufficient support services continue to be major reasons cited by our graduates for why they live with family. However, our number of graduates living independently went up slightly this year. At the time of the study, 36 (20.3%) alumni were living independently. This number is an increase of two from last year but represents a smaller percentage. The longer the alumni have been out of school the greater the likelihood of their living independently. In the greater population, “boomerang” young adults are returning to live with family as well, many for the same reasons as our young adults with disabilities.

Comparison to Previous Harbour School Follow-up Studies:



The overall paid employment rate has decreased slightly from last year (73%-2006, 75.3%-2007, 78.5%-2008, 77.9% 2009). Our percentage of recent grads in post-secondary education is at 42.6%, a percentage that is greater than many comprehensive high schools. The percentage of grads attending school and not working has decreased again this year to 10.7%. Overall the employment rate of our graduates has increased every year, with the exception of this year, from the initial rate of 54% in 1997. Even this year, with the greatest recession since the Great Depression, our alumni employment rate decreased ONLY six tenths of one percent (.6%).

There is an increase in the percentage of students living independently. This situation may also be a reflection of the larger economy. A recent Baltimore Sun article indicated that while the unemployment rate for all workers in Maryland is 4.3 % (July 2008), better than the national average of 5.7%, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities in Maryland is at 67%!! Nationally 80.2% of people with disabilities are unemployed.

The number of Harbour School graduates attending post-secondary education has increased, as has the variety of schools they are attending. Students report attending the following schools:

<i>Community Colleges:</i>	<i>Four-year colleges:</i>
Anne Arundel	American University
Community College of Baltimore County	Delaware State University
Howard	University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC)
Montgomery College	University of Maryland College Park (UMCP)
Prince George’s	Bowie State College
College of Southern Maryland	Elizabeth City State College
	Towson University
	Frostburg State University
Technical Schools:	Louisburg College
Lincoln Tech	Florida A & M
	Cabrillo College
	North Idaho College
	Leslie College

Comparisons to National/State Follow-up Studies:

Our nation is presently nineteen years past the passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and thirty-four years beyond the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), later named the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), most studies show that almost 75% of people with disabilities remain unemployed. Many more are underemployed. A Cornell University Study¹ found that since 1995 the employment rate for women with disabilities is 33.06% compared with 80.06% for women without disabilities. For men with disabilities, the employment rate is 36.21%. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that in 2004 an estimated 25.7% (+/- 6.6%) of the civilian non-institutionalized, men and women with a work limitation, ages 18-64 in Maryland were employed.

That percentage is reduced to 19.3% (+/- 0.8%) when the entire United States is considered.²

The Wall Street Journal reported on October 12, 2006 that the unemployment rates for people with disabilities remains “stubbornly high”. The article reports on a “2006 federal study of 11,000 youth who received special-education services in school shows only 40% are employed a year or two after high-school, compared with 63% of same-age young adults in the general population.”³

Anne Arundel County Public Schools reported that for all of its 2005 graduates 54.9% attended some sort of post-secondary education, while 12.5% went into the workforce. The county also reported a dropout rate of 2.3% for grades 9-12. This figure has been disputed.⁴ Education Week found that the county’s graduation rate for the 2002-03 school year was 70.1 percent, nearly 14 percentage points lower than the rate reported by the state. The same article reported graduation rates for Baltimore County above 80%. The report did not differentiate between students with disabilities and those without disabilities.⁵

In reporting on its FY 2007 budget highlights the Maryland State Department of Education has reported a “reduced” dropout rate of 3.69% for 2006. Again these figures are strongly disputed by *Education Week*.

The May 2007 issue of the National High School Center reported that students with disabilities drop out of school at significantly higher rates than their peers.⁶ In the 2001-02 school year, only 51% of students with disabilities exited school with a standard diploma.⁷ These same studies reported that students who do not complete high school have relatively high arrest rates. Overall, at least one-third of students with disabilities who drop out of high school have spent a night in jail; this rate is three times that of students with disabilities who have completed high school.

In an excellent survey article by Phyllis Levine and Steven W. Nourse⁸, the authors reviewed data from 13 frequently referenced follow-up studies regarding post school outcomes, postsecondary education, and employment, with attention to gender differences, for youth with learning disabilities who were served by and graduated from special education programs nationwide. It should be noted that these studies were all conducted with public school students. The employment rates ranged from one study that reported an employment rate of 91% to a low of 16%. Most studies reported employment in the range of high 60’s to low 70’s percent. Generally, females were less likely to be employed than males. The authors indicated their view that the gender employment discrepancy is due to 3 factors: 1) early pregnancies severely limit female employment, 2) females in special education are more impaired than males and 3) occupational training is gender based.

The most commonly referenced national follow-up study is the one completed by Blackorby and Wagner (NLTS) in 1996⁹. That survey has now been updated and is known as NLTS2 (2003). As the chart on the next page indicates, Harbour School students still outperform those in this national survey.

Results from the more recent NLTS (2)¹⁰ indicate that 31.9% of respondents were involved in some post-secondary education, not necessarily higher education. This study also indicated that 39% of people with intellectual limitations rarely or never participate in community-based instructional experiences like learning to use public transportation.

A report published by the national Center on Secondary Education and Transition, Current Challenges Facing the Future of Secondary Education and Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities in the United States indicates that only 30% of individuals with disabilities who graduated with a high school diploma and 45 percent of those with some post-secondary education are employed.¹¹

In July 2009, the US Department of Labor reported that the June 2009 unemployment rate for people with disabilities reached its highest peak since government began tracking employment data for people with disabilities.

The Oregonian reported on a follow-up study of students receiving special education services from the Oregon public schools post high school graduation.¹² This study showed that 25% of graduates had never held a paying job of any kind nor participated in any post-secondary education or job training.

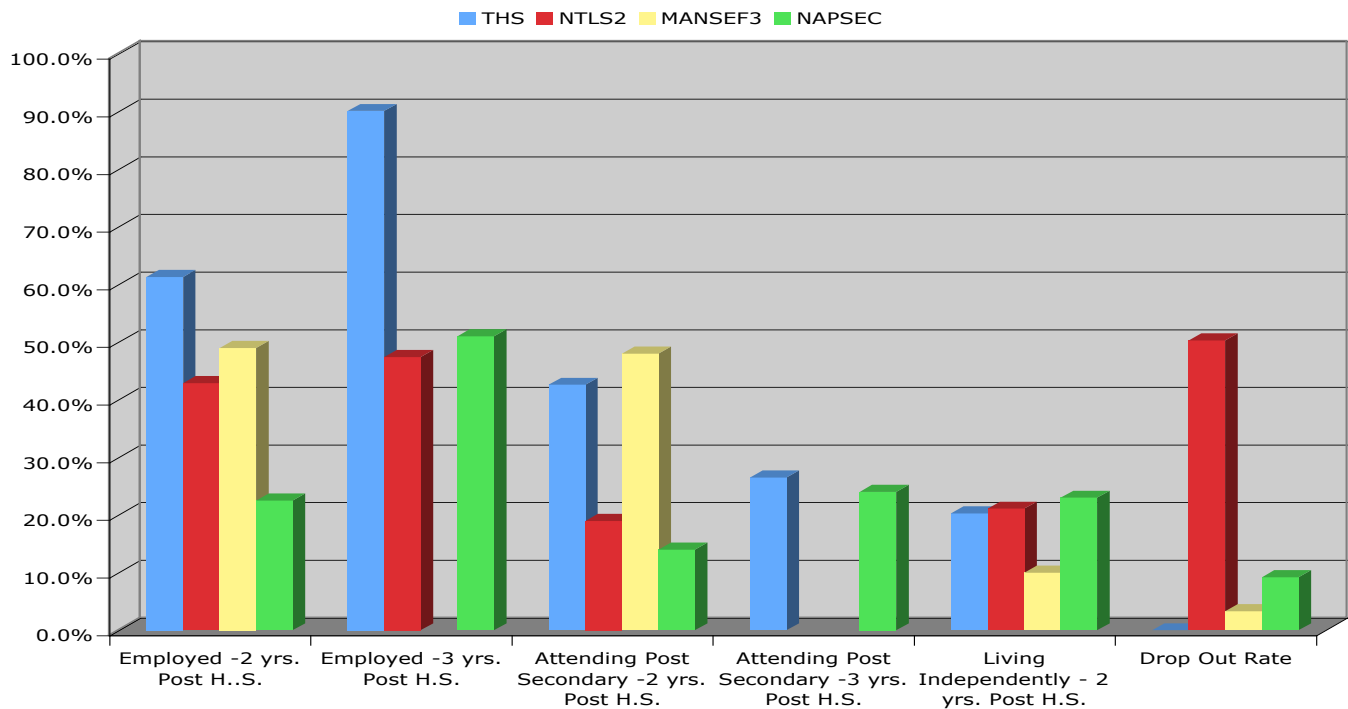
The Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities (MANSEF) conducted a follow up study¹³ in 2007. Two hundred eleven students participated in the follow up study. The Harbour School did not participate since it conducts its own follow up each year.

The National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC), of which The Harbour School is a member, surveyed its members regarding outcome data for the 1999-2000 academic year. The Harbour School participated in this survey. The survey represents schools in 15 states.¹⁴

The comparison of The Harbour School study with the Blackorby and Wagner national study (NLTS2), the MANSEF survey and the NAPSEC is indicated on the next page:



Comparison of The Harbour School Survey with National and MANSEF¹⁵ data.



Not included in this chart is a study by ASAH, an association of private approved special education schools in New Jersey. That study¹⁶ indicated that 29% of its graduates were attending post-secondary education of some type. The study also showed that 52% of graduates were in competitive employment. Again, it is not clear whether the poor job market for this year has driven more students with disabilities into post-secondary education as it has with their non-disabled peers.

According to a U.S. Department of Education (2001b), 50% of students with emotional disabilities drop out of school. This is in comparison with a 30% dropout rate for students with disabilities overall.¹⁷ This rate is about three times higher than the rate experienced by non-disabled peers.¹⁸

What THS is Doing Right?

A national survey of employers reported in Inside Higher Ed, January 23, 2008 reported that when employers were asked to rank new college graduates on 12 key areas, they reported that the grads did best in team work, ethical judgments and inter cultural work, and worst in global knowledge, self-direction and writing. What employers appear to want are intensive, personally evaluated projects, not more testing. Only 7% said it would be “very effective” to have the results of multiple-choice test of general knowledge.

The data from follow-up studies of students with disabilities continue to report the same needs during secondary education:

- Students need to be taught academic skills in the context of real life situations. The disabilities frequently interfere with the student’s ability to make the transfer from abstract to the real. “THS was the answer to our prayers” Counseling was great, great with behavior.” (Parent comment from this year’s survey)
- Students need to be taught self-determination skills. Once the student is beyond the protection of school and parents, the student must be able to self-advocate, make decisions and solve life problems. “They did a lot to help me cope with the world” (comment from a student who went on to college)
- The major cause of job loss and social isolation is lack of social skills for school, work, and community living. Many people with disabilities are socially isolated and unemployed because others are not interested in compensating for the person with disabilities lack of social skills. “Provide Saturday classes in art or music for graduates” (comment from a parent of a more moderately disabled alum who is not employed) “A course on how to enjoy your job or identify the likes or dislikes of a job” (comment from an alum who has had difficulty keeping a job, although he is getting them)
- Students and their families need more information about community services and need guidance in accessing those services. “Educating Mom more about available services. Also help understanding whom _____ is and what to expect from her” (Comment from a parent who had very high expectations for her moderately disabled student) “It would have been helpful to leave school with a resume; had to re-create all of the job experiences and volunteer activities, references, etc. after graduation. Otherwise you were great!” We are taking that advice to heart and having our current students do this.
- Outcomes based curriculum is working.

What do we need to do to Improve?

One of the questions we ask alumni is “How could The Harbour School have helped you more?” We always get interesting answers. This year one student let us know “they’ve done the best they could”. Another student further encouraged us when he answered how we could have done more by saying, “nothing, The Harbour School has been and is still great”. One of our alumni who is finishing up a four-year degree said, “The Harbour School has already helped me enough”.

The Harbour School transition teams put a great deal of energy into helping parents access post school adult services. And it is clear from the responses to this year’s survey that we need to do more. There is much to be done in helping parents to manage the rearing of a child with a disability who is going to be at home longer than the non-disabled child.

Secondly, the school needs to continue to teach social skills to all the students. Diploma students must earn a minimum of 22 credits, pass the Maryland mandates High School Assessments and do community service. Alumni of our diploma program continue to have difficulty navigating the post high school environment of college and a less structured social life. Students suffer from the loss of each friend because finding other friends is difficult.

Thirdly, we need to increase the demands in our academic program for the students with high cognitive ability and include more preparation for post secondary education. We seem to be making some progress on that goal as more of our alumni are going on to post-secondary education. Our school is hopeful that advanced education will lead to more stable employment.

Lastly, the school needs to redouble its efforts to encourage parents to access adult services before the student exits the entitlement of a publicly funded education. The school staff has not been as successful as it needs to be in getting all parents to link with adult services.

In Conclusion:

Turnbull et al¹⁹ address the issues of higher expectations for all students and their emphasis on academic achievement. They suggest a new framework for measuring outcomes along the lines of quality of life. Their framework regards using academic goals as a means to the end of achieving other outcomes, specifically the four outcomes that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) declared. These are: equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. It is their proposal that these four overarching IDEA goals, as implemented in part by the emphasis on academic achievement, should guide the curriculum and all assessment measures. Unfortunately for our students with disabilities, it is much easier to measure academic achievement than it is to measure the achievement of these other goals.

The Harbour School staff complete this survey each year for two reasons. First, the staff is deeply invested in our graduates and is sincerely interested in learning how each is doing post Harbour. Secondly, everything we do comes down to how well are our graduates doing. We count many things to measure outcomes. Currently, the political wisdom is that improved scores on standardized tests are indicators of the quality of the educational program. The Harbour School rejects that view. We believe the outcome that counts is not how many worms the bird feeds its young but how well the fledgling flies. In the end, a school is about preparing students for their lives after school has ended. The survey results clearly show there is more work to do on several fronts.

By collecting these data, our school can continue the process of continuous quality improvement (TQM). Excellence is our starting point; we seek to improve from there. Each year it is our challenge to expect more from our students, our staff and our school. We continue to do so.

End notes

1 Bruyere, Susanne. Cornell University. Ihtaca, New York. 2006

2 United States Department of Labor website October 2006

3 Shellenbarger, Sue “Young Workers with Dyslexia, ADD Find Office less Accommodating Than School” Wall Street Journal, October 12, 2006

4 Horseman, Jeff. “Report Says grad rates are inflated”. Annapolis Capital. May 16, 2007

5 Winters, Wendi “Life in The Free State Isn’t Easy for Anne Arundel County Teachers”, What’s Up In Annapolis, March 2006, pgs.67-69.

6 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs. (2006), April). 26th Annual (2004) Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Vol. 1 Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved October 10, 2006, from website.

7 ibid

8 Levine, Phyllis and Nourse, Steven. “What Follow-Up Studies say about Postschool Life for Young Men and Women with Learning Disabilities: A Critical Look at the Literature. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 31:3, May/June 1998, pages 212-233.

9 Blackorby, Jose and Wagner, Mary. “Youth with Disabilities: A Changing Population” National Longitudinal Transition Study 2. SRI International. April 2003. U.S. Office of Education ED-00-CO-0003.

10 Samuels, Christina. “Teenagers with Disabilities Making Gains After High School”, Education Week, August 10, 2005

11 “Transition -More Important than Ever”. Today. Council for Exceptional Children. Vol. 10 NO. 6, April-May 2004.

12 Hammond, Betsy: The Oregonian, April 1, 2009.

13 It should be noted that the majority of the participating schools serve students with serious emotional problems. However, several of the schools serve populations very similar to The Harbour School.

14 National Association of Private Special Education Center; NAPSEC Exit Survey, 1999-2000; Report Number 1; January 15, 2001; Captiva Island, Florida

15 These data represent a 2007 update.

16 “Outcomes of Approved Special Education Programs in the Private Sector: Results of a Statewide Survey” ASAH: Hamilton Square New Jersey, May 2004.

17 MacMillan, D., Widaman, K. Balow, I. (1992) Special Education students exiting the educational system. Journal of Special Education. 26, 20-36.

18 Marder, C. & D’Amico, R. (1992). How well are youth with disabilities really doing? A comparison of youth with disabilities and youth in general. A report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students. Menlo, Park, CA: SRI International. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 369233)

19 Turnbull, H. Rutherford, T, Turnbull, Ann P., Wehmeyer, Michael and Park, Jiyeon. “A Quality of Life Framework for Special Education Outcomes”

Remedial & Special Education. 24:2, March/April, 2003, pp 67-74.



**1277 Green Holly Drive
Annapolis, MD 21409
410-974-4248**

**11251 Dolfield Road
Owings Mills, MD 21117
443-394-3760**



You've Got to See What's Inside
www.harbourschool.org