

# The Private School Option

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# ASAH OUTCOMES REPORT #19

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ASAH, an organization of approved private special education schools throughout New Jersey, has again sponsored a study to assess our outcomes for the students with severe disabilities who were enrolled in our member schools. This report is undertaken by ASAH each year because other investigations into outcomes in special education have not focused on the students who are enrolled in programs like ours; those serving students with the most severe disabilities among those with special needs. Students attend ASAH-member programs because the highly individualized, intensive, and specialized programs and services they require are not available in the public sector.

Each student in this study has an Individual Education Program (IEP) which, as is legally mandated, was developed by the student's local public school district. By comprehensively describing the intensive therapeutic services and curriculum modifications each student needs, the IEP is a guide to each student's learning success. ASAH-member schools partner with the local public school district by implementing the specialized programs and services prescribed in the IEP.

Below are the highlights of the report for the 2017-18 academic year, which focuses on the discharge plans made by students who exited from ASAH-member programs. These exiting students were either transfer students who moved from an ASAH-member facility to another educational setting or graduates, including those who reached the legal age limit for receiving educational services, who received a secondary school diploma. For this study, 45 ASAH-member programs with 4544 students currently enrolled are represented.

## TRANSFER STUDENTS

Study findings for the 687 students who transferred during the 2017-18 school year indicate that the intensive therapeutic, IEP prescribed services offered by ASAH-member programs successfully assisted these students to develop remediate, and/or strengthen their skills. A large number of the transfer students plan to enroll in an appropriate program within the local public school district after leaving the ASAH-member facility:

- 29% planned to enter or return to an educational program within the local public school district.
- 11% planned to enter, or re-enter, general education settings in their local public school district. Of these, (1) 33% of the total planned to do so without supports, while (2) the remaining nearly 66% planned to access the general education setting with IEP and (2) a self-contained classroom 82%.
- 77% from the Learning Disorders Programs, 30% from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders Programs, and 20% from the Developmental Disorders Proprescribed supports.
- 22% of the students planned to enter other educational settings within the local district, such as (1) an alternate school program 18% of the total grams planned to return to educational settings within their local school district.
- Since 94% of these students attended an ASAH-member special education program for 5 years or less, evidence is provided that enrollment in an approved private special education program is not a barrier to returning to an appropriate in-district public school program in a timely fashion.

## GRADUATES

Study findings for 355 students who graduated during the 2017-18 school year indicate that ASAH- member programs provided the IEP prescribed instruction, support, and guidance as these older adolescents and young adults made the transition to adulthood with plans to pursue productive and meaningful roles as adults engaged in their communities:

- 85% left an ASAH-member program with plans to enter productive and/or engaged adult roles.
- 58% planned to enter a mainstream activity, this included (1) 74% of the total with plans to enroll in post-secondary 4 year/2 year college or trade/technical school; (2) 24% with plans to join the competitive employment workforce; and (3) 2% planned to enter the military.
- 13% had plans to enter vocational rehabilitation, including (1) 85% of the total to vocational rehabilitation training or supported employment; and (2) 15% to sheltered employment.
- 18% made plans to enter an appropriate adult program in the community, including (1) 11% of the total to adult partial care and (2) 89% to non-vocational day programs.
- 91% from Learning Disorders Programs were the most likely to make plans to enroll in post-secondary education, or obtain a competitive job or attend trade/vocational school.
- Over 58% from Emotional/Behavioral Disorders Programs, a population often associated with poor outcomes, had (1) plans to enroll in a 4-year college/2 year college, or trade/technical school 60% of the total, or (2) to enter the job market 40%.

## CONCLUSION

Clearly, ASAH members play a critical role along the continuum of special education. Without the programs and services offered by ASAH-member faculties, children and youth with severe disabilities would not be able to gain access to the benefits of education, or lead productive lives in their communities in the future as adults.

# UNDERSTANDING THE FULL COST TO NEW JERSEY TAXPAYERS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS SUMMARY

For years, it has wrongly been assumed that the cost of serving students with disabilities in approved private settings is greater than the cost of serving similar students in public school programs. Private school tuition rates include **all** costs. Public school tuition rates **exclude** pension, social security, health benefits on retirement, facilities construction and associated debt service. These costs are paid by **State and/or County** tax dollars, not local school districts. This accounting difference allows public schools to report special education tuition rates that are lower than the full actual cost.

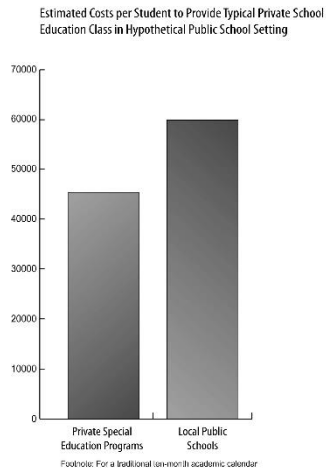
**ASAH's comparative study, which incorporates these missing costs borne by taxpayers, indicates the following:**

- The average per pupil cost for special education services in **approved private schools** for the disabled is: **\$45,358**
- The average per pupil cost for special education services in **county special services school districts** is: **\$65,266**
- The average per pupil cost for special education services **local public schools** who receive students with disabilities on a tuition basis from sending school districts is: **\$50,146**
- The average per pupil cost for a **local public school** providing the same level of service as an **approved private school** for the disabled is **\$59,051**

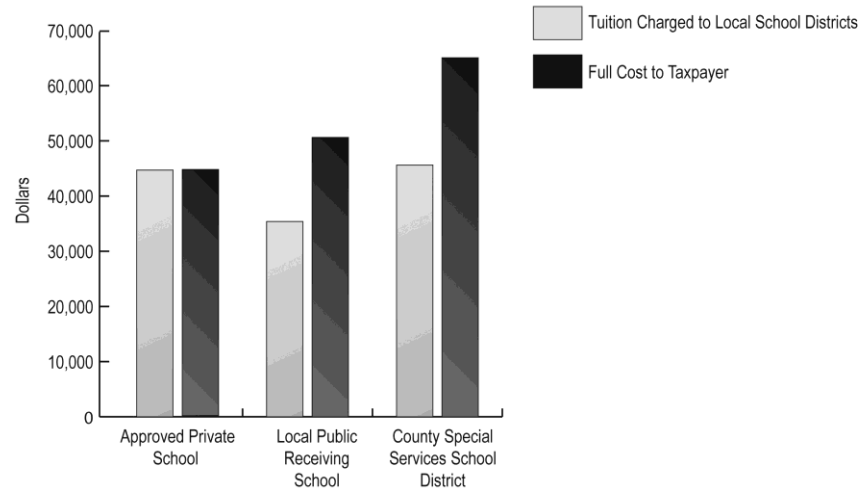
*NOTE: All costs are adjusted to reflect 10-month academic calendar.*

Estimated Costs per Student to Provide Average Private School

Education Class in a Public School Setting



Full Cost per Pupil to Taxpayers for Self-Contained Special Education Programs, Statewide Average, 2008-09 School Year



ASAH's analysis reveals that when students with disabilities need intensive specialized services as outlined in their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), **the full cost to taxpayers is less** when services are provided by an approved private school, than when provided by either a local public school or a county special services district.