

Background

From the first day of school to the last, all students must have access to a graduation pathway that prepares them to be successful in post-secondary learning, employment, and adult life. For years, the gap between Louisiana's students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers in traditional markers of postsecondary success, such as ACT, high school graduation rates, and postsecondary higher education enrollment, has been significant. While tremendous progress has been made, there is still more work to do to ensure all students have opportunities for postsecondary success.

In 2014, Louisiana implemented new opportunities for students to pursue a high school diploma. Students have a choice of two pathways to a high school diploma: the [Tops University Diploma pathway](#) which equips students with the necessary courses and preparation to attend an institute of higher education and the [Tops Tech Career Diploma, or Jump Start, pathway](#), which provides students with training and certifications in a vocational field of their choice. Within the Louisiana diploma pathway structure, certain students with disabilities are able to meet graduation requirements through alternate means. Students who qualify for the provisions of [Act 833](#) (2014) must meet the standard graduation requirements of their chosen pathway but may meet those requirements through alternate means as determined by their individual education program (IEP) team. Students who are eligible to take the alternate assessment are able to meet an [alternate set of graduation requirements](#) that are aligned to the requirements of the Jump Start diploma pathway.

To support school systems with implementation of these opportunities, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) issued [guidance](#) to district leaders, conducted [webinars](#) and in-person [trainings](#), and collaborated with school systems to implement local trainings. Furthermore, to support students and family members with understanding these opportunities, the LDOE conducted group and individualized trainings with family support partners.

Report Overview and Structure

This report examines data related to the implementation of graduation pathways for students with disabilities. Data included in this report represent the number of students with disabilities who exited high school in the 2016-2017 SY with an exit document across the state.

The report provides information on all students with disabilities who left school with an exit document, and provides additional breakouts for students who were eligible for Act 833 (2014) and students who were eligible for the alternate assessment.

Part One: Overview of All Students with Disabilities Who Exited High School with an Exit Document in the 2016-2017 School Year

In the 2016-2017 SY, 5,160 students with disabilities ages 14-21 left high school. Of these students, approximately 54 percent, or 2,791, left with an exit document, such as a diploma or certificate of achievement. This section examines students with disabilities that left high school in the 2016-2017 SY with an exit document.

Table 1: Students with Disabilities Who Exited School with an Exit Document

Total Number	High School Diploma*		Certificate of Achievement		Non-Diploma**	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
2,791	2,315	82.9%	374	13.4%	102	3.7%

* Includes the following SER exits: High School Diploma, HS Diploma (Alternate Assessment - Jump Start), and HS Diploma (Alternate Assessment - Grandfathered)

** Includes the following SER exits: Non-Diploma Certificate of Achievement, Non-Diploma Locally Designed Skills Certificate, Non-Diploma Louisiana Equivalency Diploma (GED), Louisiana High School Equivalency Diploma (LHSD), Non-Diploma GED & Locally Designed Skills Certificate, Non-Diploma Industry Based Skills Certificate, Non-Diploma GED & Industry Based Skills Certificate, Non-Diploma LHSD & Industry Based Skills Certificate, Non-Diploma State Approved Skills Certificate, Non-Diploma GED & State Approved Skills Certificate, Non-Diploma LHSD & State Approved Skills Certificate

Table 2: Percent of Students with Disabilities Who Exited School with an Exit Document, by Primary Disability Classification

Primary Disability Classification	High School Diploma	Certificate of Achievement	Non-Diploma
Autism	73%	≥20%	<5%
Emotional Disturbance	81%	7%	11%
Hearing Impairment - Deafness	79%	8%	13%
Hearing Impairment - Hard of Hearing	88%	7%	5%
Intellectual Disability - Mild	63%	≥30%	<5%
Intellectual Disability - Moderate	≥30%	59%	<5%
Intellectual Disability - Severe	≥20%	71%	<5%
Multiple Disabilities	≥10%	82%	<5%
Orthopedic Impairment	81%	≥10%	<5%
Other Health Impairments	89%	≥5%	<5%
Specific Learning Disability	92%	<5%	<5%
Speech or Language Impairments	97%	<5%	<5%
Traumatic Brain Injury	55%	36%	9%

Visual Impairment - Blindness	>95%	<5%	<5%
Visual Impairment - Partially Seeing	92%	≥5%	<5%

The remaining tables focus specifically on the graduation pathway choices of students with disabilities who exited with a diploma. A graduation pathway is defined as the coursework a student must successfully complete to obtain a high school diploma. Students choose one of two pathways; TOPS University or Jump Start.

Table 3: Graduation Pathways of Students with Disabilities Who Exited School with a High School Diploma

Total Number	TOPS University		Jump Start		Other***	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
2,315	1,846	79.7%	167	7.2%	302	13.1%

***Includes the following SER exits: Historical Career Diploma and Pathway Not Declared

Table 4: Graduation Pathways of Students with Disabilities Who Exited School with a High School Diploma, by Primary Disability Classification

Primary Disability Classification	TOPS University	Jump Start	Other
Autism	68%	17%	15%
Emotional Disturbance	81%	<5%	≥10%
Hearing Impairment - Deafness	95%	<5%	≥5%
Hearing Impairment - Hard of Hearing	94%	<5%	≥5%
Intellectual Disability - Mild	54%	15%	31%
Intellectual Disability - Moderate	<5%	53%	≥40%
Intellectual Disability - Severe	<5%	≥30%	67%
Multiple Disabilities	<5%	63%	≥30%
Orthopedic Impairment	89%	<5%	≥5%
Other Health Impairments	85%	9%	9%
Specific Learning Disability	84%	5%	11%

Speech or Language Impairments	86%	<5%	≥10%
Traumatic Brain Injury	67%	<5%	≥30%
Visual Impairment - Blindness	64%	14%	21%
Visual Impairment - Partially Seeing	82%	<5%	≥10%

Part Two: Focus on Students Who are Eligible for Act 833 and Exited School with an Exit Document

Students become eligible for the provisions of Act 833 (2014) by either not receiving passing scores on state assessments in at least two of their last three middle school years (6th, 7th, and/or 8th grades) or not receiving passing scores on the same end of course assessment (EOC) twice. This section examines data for students with disabilities who were eligible for the provisions of Act 833 (2014) and left high school during the 2016-2017 SY with an exit document. This data does not examine how students applied Act 833 to their high school experiences. Approximately 25 percent, or 695 of the students with disabilities who left high school with an exit document were eligible for the provisions of Act 833 (2014).

Table 5: Students Eligible for Act 833 Who Exited School with an Exit Document

Total Number	High School Diploma		Certificate of Achievement		Non-Diploma	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
695	644	92.7%	32	4.6%	19	2.7%

Table 6: Percent Students Eligible for Act 833 Who Exited School with an Exit Document, by Primary Disability Classification

Primary Disability Classification	High School Diploma	Certificate of Achievement	Non-Diploma
Autism	85%	≥10%	<5%
Emotional Disturbance	85%	<5%	≥10%
Hearing Impairment - Deafness	>95%	<5%	<5%
Hearing Impairment - Hard of Hearing	>95%	<5%	<5%
Intellectual Disability - Mild	87%	≥10%	<5%
Intellectual Disability - Moderate	>95%	<5%	<5%

Intellectual Disability - Severe	n/a	n/a	n/a****
Multiple Disabilities	n/a	n/a	n/a
Orthopedic Impairment	>95%	<5%	<5%
Other Health Impairments	>95%	<5%	<5%
Specific Learning Disability	92%	<5%	<5%
Speech or Language Impairments	>95%	<5%	<5%
Traumatic Brain Injury	>95%	<5%	<5%
Visual Impairment - Blindness	>95%	<5%	<5%
Visual Impairment - Partially Seeing	>95%	<5%	<5%

**** Indicates there were no students in this primary exceptionality category that fit the description of this data group.

The remaining tables focus specifically on the graduation pathway choices of students with disabilities, eligible for Act 833, who exited with a diploma. A graduation pathway is defined as the coursework a student must successfully complete to obtain a high school diploma. Students choose one of two pathways; TOPS University or Jump Start.

Table 7: Graduation Pathways of Students Eligible for Act 833 Who Exited School with a High School Diploma

Total Number	TOPS University		Jump Start		Other	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
644	515	80.0%	44	6.8%	85	13.2%

Table 8: Graduation Pathways of Students Eligible for Act 833 Who Exited School with a High School Diploma, by Primary Disability Classification

Primary Disability Classification	TOPS University	Jump Start	Other
Autism	>95%	<5%	<5%
Emotional Disturbance	64%	<5%	≥30%
Hearing Impairment - Deafness	>95%	<5%	<5%

Hearing Impairment - Hard of Hearing	>95%	<5%	<5%
Intellectual Disability - Mild	79%	6%	15%
Intellectual Disability - Moderate	>95%	<5%	<5%
Intellectual Disability - Severe	n/a	n/a	n/a
Multiple Disabilities	n/a	n/a	n/a
Orthopedic Impairment	67%	<5%	≥30%
Other Health Impairments	81%	6%	13%
Specific Learning Disability	80%	8%	12%
Speech or Language Impairments	57%	<5%	≥40%
Traumatic Brain Injury	≥50%	<5%	≤50%
Visual Impairment - Blindness	25%	25%	50%
Visual Impairment - Partially Seeing	≥50%	<5%	≤50%

Part Three: Focus on Students Eligible for the Alternate Assessment Who Exited School with an Exit Document

This section examines data for students with disabilities who were eligible to take the alternate assessment and left high school during the 2016-2017 school year with an exit document. Approximately 15 percent, or 412 of the students with disabilities who left high school with an exit document were eligible to take the alternate assessment.

Table 9: Students Eligible for the Alternate Assessment Who Exited School with an Exit Document

Total Number	High School Diploma		Certificate of Achievement		Non-Diploma	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
412	182	44.4%	225	54.6%	5	1.2%

Table 10: Students Eligible for the Alternate Assessment Who Exited School with an Exit Document, by Primary Disability Classification

Primary Disability Classification	High School Diploma	Certificate of Achievement	Non-Diploma
Autism	≥40%	51%	<5%
Emotional Disturbance	67%	≥30%	<5%
Hearing Impairment - Deafness	≥30%	67%	<5%
Hearing Impairment - Hard of Hearing	≥30%	67%	<5%
Intellectual Disability - Mild	56%	≥40%	<5%
Intellectual Disability - Moderate	≥30%	60%	<5%
Intellectual Disability - Severe	≥20%	71%	<5%
Multiple Disabilities	≥10%	84%	<5%
Orthopedic Impairment	≥20%	71%	0.0%
Other Health Impairments	64%	≥30%	<5%
Specific Learning Disability	93%	≥5%	<5%
Speech or Language Impairments	>95%	<5%	<5%
Traumatic Brain Injury	<5%	>95%	<5%
Visual Impairment - Blindness	n/a	n/a	n/a
Visual Impairment - Partially Seeing	<5%	>95%	<5%

The remaining tables focus specifically on the graduation pathway choices of students with disabilities, eligible for the alternate assessment, who exited with a diploma. A graduation pathway is defined as the coursework a student must successfully complete to obtain a high school diploma. Students eligible for alternate assessment choose one of two pathways; TOPS University or Jump Start.

Table 11: Graduation Pathways of Students Eligible for the Alternate Assessment Who Exited School with a High School Diploma

Total Number	TOPS University		Jump Start		Other	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
182	4	2.2%	93	51.1%	85	46.7%

Table 12: Graduation Pathways of Students Eligible for the Alternate Assessment Who Exited School with a High School Diploma, by Primary Disability Classification

Primary Disability Classification	TOPS University	Jump Start	Other
Autism	<5%	59%	≥30%
Emotional Disturbance	<5%	<5%	>95%
Hearing Impairment - Deafness	<5%	<5%	>95%
Hearing Impairment - Hard of Hearing	<5%	<5%	>95%
Intellectual Disability - Mild	<5%	≥30%	60%
Intellectual Disability - Moderate	<5%	54%	≥40%
Intellectual Disability - Severe	<5%	≥30%	67%
Multiple Disabilities	<5%	71%	≥20%
Orthopedic Impairment	<5%	≤50%	≥50%
Other Health Impairments	<5%	76%	≥20%
Specific Learning Disability	<5%	54%	≥40%
Speech or Language Impairments	<5%	>95%	<5%
Traumatic Brain Injury	n/a	n/a	n/a
Visual Impairment - Blindness	n/a	n/a	n/a
Visual Impairment - Partially Seeing	n/a	n/a	n/a

Summary

The LDOE is committed to ensuring successful outcomes for all students. Students must have access to a pathway that prepares them for post-secondary success. Through the implementation of the new graduation pathways, including those with modifications, opportunities are available for students with disabilities that account for their unique needs while still focusing on postsecondary education and career preparation.

Methodology

Data was collected using the SER, via the “SER Official Exit Count” report, as of June 30, 2017. The data are based on all students with IEPs, ages 14 to 21, exiting special education in 2016-2017 school year. Exit count is defined as the number of students, ages 14 to 21, that left, or exited, special education services during a given reporting period, usually a particular school year. Students exit special education services for a variety of reasons which may include earning a diploma or non-diploma, moving to another state, reaching maximum age, dropping out, or transferring to regular education. The focus of this report is students with disabilities that exited high school with an exit document, in particular a diploma or non-diploma, in the 2016-2017 SY.

Results are reported on a state level and [LEA level](#). The LDOE has modified and/or suppressed data reported to protect the privacy of students in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) codified at 20 U.S.C. 1232g. The strategies used to protect privacy vary and may include rounding or other techniques but do not substantially affect the general usefulness of the data. Because of the privacy protections, numerical and percentage totals may not add precisely to the sum of the row or column to which the total refers.