

North Dakota Transition Follow-Up Project

1999-2001 Cohort Telephone Follow-up Interview Data Report

prepared by
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Introduction

This is one of a series of reports on the ND Transition Follow-up Project. Funded by the ND Department of Public Instruction, Office of Special Education, the ND Transition Follow-up Project is an attempt to determine the status of students with disabilities as they exit high school and enter society as young adults.

In 1998, staff from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (DPI) conceptualized a two-phase study to follow students with disabilities as they left the public education system. The study is a five-year longitudinal project that examines student status at exit from high school, and then at one- and three-year intervals after school. Items of interest include satisfaction with high school, involvement in transition planning, and degree of post-school involvement in employment, living, and social arrangements. The two phases of the study are to 1) gather school exit data from students with disabilities and 2) gather follow-up data from these students and/or their families through telephone interviews. School personnel complete the exit interviews and NDCPD students and staff conduct the follow-up telephone interviews.

This particular report is a summary of the data and analyses of the 1999, 2000, and 2001 cohorts of students with disabilities who exited from North Dakota (ND) schools in nine special education units. These students' initial school exit data were reported by Hoover (2000) and are available by contacting the ND DPI office in Bismarck.

For a more in-depth analysis of ND trends, the reader is encouraged to compare these results to those presented in two companion reports, the Hoover (2000) report and the 2001 Student Exit Interview Report. Special education unit directors may request specific unit reports by contacting Dr. Brent A. Askvig at the ND Center for Persons with Disabilities, Minot State

University, 500 University Ave. West, Minot, ND 58707, phone 701-858-3052. Fees for this service will be negotiated between the district and NDCPD.

Methodology

The general procedure for this study was to survey family members of the 1999, 2000, and the 2001 school year exiters from the participating special education units. Once contacted, the family members were interviewed using the NDCPD Transition Follow-up Project Interview Questionnaire (see Appendix A). This instrument and the contact protocol are described below.

Instrument. The Interview Questionnaire was developed after an extensive review of many materials. DPI staff provided NDCPD staff with an initial outline of some questionnaire items based on their earlier work on the project. In addition, we obtained several examples of transition questionnaires from the literature, including samples from an Idaho follow-up study, samples from Dr. Eugene Edgar in Washington state, and items from the National Secondary Transition Longitudinal study.

Items from these materials were analyzed and useful structural features were selected. The authors then designed initial drafts that included items on education, employment, living arrangements, and social activities. These drafts were revised many times with input from DPI staff and other NDCPD colleagues. The final version (Appendix A) incorporated the most salient items of interest and provided an efficient instrument for gathering data via a telephone interview.

Contact protocol. The protocol for contacting participants was developed by staff with the assistance of several student workers. However, the first big step was to compile the call list. Initially, we used the exit interview reports provided by the participating special education units. Unfortunately, not all the reports had been sent to us, nor were several of them complete.

NDCPD staff contacted all special education unit staff, who provided updated copies of information, including family names, addresses and telephone numbers. This information was (and still is) kept in locked file cabinets at NDCPD. Student workers then constructed computer data files with this information. All student information was organized by identification codes rather than name to insure greater confidentiality. These data files were then used to generate call logs for the interviews.

The authors trained the student workers in the procedures for conducting the telephone interviews using the protocol shown on the questionnaire along with an Introduction script to help initiate the survey. The students were also given a list of possible Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that might arise from the interviews during the survey. Both the Introduction Script and the FAQs are in Appendix B.

Students practiced face-to-face and on the telephone with staff and with each other until they were comfortable with the process and the materials. The students were coached on how to handle participant questions about the study such as requests for more information or services or refusals to participate. Students were instructed to make at least five separate contact attempts for the 1999 cohort and three attempts for the 2000 and 2001 cohorts. These attempts had to occur at least two hours apart or on separate days.

Results

Participants. Parents of exiting students from all ND special education units (n=31) were the target participants for this study. The contact lists contained 330 students: 122 from the 1999 cohort, 208 from the 2000 cohort, and 312 from the 2001 cohort. Table 1 shows the disposition of the contacts for each of these cohort groups. We were able to obtain completed questionnaires

from 40.98% of the 1999 cohort, 42.31% from the 2000 cohort, and 54.17% from the 2001 cohort. The overall contact rate was 47.82%.

Table 1
Percent of Surveys Completed

Cohort Group	Initial participants	Surveys Completed	Percent complete
1999	122 (1 st year contact)	50	41%
2000	208 (1 st year contact)	88	42%
2001	312 (1 st year contact)	169	54%

Student demographics. Table 2 provides a comparison of the number of males and females who participated in the original exit interviews and the follow-up phone surveys. The table makes it possible to determine whether there are substantial differences between the population and the sample. In the current study, the population is defined as those students for whom we have exit interview data when they left high school. The sample in the current study is those students for whom we have follow-up interview data.

Table 2
Gender of participating students

Cohort Group	Initial Participants	Exit Interview Participants - Gender		Surveys Completed - Gender	
		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
1999	122 (1 st year contact)	87	35	37	13
2000	208 (1 st year contact)	134	74	55	33
2001	312 (1 st year contact) *	196	115	107	62

* one not reported

In the 1999 cohort, 28.7% of the original population was female (n=35) and 71% male (n=87). The sample represented by the number of students completing the follow-up survey in 2001 was 26.0% female (n=13) and 74% male (n=37). Even though the sample size is only half that of the population, it appropriately represents the number of males and females.

A similar trend is noted in the 2000 cohort. Slightly over 35% of the original population was female and approximately 64% was male. The sample was made up of 37.5% female and

62.5% male. Again, the sample appropriately represents the distribution of gender in the population.

The 2001 data represented the original cohort gender distribution with 62.8% male and 36.9% female in the exit interview sample. The telephone response sample showed 63.3% male and 36.7% female. Thus, there was good consistency of gender representation across the years.

Tables 3 and 4 provide a comparison of the racial and ethnic background of the participating students. In all three cohorts, the largest ethnic group is white/Caucasian. The second largest group is American Indian/Alaskan Native. This trend holds true for both the original exit interview data and the subsequent follow-up data. Because of the very low numbers of students who belong to ethnic minorities, when any one of them moves, the resulting changes in the percentages are amplified. There were several cases where ethnicity was not recorded on the exit form.

Table 3
Race of Participating Students during Exit Interview

Cohort Group	Initial Participants	Exit Interview Participants – Race						
		<i>White</i>	<i>Am. Indian/ Alaska Native</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Asian/ Pacific Islander</i>	<i>Combination</i>	<i>Unknown or Other</i>
1999	122 (1 st yr contact)	100	12	1	1	1	0	7
2000	208 (1 st yr contact)	181	16	1	5	1	0	4
2001	312 (1 st yr contact)	291	9	3	0	4	1	4

Table 4
Race of Participating Students during Telephone Survey

Cohort Group	Surveys Complete	Surveys Completed – Race						
		<i>White</i>	<i>Am. Indian/ Alaska Native</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Asian/ Pacific Islander</i>	<i>Combination</i>	<i>Unknown or Other</i>
1999	50	44	2	0	0	0	0	4
2000	88	77	5	0	3	1	0	2
2001	169	163	2	2	0	2	0	0

In the 1999 cohort, students from diverse racial backgrounds did not participate in the follow-up survey at the same rate as their white/Caucasian peers. This trend is not being seen with the 2000 and 2001 cohorts, however. It will be interesting to monitor this trend and see if it is a function of time.

Table 5 provides a breakdown of the participating students and their disability category as indicated in the exit data. The two largest disability categories represented in both the initial exit data and the subsequent follow-up data are specific learning disability (SLD) and mental retardation (MR). The percentage of students with these disabilities is remarkably stable in all three cohorts over the exit and follow-up interviews. Because most of the other disability categories are low-incidence with only one or two students, any changes are magnified in the resulting percentages.

Table 5
Disability of Participating Students

Cohort Group	Initial #	Exit Interview Participants – Disability												
		AUT	DB	MR	HI	OHI	OI	ED	SI	SLD	TBI	VI	Deaf	Unknown combination
1999	122	0	0	14	1	4	1	20	4	77	0	0	0	1
2000	208	2	0	32	1	1	2	19	5	132	1	1	0	12
2001	312	2	0	51	2	15	2	26	13	191	1	1	0	8

Education and training. Parents were asked if the exiting students had attended or were attending any post-high school education or training institutions. Figure 1 shows that just over half of the students had or were currently attending school. This rate is fairly consistent across all three years, with a bit of a decline in trend.

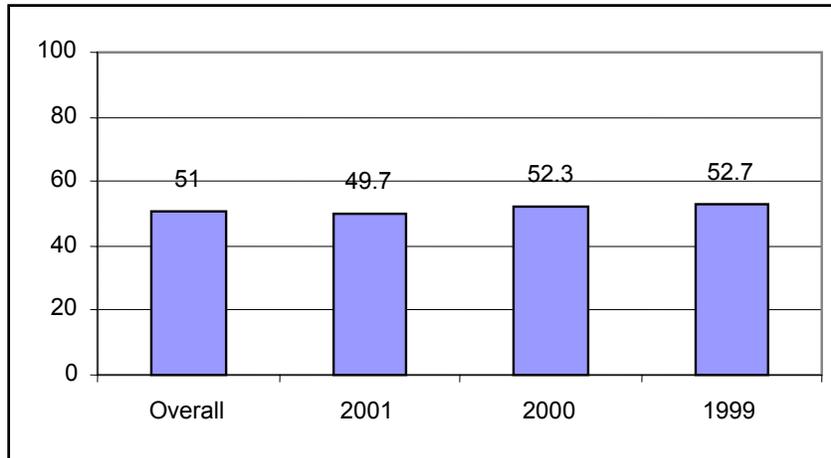


Figure 1. *Percent of students attending/attended school after high school.*

Parents' anecdotal reports (see Appendix C for anecdotal data from all questionnaire responses) show that students were attending four-year colleges and universities (e.g., UND, Jamestown College, Montana State University), and two-year colleges (e.g., Moorhead Tech, Bismarck State College, Williston State College) both in and out of ND. Students also participated in trade or technical training at programs such as Josef's School of Hair Design, Burdick Job Corps Center, and Brown Institute of Culinary Arts. Finally some students were receiving training at specialized disability programs such as Progress and Alpha Center or the Courage Center in Minneapolis, MN.

Employment

Parents were asked about the work situations of the students. Figure 2 shows that nearly three fourths of all students were employed. Figure 3 shows that of those who were not employed, 20.0% of the 1999 cohort group, 47.6% of the 2000 cohort, and 22.0% of the 2001 cohort were actively looking for work. Figure 4 shows that nearly two thirds of these students have had other jobs or have additional jobs.

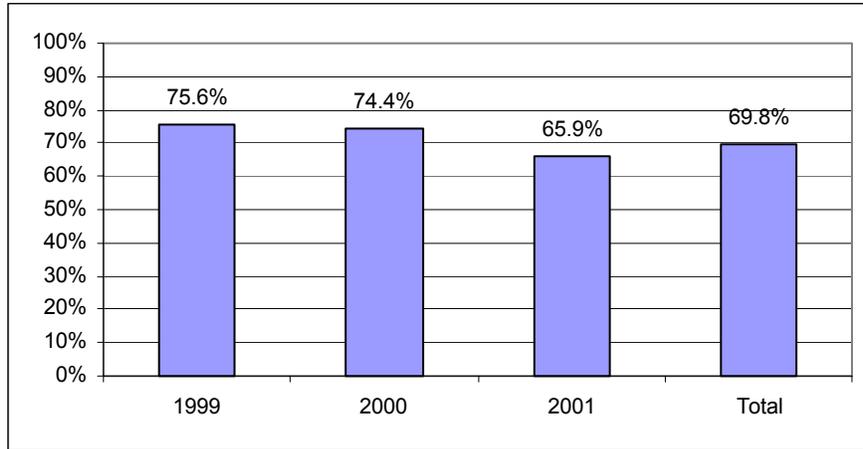


Figure 2. *Percent of students currently employed.*

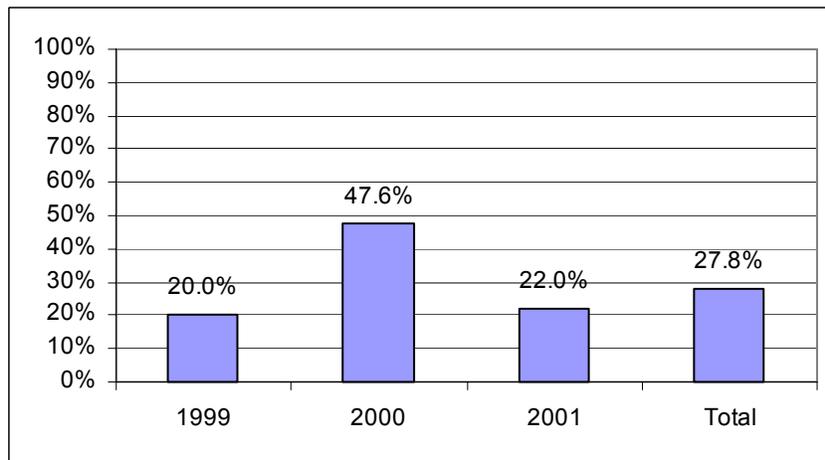


Figure 3. *Percent of unemployed students currently looking for a job.*

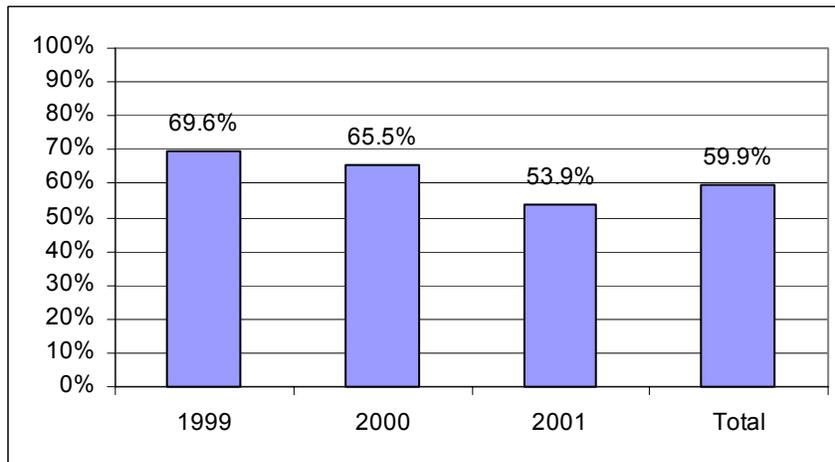


Figure 4. *Percentage of students with other jobs.*

Anecdotal data show that these students had jobs in food service, as cashiers and clerks, labor and construction, day care, preschool or nursing aides, auto mechanics, drafting, farm and ranch work, and vocational tasks in disability support agencies.

Figure 5 shows the average hourly wages, average hours per week, and months on the job for these students. It is interesting to note that the 1999 cohort students work nearly full-time and make over \$9.50 per hour. The 2000 cohort students work just over 30 hours per week, and make just over \$7 per hour. The 2001 cohort students work just over 35 hours per week, and make almost \$7.50 per hour.

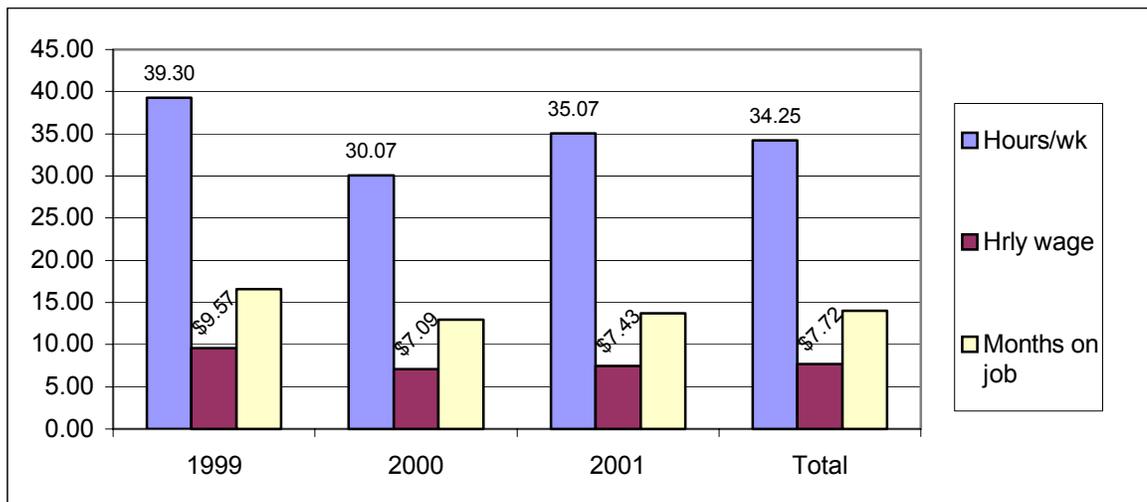


Figure 5. Average wages, hours and time on job for students.

Parents were asked to rate the students' satisfaction with their present jobs on a scale from 1 – not satisfied to 5 – very satisfied. Figure 6 shows that most students were satisfied with their jobs.

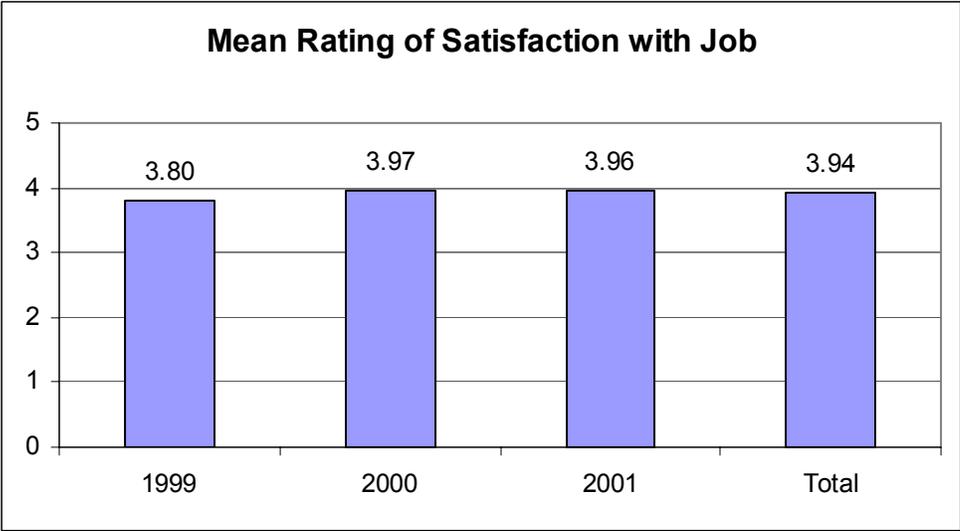


Figure 6. *Percent of students satisfied with current job.*

Living Arrangements

We next asked parents about the students’ living arrangements. Figure 7 shows the students’ current living arrangements. Over one third of the students lived with their parents, while another third lived in rented apartments or homes either by themselves or with others.

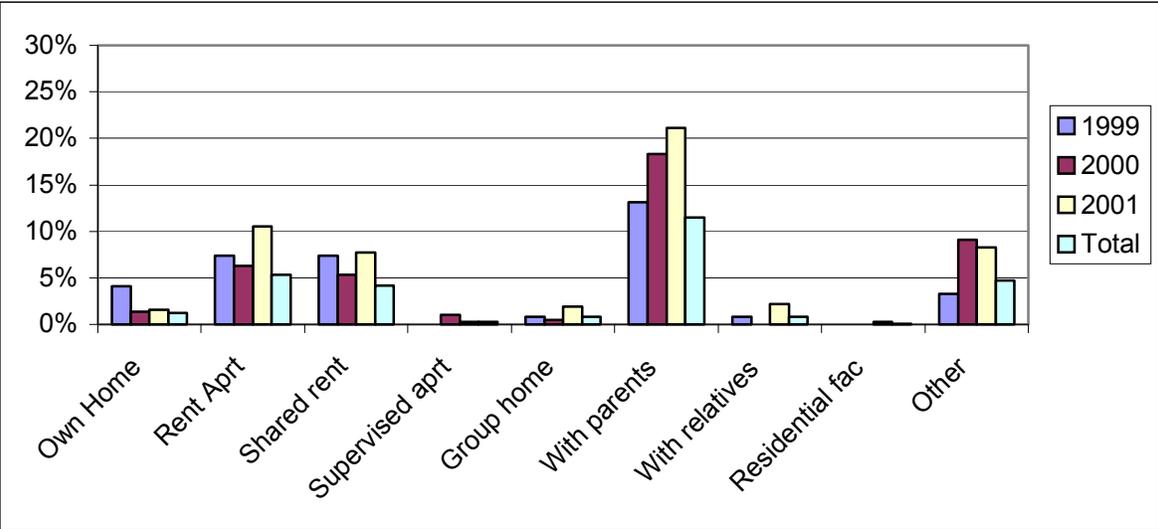


Figure 7. *Percent of students by living arrangements.*

Approximately 1 in 6 had other living arrangements, including assisted living apartments, college dorms, and fraternity or sorority houses. One student was in prison.

We also asked about the marital and family status of the students. Figures 8 and 9 show parents reported that 17 students overall (just over 5%), four in the 1999 cohort, six in the 2000 cohort and 7 in the 2001 cohort were married. A total of 27 students (about 9%) had children, 11 in the 1999 cohort, 6 in the 2000 cohort, and 10 in the 2001 cohort. Only one of these students had two children while the remainder had one child.

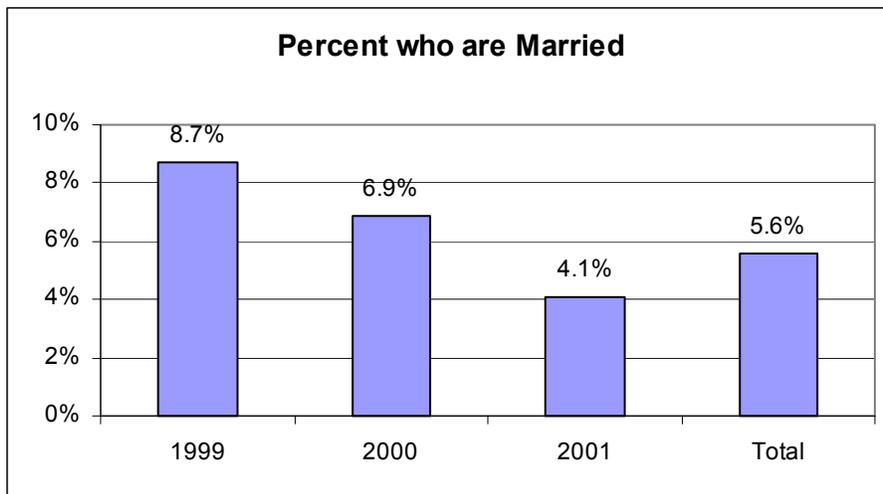


Figure 8. *Percent of students who are married.*

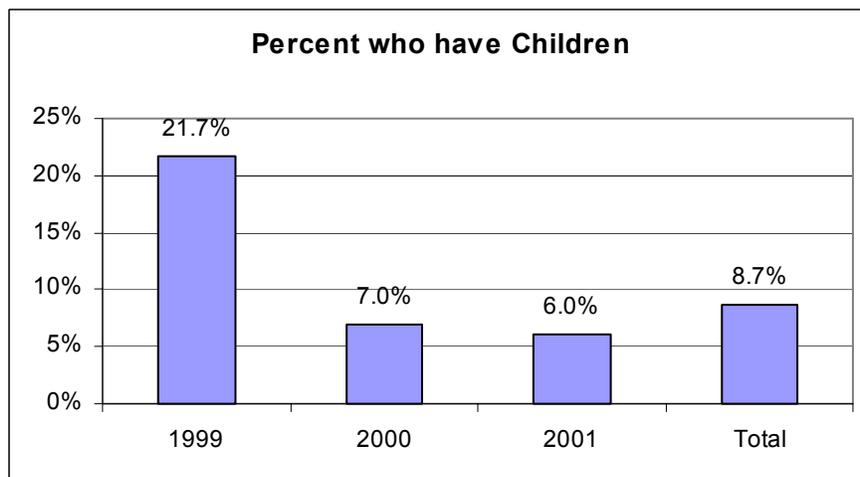


Figure 9. *Percent of students who have children.*

Social Activities

Parents were asked about the social activities and community participation of the students. Figure 10 shows how often students went out with others each week. The majority go out between one and five times each week, while few appear to be homebound. Parents provided anecdotal data regarding the students' recreation activities (Appendix C). They said the students participated in a wide variety of sports, were involved in Special Olympics, participated in outdoor activities such as camping and fishing, jogged, walked, went to community sports events like baseball and basketball, played pool, raised pets, watched TV and videos, worked on their vehicles, and frequently "just hung out with friends".

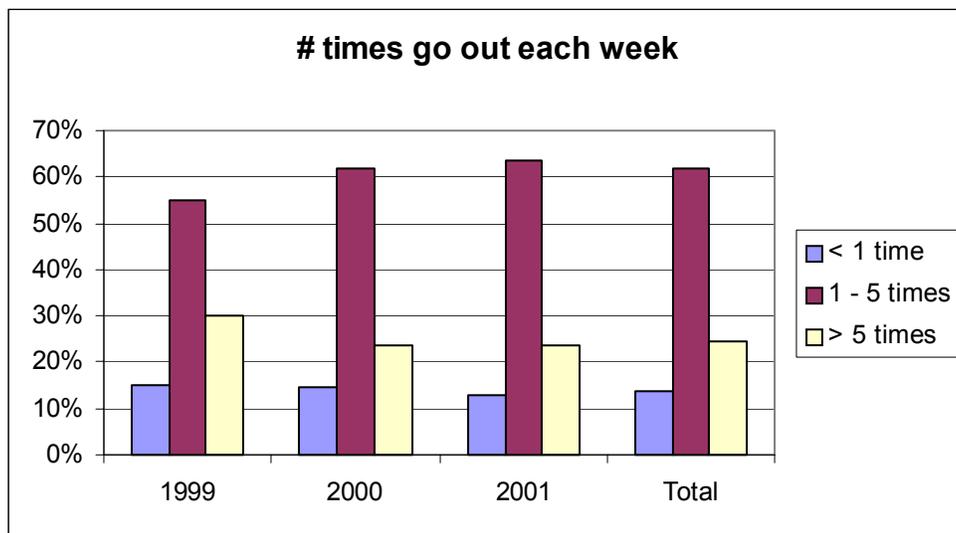


Figure 10. *Percent of times per week that students go out with others.*

Figure 11 shows that about one fourth of the students (28.9% of the 2001 cohort, 24.1% of the 2000 cohort and 21.7% of the 1999 cohort; 26.4% overall) did volunteer work which included church activities, senior center visits, college student organizations, youth coaching, and even blood donations. In addition, these students were involved with a variety of community

organizations including their churches, car racing clubs, cattleman’s associations, the public schools, teamsters, park districts, boy scouts, railroad clubs, and city fire departments.

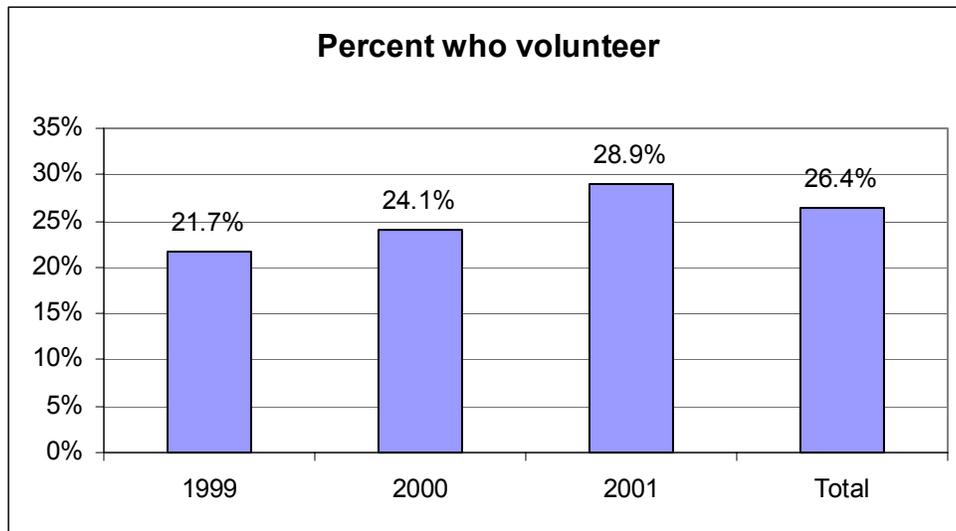


Figure 11. *Percent of students who reported doing volunteer work.*

Accessing Adult Services

Parents were asked two questions about the specialized adults services these students had accessed since high school. First, parents reported that just over one fifth of the students overall received services for their disabilities (see Figure 12). Figure 13 shows parent responses when asked if the students had been referred to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Developmental Disabilities, (DD) or Job Service. Over half of the students had been referred to VR while only about 1 in 7 had been referred to DD or to Job Service. Some parents reported that their children received note taking and other services in college, while some students received assisted living care or social security assistance.

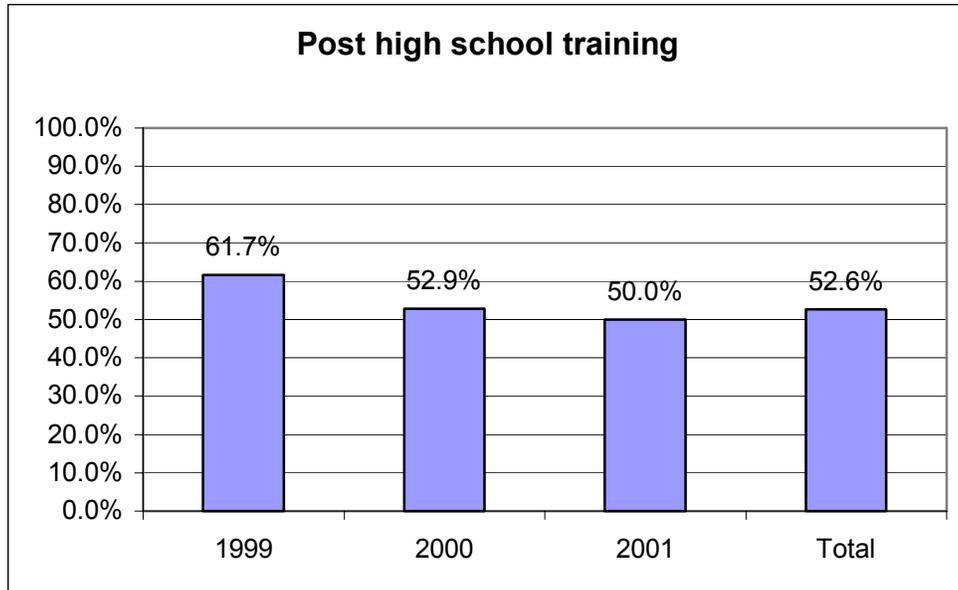


Figure 12. *Percent of students receiving post-high school services for their disability.*

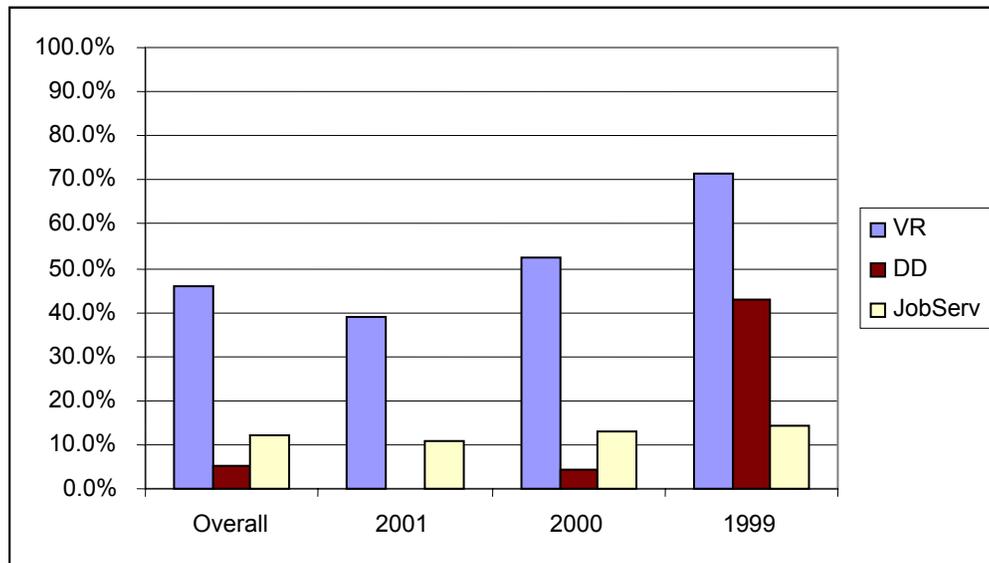


Figure 13. *Percent of students referred to adult services agencies for post-school services.*

High School Satisfaction

Finally, parents were asked if the students were satisfied with high school and if they were prepared for life after high school. Over three fourths of the parents said that their children were satisfied with high school (see Figure 14).

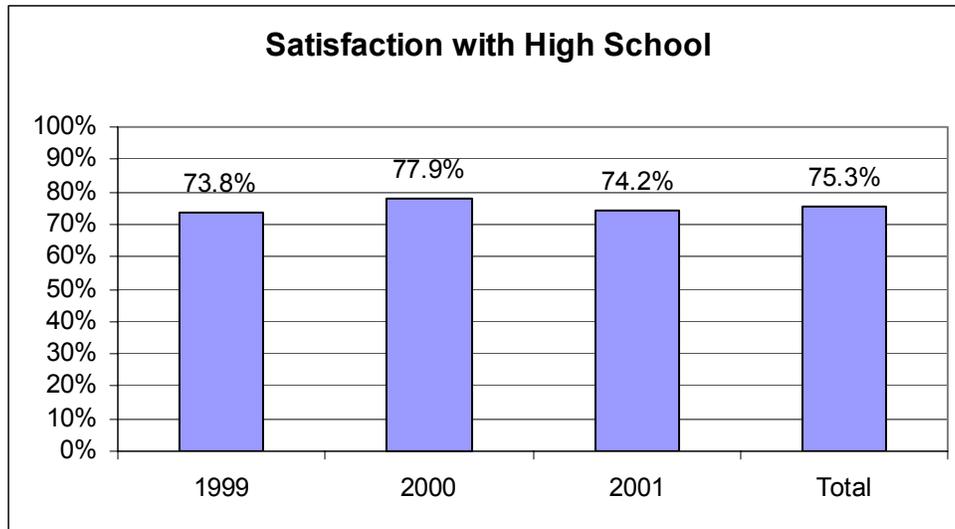


Figure 14. *Percent of students satisfied with high school.*

The parents were also asked to explain why they were or were not satisfied. Both positive and negative comments were collected (see Appendix C). Positive comments included statements such as:

- *“senior year best, was mainstreamed with others and given extra help”*
- *“quit Ritalin in junior year, helped his experience. Enjoyed classes and extra help”*
- *“got along with others, got the help he needed”*
- *“got along well with teachers”*
- *b/c of the opportunities he had in HS-allowed him to get current job*
- *utilized help & learned good work/study habits; knew how to go & get resources b/c of teachings*
- *good sped depart., same teacher aid for 12 yrs who was supportive*

Negative comments included

- *“hated it, felt different because he had to go to different classes”*
- *“tough time in school – reading really a problem”*
- *“treated badly”*
- *“did not enjoy the label of learning disability”*
- *“no friends, picked on”*
- *“Case manager didn't follow IEP rules. Wasn't correctly placed, got less help than needed. Not a big support system”*
- *“didn't get much help-labeled troublemaker and never got sufficient help”*

- *“school didn't help much with ed. Probs; didn't work with her enough; mindset wasn't there to help; categorized her as ADD as lazy or retarded”*
- *“Worst time of life. Keep same teacher & aids with same kid & get burned out & start to verbally abuse. Everything was always the kid's fault-never took into account the disability”*

Parents were asked what could have been changed about their children’s high school experience. They provided many comments that included the following:

- *“motivate him more”*
- *“more socialization with peers, did not participate with others outside of school”*
- *“too much to change”*
- *“better teachers”*
- *“more daily living skills”*
- *“the way goals were met with her IEP”*
- *“needed to be hands on experience”*
- *“identifying the problem earlier – get help earlier”*
- *“more flexibility in school curriculum”*
- *“availability of 1:1”*
- *“Being there till 21 is long; some things contradicted with what he learned @ home; picked up some bad habits from other kids”*
- *“could have excelled more if they offered him more technology & more help”*
- *“make it more job skill prep at a younger age; academics consistent early on”*
- *“more funds in rural areas to get LD teachers; he got too many modifications and not proper help”*
- *“SPED & other help were overloaded; don't care for SR's coming in to help with kids in SPED to earn credits. Needs to be monitored more. Was very disappointed-couldn't explain on her level. Help looking for jobs was a joke as well”*

Figure 15 shows the results of parent responses regarding preparation for life after high school. Just under two thirds of the parents thought that the students were prepared for post high school life.

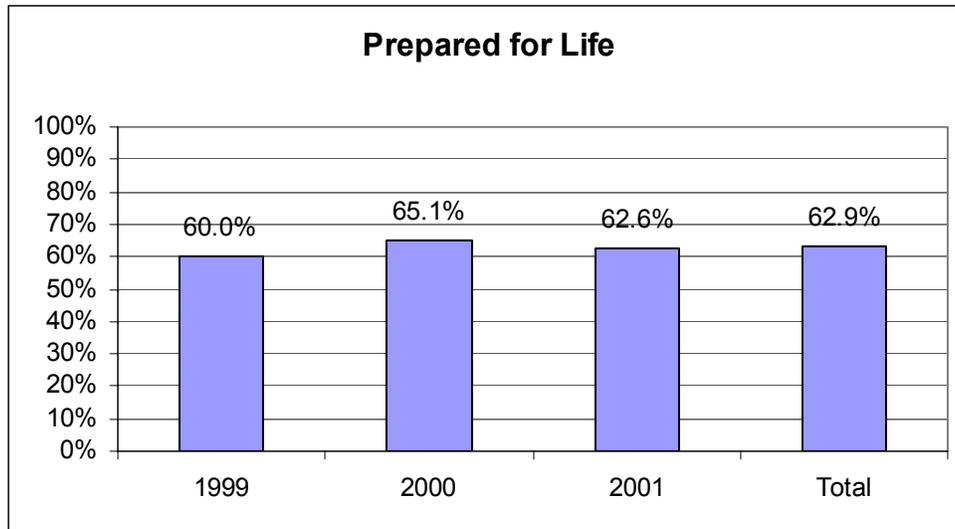


Figure 15. *Percent of parents who thought students were prepared for life after high school.*

They again provided comments to their responses. These included the following:

- *“did not think this initially, but happy with the way things have turned out”*
- *“grew up after college, was not ready for bills and rent, but ready for college”*
- *“special services did not follow up – teacher who was supposed to take care of this moved”*
- *“opened up with help”*
- *“wasn’t prepared for life”*
- *“his is doing, but it is tougher than {student} expected – Dad helps out when he can”*
- *“needed more maturity, lonesome when he left for school”*
- *“schoolwise, but not daily living skills”*
- *“as well as anyone is prepared after high school”*
- *“didn’t learn basic \$ mgmt; never learned basic accounting”*
- *“Didn’t realize what was needed to get a job. Wished she could have had more job knowledge, choices. Not good socialization skills”*
- *“don’t fully prepare them & wasn’t able to learn independent living skills @ school”*
- *“getting ready for college-borrowing \$-didn’t realize the debt and having a hard time dealing with it”*

Initial Intra-Cohort Comparison

The follow-up data of the 1999 cohort were examined comparing the one year and the three year data sets. These comparisons were done using a variety of statistical procedures, individualized based on the type of data per follow-up question. For example, descriptive or

categorical data (e.g., involvement in post-secondary education, current employment) were analyzed using the non-parametric McNemar Test, while ratio type data (e.g., hourly salary, months on a job) were analyzed with a paired *t* test. Table 6 shows the data that were analyzed and the statistical test used, along with the level (*p* value) of significance of the test results.

Table 6
Follow-up Data and Statistical Test Used

Data	Test Used	<i>p</i> value *
Post-Secondary Training/Education	McNemar	1.000
Currently Employed	McNemar	.687
Looking for Work	McNemar	1.000
Other Jobs Since High School	McNemar	.687
Current Marital Status	McNemar	.500
Have Children	McNemar	1.000
Go Out with Others	McNemar	1.000
Student Satisfied with High School	McNemar	.625
Prepared for Life After High School	McNemar	1.000
Do Volunteer Work	McNemar	1.000
Receive Services for Disability	McNemar	1.000
Weekly Hours	Paired <i>t</i> test	.885
Hourly Salary	Paired <i>t</i> test	.536
Number of Jobs Since High School	Paired <i>t</i> test	.137
Months on Job	Paired <i>t</i> test	.259
Job Satisfaction Rating	Paired <i>t</i> test	.862

* A *p* value equal to or less than 0.050 would indicate a significant difference between the year 1 and year 3 data.

The results suggest that from one year post-school to three years post-school, the 1999 cohort students had little change in their lives across those 16 variables. In nearly every case the trend of change was minimal or non-existent. For example, of those students who had no children at the one year post-school time, none of those individuals had children three years post-school.

One reason for the lack of statistically significant changes may be that the numbers of respondents for this cohort was relatively small. While the data set of the 1999 cohort contained 50 respondents at one year out, only 31 respondents provided information at three years post-

school. Thus many analyses had only 30 or 31 entries for each variable. Most statistical tests require much larger numbers of subjects or greater differences in pre-post scores to show significant changes.

Another reason may be that while the follow-up data collection periods were labeled as one year and three years post-school, the actual time period between data collection points was often less than 24 months. The one year follow-up data collection sessions occasionally lasted well over 12 months after school exit, and some three year data collection sessions began a bit before 36 months (these technical adjustments were made to facilitate the transfer of the overall project from another agency to NDCPD). Future data collection methods have remedied this problem.

Summary

The data in this report suggest that the students in these cohorts go on to post-high school training and education, have jobs, work nearly full time, have average wages above the minimum wage, live in a variety of home and community settings, volunteer in their communities, liked high school, and were generally prepared for adult life. Few students access specialized adult services. In addition, for one cohort group (1999) there was little difference in their one year and three year post-school results.

The data coming from this project will be valuable in the next several years. The intent of this project is to survey the high school students at the time of exit, one year after exit, and again three years after exit. Thus, for each student, a total of three contacts will be made over 3 years. This will ultimately provide us with a comparable, longitudinal picture of ND students. Comparing these data will be critical in examining trends, patterns, and developments, thus

giving indicators of what in the education delivery system is effective and what is not. The data will prove useful towards the future of students with disabilities in not only their academic lives but also in their personal lives for a better quality of life.

State and local education personnel are encouraged to use these data for individual student planning, as well as more comprehensive school system planning. Comparison of data over time will allow for a clearer picture of the effectiveness of our educational efforts with students with disabilities.

Appendix A
Telephone Interview
Questionnaire

Appendix B
*Introduction Script and
Frequently Asked Questions
Sheet*

Appendix C

Anecdotal Comments