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Bureau of Special Education FY'08 Memo #18

DATE: November 26, 2007

TO: Superintendents of Schools  
Special Education Directors

FROM: Lyonel B. Tracy  
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Santina Thibedeau  
State Director of Special Education  
Administrator, Bureau of Special Education

RE: Calculating the Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities

The intent of this memo is to offer some clarifications on calculating the dropout rate for students with disabilities. The NHDOE, Bureau of Special Education is required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to report the percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school compared to the percent of all youth in the State dropping out of high school. The NHDOE, Bureau of Special Education is required to report the baseline of this information in the State Performance Plan (SPP) and the progress in the Annual Performance Report (APR). The NHDOE would like to explain why the 47% dropout rate published by the National Center for Special Education Monitoring does not accurately reflect the dropout rate for students with disabilities in New Hampshire.

The NHDOE, Bureau of Special Education has revised the dropout percent in both the SPP and APR based on a clearer understanding of the data used in the formula. The NHDOE uses the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) definition of dropout when calculating the dropout for students. There are three areas of clarification:

- Originally there was no accounting for students who had dropped out of school in the previous year and returned to school in September. Although the Bureau of Special Education does not collect this data, there was an estimation made based on information from the Bureau of Information Services that all students for the last two years have a return rate of 18% in September.
- Originally the Bureau of Special Education used 16 to 21 year olds as part of the denominator for the formula. The Bureau of Information Services uses all high schoolers as part of the denominator; therefore, the change was made to 14 to 21 year olds.
- The Bureau of Special Education did not accurately account for students with disabilities who dropped out by not returning to school in the fall (i.e. summer dropouts). Working with the Bureau of Information Services there was an estimation made based on information that all students for the last two years have a dropout rate of 23% in the fall.

With this in mind, the Bureau of Special Education made revisions to the SPP and APR. To find out more details about the percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school compared to the percent of all youth in the State dropping out of high school please go to: [www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/instruction/SpecialEd/OSEPreports.htm](http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/instruction/SpecialEd/OSEPreports.htm), to view the SPP and APR.

As reported in the revised APR, 3.9% of youth with IEPs dropped out of high school compared to 3.1% of all youth in the State dropping out of high school for the 2005-2006 school year.

The New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) would like to explain and place in proper context the formula used to calculate the dropout rate that the National Center for Special Education Monitoring Center used to rank New Hampshire at a 47% dropout rate for students with disabilities.

The dropout rate was calculated by using information from the 2004-2005 federal report of exiting students from special education. The formula used to calculate the dropout was the total number of students ages 14 through 21 exiting special education (3,097) divided by the number of students who exited special education using the dropout category (1,465). Please keep in mind that according to New Hampshire statues 14 and 15 year olds are not permitted to drop out of school. The category of dropped out included students who exited special education for various reasons including services refused, limited physical emotional stamina, ages 21-22, moved out of state, moved to another New Hampshire school district and dropped out of school. Of the 3,097 students exiting from special education there were 1,587 who exited special education because they had graduated with a regular high school diploma.

Although the National Center for Special Education Monitoring used a formula to calculate a dropout rate based solely on exiting students from special education, this is not the standard by which the NHDOE calculates the dropout rate.

If you would like to discuss the dropout rate for youth with IEPs or any other indicator in the SPP and APR, please feel free to contact Santina Thibedeau at 271-6693.

This document is available in alternative format upon request.