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ABSTRACT

This brief report cites the grade of "adequate" given to the American educational system on the fifth of the six National Education Goals proposed by the President and the Governors in 1990. The fifth goal states that "By the Year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." This goal is discussed in relation to youth with disabilities, focusing on involvement of American business in strengthening the connection between education and work for students with disabilities, postsecondary training or education completed by young adults with disabilities, demonstration of literacy achievement by college graduates and other former students, methods of monitoring the literacy skills and lifelong learning of young adults with disabilities, and information that is still needed. (JDD)

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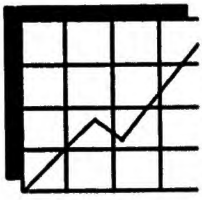
Pursuing Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning

National Education Goal 5 and Students with Disabilities



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BRIEF REPORT
6

National Center on Educational Outcomes

The College of Education
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

May, 1992

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National Education Goal 5

"By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship."

Objectives:

- Every major American business will be involved in strengthening the connection between education and work.
- All workers will have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills, from basic to highly technical, needed to adapt to emerging new technologies, work methods, and markets through public and private educational, vocational, technical, workplace, or other programs.
- The number of quality programs, including those at libraries, that are designed to serve more effectively the needs of the growing number of part-time and mid-career students will increase substantially.
- The proportion of those qualified students (especially minorities) who enter college, who complete at least two years, and who complete their degree programs will increase substantially.
- The proportion of college graduates who demonstrate an advanced ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems will increase substantially.

From: The National Education Goals Report 1991: Building a Nation of Learners (Executive Summary). Washington, DC: National Education Goals Panel

Our nation has received a grade of **ADEQUATE** on the fifth of the six national education goals proposed by the President and the governors in 1990. This grade is given with caution because, as the Goals Panel notes, "While most Americans have mastered basic literacy skills, few can perform more complex analytical tasks." The Goals Panel argues that functional literacy is not enough.

The information reported by the Goals Panel deals with adult education, college completion, and employer support for education. This is a relatively narrow view of literacy achievement. None of the information reported by the Goals Panel addresses how well individuals with disabilities are doing.

The purpose of this Brief Report is to highlight what we know about young adults with disabilities in relation to Goal 5 of the six national education goals:

- ✓ Are American businesses involved in strengthening the **connection between education and work** for students with disabilities?
- ✓ Do young adults with disabilities who have completed school participate in **additional training or education**?
- ✓ Do college graduates and other former students with disabilities demonstrate **literacy achievement** (including critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills)?
- ✓ How are we **monitoring** the literacy skills and lifelong learning of young adults with disabilities?
- ✓ What do we still **need to know**?

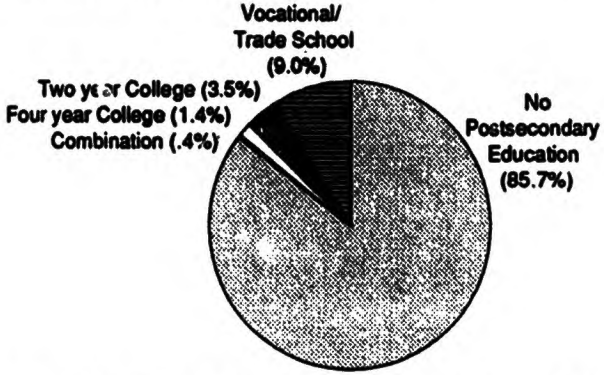
EDUCATION-WORK CONNECTION

Transition services are required for students with disabilities to help bridge school and adult experiences, usually employment. Most likely, business will show greater interest in the connection with education as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) vastly expands the employment rights of individuals with disabilities.

Unfortunately, we have no data on the extent to which American businesses are involved in strengthening the connection between education and work for students with disabilities.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING OR EDUCATION

Much of what we know about the postsecondary training experiences of young adults with disabilities is from the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students (Butler-Nalin & Wagner, 1991).



- ✓ Nearly 86% of students with disabilities do not enroll in any type of postsecondary education
- ✓ Most of the students in postsecondary programs are in vocational/trade schools (9%)

POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT	
Deaf	34.5%
Visually Handicapped	30.4%
Speech Impaired	26.4%
Hard of Hearing	25.6%
Other Health Impaired	24.1%
Orthopedically Impaired	19.0%
Learning Disability	15.6%
Emotionally Disturbed	14.8%
Deaf/Blind	9.6%
Mentally Retarded	8.4%
Multihandicapped	3.1%

Not all students with disabilities are equally likely to be enrolled in postsecondary school two years after leaving high school.

Often, students with disabilities attending postsecondary programs experience some of the same difficulties as they did in secondary school. For instance, they earn grades significantly below the grades reported for postsecondary students in the general population.

LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT

Information on individuals with disabilities is not available from prominent national literacy data bases, such as the National Adult Literacy Survey and the Young Adult Literacy Survey, because many individuals with disabilities are not included in these assessments. When they are included, their data are not separately reported.

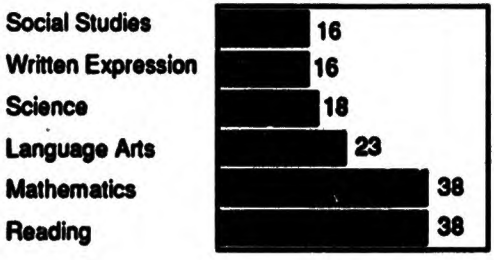
Literacy surveys typically assess daily living skills such as reading newspapers and schedules, computing costs of items and balancing checkbooks. From the National Longitudinal Transition Study, we know that some former students with disabilities are using checking accounts (Newman, 1991), which is one indication of financial literacy:

- ✓ 10% who have been out of school 1-2 years have checking accounts
- ✓ 30% who have been out of school 3-4 years have checking accounts

MONITORING LITERACY SKILLS AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Widespread exclusion of individuals with disabilities from national literacy surveys limits our ability to monitor their progress on literacy and lifelong learning skills.

Relatively few states have assessment programs that address literacy beyond reading and math. For example, 38 states assess reading and math, but only 16 assess social studies and written expression.

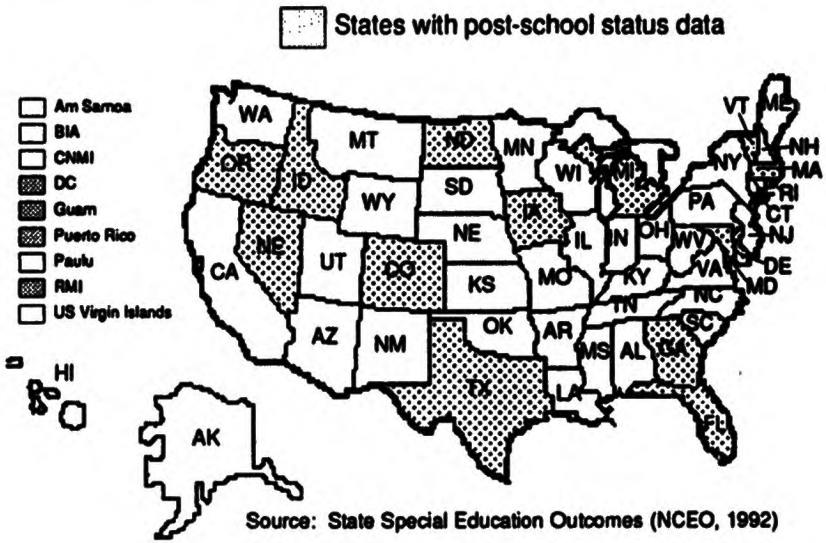


Source: State Special Education Outcomes (NCEO, 1992)

Follow-up studies, which are most prevalent in state special education and vocational education programs, typically focus on:

- ✓ Employment
- ✓ Postsecondary Education
- ✓ Leisure Activities

Unfortunately, current post-school status studies generally do not assess literacy skills of former students. But, these state data bases could possibly provide important national information on additional training or education pursued by individuals with disabilities because the states conducting these studies are fairly widely distributed geographically:



Source: State Special Education Outcomes (NCEO, 1992)

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO KNOW

The National Education Goals Panel identified in their 1991 Goals Report a need for better information on adult literacy, work force skills, and the skills and knowledge of postsecondary training or education completers. This information will be useful as well for reporting on adult literacy and lifelong learning of individuals with disabilities, if there is **greater inclusion** of these individuals in national data collection systems. Further, we need to be able to summarize information on individuals with disabilities separate from that of other individuals.

We need also to make better use of the post-school status information we have from states. First, we must expand follow-up information to include assessments of literacy skills. Second, we must bring states with post-school data together to discover ways to connect data sets to provide a national picture of literacy and lifelong learning in individuals with disabilities.

Information Sources

Butler-Nalin, P., & Wagner, M. (1991). Enrollment in postsecondary schools. In M. Wagner et al., Youth with disabilities: How are they doing? The first comprehensive report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students. Menlo Park, CA: SRI.

NCEO. (1992). State special education outcomes 1991: A report on state activities in the assessment of educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Newman, L. (1991). Growing up, moving on: Aspects of personal and residential independence. In M. Wagner et al., Youth with disabilities: How are they doing? The first comprehensive report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students. Menlo Park, CA: SRI.

Other Available NCEO Brief Reports

1. **Including Students with Disabilities in National and State Data Collection Programs**
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7. **Promoting Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-free Schools**

The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) was established in October, 1990 to work with state departments of education, national policy-making groups, and others to facilitate and enrich the development and use of indicators of educational outcomes for students with disabilities. The Center represents a collaborative effort of the University of Minnesota, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, and St. Cloud State University. The Center is supported through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (H159C00004). Opinions or points of view do not necessarily represent those of the U.S. Department of Education or Offices within it.

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