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PROJECT 10 TOPICAL BRIEFS are published on a bi-monthly basis. Each issue focuses on a specific topic or theme, highlighting current and upcoming information and events related to secondary transition. This month the Topical Brief is focused on Students with Disabilities Earning Standard High School Diplomas and Attaining Postsecondary Success in Education, Employment and Career: Closing Both Gaps.

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Topics

- Standard Diploma Acquisition and Postsecondary Outcomes - Diverging Data Stories
- A Pair of Student Case Studies
- Project 10 and Additional Recommended Resources

Standard Diploma Acquisition and

Postsecondary Outcomes - Diverging Data Stories



Each year, school districts across the state of Florida are measured for their ability to produce high quality and rigorous education for all students that results in the acquisition of high school standard diplomas. Furthermore, high school graduates are measured in subsequent years to determine if they are employed and/or learning in postsecondary institutions. Both measures are critical for accountability and typically lend themselves to determining educational effectiveness and post-school outcomes for students. It might be expected that as high school graduation rates rise that employment and postsecondary enrollments rise along with it. However, for students with disabilities, these measures reflect a divergent story. Let's take a closer look at the data.

Florida High School Four-Year Graduation Rates:

One method of measuring graduation rate is the four-year graduation rate cohort. Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) has the following resource for more detailed information on how this rate is calculated:

<https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7584/urlt/2122GradRateInfoGuide.pdf>

The following graduation rates are displayed for all students in Florida compared to the subgroup "students with disabilities" in Florida, annually from the 2016-17 school year (SY) to the 2021-22 SY.

	2016-17 SY	2017-18 SY	2018-19 SY	2019-20 SY	2020-21 SY	2021-22 SY
All Students in FL	82.3%	86.1%	86.9%	90.0%	90.1%	87.3%
SWD in FL	66.0%	77.0%	80.6%	82.6%	82.3%	83.5%
Gap (All-SWD)	16.3%	9.1%	6.3%	7.4%	7.8%	3.8%

Source: Know Your Schools, Florida Department of Education <https://edudata.fldoe.org/>

The growth of all students earning standard diplomas using this calculation method has grown from 82.3% to 87.3% over six academic school years, whereas students with disabilities have seen their standard diploma acquisition rate grow from 66% to 83.5% over the same time period. Students with disabilities are now earning standard diplomas at nearly the same rate

as the entire population of students (which includes students with disabilities). Furthermore, the gap between standard diploma acquisition and graduation rates between ‘all’ students and ‘students with disabilities’ has never been smaller than the 3.8% net difference seen in the 2021-22 SY.

Florida Postsecondary Enrollment:

Another measure of student outcomes in Florida can be observed in the postsecondary outcomes of students who continue education beyond high school in any institution of higher learning. Students who enroll in postsecondary education within the academic year immediately following earning a standard diploma and exiting K-12 education are captured in Florida’s Postsecondary Continuation Rate data. FLDOE has additional information on this data located on the website:

<https://edudata.fl DOE.org/ReportCards/Schools.html?school=0000&district=00>

The following Florida postsecondary enrollment rates are displayed for all students in Florida compared to the subgroup “students with disabilities” in Florida, annually from the 2016-17 SY to the 2019-20 SY (the most recent available data).

	2016-17 SY	2017-18 SY	2018-19 SY	2019-20 SY
All Students in FL	58.5%	56.3%	55.2%	50.5%
SWD in FL	40.9%	34.5%	31.1%	25.3%
Gap (All-SWD)	17.6%	21.8%	24.1%	25.2%

Source: Know Your Schools, Florida Department of Education <https://edudata.fl DOE.org/>

The trend for both all students and the subgroup “students with disabilities” to be enrolled in postsecondary education immediately following graduation from high school is downward from the 2016-17 SY to the 2019-20 SY. However, the gap between the two comparison groups is increasing over the same four-year period, as students with disabilities are participating in any Florida postsecondary education in the year following high school completion at a rate of 25.3% for the 2019-20 SY, nearly half of the participation rate of “all” students in Florida for the same year.

Employment and Labor Participation Rates for Adults with Disabilities:

Another essential metric for measuring postschool outcomes for students and adults with disabilities is employment, specifically labor participation and employment rates. All roads of education and training, including K-12 education and any type of postsecondary educational and/or training experiences should lead to labor participation and careers.

On a national level, labor force participation rates for adults with disabilities remain less than half that of adults without disabilities.

	February 2021	February 2022
Adults with Disabilities	33.4%	36.6%
Adults without Disabilities	76.0%	76.9%

Source: Kessler Foundation, February 2022 Jobs Report <https://kesslerfoundation.org/press-release/ntide-february-2022-jobs-report-job-numbers-decline-people-disabilities-remain-above>

Statewide, Florida presented the following employment statistics for adults with disabilities from the 2019 release of "A Study of Employment of Floridians with a Disability":

	Not in the Workforce	Full-Time Work	Part-Time Work
Floridians with Disabilities (Ages 18-64)	61.6%	19.9%	18.6%
Floridians without Disabilities (Ages 18-64)	20.1%	54.1%	25.8%

Source: "A Study of Employment of Floridians with a Disability, 2019" Florida Chamber Foundation and The Able Trust, https://www.flchamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Employment-of-Floridians-with-a-Disability_2019.pdf

Discussion and Implications:

Florida educators and schools are supporting all students to graduate with standard diplomas. The gap between all students and students with disabilities (SWD) is smaller than ever (3.8%) and SWD are earning standard diplomas at a higher rate than ever (83.5%). However, national and state level data suggest that people with disabilities participate in the workforce at less than half the rate of adults without disabilities. Furthermore, Florida postsecondary enrollment data suggests that SWD are significantly below enrollment rates compared to all students and the gap has been widening over the past several years.

Typically, high rates of graduation and acquisition of standard diplomas portend future employment and postsecondary education success for graduates. However, student with disabilities, despite earning standard diplomas at rates close to their non-disabled peers, have not seemed to benefit from high rates of labor participation and post-high school education

enrollment.

One part of the solution for eliminating this discrepancy is to continue to close the graduation and high school standard diploma gap that remains. A more significant portion of the equation may be to ensure SWD are prepared to graduate, not only with a diploma, but also with employment skills and career interests that lead to employment or postsecondary school readiness. The Florida Chamber Foundation's "The Florida Scorecard- Metrics to Help Secure Florida's Future" website (<https://thefloridascorecard.org/>) highlights the fact that 1.48 million new jobs will be needed in the state within the next seven years! Students with disabilities can be prepared to fill a significant portion of those needs if they are prepared for the workforce as a result of K-12 experiences.

A Pair of Student Case Studies

STUDENT CASE 1

Sarah graduated high school last June with a standard diploma after attaining 24 credits and a 2.35 grade point average (GPA) in the general education curriculum. She was successful at graduating in four years after entering 9th grade, just like most of her peers. Besides receiving specialized instruction in English Language Arts and Math, she received assessment waivers through her Individual Education Plan and had several accommodations to assist with accessing curriculum content in her classes. Unfortunately, Sarah is discouraged about postsecondary education and training opportunities and has difficulty sustaining employment despite numerous attempts over the past seven months.



Case 1 Discussion

Sarah may be experiencing early challenges in postsecondary life as a result of being underdeveloped in self-advocacy and planning skills and lacking confidence in navigating adult settings. As part of essential transition planning, increasing students' self-determination and self-advocacy skills and having opportunities for students to practice those skills in various settings will support their problem solving, goal attainment and overall independence. In addition, understanding one's own disability and how (and when) to appropriately disclose a disability is pivotal to accessing necessary accommodations in postsecondary work and education settings. Finally, a Summary of Performance (SOP) completed *with* a student prior to graduating and exiting high school can be a powerful tool to assist in bridging the gap between high school and postsecondary environments.

Case 1 Relevant Resources

Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy Guide:

<http://project10.info/Documents/SD->

Florida Summary of Performance Template:

http://project10.info/Documents/FL_Summary_of_Performance_Template_SOP.pdf

STUDENT CASE 2

Paul is a 17-year-old high school sophomore who was retained twice prior to entering ninth grade last school year. He has an individual education plan to support reading comprehension and needs related to social-emotional behaviors. He can succeed in advanced-level math and science courses when accommodations and reading support are provided. Paul has a 1.7 GPA and is absent from school approximately four days per month. He appears on the school's early warning system as potentially at-risk of not graduating with a standard diploma.

Case 2 Discussion

Paul is a student that is in danger of failing to complete the requirements needed to earn a standard diploma. He presents several at-risk factors including multiple retentions, low GPA and high absenteeism. Strategies that could be used to support his future success might include ensuring age-appropriate transition assessments are conducted at least annually to align very specific strengths and preferences to employment, career and education goals. Using transition assessment data to design and implement an individualized course of study that leads to specific and relevant goals and outcomes may likely increase Paul's ability and fortitude to engage with school. In addition, ensuring Paul is on the most appropriate standard diploma pathway that includes courses and experiences aligned to his postsecondary goals will provide an enhanced opportunity to succeed in high school and become prepared for future employment.

Case 2 Relevant Resources

Student Engagement Best Practice Checklist:

http://project10.info/Documents/Student_Engagement_Checklist_FINAL_with_Logo11.13.19_QR.pdf

Graduation Pathways Chart:

http://project10.info/Documents/24-Credit_and_18-Credit_Grad_Pathways_Chart_Updated_12.7.22.pdf

Transition Assessment Project 10 Website Page:

<http://project10.info/DPage.php?ID=146>

Transition Assessment Chart:

http://project10.info/Documents/Transition_Assessment_Chart_11.1.21_1_4.pdf



Project 10 and Additional Recommended Resources

Trainings

Standing Up for Me Plus (SUFM+). The SUFM+ curriculum has been updated at the high school level and is available for use. Topics of concentration include self-determination definition and importance, curriculum review and dissemination and a deeper dive into the student portfolio and selected lessons.

Using School-level Data to Increase Graduation Success of Students with Disabilities: An Early Warning System (EWS). Details how schools and districts can use early warning system (EWS) data to promote timely graduation and post-school success. This training will include information on how to access and utilize data to impact graduation rates at the school level and interventions to help students graduate. In addition, effective practices implemented in other districts across the state will be shared.



For the trainings, please visit the P10 Training Request page at <http://project10.info/DPage.php?ID=319#NS105> and/or contact your regional transition representative (RTR) using the training request page or the P10 resources by location RTR statewide contact page: <http://project10.info/DPage.php?ID=331#NS84>

Publications

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Course Substitutions: The Who, What, When, Why and How:

http://project10.info/Documents/CTE_Course_Sub_TA_brief_for_Posting_11.18.20_links_updated_8.29.22_QR.pdf

Career and Technical Education: Enhancing Educational Experiences in Middle School, High School and Postsecondary Education:

<http://project10.info/Documents/CTE SSTIC Product with CTE Option 4.1 7.2020 2.pdf>

January 2020 Project 10 Topical Brief (Labor Market Trends)

<http://project10.info/Documents/January 2020 Topical Brief Labor Market .pdf>

Middle School Transition Trail Map

<http://project10.info/Documents/MS Transition Trail Map Updated 1.30.23 .pdf>

Project 10 Helpful Online Transition Resources

<http://project10.info/Documents/Helpful Online Transition Resources Revised for Final Posting 4.2.20.pdf>

Secondary Transition Road Map

<http://project10.info/Documents/Secondary Transition Roadmap FINAL 3.1 0.22 ENGLISH.pdf>

Outside Resources

Career and Technical Education Site (FLDOE):

<https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/career-tech-edu/>

Vocational Rehabilitation Students and Youth Programs (Including Pre-Employment Transition Services) Website:

<https://www.rehabworks.org/student-youth/student-youth.html>

Work-based Learning Toolkit, U.S. Department of Education:

<https://cte.ed.gov/wbltoolkit/>

Work-based Learning Toolkit (WBLEs), Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC):

<http://www.wintac.org/topic-areas/pre-employment-transition-services/overview/work-based-learning-experiences>

Xello (Transition Planning Website):

<https://xello.world/en/>

Xello FLDOE Memo (1.24.23):

<https://files.constantcontact.com/1f6fc7af701/04ee067f-a469-4edb-a0c0-c569bd7ebe14.pdf?rdr=true>



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Project 10: Transition Education Network

Assists Florida school districts and relevant stakeholders in building capacity to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and post-school outcomes.

Project 10: Transition Education Network

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Questions or comments?

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