

Annual Report 2023



Kentucky Post School Outcomes Center

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Table of Contents

KYPSO Mission	1
Introduction	2
Indicator 14.....	2
Indicator 14 Definitions	3
Disaggregated Outcomes.....	6
Disaggregated Outcomes by Gender	6
Disaggregated Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity	9
Disaggregated Outcomes by Disability.....	10
Disaggregated Outcomes by Manner of High School Exit	12
Follow-Up Questions	14
High School Experience	14
Employment and Unemployment	15
Postsecondary Education.....	17
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	21
Community Participation.....	22
Students’ Perceptions of Effective High School Practices.....	23
Insights from New Data Synthesis	25
Career and Technical Education.....	26
Postsecondary Readiness	26
Homelessness	28
Guardianship	29
Conclusion	31
KYPSO Support.....	33
Citations.....	35



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 provide exemplary transition planning and increase student post-school success. 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 for students with disabilities one year after exiting high school, which includes their experiences and the degree to which they may be considered integrated and competitive. This data is often used for research by both KYPSO and partners and to make recommendations for supports, services, and professional development to improve post-school outcomes for people with disabilities.



Introduction

KYPSO is KDE's contractor for the collection of post-school outcome data for students who had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in place at the time they exited high school. This includes data related to the federal requirement for Indicator 14 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other post-school data necessary and appropriate to improve transition services for youth with disabilities throughout Kentucky. Data is collected through YOYO former student interview developed by KYPSO and administered by district-level personnel that 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 a student's personal experiences; involvement with agencies; living arrangements; and community engagement. The YOYO also asks for general feedback regarding how former students' high schools prepared them for adult life. Attempts were made in the spring and summer of 2023 to interview all former students who exited a public high school in Kentucky during the 2021-2022 school year with an IEP in place at the time of exit. Because the YOYO includes student identification numbers, KYPSO has the potential to link findings from the YOYO to other databases to identify malleable factors related to post-school success. These other databases include Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), pre-Employment Transition Services (pre-ETS), and Career and Technical Education (CTE) data, etc.

Indicator 14

The number of students who exited high school in the 2021-2022 school year with an IEP in place at the time of exit was 4,432, and 2,925 responded to the 2023 YOYO survey, a response rate of 66%, the highest YOYO response rate to date. Previous administrations of the YOYO have had response rates between 55.2% and 60%. Over the past three years there has been a continual increase in response rate to 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.

In response to interviewer reports that the leading cause of not being able to conduct an interview was the inability to contact former students, KYPSO worked with 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. Two strategies identified were having students complete a new contact information card at the time of exit and using social media to announce the start of the survey. Frequent contact by KDE staff with district leaders regarding the importance of the YOYO was thought to be an effective means of improving response rates as well.

KYPSO tracks the representativeness of the YOYO by comparing the demographics of our target population (all eligible former students) to that of respondents. It is important to recognize when a population is under- or over-represented, as this can inform how one interprets their 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, race, disability category, and manner of exit from high school.



Table 1: Response Rates by Subgroups

Kentucky YOYO 2023	Target Group	Respondents	Difference from Target
Female	33.1%	33.4%	0.3%
African American	14.2%	11.7%	-2.5%
Dropped Out	2.9%	1.7%	-1.2%
Mild Mental Disability	16.6%	16.2%	-0.4%
Functional Mental Disability	4.6%	4.9%	0.3%
Emotional Behavioral Disability	7.6%	6.7%	-0.9%
Specific Learning Disability	29.2%	30.9%	1.7%

Table 1 compares the representativeness of the YOYO by comparing the demographics of our target population (all eligible former students) to that of respondents. It is important to note that the demographic representation of the YOYO respondents is reflective of the targeted student population of Kentucky. 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:

- 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

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.



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).

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 “non-competitive employment”.

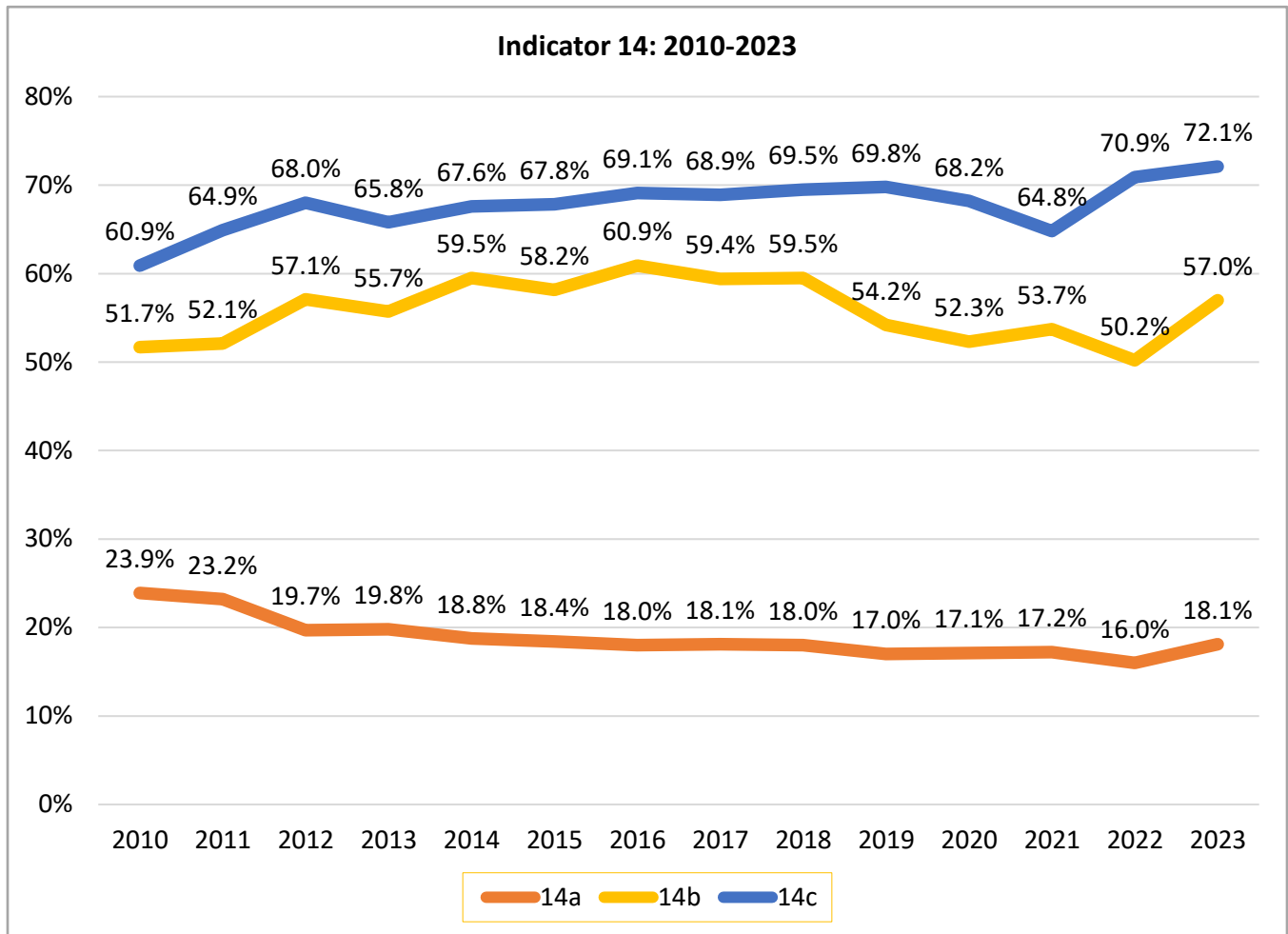
"Former students who received special education" are defined as those students who had an IEP in place at the time of exit and exited school one year previous with a standard diploma, a certificate of attainment, or alternate diploma, or by dropping out or aging out.

The 2023 YOYO data, based on 2,925 respondents, shows a rate of 18.1% for Indicator 14a, 57.0% for 14b, and 72.1% for 14c. Figure 1 shows how Indicator 14 data have changed since 2010.

Indicator 14a, which solely represents higher education, saw a slow but steady decrease from 2010 to 2019. The 2023 data shows a 2.0 percentage point increase from last year and is up to pre-pandemic levels.



Figure 1



Indicator 14b, which includes both higher education and competitive employment, has seen a decline since 2019. This 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. The 2023 data shows that Indicator 14b has risen above the pre-pandemic levels of 2019. Students interviewed in 2023 reported the highest percent for indicator 14b since 2018, at 57.0%. In addition to higher education and competitive employment, Indicator 14c includes the percent of former students with IEPs who go on to non-competitive employment and/or postsecondary education that is not a two or four-year college or university. This category has seen an increase of five percentage points this year.

“After high school you just have to get a job and figure this life thing out.”

The percentage of former students who reported being unengaged in any post-school outcome related to education or employment has been above 30% for over 10 years until last year when it dropped below 30% for the first time. This year, it has declined further to 27.9%. Over half of these students graduated with an alternate diploma.



Respondents indicated that 36.8% of the unengaged students were unable to answer the questions themselves because of their disability. Examples of reasons included naming specific disabilities or a lack of a communication system. These are concerning reasons as communication is a basic part of human interaction. Communication strategies are vital for positive post-school outcomes and should be prioritized throughout a student’s educational career.

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) shows how education and employment outcomes intersect. As stated earlier, 18.0% of former students went on to higher education. In addition, many of these students were either employed competitively (190) or non-competitively (134) while enrolled in higher education, indicating that over half of former students who went on to higher education were also employed in some manner. Alternatively, we can see that a large majority of competitively employed students are not in any school or training program. The implications for this are clear: If a young person 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 (2023)	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	No Employment	Education Totals
Higher Education	190 (6.5%)	134 (4.6%)	205 (7.0%)	529 (18.1%)
Other Education	118 (4.0%)	28 (1.0%)	54 (1.8%)	200 (6.8%)
No Postsecondary Education	1,022 (34.9%)	358 (12.2%)	816 (27.9%)	2,196 (75.1%)
Employment Totals	1,330 (45.5%)	520 (17.8%)	1,075 (36.8%)	2,925 (100.0%)

Disaggregated Outcomes

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

Whenever possible, KYPSO aggregates findings by demographics of interest. The following tables (Tables 3-6) 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

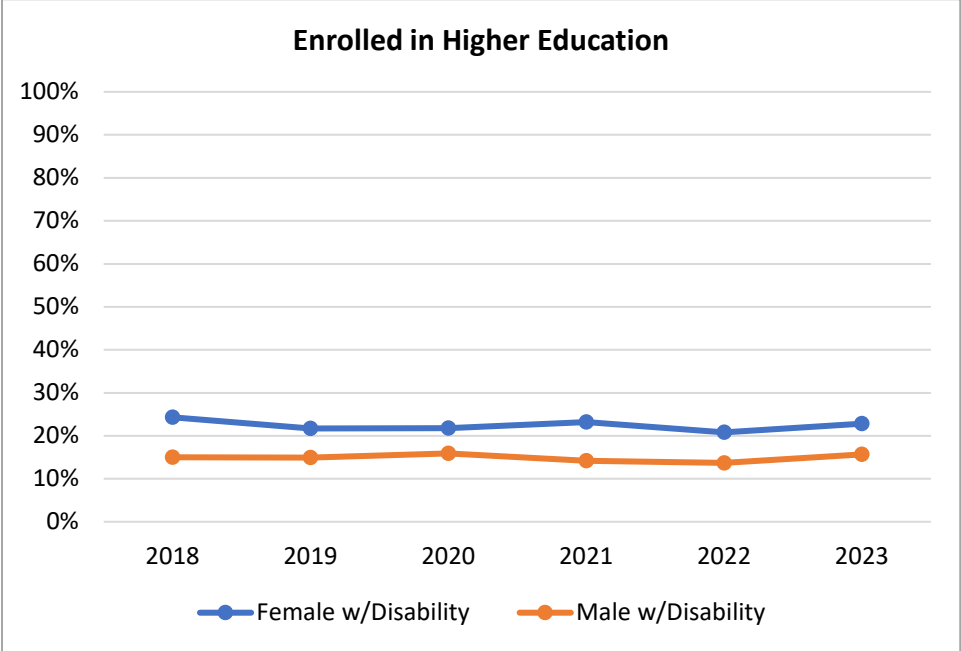
Table 3: Disaggregated Outcomes by Gender

Gender Outcomes	Higher Ed.	Other Ed.	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Not Engaged	Total (2,925)
Male	15.7%	7.6%	48.2%	17.4%	26.2%	1,947
Female	22.8%	5.4%	40.0%	18.5%	31.3%	978



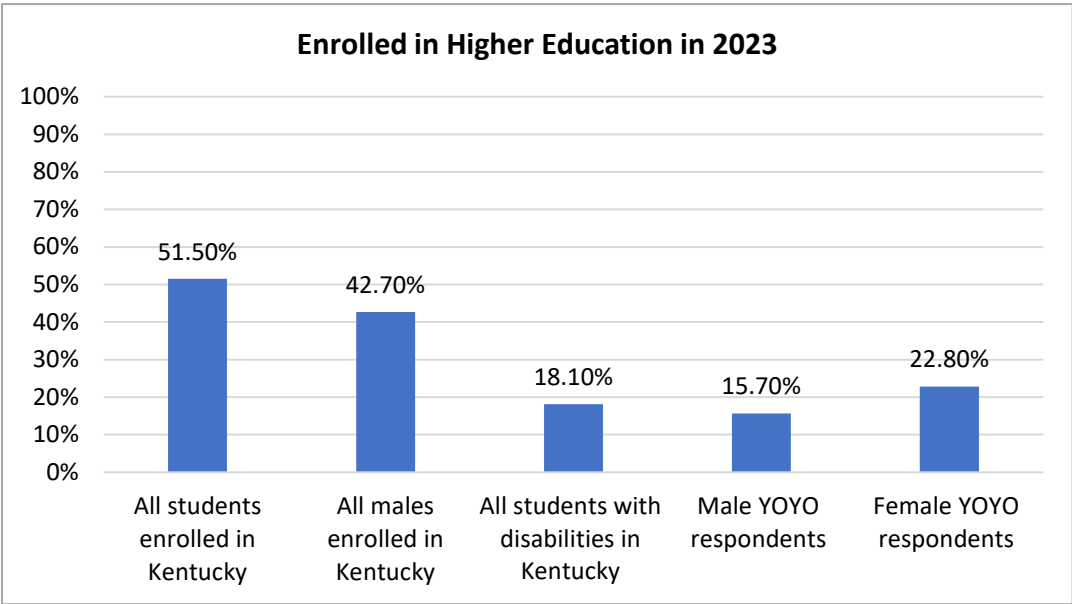
Enrollment in higher education for all students with disabilities is significantly lower than for students without disabilities. According to the 2023 Annual Report of the Council on Postsecondary Education in Kentucky, 51.5% of students enrolled in higher education directly after high school. For students with disabilities, that rate is only 18.1%. When further disaggregated by male and female there is a trend of more females enrolling in higher education than males. Figure 2 presents longitudinal disaggregated data for students with disabilities.

Figure 2



Comparing data trends over time is important. The data in Figure 2 shows male/female enrollment has been relatively parallel since 2018. To help highlight the differences between students with disabilities and those without, as well as state-wide trends based on gender, the figure below (Figure 3) provides a comparison of all students in Kentucky who were enrolled in higher education compared with the students who responded to the YOYO in 2023.

Figure 3



In 2023, 51.5% of all graduates in Kentucky went on to higher education. Of this group, 42.7% were males and 18.1% had disabilities. This year male respondents from the YOYO who enrolled in higher education increased two percentage points back to 2020 levels of enrollment.



Enrollment in other education opportunities, such as technical courses, continues to increase toward pre-Covid-19 rates, with males with disabilities consistently having a slightly higher rate of enrollment than females.

Overall, males are slightly more likely than females to be competitively employed one year out of high school with 8.2% more males competitively employed compared with females. Females are more likely to be both competitively employed and enrolled in higher education (7.8% vs. 5.9%). This has been a trend for the past five years, though this year, 15.7% of males were competitively employed and 16% were in higher education. These are the highest levels since 2020. Preparing students to succeed in higher education while working requires teaching them the explicit skills and strategies to balance work and school, and this increase indicates some potential instructional level changes at the high school that have a positive impact on students.

For both males and females, there was a two percentage point increase in enrollment in higher education. Enrollment increased this year to 15.70%, a shift of 2 percentage points from the decline in enrollment in 2022. There has also been a significant increase in the percentage of males and females who went on to higher education and/or competitive employment (indicator b) from 2022. Females had a 6.4 point increase, and males had a 7 point increase in indicator 14b.

Figure 4 presents the disaggregated gender data for students who are not engaged in work or any type of postsecondary education.

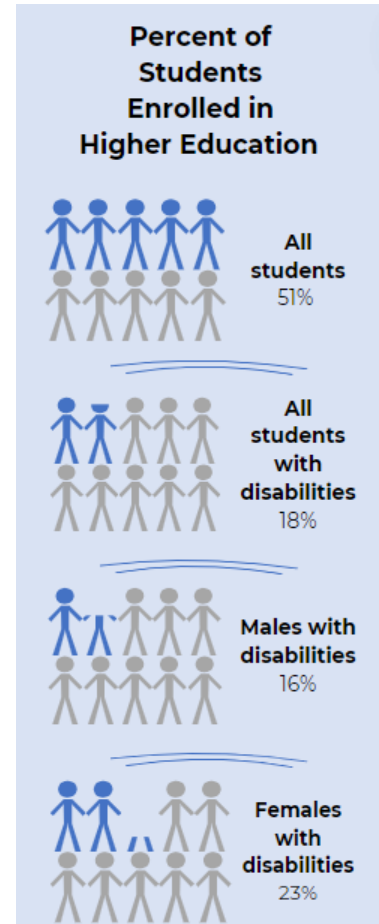
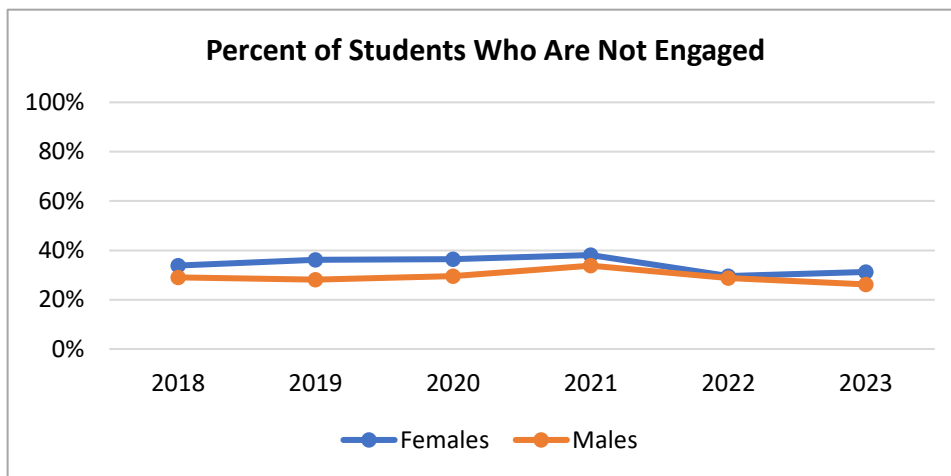


Figure 4



The trend of having a higher percentage of females unengaged than males has been in place since at least 2018. While both males and females had a decrease in non-engagement in 2022, the trend line for males continued to go down while it began to increase for females in 2023. Overall, 31.3% of females were unengaged and 26.2% of males, a 5.1% difference.

Reasons for non-engagement vary though common themes emerge. One theme was unpaid caretaking. 5.8% of the respondents indicated they were not working or not working more hours because of caretaking; of those who indicated this response, 2/3 were female.



Disaggregated Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity

This section disaggregates data by ethnicity and race. 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 (2,925)
White	17.7%	7.0%	45.2%	17.2%	29.2%	2,331
African American/Black	19.9%	6.4%	47.7%	20.2%	22.2%	342
Hispanic and/or Latino	19.1%	5.0%	51.1%	17.0%	20.6%	141
Two or more races	20.0%	5.9%	40.0%	24.7%	23.5%	85

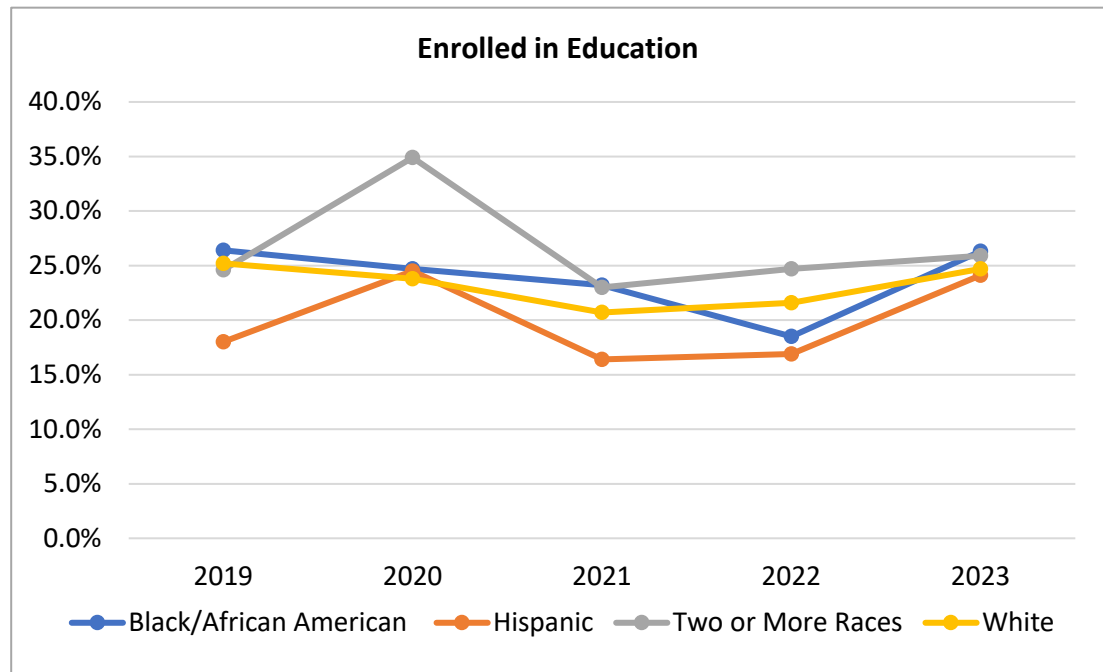
Figure 5 is the enrollment of graduates who participated in higher, technical, or other education opportunities from 2019 to 2023 disaggregated by ethnicity. Figure 5 illustrates how students from racial and ethnic groups are increasing enrollment across time and have similar outcomes across groups. Students who are Asian, American Indian, Hawaiian Native, or Pacific Islander are not included due to the sample size being too small. This year, those enrolled in education were between 24-26% across all racial and ethnic groups. 24.7% of white students, 26.3% of Black students, 24.1% of Hispanic/Latino students, and 25.9% of students who identify as two or more races enrolled in an educational program. Higher education rates for African American students exiting high school in

Kentucky with IEPs have exceeded those of white and Hispanic students since the YOYO first began. Higher education for this group was the highest of all racial and ethnic groups at 19.9%, up three percentage points from last year.

Students who identify as two or more races are

small compared with white students (85 vs. 2,331). There were 141 Hispanic/Latino students and 342 Black/African American students. While the sample sizes are proportionally appropriate to the overall population of Kentucky, a change of a few students in groups with small sample sizes makes a disproportionately large

Figure 5



difference in the percentages. At the same time, it is important to try to identify differences in education opportunities and factors influencing these differences in outcomes to identify potential practices being used with one group of students that could be implemented with another group of students.

Unlike previous years, Hispanic /Latino students have the highest rate of competitive employment (51.1%) compared to any other ethnic group. Black students had a 47.7% rate of competitive employment, white students had 45.2%, and students with two or more races had a 40.0% rate of competitive employment. Several changes are notable this year in relation to competitive employment. Historically, Black students have had the highest rates of competitive employment, while this year, they were the second highest. Students identifying as two or more races continued to drop from 59% in 2021 to 46.1% in 2022 and now down to 40.0% in 2023. This continued downward trend should be monitored and investigated to identify if there are underlying reasons for this trend though it should be noted that the sample size for this population, while growing over the years, remains at less than 90 students.

For students who are white, there was a slight decrease in competitive employment, an increase in enrollment in education, and a decrease in disengagement of less than a full percentage point.

For Hispanic students, a decrease in non-competitive employment is paired with a 7.2 increase in competitive employment. Overall, Hispanic students showed improved outcomes one year out compared with the past four years.

The non-engagement rate for all Black/African American students was 22.2%, a 6.2 improvement from 2022. For Black/African American students who graduated with an alternate diploma, there was a 9.8% point decrease in the percentage of students who were disengaged while students who graduated with a standard diploma had a 3.5% decrease. For students who are Hispanic and had an alternate diploma there was a 10.7% increase in non-engagement. For these students who graduated with a standard diploma the percentage of non-engagement increased by 2.8%. For students who are white, the non-engagement rate had a 1.4% increase for students who graduated with an alternate diploma and a negligible difference (.5) for students who graduated with a standard diploma.

Disaggregated Outcomes by Disability

Differences in outcomes based on a former student's primary disability classification are striking. Due to student population size, we have included the 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.



Table 5: Disaggregated Outcomes by Disability

Disability Category Outcomes	Higher Education	Other Education	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Not Engaged	Total (2,925)
Autism	22.6%	6.4%	19.9%	17.5%	46.5%	297
Emotional and Behavioral Disorder	16.3%	5.6%	45.9%	14.3%	31.1%	196
Functional Mental Disability (FMD)	0.7%	4.9%	8.4%	13.3%	74.1%	143
Hearing or Vision	41.3%	10.9%	26.1%	17.4%	28.3%	46
Mild Mental Disability (MMD)	7.6%	4.9%	40.7%	16.5%	38.2%	474
Multiple Disability	7.0%	1.4%	12.7%	11.3%	71.8%	71
Other Health Impaired (OHI)	19.9%	6.9%	50.2%	19.5%	20.5%	713
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	21.8%	8.6%	62.1%	18.8%	11.6%	904

Students with SLD and OHI continue to fare relatively well in terms of higher education and competitive employment. Students with learning disabilities increased enrollment in higher education from 18% in 2022 to 21.8% in 2023. In 2022, 52% of students with learning disabilities were in competitive employment, and in 2023, 62.1% were competitively employed. For students with other health impairments, enrollment increased from 18% to 26.8% and saw a slight increase in competitive employment from 48% in 2022 to 50.2% in 2023. Non-engagement rates for students with learning disabilities continue to be the best for all disability labels and improved from 2022-2023. Their non-engagement rate went from 13.7% in 2022 to 11.6% in 2023. While students with other health impairments remain low, the rate slightly increased from 20.1% to 20.5%.

Students identified as having FMD had low rates of higher education and competitive employment. These students are more likely to engage in "other employment," which is often based in a segregated setting or "other education." The biggest area of concern for students in this disability category is they consistently report the highest rates of non-engagement, meaning they are not engaged in any educational or employment outcomes. Last year, there was a slight decrease in non-engagement though the rate remained above 80%. This year the non-engagement rate decreased by 13.8% to 74.1%. This decrease might reflect continued recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Persons with autism continue to have the best higher education outcomes (22.6%) in relation to the other disability categories referenced and far above other students in the low incidence categories. Autistic students' higher education rates exceed those of employment, which have typically averaged in the high teens. For the other disability categories, rates for higher education are much lower than those for competitive employment.

When the data are further disaggregated for autistic students based on the manner of high school exit those who exit high school with a regular diploma continue to have much higher rates of competitive employment (23.4%) and attendance in higher education (28.0%) and lower rates of non-engagement (38.5%) than autistic students who exit high school with an alternate diploma or age out. These data have improved from 2022. 78.6% of autistic students who exit high school with an alternate diploma or age out are not engaged, which is up from



2022. This high percentage of unengaged students 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 students on the regular vs. alternative diploma track are being prepared for life after high school. Access to additional data (e.g., LRE, Individualized Learning Plan (ILP), pre-ETS, review of IEPs, etc.) would allow KYP SO to probe more deeply into these factors, their distribution, and their relative impact.

Persons classified as having multiple disabilities report a high non-engagement rate (71.8%) up from 64.4% in 2022. Competitive employment and education rates are low and decreased from 2022. They went from 13.7% to 12.7% and higher education moved from 8.2% to 7.0%. When these outcomes were further disaggregated by the manner of high school exit, it was revealed that all students with multiple disabilities who were competitively employed or went on to higher education graduated high school with a regular diploma.

Disaggregated Outcomes by Manner of High School Exit

Manner of exit is the final way in which KYP SO disaggregates outcomes. Because students who exited by aging out or receiving an alternate diploma are indistinguishable based on 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 alternate diploma track.

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 (2,925)
Regular Diploma	20.0%	7.0%	48.9%	18.5%	23.2%	2,632
Alternative Diploma	0.8%	5.8%	8.3%	11.6%	75.6%	242
Dropped Out	2.0%	2.0%	45.1%	7.8%	45.1%	51

Those who graduated with a regular diploma have the best outcomes. One student who exited high school by dropping out in the 2021-2022 school year enrolled in higher education. However, students who drop out have considerably higher competitive employment rates (45.1%) than those who exited from the alternate diploma track (8.3%). More than seven out of ten students on the alternate 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.

“I thought I knew what was best for me but turns out I was wrong.”

-quote from a student who dropped out.

One of the strengths of the YOYO is that it allows us to probe deeper into a young person's outcomes. We do this by asking a series of follow-up questions to learn more about one's high school experiences, employment outcomes, postsecondary education, and community living. Each question is depicted in Tables 7-11. Note that the sample size for each question varies. We will examine the follow-up questions in greater depth.



Table 7: High School Experiences

High School Experiences	Number of Potential Responses
What are the reasons you left high school without graduating?	51
What might have helped you stay in school?	51
Please name the most important thing during high school that helped you in your life right now (e.g., high school programs, classes, agencies).	2,925

Table 8: Employment/Unemployment

Employment/Unemployment	Number of Potential Responses
What is the main reason that you are not working, or not working more hours?	1,924

Table 9: 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.	865
What would you say is the main reason you did not go on to postsecondary education?	2,014

Table 10: Community Living

Community Living	Number of Potential Responses
Where do you live?	2,925
Do you have a driver's license?	2,925
Are you registered to vote?	2,925
How do you spend your time (if not working, attending postsecondary education)?	729

Table 11: 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?	2,925

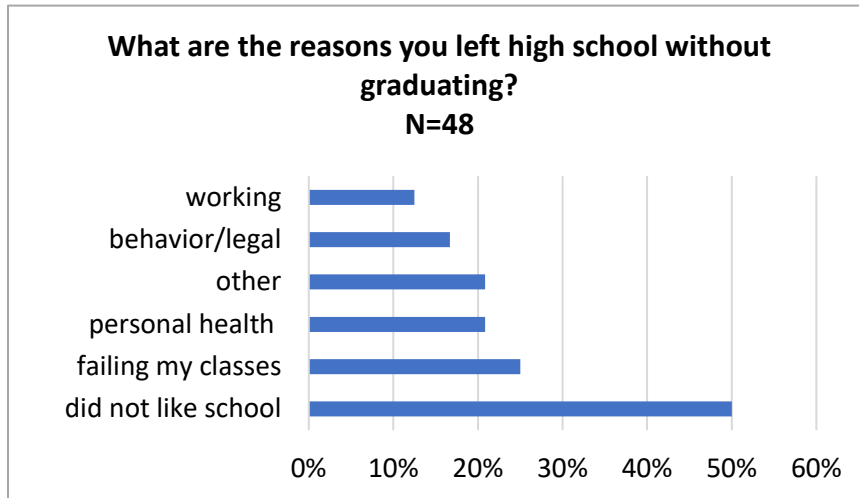


Follow-Up Questions

High School Experience

Of the 4,432 Kentucky students who exited high school during the 2021-2022 school year with an IEP in place at the time of exit, 127 did so by dropping out. The dropout rate has gone down significantly (↓60%) over the last two years.

Figure 6



Of the 127 students listed as having dropped out, 51 responded to the survey. We asked them to share why they left high school without graduating, and 48 of the 51 respondents answered this question. The reasons varied among the respondents, and if a respondent provided multiple reasons, all reasons were recorded and counted. Half of the respondents indicated that their reason for dropping out was because they did not like school, which is consistent with the last several years. One-fourth reported failing their

classes. One-fifth reported health reasons, including pregnancy. 17% reported that their behavior contributed to dropping out, including legal issues. This percentage was down five percentage points last year but is back up to previous levels. Other responses included having issues with their class credits, living arrangements, and bullying. The top reasons for leaving high school without graduating are depicted in the figure above (Figure 6):

The YOYO design allows respondents to provide answers that vary in their degree of specificity, so for answers that may be too general to be prescriptive, the YOYO also allows for clarification of answers. For example, while some reasons for dropping out, such as bullying, may help programs easily identify solutions (i.e., a prevention strategy for 'bullying' may be a bully prevention program), other reasons provided, such as the often-cited reason of "not liking school," do not offer such an apparent remedy. To gather information that may help instructional programs identify strategies to reduce future dropout rates, we asked these former students more specifically, "What might have helped you stay in school?". Of the 45 students who responded to this question, just over one-third indicated that more flexible hours and scheduling, including in-school learning instead of distance learning, might have helped them stay in school. One-fourth

Things that might have increased retention:

- Flexible hours and scheduling
- More practical/real-life connections or hands-on classes
- Relationships with adults in school

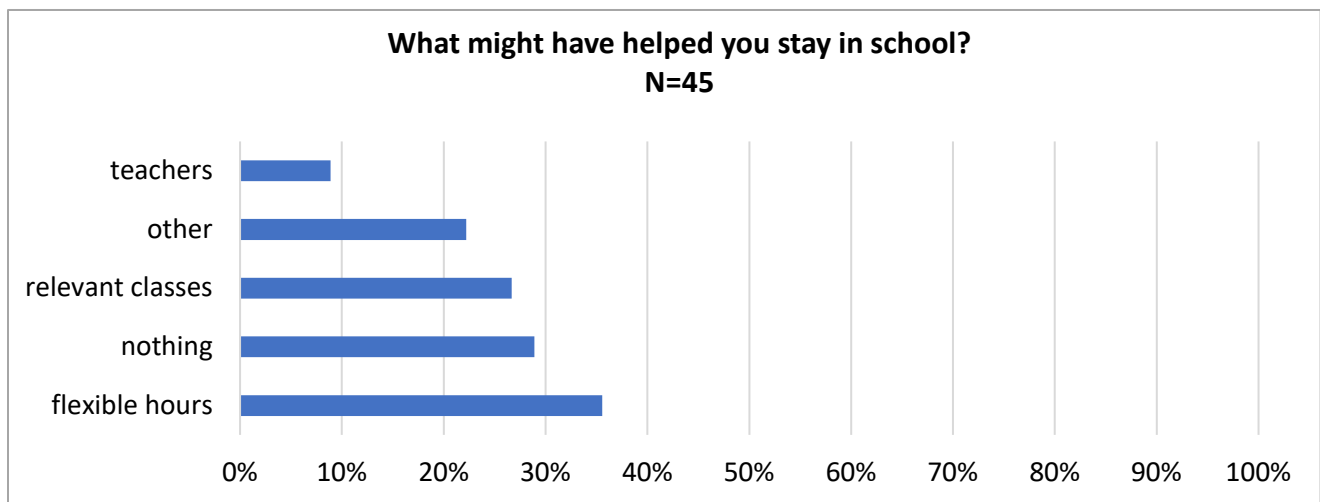


of the students stated more practical/real-life or hands-on classes might have helped. Some students (9%) stated that more encouragement from teachers or counselors might have led them to stay in school.

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 communication regarding credit hours, “a place to live”, and access to Wi-Fi.

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 students participated in vocational classes, pre-ETS, and/or CTE courses prior to dropping out. The top five responses for what might have helped keep the student in school are depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7



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 students who met the Indicator 14 definition for employment, we asked additional questions about the number of hours worked and minimum wage to determine whether the student fit the definition of competitive, integrated employment, or other employment. We also asked about employment supports that were utilized and students' interest in their jobs (Figure 8).

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 (2001) since leaving high school whether they received any of the following

supports/accommodations at their job: job coach, personal assistant, special equipment, or other accommodations. 12% of the respondents who had been employed indicated that they had used a job coach,

“Student did what her transition plan always was and obtained competitive employment in childcare.”

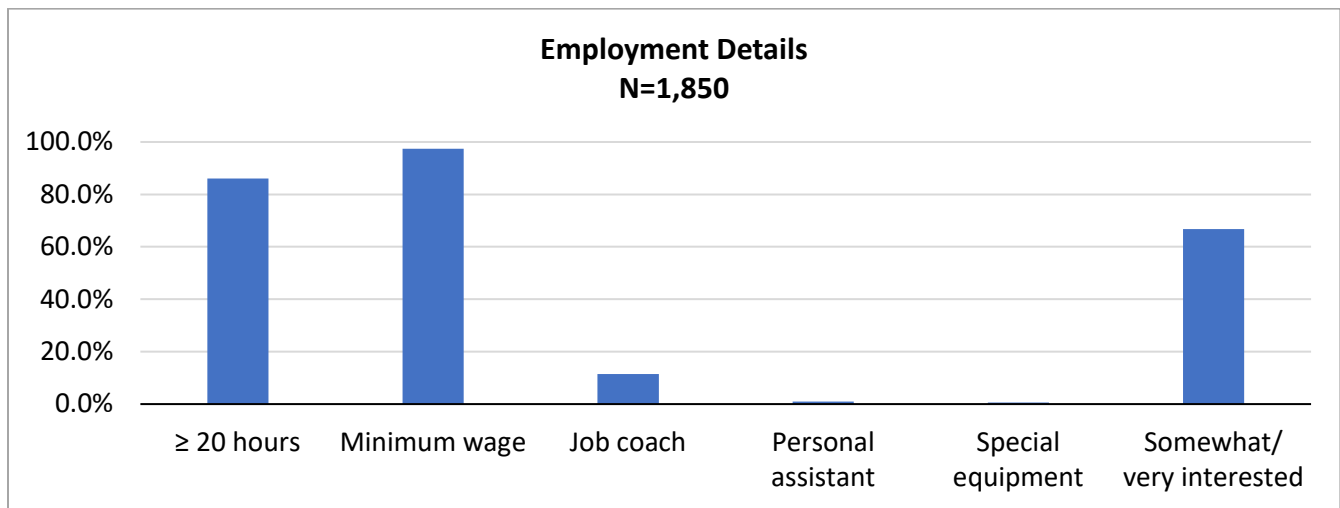


and very few respondents ($\leq 1\%$) indicated they had used a personal assistant or special equipment. These percentages have been consistent over the years.

The percent of students who report using any type of employment supports is extremely low. 213 of the 214 reporting to have a job coach made minimum wage. The one student who made less was employed by a sheltered workshop. 90% of former students with a job coach reported still being employed at the time of the interview. It appears that students might be underutilizing job coaches and other types of employment supports.

Three former students indicated having utilized all three supports (coach, personal assistant, and equipment), and all three were employed and attending further education or training. Two of the three exited high school with a regular diploma and one with an alternate diploma. Disability categories represented were FMD, autism, and SLD. One of the three reported working with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) counselor and also mentioned that as one of the most helpful things from high school.

Figure 8



We also asked respondents who had been employed how interesting they found their job. 67% indicated that they found it very or somewhat interesting, while only 8% indicated that they found it not very interesting or not interesting at all.

Students who reported that they were not employed, had not been employed for at least 90 days since exiting high school, or worked less than full time were asked an additional question, "What is the main reason you are not working or not working more hours?" (Figure 9). Of the 1,692 responses, 26.48% (N=448) chose not to work or work more hours because they were pursuing further education or training, including attending a university, college, or trade school. 7.57% of the respondents indicated a lack of motivation and/or readiness to work, stating they were taking a gap year, didn't need to work, or didn't know what to do/how to begin. 11.47% of students who did not work indicated they could not work because of the severity of their disability or because they were attending adult day programs/daycare. In addition, 2.5% of the respondents reported they did not work or limited their work hours because they were receiving disability benefits. 13.77% of respondents were actively looking for a job, had interviews scheduled, or were currently working.

"I am doing on the job training for my career as a welder."



Some specifically mentioned being in the military. Another 3% stated that they were not working because they could not find a job or had just lost their job through firing, layoffs, or business closings.

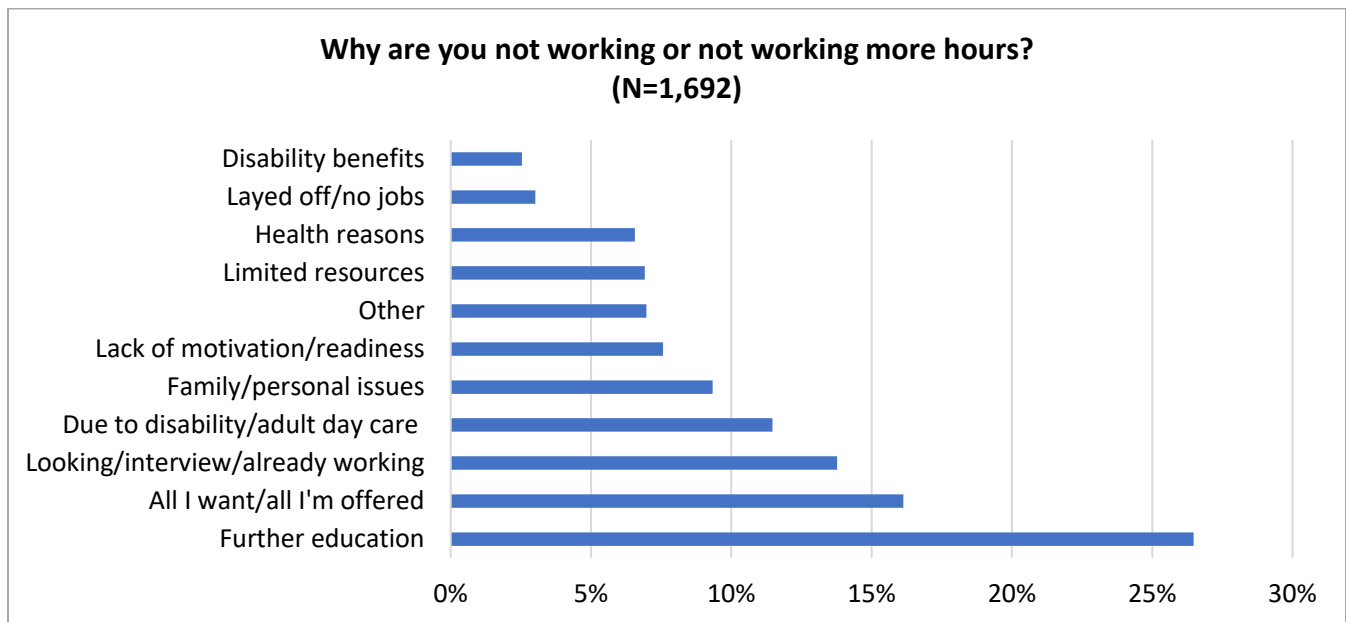
Just under 10% of the respondents indicated they had family or personal issues, including taking care of children or other family members.

Respondents also mentioned limited resources (7.57%) such as a lack of required equipment, transportation, a need for a personal assistant/supported employment, and waiting for OVR as reasons for not working or not working more hours. This might explain the low response rate to the question regarding accommodations used. Former students may not know how to obtain and/or request accommodations. Educators can use this information to evaluate and inform instruction in this area.

Just under 7% of the responses were in the category of 'other' and related to trouble with the law, issues with supervisors and/or customers, seasonal work, quitting after one day, and moving. Another 6.5% reported being negatively impacted by their health, both physical and mental health, including anxiety and depression.

Area to inform instruction:
Former students have low rates of accessing additional support in employment and postsecondary school.

Figure 9



Postsecondary Education

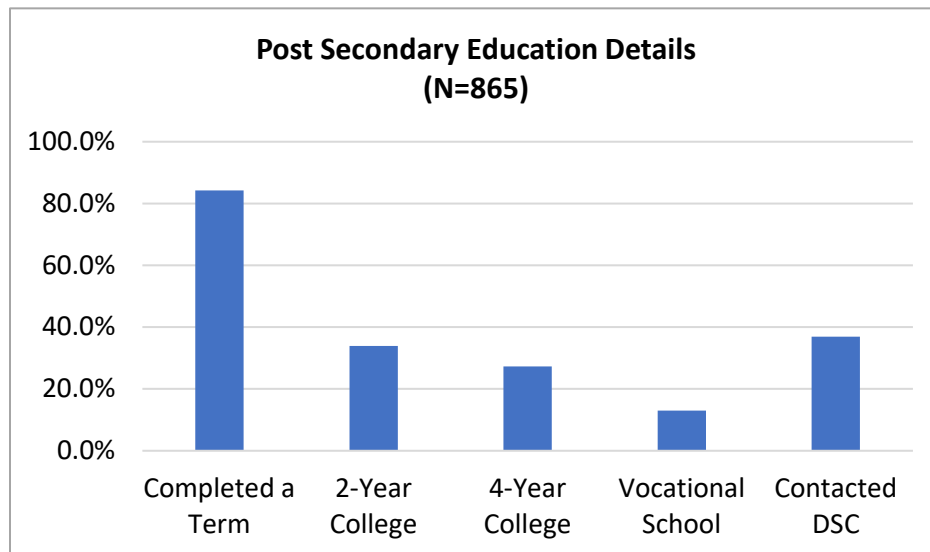
Of the 865 respondents who indicated that they had gone on to some form of postsecondary education, 729 (or 84%) completed at least one entire session or semester, which is consistent with previous years. We also asked



what type of school or training program they had enrolled in (Figure 10). The highest number, 293 (33.9%), indicated that they had enrolled in a two-year college, 27.3% indicated a four-year college, 12.9% indicated enrollment in a vocational school, 8% indicated that they were enrolled in some type of short-term program, and 1% indicated that they were pursuing some form of adult education or General Education Diploma (GED). We also asked what degree they expected to get when they finished school. 29% indicated they were pursuing a bachelor's degree, 23% indicated an associate degree, 21% stated they were in a certificate program, and 5% indicated that they were not seeking degree credit, including those who were auditing classes.

“She was unsure of how to ask for the help (accessing services for her disability) that she needed in school.”

Figure 10



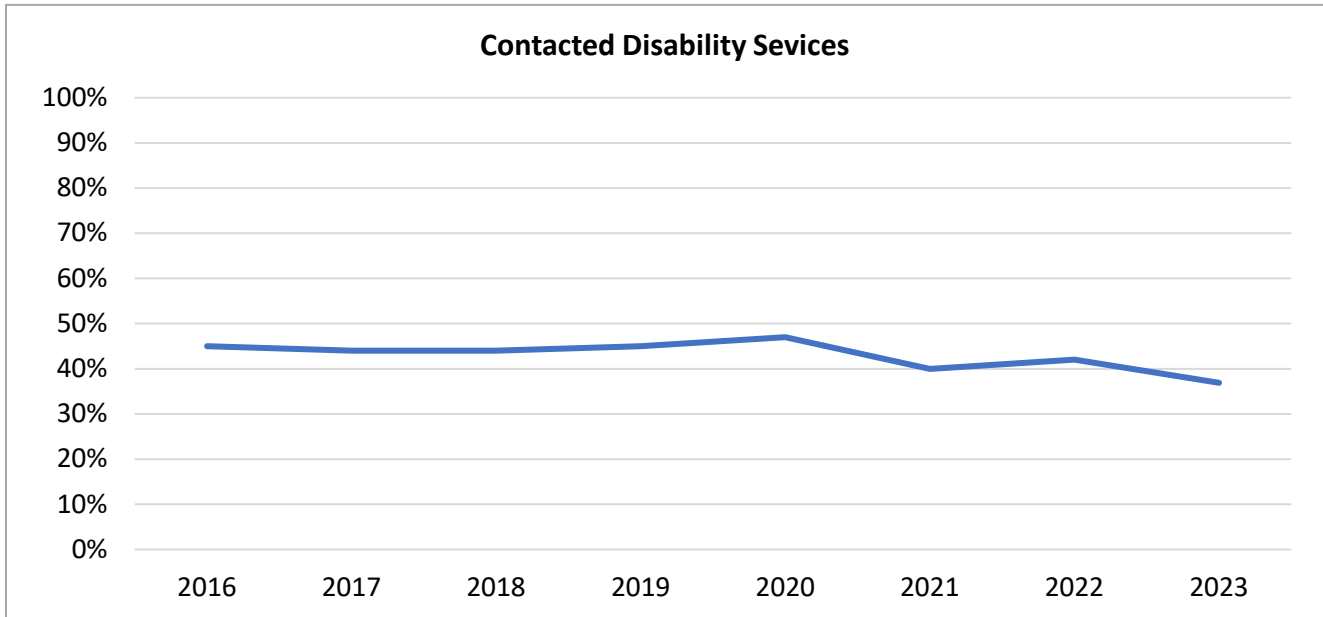
We also asked those who enrolled in postsecondary education where they lived while classes were in session. 68% indicated that they lived with their family. While it is tempting to believe that "going to college" involves a residential experience whereby young persons may learn valuable social skills (e.g., independent living in a relatively safe environment), educators should be aware that for most of this population, their residence is

likely the same as it was while they were in high school. This may also reflect the increasing prevalence of virtual higher education.

Finally, we wanted to know whether a student who was pursuing further education had contacted the Disability Services Coordinator (DSC). From 2016-2020 just under 50% of the respondents reported that they had contacted the DSC. Since 2021 this has continually gotten lower, with this year reporting the lowest percentage of students who contacted DSC at 36% (Figure 11).



Figure 11



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

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

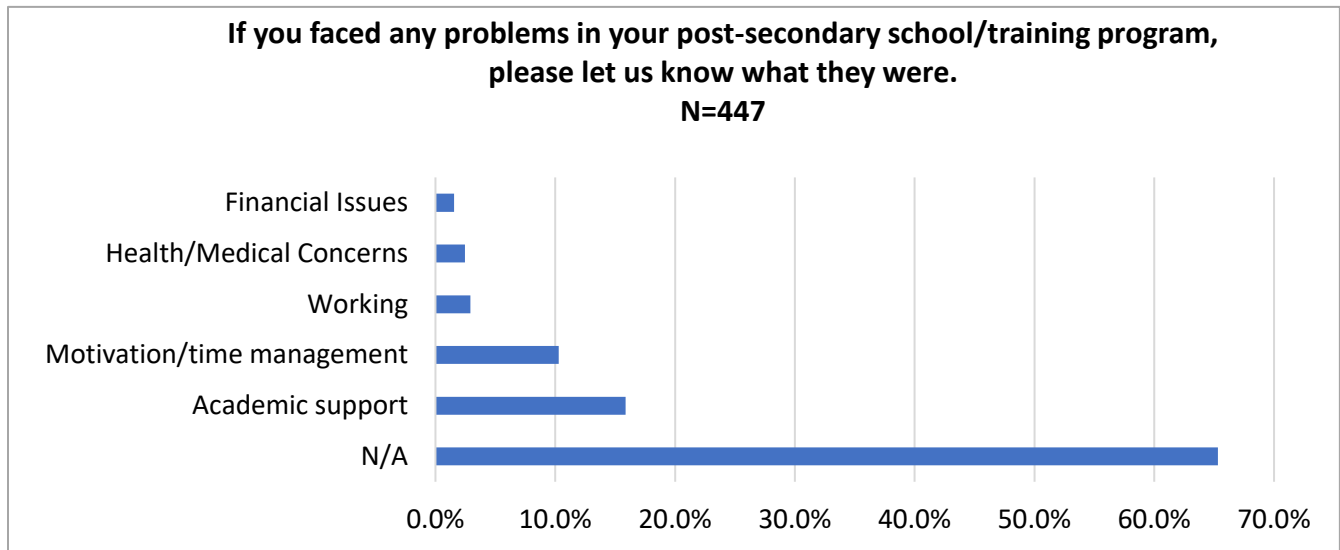
When asked, "If you faced any problems in your postsecondary school/training program, please let us know what they were," 447 participants responded. Of those, 65.3% reported that they did not experience any problems. The top five

challenges reported in postsecondary school/training programs were struggles with academics due to lack of supports and services, including transportation (15.9%); adapting and adjusting to college demand (10.3%), including time management, motivation, and balancing school and life; working while in school (2.9%); health (2.5%), including mental health, general health, and stress; and financial issues (1.6%) (Figure 12). 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 students did not understand the differences in the provision of support services between high school and college, in that they must disclose disability and request support services.

"...making friends in school was the most important thing for me. I think friends carry you through life."



Figure 12



Many of the difficulties reported by students (i.e., academic struggles, lack of supports and accommodations, and adjustment to college demands) may have been mitigated by supports from DSCs, but as stated earlier, less than half (36.9%) of those who went on to postsecondary education contacted their DSC.

We recognize that it may seem liberating to some students to not disclose their disability to anyone at their college or university; however, it is important for students to know that services and accommodations are not available if they choose not to do so. This is a major impacting factor of which educators need to be aware. Students who were taught how to access student support services and the importance of disclosing their disability have indicated that this was one of the most beneficial learning experiences in high school.

For students who did not go on to postsecondary education, we followed up by asking the reasons for not continuing their education (Figure 13). Among 1,895 respondents who answered this question, 35% did not want to go to school (not interested), and another 33% chose to go directly into the workforce. Many students reported that school was not for them, they did not like school, and they did not have a good experience with school. However, 6% of the students indicated they were enrolling or planning to enroll in the near future, this is down nearly 20 percentage points from last year.

One-tenth of students reported that they did not believe they were able to go to college because of their disability or because they believed they were not smart enough. Some students reported that their parent or guardian did not want them to go to school.

One predictor of positive post-school outcomes is parent and teacher expectations. This is an area where schools and districts can work with parents by addressing the barriers and fears associated with student safety and success after high school. Parents may need to be informed of the availability of accommodations, support services, and the importance of including their child in the larger community to become independent and productive members of that community. To ensure students are prepared for the transition to higher education, as with employment, more instruction and practice utilizing self-determination and self-advocacy skills paired

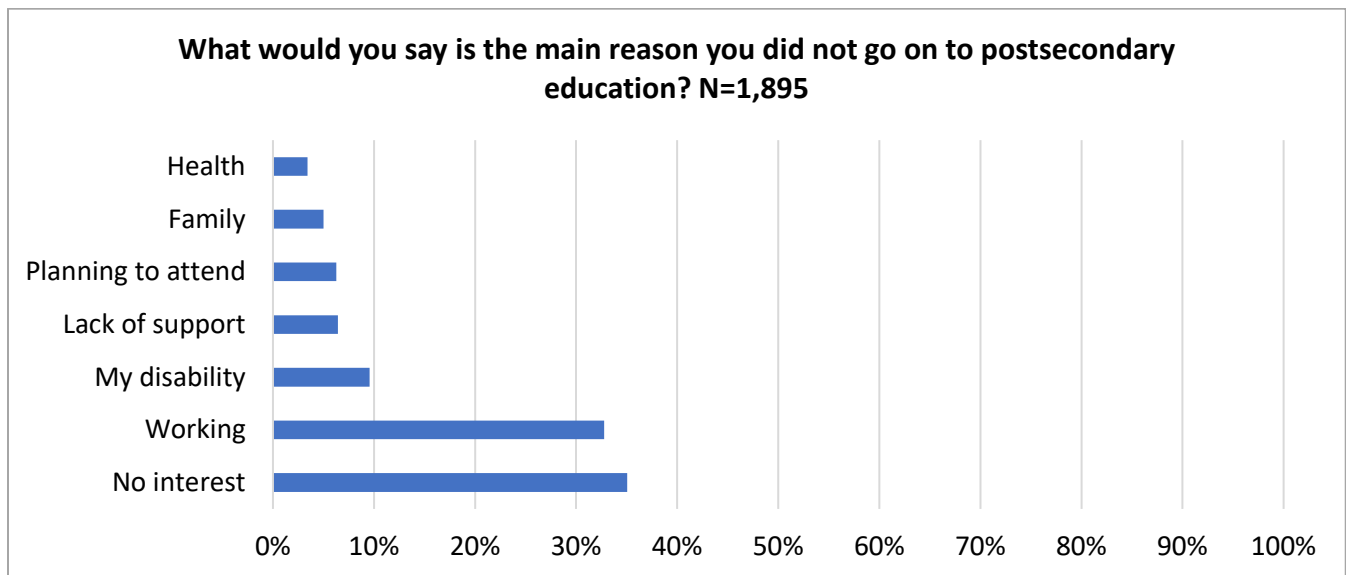


with structured career planning may be needed throughout the high school years to increase enrollment in postsecondary education and make it a successful experience.

Additionally, mentorship and encouragement from teachers and counselors during high school may improve self-efficacy and increase young people's interest in pursuing higher education.

Other reasons students reported for not enrolling in higher education included health conditions (mental, behavioral, and medical issues), family or personal issues (e.g., taking care of family members, getting pregnant/married), limited resources/accommodation (e.g., lack of transportation and financial support, and graduating qualifications).

Figure 13



Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

KYPSO also asked respondents if they had contact with the OVR since leaving high school. Of the 348 respondents who indicated they had contact with OVR, 317 described the kind of help they received (Figure 14).

Just over 30% of the respondents reported not receiving help or receiving limited help because they did not wish to accept help, they did not get back with OVR, they didn't qualify, they were still in the application process, or they were simply checking in as needed.

Almost 30% reported receiving help with further education including enrollment, tuition, books and supplies, and accommodations such as contact with student support services and tutoring.

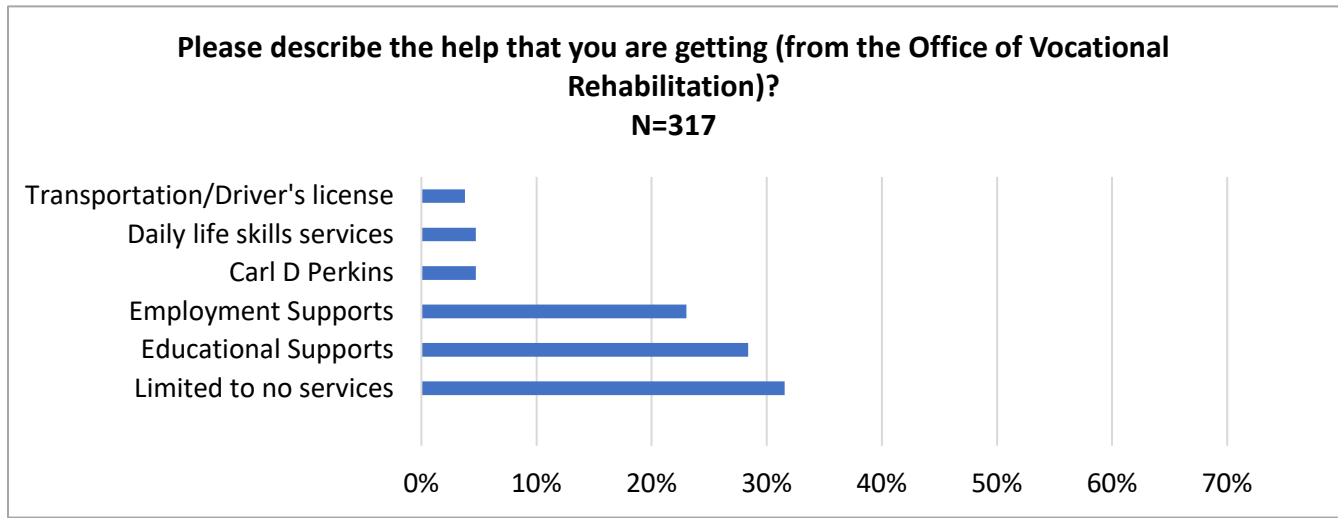
Approximately one in four students reported receiving help from OVR for services such as finding a job, job training, job counseling, obtaining a job coach/Community Living Supports (CLS) worker, and supported employment. Just under 5% of respondents specifically mentioned receiving information and help with attending Carl D. Perkins.



Other OVR supports mentioned included connecting students to other services such as day programs, waiver programs, Medicare/Medicaid, Social Security, helping students get a driver’s license, and offering transportation assistance.

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

Figure 14

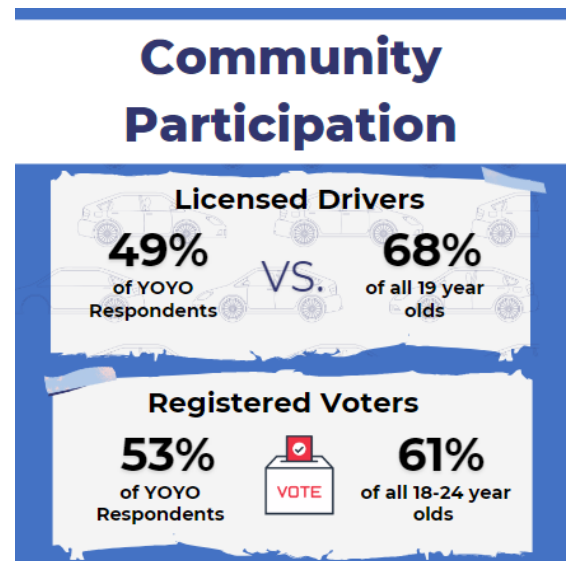


Community Participation

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

Although the national trend for young persons with driver's licenses has been dropping for years, and the rate of our respondents (students with an IEP) has consistently been below the overall (students with and without disabilities) national average, that gap is getting smaller. 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 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 last year, while Kentucky's general population of 18-24-year-olds reported a 61% registration rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).



Another question asked in the YOYO regarding community participation is where students 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 from last year.

Students' Perceptions of Effective High School Practices

To gather more information about the students' experiences in high school, students were asked to "Name the most important thing during high school that helped you in your life right now" (Figure 15). 2,419 respondents answered this question with a response rate of 82.7%. Many students (39%) reported that the support and encouragement they received from teachers and other staff (e.g., coaches, guidance counselors, speech

Most participants identified adult support and encouragement as the thing that most helped them **(38.5%)**.

therapists, and principals) were most helpful. Just under one quarter (23%) of the respondents mentioned many of the transition programs designed to prepare students for life after high school as the most important. Transition programming mentioned included OVR, the Community Work Transition Program (CWTP), CTE, Area Technology Centers (ATCs), specific career clusters and certifications, Future Farmers of America (FFA), Jobs for Kentucky's Graduates (JAG KY), United Parcel Service (UPS), job exploration, job coaches/employment specialists, and paid work experience, as well as military development programs such as Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) and Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC).

16.0% of students named specific personal skills acquired, such as working hard, working with others, learning to be independent, asking for help, managing time, and gaining study skills as the most helpful. School programs and services offered were mentioned by 13% of respondents. Some students specifically indicated that they benefited from special education and their IEP, including educational supports such as extra time for testing, one-on-one instruction, small classes, and hands-on learning. Others stated that they liked the benefits of the social aspect of high school, including involvement in extracurricular activities such as sports, art programs, band, and clubs. Students also indicated that earning their high school diploma or alternative diploma was important. To go along with the social aspect of high school, respondents reported that friendships and peer relationships (10%) and support from family members (3%) were very important to their post-school success. It must also be noted that 15% of the respondents said nothing was important or they did not know what was most important to their post-school life.

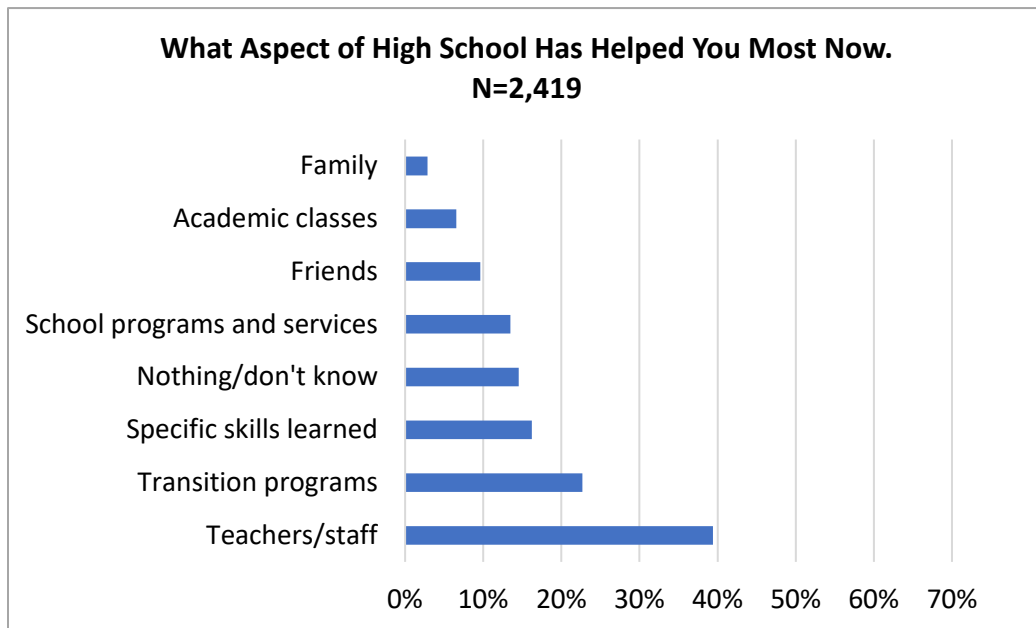
It is interesting to note that of the students who exited high school with an alternate diploma or aging out and responded to this question, 23% were employed and 7.4% pursued further education. Of these respondents, 19.5% specifically mentioned transition activities as most helpful, but of those employed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



Students were allowed to identify multiple factors of what was 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 students who did not specifically mention transition activities as the most helpful does not mean they did not participate in those programs. KYP SO has been interested in documenting the actual frequency with which students 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 students with disabilities. This information can be found in the Insights from New Data Synthesis section of this report.

Figure 15



Students 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 students who responded to the question, the majority (96%) indicated that they spend their time "at home," and 38% of the students who noted spending their time at home indicated

that they helped with family chores or caring for family members. Since students could give multiple answers, just over half of the respondents reported spending time on hobbies, including community organizations and church groups. 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.

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, for requesting 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 students.



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 students who contact their DSC and the importance of providing instruction during high school in self-determination for the purpose of accessing and advocating 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 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, Social Security Office (e.g., SSI, Medicaid), guardianship, and other community agency resources.

Insights from New Data Synthesis

For many years, KYPSO has been interested in the impact of inclusion in the general education environment on post-school outcomes. This year marks the first year in which we are able to measure this. In order to do so, we collected individual-level data on how much time students spent in the LRE. These data were provided to KYPSO by KDE. When viewed in the aggregate, time spent in the LRE is encouraging, with more than 70% of students with IEPs spending at least 80% of their school day in the LRE. Higher incidence disabilities such as SLD and those with OHI skew these numbers to look very favorable. 85% and 78% of students 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 students with FMD (4%) and Multiple Disabilities (24%), spend far greater amounts of their day in segregated settings. 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 75% spend at least 80% of their day in general education classes. Among those who received alternative diplomas, only 4% spent at least 80% of their day in general education while 62% spent less than 40% in inclusive settings. Because these data were provided for the full population, this includes persons who did not respond to the YOYO.

It might be assumed students with more involved disabilities should spend more time in segregated settings. However, it is useful to examine how placement impacts outcomes. When we examine those students who are on the alternate assessment, we see vast differences in employment outcomes based on LRE data. Even though very few students who received alternative diplomas spend 80% or more time in general education, 22% of those students were employed in the year since their exit. On the other hand, only 7% of those students 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. While this is not a perfect control group, and there are undoubtedly differences in the students, we believe that this is compelling evidence for the value of inclusion in general education settings. These findings correlate with national research (e.g., Mazzotti et al., 2021).

When we look at students who received alternative diplomas, overall, 70% 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 students who received alternative diplomas, we see that 65% of white students spent less than 40% of their school day in general education settings. However, for Hispanic students, this figure is 73%, and for Black students, this figure is 84%. These percentages are disproportionately higher than expected.



Another interesting finding concerning placement is the case of students with autism and postsecondary education. We have already established that students with autism have relatively high numbers in terms of enrolling in higher education following high school (22.6%). This is almost entirely driven by those students with autism who are included in general education settings for at least 80% of the day. 93% of those students with autism who went on to higher education were included in general education for at least 80% of the school day, while only 7% who were included between 40 and 80% of the day went to college. No students with autism who spent less than 40% of their time in general education went on to higher education. 47% of students 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 11% of students who spent 80% or more of their day in separate settings went on to other postsecondary education. Only 56% of students with autism were found to spend at least 80% of the average school day in a general education setting.

Career and Technical Education

This year, with the help of KYSTATS, we were able to obtain data regarding the level of CTE involvement for former students in our sample. We linked these to YOYO outcomes. As can be seen in Table 12, 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, 52% went on to competitive employment, while another 19% went on to other employment. Still, not all students receive the same amount of CTE training. CTE Concentrators had 49.5% competitive employment and 18.4% other employment. Those who were considered just CTE Explorers had 41.8% competitive employment and 16.7% other employment. Among those with no CTE training only 22.8% were competitively employed a year after high school, while 15% were in other employment and 62.2% were not employed. The relationship between CTE and postsecondary education was not as striking. Those with no CTE training still attended higher education at a rate of 13.1%, while other groups had increased rates (14.3% for Explorers; 18.1% for Concentrators; and 22.8% for Completers). CTE appears to have positive impacts for both employment and education, but for those students planning to pursue employment directly after high school, CTE is especially important.

Table 12: Employment Outcomes by CTE Status

Employment Outcomes by CTE Status	Competitively Employed	Other Employed	Not Employed
CTE Completer	52.0%	18.9%	29.1%
CTE Concentrator	49.5%	18.4%	32.1%
CTE Explorer	41.8%	16.7%	41.5%
No CTE	22.8%	15.0%	62.2%

Postsecondary Readiness

We have often wondered how well the state’s definition of Postsecondary Readiness accurately correlates with the degree to which students with IEPs go on to colleges and careers during their first year after high school. The actual definition for Postsecondary Readiness from KDE 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” (KDE,



2024). To demonstrate Postsecondary Readiness, the student 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 13, postsecondary education aligns quite well with the state’s definition of college readiness. Among those who were deemed to be both College Ready and Career Ready, 46.1% reported going on to higher education in the year since exiting high school. Similarly, those who are deemed College Ready have a postsecondary enrollment rate of 42.1%. The number drops off dramatically for those not in these categories. Those deemed to be Career Ready go on to higher education 18.7% of the time, and those who are identified as neither College Ready nor Career Ready only go on to higher education 9% of the time. In terms of other postsecondary education, there is little variance with those not deemed College Ready only going onto education 6.2% of the time, while all other designations approach 8%. It should be noted that there are more students with IEPs who are not deemed College Ready or Career Ready than any of the three other Postsecondary Readiness groups.

Table 13: Postsecondary Readiness by Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary Readiness by Postsecondary Education	Higher Education	Other Education	No Education
Academic and Career Ready	46.1%	7.8%	46.1%
Academic Ready Only	42.2%	7.9%	49.8%
Career Ready Only	18.7%	7.9%	73.4%
Not Academic or Career Ready	9.0%	6.2%	84.8%

Employment outcomes tell a 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 14, those who were deemed solely Career Ready go on to competitive employment 55.8% of the time in the year following high school. Those who are deemed to be both College Ready and Career Ready obtain competitive employment 48.1% of the time. However, in this case, there is not much of a drop-off when career readiness is not determined. Among those who were solely deemed College Ready, 42.2% obtained competitive employment, and those who were deemed neither College Ready nor Career Ready still obtained competitive employment 42.5% of the time. A large majority of students with IEPs are not considered to be College Ready or Career Ready, and while meeting the requirements for Career Readiness does seem to enhance one’s prospects, the magnitude of the effect is not as great as one might expect.

“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



Table 14: Postsecondary Readiness by Employment

Postsecondary Readiness by Employment	Competitively Employed	Other Employed	Not Employed
Academic and Career Ready	48.1%	21.7%	30.2%
Academic Ready Only	42.2%	19.4%	38.4%
Career Ready Only	55.8%	18.9%	25.3%
Not Academic or Career Ready	42.5%	16.5%	41.0%

While 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 students who are not considered to be Career Ready go on to find competitive employment. However, the reasons for this need to be explored. Perhaps students with IEPs who are finding jobs are doing so largely without the help of traditional job preparation programs through the school. A final point regarding Postsecondary Readiness is simply the large number of students with IEPs who are not considered to be either College Ready or Career Ready when they exit high school. In 2023, 60.8% of all students with IEPs in Kentucky fall into this category.

Homelessness

Through our interagency collaboration, we identified a subgroup of students who we believe have often been overlooked in terms of examination of post-school outcomes. Approximately 3% of all students in Kentucky are considered to be homeless (National Center for Homeless Education). For students with disabilities, this number is slightly higher, with our own research indicating that 4.3% 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 student who does not have a fixed, stable, and adequate nightly residence. We were particularly concerned that we were not capturing the students in our post-school outcomes research due to the transient nature of their lives, but until now 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.

Surprisingly, we found that homeless students are not underrepresented in our population for the YOYO. In fact, our sample includes 4.4% of students 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 might also be the case that because of the McKinney-Vento services, including that of the local homelessness coordinators, schools might have better ways of getting in contact with these students. For whatever reason, it is a promising finding and might serve as a model for increasing response rates for other groups that do not pose the challenges that this group might face.

We also discovered good news in terms of employment outcomes for this group. 54% of homeless students reported being competitively employed within one year of exiting high school. This compares favorably to the 45% of students who are not homeless and report competitive employment. Rates for noncompetitive employment were very similar between homeless and non-homeless. Our data cannot speak to causal reasons for these positive outcomes, but several hypotheses seem plausible. First, students who are receiving McKinney-Vento services may be receiving overall better attention from school staff in ways that are not traditionally considered transition planning but may, in fact, be just that. For instance, we have heard anecdotally about



services being provided to these students that include working within the school system both during the school year and during summer programs. As a plethora of research has shown, paid work during high school is one of the best predictors of post-school employment, and therefore, this might be a reason for positive outcomes for these students. A second explanation might be simply the necessity of finding work if one is unhoused. While other students with IEPs, and other students in general, might in some cases become comfortably reliant on staying at home with family, this is likely not an option for homeless students.

While employment outcomes were favorable for homeless youth, postsecondary education was not. 11% of homeless youth reported going on to higher education compared to 18% of the population of youth with homes. Similar rates of other education were seen between the two groups. We know that the McKinney-Vento program provides assistance with the completion of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms and aims to promote postsecondary education among homeless youth. While we, of course, do not know what the figures would look like in the absence of these efforts, it is discouraging to see the discrepancy in higher education rates for homeless youth. This might speak to the value of having a stable family life, parental expectations and involvement, and stronger support from the community. Our data again cannot speak to the causal mechanisms for this association, but we do believe that is grounds for further research.

Guardianship

Guardianship and disability have been topics of recent research, including alternatives to guardianship, such as supported decision-making (e.g., Nye-Lengerman et. al., 2017). With the advice and consent of the KYPSO Advisory Group, we added a question to this year's YOYO asking respondents whether they had a legal guardian. Understanding that this could be a difficult question for young people to answer, we stressed to interviewers that if the respondent did not know the answer, this was perfectly acceptable and to mark the interview as such.

Only about 5% of respondents did not respond to this question, while 72% indicated that they did not have a legal guardian and 22% said they did. There was huge variation between disability types as to who did and did not report having a legal guardian. See Table 15 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 guardian, limited guardian, or had some type of conservatorship. Nevertheless, the findings regarding the outcomes of students who reported having legal guardians are striking.

Area to inform instruction:

Educators and families should understand options related to guardianship and supported decision-making.



Table 15: Guardianship by Disability

Disability Type	% Reported Having Guardian
Autism (N=303)	41%
Emotional Behavioral Disability (N=202)	15%
Functional Mental Disability (N=144)	69%
Hearing Impairment (N=27)	7%
Mild Mental Disability (N=494)	22%
Multiple Disabilities (N=73)	56%
Orthopedic Impairment (N=13)	23%
Other Health Impaired (N=745)	13%
Specific Learning Disability (N=936)	16%
Speech or Language Impairment (N=51)	6%
Traumatic Brain Injury (N=15)	27%
Visual Impairment (N=20)	10%
Total (N=3,025)	22%

Supported decision making improves post-school outcomes

For graduates with alternative diplomas, Competitive employment is

5X Higher

for people without Legal guardians

Because guardianship is a phenomenon most closely associated with more severe disabilities, we restrict our analysis of post-school outcomes and guardianship to those students who exited with alternative diplomas. Upon request, we could also look at different disability types or other breakdowns, but we think 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 students with and without guardians. Among students who exited high school with an alternative diploma, 74% reported having guardians while 26% 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 students 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) only 4% obtained competitive employment. Of the 26% of students on the alternative diploma who reported not having guardians 21% achieved competitive employment within a year after exiting high school. While we would in no way argue that guardianship alone is the sole factor that contributes to a young person not being able to become competitively employed, we cannot ignore the fact that the rate of competitive employment is five times higher for students without guardianship amongst a similar group of students who have guardians.

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



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, weighting pros and cons, exploring options, offering advice based on experience, and/or explaining complicated documents or concepts.

The more schools and other members of the community incorporate principles of self-determination into transition planning the greater outcomes we can see for this group.

Conclusion

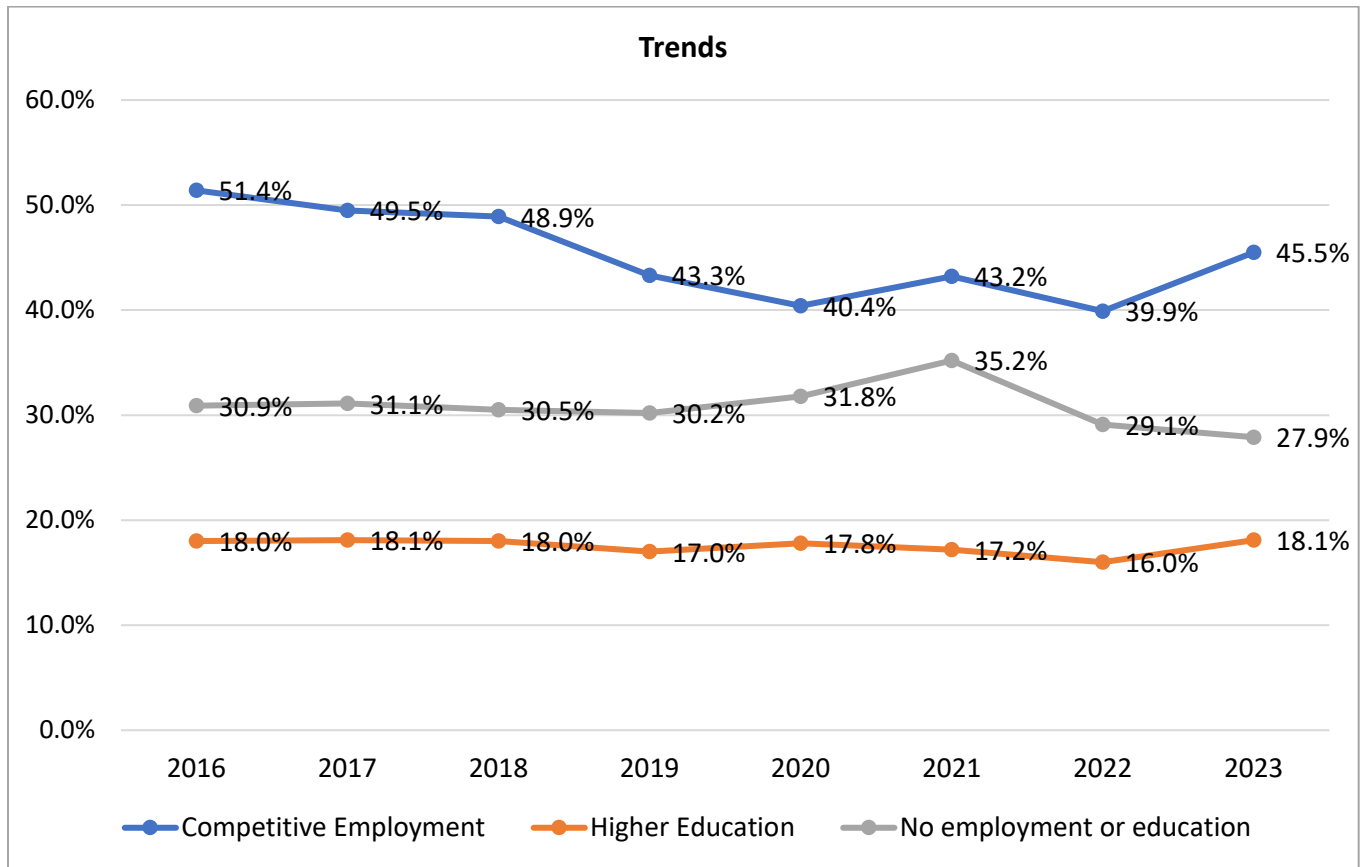
Given the number of years for which we have consistent data, we could typically speak with greater certainty about developing trends. However, the introduction of the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020 has impacted these trends. The figure below (Figure 16) shows that from 2016 to 2020, the percentage of students who entered competitive employment within one year after exiting high school was steadily declining. Then in 2021, students who entered competitive employment rose slightly, even though this was during the start of the pandemic. However, students interviewed in 2022 have reported the lowest rates of competitive employment.

During this same time frame, the percentage of students who enrolled in higher education one year after high school was fairly steady, between 17 and 18 percent, until this year when it fell to 16%.

Non-engagement rates remained fairly steady between 30 and 31%, then rose to 35.2% last year. This year, the non-engagement rate dropped to 29.1%, the lowest it has been in this time frame.



Figure 16

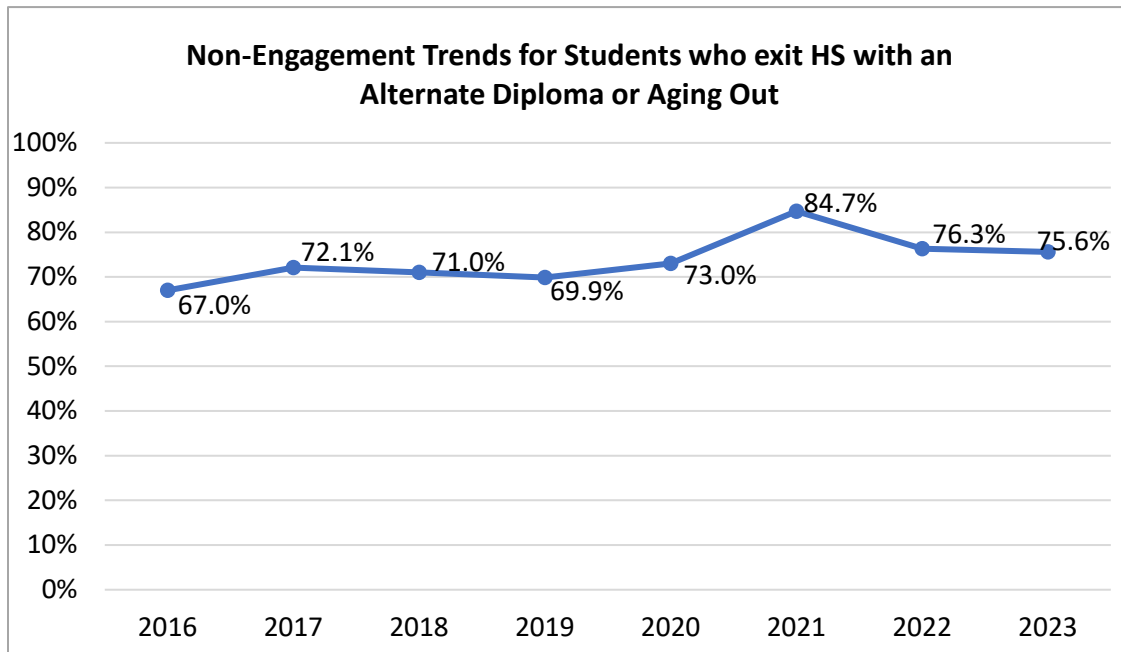


Although KYPSO does not have information on the types of jobs obtained in 2020 when employment rates appeared to rise as reported in the 2021 YOYO, it would be interesting to see if this increase was related to the demand for employees in the service industry and whether those types of jobs are more prominent in transition activities for students with disabilities vs. all students.

Disparities continue to exist in many outcomes related to gender, disability type, and exit from high school. This report highlights some of the disparities and draws some conclusions and assumptions. The figure below (Figure 17) shows that students who exit high school with an alternate diploma or age out continue to have the lowest percentage of successful outcomes and the highest rates of non-engagement. These rates of non-engagement had not changed significantly, averaging 68%, except for a spike last year, when it increased over 11 percentage points to 84.7%, and although it has dropped back down slightly, it is still above that average at 76.3%. The Covid-19 pandemic has most likely impacted the increase; however, this still does not explain why this population of students continues to be not engaged in post-school employment and education at such high rates. This continues despite an increased emphasis on career readiness, the availability of pre-ETS, transition services mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and the option of supported higher education programs.



Figure 17



Of these students, approximately 40% report that they do not work because of their disability. This may suggest that parents, educators, and/or students may not be aware of employment and further education

possibilities for individuals with significant disabilities, therefore lacking a vision and expectation for employment.

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

KYP SO Support

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

We hope this report highlights some findings that will allow educators to make informed decisions that help students succeed. KYP SO staff are available to work with districts, SERTACs, and the state to identify best practices based on data.



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

Our staff has worked with SERTACs and districts on using this reporting system, analyzing the results, and making data-based decisions to improve transition programs and instruction.

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 as being among the most innovative in terms of data collection and reporting. We rely heavily on the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) for our knowledge regarding best practices. KYP SO has led the effort to pull together a collaborative state transition planning team with an emphasis on sharing transition-related data across state agencies.

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

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



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