

DATA NOTES FOR *IDEA*, PART B

This document provides information, or data notes, on the ways in which states collected and reported data differently from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) data formats and instructions. In addition, the data notes provide explanations of substantial changes or other changes that data users may find notable or of interest in the data from the previous year. The chart below summarizes differences in collecting and reporting data for nine states. These variations affected the way data were reported for the IDEA, Part B child count and the educational environment, exiting and discipline collections. Additional notes on how states reported data for specific data collections follow this table.

Table B-1. State reporting patterns for *IDEA*, Part B child count data and educational environments data, 2005 exiting and discipline data, 2004-05

States	Differences from OSEP reporting categories		
	Multiple disabilities	Other health impairments (OHI)	Deaf-blindness
Colorado		O	
Delaware	P	O	
Florida	P		
Georgia	P		
Michigan			H
North Dakota	P		
Oregon	P		
West Virginia	P		
Wisconsin	P		

Table B-2. State developmental delay reporting practices for IDEA, Part B child count data and educational environments data, 2004, and discipline data, 2004-05

	Does not use developmental delay	Uses developmental delay for children under age 6 only	Uses only developmental delay for children under age 6
Arizona		X	
Arkansas		X	
California	X		
Colorado		X	
Connecticut		X	
Delaware		X	
Florida		X	
Illinois		X	
Indiana		X	
Iowa	X		
Maine		X	
Montana		X	
Nevada		X	
New Jersey		X	
New York		X	X
Ohio	X		
Oregon		X	
Rhode Island		X	
South Carolina		X	
South Dakota		X uses it for 6-year-olds	
Texas	X		
West Virginia		X	
Wyoming		X	

Tables 1-1 Through 1-18: IDEA Part B Child Count, 2005

Alabama—The state attributes the significant changes in child count and environment during this reporting period (2005) to several factors, including:

1. Increased emphasis on prereferral interventions for behavior and instruction that are implemented in regular education classrooms through Building-Based Student Support Teams (BBSSTs), which are mandatory in each school;
2. Continued efforts to address disproportionality that is the result of inappropriate identification, especially in the disability areas of specific learning disabilities, emotional disturbance and mental retardation;
3. Continued emphasis on appropriateness of referrals, evaluations and identification through mandatory training/technical assistance on cultural sensitivity and awareness for children ages 3 through 21 who are suspected of having a disability;
4. Statewide training on writing standards-based individualized education programs (IEPs) that improve special education services delivery in the general curriculum;
5. Increased emphasis on accessing the general education curriculum as a result of the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* legislation;
6. Continued emphasis on and expanded use of state-adopted instructional strategies, interventions and positive behavior support intervention programs for all students; and
7. Frequent state monitoring of special education programs in local education agencies (LEAs) through the focused monitoring process geared toward continuous improvement of identified areas of concern.

Alaska—The state attributed an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with autism to an increase in the number of people able to correctly diagnose autism and a greater awareness of autism.

Alaska began reporting data on students with developmental delay in 2000. Although the state definition applies to children ages 3 through 9, in the first year the state used the category, the vast majority of students identified with this disability were ages 3 through 5. The state reported that as these children aged, there was a concomitant increase in the number of children ages 6 through 9 reported with developmental delay.

American Samoa—The number of children ages 3 through 5 with emotional disturbance decreased. In 2004, 19 children were reported as having emotional disturbance. In 2005, none were reported with the disability. The 2004 number is based on the information collected from schools based on students' behavior. At that time, American Samoa did not have a school psychologist to legally diagnose this disability, and American Samoa put these students under the emotional disturbance disability category. However, this year, American Samoa followed up on these cases with teachers with the assistance of the school psychologist. These cases were determined to be behavior problems related to other disabilities such as speech and language impairments or multiple disabilities.

The total number of children with disabilities for ages 3 through 5 was 98 for 2004 compared to 80 in 2005. This drop occurred as students exited the program. Some students exit to return to regular education and some exit by moving off island.

Arizona—The state data system allows LEAs to submit all disabilities for each eligible student receiving special education services. To determine the primary disability, a hierarchy was used. Beginning in FY 2007, the state will require LEAs to indicate a primary disability for each student with multiple disabilities.

During the 2005-06 school year, the Arizona Department of Education no longer allowed LEAs to submit data on preschoolers attending Head Start programs and students attending approved private special education schools or those incarcerated in certain *correctional facilities* using an old data entry program called DELREP. For the first time, the state Information Technology (IT) department implemented a new Web-based application for LEAs to report these students. However, this application has had numerous problems up to the end of the fiscal year, which caused the 3 through 5 child count and *correctional facilities* count to change significantly from last year. The state IT department hopes to have all remaining issues resolved for FY 2007 data reporting, resulting in more accurate counts.

The state explained individual changes below.

- The increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with mental retardation may be a result of the increase in the general population.
- The increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with OHI is most likely due to the increase in the general population, increased medical diagnosis and the housing boom that has resulted in higher pollution levels.
- The increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with specific learning disabilities is probably the result of early intervening services to identify these students earlier.
- The increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism is consistent with the rise in autism cases nationwide.
- The decrease in the number of American Indian or Alaska Native children ages 3 through 5 with disabilities can be attributed to the improvement of general living conditions and health care as well as early intervening services to identify students with disabilities.
- The state had no explanation for the increase in the number of Asian or Pacific Islander children ages 3 through 5.

Arkansas—The early childhood enrollment declined by approximately 1,352 children ages 3 through 5. This change involves the educational setting of *separate school*. Part of Arkansas' early childhood programs are operated through the Department of Health and Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS). When the interagency agreement was entered into, the DDS programs were strictly *separate schools*; however, over the years, the programs have grown to include *reverse mainstream* preschools, and a few have Arkansas Better Chance for Success preschools. According to the data submitted to the Arkansas Department of Education from DDS, enrollment in the DDS programs has fluctuated greatly in recent years, with a 20 percent increase one year and a 50 percent loss the next. Therefore, while the interagency agreement is in the revision process, the Arkansas Department of Education will closely examine the child count and educational settings of these programs. The state attributes an increase in the number of Hispanic students ages 6 through 21 to the increased Hispanic population in Arkansas.

Bureau of Indian Affairs—The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools are schools of choice, and Native American students in any given area may attend a public school or BIA-funded school if one is located in their area. Attending an off-reservation boarding school may also be a choice. The BIA has schools for which the highest grade may be kindergarten, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, fifth

grade, eighth grade or 12th grade. Many students, after reaching the highest grade in a local BIA-funded school, then move to a public school. Because the number of students is small compared to that of a state, the changes listed below can appear to be significant.

The increase in 3- through 5-year-olds with speech or language impairments is proportionate to the overall increases in children served. It is not clear why the proportional increase in the developmental delay category is higher.

There was a decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with emotional disturbance. Emotional disturbance overidentification has been a concern in one agency within BIA. Technical assistance in appropriate identification procedures has been provided to the agency. This training may have contributed to the decrease.

BIA could not provide a reason for the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported with OHI.

There are students who attend BIA-funded schools who meet the Part B Data Dictionary definition of American Indian or Alaska Native but do not have sufficient blood quantum verification to be counted under the BIA funding system. Better training has been provided so these students, who are recognized as American Indian in their communities but who may have been previously reported as Hispanic based on blood quantum, are now reported as American Indian.

California—California notes a review of local data indicates that the differences are based on accurate reporting and are normal data variations. The change in data is due to improvements in the data system of one of the largest school districts in the state.

The state noted the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with emotional disturbance is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level. The state was unable to explain why the change occurred.

The state noted the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with specific learning disabilities is due to improvements in reporting practices in one of the largest districts in the state. The district has implemented a new management system that has enhanced capacity to capture student-level information.

The state noted the increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism is due to a statewide trend in identifying children and students with autism. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with OHI is due to improvements in reporting practices in one of the largest districts in the state. The district has implemented a new management system that has enhanced capacity to capture student level information.

The state noted the decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with deaf blindness is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level. The state was unable to explain why the change occurred.

The state noted the increase in the number of Asian children ages 3 through 5 is due to a statewide increase in migration. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

Colorado—The state could not attribute a reason for the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with specific learning disabilities. A review of individual LEA-level data did not indicate a significant increase in any specific LEA's data. The change in specific learning disabilities is a function of normal fluctuations in the data.

There is a steady increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with hearing impairments. The state attributes the increase to a concerted effort to increase services to this population. Increased outreach services have been offered throughout the state.

The number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism increased from 2004 to 2005 and continues to increase throughout the state. This is the result of improved identification processes and training.

The state could not attribute a reason to the decrease in the number of American Indian or Alaska Native or the increase in the number of Asian or Pacific Islander children ages 3 through 5 served under *IDEA*, Part B. A review of individual LEA-level data did not result in identifying a significant increase in any LEA's data.

Colorado does not collect data on children with developmental delay. Children reported to OSEP in the developmental delay category are those who were reported by districts in Colorado's category of preschooler with a disability.

Colorado reported that one of its state disability categories is physical disability. The state reports these students to OSEP in the orthopedic impairments category. The state does not collect data on OHI.

Connecticut—The state attributed the increased number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism to improved diagnostic techniques, increased professional and parental awareness and the growth of professional organizations advocating services for children with autism. Children are being identified earlier and remaining in special education. The state expects the upward trend will continue in Connecticut.

Delaware—Delaware does not report students in the disability categories of OHI or multiple disabilities. Children and students with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability, and students with OHI are reported in the orthopedic impairments category.

The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

District of Columbia—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Florida—Consistent with national trends, Florida is seeing an increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 identified as autistic. Increases in the number of students ages 6 through 21 identified as having OHI is likely a combination of students with attention deficit disorder and students on the mild end of the autism spectrum disorder who are not eligible under the current State Board Rule for Autism (rule is currently being revised to include the full spectrum).

Florida does not collect data on multiple disabilities. Students and children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability. Florida does not collect data on developmental delay for students ages 6 through 21.

Georgia—Georgia collects aggregate data using a single multiracial category. The racial/ethnic category of some students is unknown. The state estimated race/ethnicity for multiracial students using the district-level racial/ethnic distribution, as prescribed by OSEP in *Handling Missing Data When Reporting Race/Ethnicity*.

In the age group 3 through 5, a total of 598 children (2.94 percent of the 20,370 children ages 3 through 5 with disabilities) were reported as multiracial. In the age group 6 through 21, a total of 4,054 students (2.29 percent of the 177,359 students ages 6 through 21 with disabilities) were reported as multiracial.

The state explained specific year-to-year changes below.

- The decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with hearing impairments (39 students) is attributed to the large number of students age 5 who were reported in the 2004 *IDEA* Child Count who are now included in the child count for students ages 6 through 21 (an increase of 59 students ages 6 through 21). The number of students ages 3 and 4 with hearing impairments remained stable between 2004 and 2005.
- The state attributed an increase in the number of Hispanic students receiving special education to a 13 percent increase in the number of Hispanic students in Georgia schools since the same reporting cycle for the 2004 school year (FY2005). The first FTE reporting cycle for the 2005 school year (FY2006) was completed in October 2005.
- The state attributed an increase in the number of Asian/Pacific Islander children and students receiving special education to a statewide increase of 2 percent in the number of Asian/Pacific Islander students for the reporting cycle for the 2004 school year (FY2005). The first FTE reporting cycle for the 2005 school year (FY2006) was completed in October 2005.

The state does not collect data on multiple disabilities. Children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability.

Guam—Guam noted the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with emotional disturbance can be attributed to the territory's hiring more social workers and increased community awareness presentations that resulted in a greater number of children identified as having emotional disturbance.

Guam attributed the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with OHI to increased community awareness presentations (Child Find activities) that have resulted in a greater number of students identified in this area.

The decrease in the number of students with developmental delay was attributed to a change in disability status for students when an eligibility/tri-annual evaluation was conducted.

Hawaii—The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with all disabilities to efforts to comply with transition requirements between Part C and Part B. This includes the increase in the number of children with speech or language impairments.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with OHI to heightened awareness of alternatives and prereferral intervention strategies available to schools for students with attention deficit disorders.

Overall the numbers for students ages 6 through 21 in special education have decreased over the past few years. The Comprehensive Student Support Services (CSSS) program has increased and improved over the past few years. Hawaii's CSSS is an effort to fulfill the government's obligation to help all students meet the state's rigorous content and performance standards. Established by the legislature in 1999, Hawaii's CSSS draws together classroom, school, neighborhood and community resources to provide the social, emotional, intellectual and physical supports that individual students may need to succeed in school. It requires all schools in the state to create systematic and integrated responses to student needs, and it expects these responses to focus on prevention and early intervention rather than on ad hoc crisis management, as was often the case in schools prior to the implementation of CSSS. The implementation of this program seems to have had a positive effect on the number of children requiring special education services.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with speech or language impairments to improvement in prereferral strategies and school-level awareness of these strategies. There has been a decreasing trend over the past few years in this disability category.

The state noted there has also been a decreasing trend in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with emotional disturbance. The state attributes the decrease to increased services being available. Implementation of Felix mandates has had a significant positive effect and has resulted in a decrease in numbers in this category. The Felix Consent Decree grew out of a lawsuit filed in 1993 on behalf of then-student Jennifer Felix. The case subsequently grew into a class-action lawsuit on behalf of all learning-disabled children in Hawaii. In 1994, an out-of-court settlement was reached, and the consent decree was implemented.

The state noted there has been an increase in the number of students with autism over the past few years. The state attributes the increase to heightened awareness of the public about autism.

Idaho—The state could not attribute the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with multiple disabilities to a reason. The state does not track individual disabilities within the multiple disability category, so is unable to determine whether one disability is driving the decrease. The decrease appears to be the function of normal fluctuations in the data.

There was an increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism. The state attributes the change to increased public awareness, which is leading to more children and students being identified with this disability.

There was an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with OHI. The increase could be affected by an increasing medical diagnosis of students with attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD) and/or by intolerance of some regular education teachers for students with higher activity levels in an age of increased accountability for all students meeting state standards. The result is an increase of students referred to special education under this category.

Illinois—Illinois attributes data changes to the reasons below:

- Districts increased use of developmental delay and multiple disabilities for children ages 3 through 5. The increase may have attributed to the decrease in the use of mental retardation, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments and specific learning disabilities categories.
- The state attributes the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with OHI to the fact that more students are being diagnosed with ADD/ADHD, which has resulted in a determination of OHI.

- Public awareness and increased staff knowledge about autism may have resulted in more referrals and determinations under the autistic category for students ages 6 through 21.
- The increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported with multiple disabilities may be attributed to an increase in students with concomitant impairments and the sometimes difficult decision of which disability is primary.
- The increase in the diagnosis of Hispanic children ages 3 through 5 may be attributed to bilingual programs, particularly the Prevention Initiative 0-3, that have been reaching out to Hispanic families to provide information regarding disabilities and assistance that is available.

Indiana—The increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism is a result of improvements to Indiana’s data collection system that allow for a more accurate count of autistic students. Previously, many of these students were counted under other disability areas, such as having mental retardation. Nationally, there is a growing awareness and a better recognition and identification of autism as a separate disability. In addition, advances have recently been made in identifying higher functioning autistic children (Asperger’s Disorder) for placement in special education.

The increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with OHI is a result of pressure placed on school districts to identify and serve students who have ADD/ADHD. Also, students with certain medical conditions are living longer and thus being served by school districts in special education programs.

The increase in the number of Hispanic and Asian students is a direct result of overall population increases of these two racial/ethnic groups residing in Indiana.

With respect to the increase in the number of students ages 3 through 5 with visual impairments, there were no unusual circumstances or contributing factors identified to explain the increase.

Iowa—The state has had a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with autism. Verification and validation shows the reported data are accurate. Iowa uses eligible individual (EI) as a noncategorical designation for children meeting all the requirements for services under *IDEA* and the state’s special education delivery system. The number reported includes records with the specific disability label and a portion of the records with the noncategorical label (EI). The use of the noncategorical designation has increased and changed the number apportioned versus those actually identified with a specific label.

The state has had an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported with OHI. The count has been verified and validated and is accurate. The change is the subject of further study.

The state has had an increase in the number of black children ages 3 through 5. The data have undergone a validation and verification process. Collaborative efforts have increased between Iowa’s special education programming staff and other early childhood programming staff (e.g., Head Start, Empowerment and Shared Visions—these are two state efforts in early childhood, etc.) ensuring comprehensive coverage in services provided to at-risk populations. This collaborative effort partnered with the corresponding increase in the potential population receiving special education services is a possible explanation for the increase. The change is the subject of further study.

Kansas—The Kansas State Department of Education believes there is a categorization change taking place. There is a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with speech/language impairments and an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with developmental delay. More LEAs and IEP teams statewide have determined that identifying students with developmental delay is a more appropriate category of identification. Looking at the state’s long-term trend across 5 years,

developmental delay has increased significantly, whereas speech/language impairments has remained stagnant, and, in the case of FY 2006 numbers, has dropped significantly. For clarification, Kansas does not fund on a per-student/disability category basis.

Autism has also had an upward trend in Kansas over the past 5 years. This seems consistent with national trends. The upward trend of developmental delay in students ages 6 through 9 is a reflection of the same upward trend in the 3 through 5 population. These students are identified at an early age, and as they get older, they continue to carry the developmental delay label until the age of 10. These are not newly identified students, but the population who represented upward trends in prior years and are now older.

Kentucky—Kentucky explained individual changes in the data below.

- Kentucky has been experiencing increases in OHI and to a lesser extent autism for several years. OHI has had significant increases every year since 1993. In 1993, there were 556 children and students with OHI, and in 2005, a total of 13,372 children and students were reported with OHI. This increase stems from the inclusion of ADD/ADHD as a medical reason that can be used to qualify for this category. The rise in autism numbers reflects national trends in this area.
- The increase in visual impairments is attributed to the decline in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in the multiple disabilities category. Clarification went to districts via a statewide email to directors of special education at the local level that stressed the guidelines for the identification of a child with disabilities under the multiple disabilities category. A number of visual impairments children who had a speech/language disability also were previously being reported as multiple disabilities. The message of clarification that went out to districts noted that the combination of speech/language with another disability did not meet the eligibility criteria for multiple disabilities. The statewide email was distributed in the spring/summer of 2005. The December 2005 count is the first time in three years that visual impairments has shown any increase. The number of children with multiple disabilities declined this year for the first time in a number of years.
- The state attributes an increase in the number of Hispanic special education students ages 6 through 21 to an overall increase in the number of students in the state who are identified as Hispanic. The number of Hispanic children and students ages 3 through 21 with disabilities increased from 16.25 percent. The number of Hispanic students in public schools increased by 13.66 percent.

Louisiana—Louisiana child counts have decreased from previous years across all categories due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Some students evacuated to other states and have not returned to Louisiana.

Maine—The state attributed the decrease in the number of students ages 3 through 5 served to the Maine Department of Education's examination of children with developmental delay. Between the years 2004-05, the count of children ages 3 through 5 served went from 4,806 to 4,348, a decline of 458 children. The number of children ages 3 through 5 who are developmentally delayed declined by 415 students. The Maine Department of Education's effort to examine this population and determine appropriateness of disability may have resulted in the decline along with a decline in the 3 through 5 population.

The state attributes the increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 identified with autism to better identification procedures, more qualified staff who identify this disability and more programs and services available for students with autism.

The state attributes the increase in the number of American Indian, Asian, black and Hispanic students ages 6 through 21 served under Part B to the identification of ethnic groups resulting from the state focus around disproportionality in the State Improvement Plan. Data regarding these populations are being used in the state monitoring and educational planning process.

Additionally, the population of Hispanics in the state is increasing and may be contributing to the increase in the number of Hispanic special education children and students served under *IDEA*, Part B.

Maryland—Maryland attributes a 20.03 percent increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with developmental delay to a change in coding and reporting practices relating to the state definition. More attention to the use of this definition has increased the use and extension of the age requirements (up to age 9) in this category.

Maryland attributes a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with mental retardation (30.28 percent), emotional disturbance (23.81 percent), specific learning disabilities (62.61 percent), and multiple disabilities (14.58 percent) to an increase in the use of developmental delay. The increase may also be attributed to an increase in the number of autistic students being labeled as having developmental delay.

Maryland attributes a 7.70 percent increase in the Hispanic 3 through 5 age group to an increase in the overall Hispanic population in Maryland. Since 2000, the Hispanic population in Maryland has increased overall; the special education Hispanic population has increased about 1 percent less than the Hispanic population in regular education.

Maryland attributes a 14.11 percent increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with autism to the following:

- Changes in diagnosis and treatment,
- Autism is no longer thought of as one disability, but as a spectrum, so students who were ‘pervasive developmentally delayed’ may now be placed in autism,
- Parents moving to Maryland to access autism support services,
- Increased awareness,
- Better understanding/recognition.

Massachusetts—The increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism reflects national trends, and it is accurate to say that awareness about autism has increased significantly over the past several years. For the past few years, the Massachusetts Department of Education has sponsored a program focused on improving supports and services for students with autism in inclusive settings, and the general awareness of autism (as evidenced through media coverage, etc.) has also increased.

Massachusetts continues to support the efforts of agencies and LEAs to conduct screening and outreach for children with visual impairments. The increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with visual impairments may reflect a clearer understanding of the categories of deaf-blind, visually impaired and hard-of-hearing or deaf, all three of which are preceded by the words sensory impairment in the Massachusetts regulations. Historically, the state has over reported deaf-blind because of inaccurate understanding that it did not mean deaf or blind but both. The state has been focusing on clearer understanding of primary disability, and there may be more reporting for this group in multiple disabilities.

The state did not have a program closure, and funding has not been decreased for children ages 3 through 5 with hearing impairments; however, there has been a decrease in the number of children identified with the disability. Massachusetts continues to support identification and services for children with hearing impairments through a variety of programs, policies and funding streams.

The increase in the number of Hispanic children ages 3 through 5 is consistent with a state trend. For all students in Massachusetts, the rate of Hispanic students has increased from 11.5 percent in 2003-04, to 11.8 percent in 2004-05, and 12.9 percent in 2005-06.

Massachusetts continues to support the efforts of agencies and LEAs to conduct screening and outreach for students with hearing impairments, deaf-blindness and visual impairments; however, the number of students ages 6 through 21 with these disabilities has decreased. The decreases may reflect a clearer understanding of the categories of deaf-blind, visually impaired and hard-of-hearing or deaf.

The state had an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with OHI. Massachusetts LEAs report on the broad disability category, but do not provide additional levels of detail. The national increase in the number of students with ADD/ADHD could play a role in the state's increase.

Michigan—The Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS) has emphasized to intermediate school districts (ISDs), schools and LEAs the need to increase data accuracy with respect to special education data reporting. In addition, LEA and the ISD data are now publicly reported, further increasing the content validity of data on students with disabilities. Programs such as the Continuous Improvement Monitoring System (CIMS) have broadened the state's monitoring emphasis, moving from mainly a compliance orientation to a focus on improving education results for students with disabilities in Michigan. In turn, CIMS has also focused on assessing and improving the quality of data the OSE/EIS receives from school districts. These interventions have resulted in more accurate data reporting, resulting in better data being submitted to OSEP.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 21 with orthopedic impairments and an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with OHI and traumatic brain injury to changes in the data collection. In the past, orthopedic impairments, OHI and traumatic brain injuries were combined into one state data collection category: physical and otherwise health impaired. Disaggregating these disabilities enabled us to report them separately, beginning December 1, 2005. In addition, a developmental delay category was added, which resulted in changes in other categories.

The state reported an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with OHI, autism, traumatic brain injury and developmental delay. Besides the classification changes that occurred with respect to reporting state data, research has shown that rates of autism, traumatic brain injury and developmental delay are increasing. The number of people, particularly children, identified with a traumatic brain injury has increased significantly in recent years due to faster and more effective emergency care, quicker and safer transportation to trauma centers and advances in acute medical management. Going further, according to a national study published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 475,000 traumatic brain injuries occur across the United States each year among children ages 0 through 14 years.

The number of Asian children and students ages 3 through 21 has increased in Michigan. When comparing the 2004 and 2005 data on increased numbers of Asian or Pacific Islander children and students identified as having a disability, the state notes that both years display small population numbers; therefore, any change creates a notable percentage change. In addition, the population of children identified as Asian and/or Pacific Islander has been increasing over the last several years in Michigan.

These population increases could lead to greater numbers of these children and students found to have a disability.

The state does not collect data on deaf-blindness. Children with deaf-blindness are reported in the hearing impairments category.

Minnesota—The state attributed an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with mental retardation, orthopedic impairments, OHI and autism to training efforts by the state. The Minnesota Department of Education teams who are charged with initial evaluation and eligibility determination for children ages 3 through 5 have been trained to think more comprehensively in planning an evaluation. Minnesota has stepped up its training efforts to facilitate child find, particularly in the birth to 5 age group, and the data reflect this. The training has resulted in more children being categorically identified earlier, rather than being initially identified as developmentally delayed.

The state attributed an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with multiple disabilities to a change in reporting procedures in the category of multiple disabilities in Minnesota in the year 2001. Prior to 2001, students with multiple disabilities were reported according to their primary disability. The increase is attributed to the category's being relatively new.

The state noted that the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with autism (19 percent) is similar to national trends.

The state attributed an increase in the number of Asian and Hispanic children and students to the overall growth in the Asian and Hispanic population in Minnesota.

Mississippi—The state child count has decreased from previous years as a result of the hurricane Katrina.

As a result of the devastation, many of the state's coastal schools most affected were not open during September and part of October. Many students previously attending those schools moved throughout the state and to other states during this period.

The state attributed the increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with OHI to the emphasis placed on this disability from the Mattie T Consent decree. OHI was not a disability category three years ago in the state. The state made it a category and has seen a steady increase in this particular disability. The state's Mattie T Consent decree mandates that the state identify 0.30 percent by 2009-10. The state has yearly goals that it must meet. For school year 2005-06, the state goal was 0.15 percent. The state met that goal for the 2005-06 school year.

Mississippi has experienced significant growth in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with autism, as have many other states. The increase is due, in part, to heightened awareness among parents and medical professionals and improved identification of preschool children with autism.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with emotional disturbance to emphasis placed on this disability from the Mattie T Consent decree. The state's Mattie T Consent decree mandates that the state must identify 0.55 percent by 2009-10. The state has yearly goals that it must meet. For school year 2005-06, the state goal was 0.15 percent. The state met that goal for the 2005-06 school year.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 8 with developmental delay to Mississippi's emphasis on early intervention and improved transition from Part C. An increase in the numbers of children transitioning from Part C resulted in an increase in the preschool/619 population in

past years. Those children are now entering the 6 through 21 count. Mississippi allows an eligibility ruling of developmental delay to be maintained through the age of 8.

A portion of the increase in the number of American Indian students ages 6 through 21 served occurred in three school districts that received a large number of displaced students from Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, one school district accounting for much of the growth is the county district where the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is located, and there was an increase in students who elected to attend state public schools rather than schools on the reservation.

Missouri—The state reports that the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported with developmental delay is offset by increases in a number of disability categories (mental retardation, visual impairments, emotional disturbance, OHI and autism). This indicates that more children are receiving a categorical diagnosis rather than the broad developmental delay diagnosis. The decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with specific learning disabilities mirrors a decrease in the 6 through 21 age group.

The state reports increases in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with OHI and autism are continuations of upward trends over the past several years.

The increase in the number of students reported with developmental delay is due to a change put in place in the 2001-02 year. Beginning in 2001-02, children could keep the developmental delay diagnosis through the kindergarten year. Prior to 2001-02, children needed to have a categorical diagnosis prior to entering kindergarten.

The increases in the number of Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latino children and students ages 3 through 21 with disabilities are due to increases in these population groups in larger urban areas of the state.

Montana—Montana has experienced a significant change in the way its data for children ages 3 through 5 will be reported on the December 1, 2005, child count.

Prior to 2005, Montana statute allowed children ages 3 through 5 to be reported under a general (noncategorical) disability category called Child with Disabilities Ages 3-5 (CW). This statute had two parts: The first part allowed for a noncategorical identification if the child met the criteria for any other disability category listed in administrative rule, and the second part allowed for identification based on a severe delay in development in any one of several areas. When OSEP changed its reporting requirements for children ages 3 through 5, requiring that they be reported under specific disability categories, Montana strongly encouraged LEAs to use a specific disability category for children ages 3 through 5, if they met the criteria. Instructions to school districts stated that if a child is identified with a specific disability, the child must be reported under that disability category for child count. As a result, the number of students reported under CW decreased by about 40 percent. For federal reporting purposes, those children who continued to be reported under CW were then reported to OSEP under specific disability categories based on the proportionate breakout of all other children ages 3 through 5 who were reported under specific disability categories.

In October 2005, the statute was changed to conform to *IDEA 2004*, and Montana adopted an administrative rule that allowed identification and reporting of a child ages 3 through 5 as having developmental delay.

For the December 1, 2005, federal child count report and succeeding years' reports until 2008, Montana will combine all students who have been reported under the two categories of CW and developmental delay and report them as developmental delay. Rationale for doing this is as follows:

- Montana, for the past several years, has provided specific instruction to school districts that, for reporting child count, districts should use the CW category only if a student is not identified under any other disability category. Because of these instructions, the majority of students reported under CW are reported that way because they fit the criteria for severe delay in development.
- Almost every disability category that a preschool child is identified under (i.e., speech-language impairment, cognitive delay, emotional disturbance, etc.) has a standard that requires two or more standard deviations below the mean for such things as cognitive development, communication development, social emotional development, etc. Thus, even though the disability category of CW was chosen as the label, the child would also qualify under the developmental delay category.
- The number of students with CW represents only 16 percent of all students ages 3 through 5 in the December 1, 2005, child count, and this will decrease with each succeeding year.

Nebraska—The decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with hearing impairments is due primarily to an unanticipated spike in the 2004 data. The total number of children in 2004 (90) as well as the number of 5-year-olds reported with hearing impairment in 2004 (39) represents an unusually high number compared to the six-year trend data from 2000-05. The six-year average is 77 children reported per year in this category, and the average number of 5-year-olds is 31. The trend data are comparable to the numbers reported in 2005 and in years prior to 2004. In addition, with an increase in the number of children reported in the developmental delay category, it is likely that several children of this young age group in 2005 were initially verified as developmentally delayed, prior to a positive later identification of hearing impairment.

There was a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported with emotional disturbance and an increase in the number of children with developmental delay and autism. Nebraska suspects that children previously identified in the category of emotional disturbance are now being identified in the categories of autism and developmental delay. This is due to the increased awareness of the characteristics of these two disability categories and the increased staff development in these areas.

The increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with autism and developmental delay was not unexpected. There has been a national increase in the identification rate of children with autism. Additionally, districts have an increased awareness of these categories due to staff development.

New Hampshire—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

New Jersey—The state reported 64 and 59 children ages 3 through 5 classified with hearing impairments in 2002 and 2003, respectively. The statewide numbers of 55 and 70 are on the low and high sides of the numbers reported in 2002 and 2003. The state is not sure why there was a 15-student difference between the present years and only a 5-student difference between the years two years ago. The state thinks that with such small numbers there is a likelihood of greater variation from year to year.

The number of children and students ages 3 through 21 classified with autism has grown substantially every year since 1991. In 1991, New Jersey had a statewide count of 204 students classified autistic. That number has grown to 7,396 in 2005. The state is not surprised that the number increased nearly 13 percent from 2004 to 2005. At the current trend, the state anticipates similar increases in both age groups 3 through 5 and 6 through 21 next year and into the near future.

The state noted that over the last four years the number of children ages 3 through 5 classified with emotional disturbance has generally been in the mid to low 90s. In 2002, there were 93 children, and in 2003 there were 94 children classified with emotional disturbance. The increase to 104 in 2004 was higher than usual. It seems that 82 children in 2005 is low. The difference between the two years suggests a greater difference between these somewhat unusual high and low trends. The state believes the average generally falls in the 90s and that this trend is simply the difference between two reporting years that are unusually higher and lower than in years prior.

The state noted the number of students ages 6 through 21 with OHI has been steadily increasing by approximately 3,000 students per year. The state believes that since the reauthorization of *IDEA* in 1997, the inclusion of ADD/ADHD has contributed to the increased number of children classified as having OHI.

The number of students ages 6 through 21 classified with traumatic brain injury has been decreasing by approximately 200 students per year since 2002. The numbers for 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 are 2,274, 1,897, 1,621 and 1,411, respectively. The reason for this decreasing trend is not clear to the state. It may be due to technological improvements in diagnoses over the years. The state anticipates that this trend will continue.

The state has had an increase in the number of Asian students ages 3 through 5 since 2002. In 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005, there were 749, 812, 895, and 1,028 classified Asian students. There has also been a similar increase in the number of Asian students ages 6 through 21. The number of Asian students is growing, and this trend reflects that.

The number of Native Americans, statewide, is quite small, so year-to-year changes may fluctuate substantially. Overall, there has also been some year-to-year fluctuation in the number of Native American students receiving services under *IDEA* (in 2002, 361 students, in 2003, a total of 732 students, in 2004, a total of 332 students, and in 2005, a total of 390 students). The state is unclear why there is so much variation, but suspects that some of these fluctuations may be due to how individual districts with larger numbers of Native American students may be reporting these numbers. In 2005, there was an increase in the number of American Indian or Alaska Native students ages 6 through 21.

New Mexico—The state noted when comparing the 2004 and 2005 child count tables that there several districts showed an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with hearing impairments. The districts and NMSD were contacted and gave the following explanations for the increase:

- The 2004 child count report was accurate, showing zero students with hearing impairments in the 3- through 5-year-old age group. However, the number reported in the 2005 child count report was in error (six students were reported). The error was corrected after the snapshot deadline.
- The state increased resources to hire personnel and expended more effort to locate and identify students with hearing impairments as part of its child find process.
- In the 2005-06 school year, one district opened an Early Learning Center specifically for preschool-age children.

The state noted when comparing the 2004 and 2005 child count tables that several districts showed an increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism. The districts were contacted and gave the following explanations for the increase:

- This increase also follows a national trend that shows an increase in the number of students identified as having autism.
- In recent years, districts have provided professional development training for staff, specifically in the area of autism.
- One district stated that it has improved the ability to identify students that may have autism. The Southwest Autism Network has trained three teams in the district specifically for identifying students. The teams consist of a diagnostician, a speech language therapist, an occupational therapist and a psychologist.
- An increase in the number of students with autism may be due to one district's starting an elementary-level autism program.
- Another district stated that students had been receiving services under different eligibilities and were now specifically diagnosed as students with autism. Additionally, a military base in the district has recently received a new mission, and this has resulted in fewer families being relocated and more families moving to the city.
- One district stated that families are moving to the area as part of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) component of the border control program. Some of these families have children with disabilities who attend the public schools in the district.
- Another district stated the increase was due to the transition from Part C to Part B. All of the children were diagnosed with autism through the University of New Mexico Southwest Autism Network.
- One district stated that it is seeing many children who have received a diagnosis of autism before they have entered a preschool program or are identified by the district through their child find process.

New York—On October 6, 2006, after the snapshot was taken for the *29th Annual Report to Congress*, New York submitted revised data to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for the December 1 child counts of 1999 through 2003. This was necessary because New York was not consistent over the years in how many students it reported as ages 3, 4 and 5 to the U.S. Department of Education. The most accurate way to report these students by discreet age is to report all kindergarten students who are 4 and 5 years of age as of December 1 as 5 years old, since the majority of these students are 5 years old on December 1. (At this time, New York does not collect individual child count data by discreet age.) For the data submitted between 2000 and 2003, New York added its kindergarten students (ages 4 and 5) to its preschool students, ages 3, 4 and 5 according to the proportion of preschool students who were reported by discreet age. In hindsight, this was not a good way to report these students, and New York revised its methodology with the 2004 report.

Beginning on December 1, 2004, New York started reporting all kindergarten students as 5 years of age. This is the most accurate way to report these students for now. Therefore, the state revised its 1999 to 2003 child count data to be consistent with the 2004 and later reporting methodology. The state anticipates that New York will have an individual student-level database beginning with December 1, 2007, at which time the state will be able to report the actual numbers of kindergarten students with disabilities by discreet age (age 4 and age 5).

New York noted a multiple-year trend in the decrease of the number of students ages 6 through 21 with visual impairments and an increase in students with autism. This trend is evident in both numbers of students as well as in the percentage of total number of students with disabilities. This trend is also noted in the New York City Department of Education data system.

The state noted the increase in the number of American Indian or Alaska Native children ages 3 through 5 is attributed to one district that may have reported inaccurate data for this item. The district will make the necessary corrections to its race/ethnicity data for future reporting. The state was unable to correct this data by the snapshot deadline for the *29th Annual Report to Congress*.

New York collects race/ethnicity for an aggregated count of all school-age students with disabilities (ages 4 through 21). It does not separate race/ethnicity for students ages 6 through 21 with disabilities or for all students ages 3 through 5 with disabilities. The reported race/ethnicity for 6- through 21-year-olds was estimated using race/ethnicity data from students ages 4 through 21 with disabilities. The race/ethnicity of 4- and 5-year-old children in school-age environments (e.g., kindergarten) is based on the race/ethnicity distribution for 3- through 5-year-olds in preschool education environments.

New York does not classify preschool children by particular disabilities. The state reported all children ages 3 through 5 in the developmental delay category.

The state reported 4- and 5-year-old children who attend kindergarten and receive special education services as age 5 on both the child count and the educational environments data.

Nevada—The state had an increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism. The increase reflects a nationwide increase in identification within this category, based in part on improved techniques for identification and increased public awareness.

North Carolina—The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with emotional disturbance and specific learning disabilities to staff turnover. Although North Carolina does not recommend these categories for preschool, new administrators without a preschool background may identify students in these categories instead of using developmentally delayed. The state definition for developmental delay covers two areas. One area is delayed atypical development, which is having delayed/atypical patterns of development in the five developmental domains. The other area is delayed/atypical behavior, which covers children whose behaviors are so significantly inadequate or inappropriate that they interfere with the child's ability to learn. These categories should be used and not the categories of emotional disturbance and learning disabilities (which are really defined according to school-age criteria). There are no appropriate assessments to determine if a child has a learning disability at the preschool level. Many new directors without preschool background (and compliance staff with no knowledge of preschool) do not understand that some of the state definitions used with the school-age population are not recommended for use with preschool.

The increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with multiple disabilities may have occurred due to the increase in technology that allows more children with severe disabilities to receive services.

The state attributed the increase in the number of children and students with autism (ages 3 through 21) to the Division for the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH). The program is located in the Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. TEACCH was the first statewide, comprehensive community-based program dedicated to improving the understanding of and services for autistic and communication-handicapped children and their families. TEACCH was established in the 1980s but is

well known nationally. Some families move to North Carolina from other states so their children can participate in this program. This influx has increased dramatically in the last five years.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with orthopedic impairments to these children being identified in the developmentally delayed category. This is a change for 2005 for directors who have been working for the state for several years. These directors are becoming more accustomed to using the developmental delay category for preschool children.

The state attributed the increase in students ages 6 through 21 with deaf-blindness to the great support network in North Carolina. The state conference on deaf-blindness attracts families from other states. In 2006, North Carolina will host the national deaf-blind conference.

North Carolina has been identified as one of the highest growing states for Hispanic families in the nation. The increase in Hispanic children and students in special education ages 3 through 21 may have occurred due to the increase of Hispanic families in our state.

North Dakota—North Dakota used a new web-based student data collection system for the first time during the 2004-05 school year. The new web-based system incorporates unique student identifiers as the link to all special education Section 618 data requirements. The web-based electronic data collection system has greatly increased the accuracy of all state and federal reports and reduced the number of duplicated students reported. The 2005 child count is the second year of data that were collected using the new on-line reporting system. The state attributes the decrease in the number of children and students reported from 2004 to 2005 (5.4 percent or 798 students and children), to the change in reporting systems.

The state addressed responses to the increases in specific categories as follows:

- The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with hearing impairments to better reporting in this category for the 2005-06 school year. Often these students received minimal supports in their home environment, and schools found little financial benefit in reporting this category. In 2005, the state worked directly with each of the 31 special education units to improve the reporting of this population.
- The state noted that the increase in the number of children and students with autism reflects a similar national data trend. The state attributes the increase to improved identification of children and students with autism.
- The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 6 through 9 reported with developmental delay to a statewide increase in the upper age limit for this disability from age 5 to age 9. In 1998, five of the 31 units in the state began using the increased upper age limit as a pilot project. In 2004, the new age limit was implemented throughout the state.

The state does not collect data on multiple disabilities. Children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability.

Northern Marianas—Northern Marianas attributes the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with autism to better training and community awareness. The decrease in the number of students with mental retardation is likely due to increased identification in the category of autism.

There has been no change in the definition of developmental delay that would contribute to the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with the disability. Cultural stigma may be a factor to not immediately placing children or students in a category other than developmental delay. Categorizing a

child with developmental delay and then reclassifying the child at age 9 provides a smoother transition into the realm of having a child with special needs.

Ohio—The state attributed the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with OHI to the increased diagnosis of ADHD in the state. Ohio’s increase follows national growth rates.

The state reported increases in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with autism to national growth rates and to increased testing and greater use of diagnosis within the autism spectrum.

The state reported it will need to further review the data to determine the cause of the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with traumatic brain injury.

The state had no explanation for the increase in the number of Asian and black children ages 3 through 5. Additional research needs to be completed in order to address the variance noted.

Oklahoma—The observed changes from 2004 to 2005 were likely the result of several edit checks that were added to the online reporting system. Therefore, the Oklahoma State Department of Education is confident that the data submitted to OSEP are an accurate portrayal of the child count data for special education students as of December 1, 2005.

Oregon—The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with mental retardation and with hearing impairments to one large county that had a significant increase in both categories. The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with visual impairments to small increases across multiple agencies. The changes in these categories are a function of normal fluctuations in the data.

The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with deaf-blindness to one large county that had a significant increase in this category. All the children were new to the agency this year.

Oregon continues to see an increase in the proportion of children and students ages 3 through 21 in the state who are reported with autism as their primary disability. This level of increase is consistent with prior years and is not attributed to selected agencies.

The state noted the increase in the number of American Indian or Alaska Native children ages 3 through 5 with disabilities is due to numerous small increases. When viewed at the county level, no significant changes occurred.

The state attributed the increase in the number of Hispanic children ages 3 through 5 to general increases across many agencies; however, specific counties show larger increases that reflect the changing ethnicity of those counties. The Hispanic counts have increased in Oregon over many years. This latest year increase is proportional with the previous increases.

Oregon does not collect data on multiple disabilities. Students and children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability.

For students ages 3 through 5, the count includes all children correctly by their age. However, the number of 5-year-olds does not align with the number of 5-year-olds shown in the educational environments table. Students who are age 5 as of September 1 of each year are considered school age and served by the school system. Students who have their fifth birthday after September 2 remain the responsibility of the state’s Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) system. (Oregon has a single statewide

program that serves children from birth through preschool. It is implemented at the state level, with regional contractors and subcontractors providing services around the state. Once children reach school age (age 5 on or before September 1) they become the responsibility of the school district.) Oregon does not ask school personnel—who have no knowledge of 619 program placements—to cross-walk school-age students into the 619 placement categories. School-age 5-year-olds are in school-age education environments and are included with the 6-year-olds in the counts of school-age students on the educational environment table.

Palau—Palau attributes the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with specific learning disabilities (an increase of 13 students) to an increase overall in students with disabilities (an increase of 11 students).

Pennsylvania—The state attributes changes to increased data training and technical assistance to state LEAs. The training is provided consistently to ensure that the quality of the data improves from year to year. Some of the changes that occurred in the data due to training were an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported with autism and a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported with emotional disturbance and traumatic brain injury. Additionally, there was an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with OHI and autism and a decrease in the number of students with traumatic brain injury and developmental delay.

Puerto Rico—The Puerto Rico Department of Education had a decrease in the number of children and students provided special education services in 2005. Although the decrease in enrollment between 2004 and 2005 is small, and does not appear to be significant, the Puerto Rico Department of Education is in the process of identifying reasons for the decrease in the students reported from one year to the other. A validation process is being carried out to ensure accuracy of data. One of the reasons for this validation is that in analyzing data over the years, the trend has been steady in terms of increases in enrollment; the above data depart from this trend.

Rhode Island—eRIDE is the Rhode Island Department of Education’s latest initiative to streamline data collection and information management. eRIDE provides a secured portal for each school district and school to submit or upload data through a single web-based system. Key student-level data are collected through eRIDE that include: enrollment, graduation, dropout data and program participation and services received (special education, English language learners, discipline, voc-ed and the free or reduced-price lunch program). The Rhode Island Department of Education, in conjunction with the school districts, processes and improves the accuracy, timelines and utility of the data collected through eRIDE. The accuracy of the data has improved substantially.

The state had an increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism. This follows the national trend of an increase in the reporting of autism. Wider definitions of this disorder account for some of the increase, but the reason for the rest of the increase is unknown.

As the Rhode Island Department of Education and the local schools districts align data between the various databases, the state has focused on ensuring that race/ethnicity is accurately reflected on all databases, and the data more are more reliable. The state suspects that there was overreporting in the white (not Hispanic) age 3 through 5 count in 2004, as this number decreased by 9.71 percent, while the count of Hispanic children ages 3 through 5 increased by 26.55 percent; a shift in the data reporting has made it more reliable.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students with orthopedic impairments in 2004 to 2005 to students who left the system either through *graduation*, all objectives met, parents’ request or *dropped out of school*.

South Carolina—The state had an increase in reporting agencies for the 2005 child count. The state gave all Head Start agencies that were not previously participating in the December 1 child count the opportunity to submit data this year. The state numbers increased for the number of children ages 3 through 5 with mental retardation, OHI and autism due to this change.

The state attributes the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with multiple disabilities and autism to the fact that the state has more specific identification and evaluation practices; outside agencies such as the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs are identifying students at a higher rate, and the state is now dealing with more children with more complex needs.

South Carolina has had an influx of Hispanics and a slight increase in the Asian population attending public schools in the past year. The state also has had better identification criteria for children who fall under the category of students for whom English is a second language. (ESOL) As a result of these two changes, the state has had an increase in the number of Asian and Hispanic children and students ages 3 through 21 with disabilities.

South Dakota—The state has reviewed and verified that the child count data submitted by each public school district are accurate.

South Dakota attributes a number of changes in the Part B child count to coding of students at the district level following an audit of child count data the summer of 2004. This may have resulted in a more thorough review of reported data at the district level.

South Dakota attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 21 reported with autism to several factors. First, public awareness in the state has increased through the work of the Autism and Related Disorders Program and the West River Autism Project in the state resulting in more and younger referrals. National educational organizations have brought speakers on autism to the Midwest more than in the past, which has also led to more awareness. Second, the Autism and Related Disorders Program and the West River Autism Project provide training to district personnel, agency personnel and parents, which aids in identification and service for children with autism. Last, more staff in the state have been trained to identify children with autism. Three autism teams, two educational cooperatives and some individual school districts are available in the state to help diagnose autism.

South Dakota attributes the increase in Hispanic students ages 6 through 21 for all disabilities to the increase (49.7 percent from 2000 to 2004) in the overall percentage of Hispanic students attending public school.

South Dakota has not changed any categories or definitions. The state has not had any policy changes or changes in the methods of collecting data. However, South Dakota has had a change in the data manager for the state.

Tennessee—The decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with mental retardation may be attributed to five factors. A large LEA in the state began implementation of a Response to Intervention program. There was an increased use of research-based effective practices (especially in reading) and an increase in the number of students with greater access to the general curriculum. Special education personnel showed an improved awareness of culturally responsive education practices, and the state emphasized elimination of overrepresentation of black students identified as having mental retardation.

The increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 being identified with visual impairments can be attributed to statewide awareness efforts, including those of Project PAVE (Providing Access to the Visual Environment), a cooperative effort between the Tennessee Department of Education and Vanderbilt University.

The increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism is attributable to several factors. The 2003 publication of Tennessee's broadened definition of autism, which includes the full spectrum of autistic disorders, continues to have an impact. Both continuing improvement in LEA child find and later stage diagnoses of more mild forms of autism have contributed to the steady increase in the number of students identified as having an autism spectrum disorder. Public awareness of autism and the work of parent advocacy groups also contribute to the increase.

The increases in the number of Asian or Pacific Islander and Hispanic children and students ages 3 through 21 are attributed to overall population increases in these racial/ethnic groups in the state and improving practices in identifying and properly evaluating children from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

No policy or program change was identified that may have led to the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with orthopedic impairments.

Students identified under the state definitions of intellectually gifted or functionally delayed are recognized as being in need of specialized services under state law and have IEPs developed for them. Students who receive special education services based on an IEP team decision that they meet criteria to be served as intellectually gifted or functionally delayed are counted as students with IEPs in in-state counts but are not included in any data tables submitted to OSEP.

Texas—The state's number of children ages 3 through 5, found eligible under the autism category continues to increase; as well as the two-year trend for rate of change (15.0 percent to 16.4 percent). The state's number of students ages 6 through 21 found eligible under the autism category continues to increase; however, the two-year trend for rate of change is decreasing slightly (19.9 percent to 17.8 percent). The decrease in the number of students with multiple disabilities can be attributed improved guidance on coding these students. Students with visual impairments continue to be identified at an early age in the state, which can be attributed to the increase.

Utah—One large district incorrectly reported 550 children ages 3 through 5 as having specific learning disabilities instead of developmental delay, which accounts for the large increase in the number of children with specific learning disabilities and the decrease in the number of children with developmental delay. This will be corrected in the 2006 data collection. The state is unable to change the data for the 2005 data collection.

The state has had a steady increase in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism and OHI. The state expects this trend to continue.

The reason for the decrease in the number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with deaf-blindness is unknown. The state will be watching next year for a trend in these data. Utah realigned the LEAs in the state with the Utah School for the Deaf and Blind. The state thinks this will increase data quality and reporting in the years to come.

The Hispanic population is increasing rapidly in Utah in general, and as a result, the number of Hispanic children and students ages 3 through 21 with disabilities is also increasing.

Vermont—The number of children ages 3 through 5 with speech or language impairments decreased from 97 in 2004 to 83 in 2005, a decrease of 14 students or -14.43 percent. This decrease may be attributable to an increase in the appropriate usage of the developmental delay disability category for children ages 3 through 5. The number of children with developmental delay increased over 5 percent from 2004 to 2005, the largest significant increase recorded in this time period.

The number of students ages 6 through 21 with orthopedic impairments decreased from 86 in 2004 to 75 in 2005, a decrease of 11 students or -12.79 percent. These data have been verified, and no changes in state policy or data collection methodologies are thought to be attributable to this change. Future changes in this disability category will be analyzed to understand if this is a trend.

The number of students ages 6 through 21 with OHI increased from 1,793 in 2004 to 1,975 in 2005, a difference of 182 or 10.15 percent. These data have been verified, and no changes in state policy or data collection methodologies are thought to be attributable to this change. Future changes in this disability category will be analyzed to understand if this is a trend.

The number of American Indian or Alaska Native students ages 6 through 21 decreased from 74 in 2004 to 62 in 2005, a decrease of 12 students or -16.22 percent. This decrease reflects a similar decrease of almost 9 percent in this race/ethnicity category in the total Vermont student population between the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years.

The number of Asian or Pacific Islander students ages 6 through 21 increased from 59 in 2004 to 72 in 2005, an increase of 13 or 22.03 percent. This increase, combined with the increase of 25 black students from 153 to 178 (a 16.34 percent increase) appears to reflect an overall trend in the Vermont student population of an increasing minority population. Overall, the 6 through 21 special education minority population in Vermont has increased 0.2 percent over the last year, while the total minority student population in Vermont has increased 0.5 percent.

Virgin Islands—The increase in the reported number of children ages 3 through 5 with speech/language impairments is due to more children being referred and deemed eligible for services from the Infant and Toddlers Program Part C to Part B and due to child find and transition activities.

The decrease in the reported number of children ages 3 through 5 with developmental delay was a direct result of specific guidelines provided by the SEA to the local LEA. The guidelines provided the LEA with the appropriate criteria for determining this eligibility. The LEA purchased the necessary evaluation tools to assess children with the suspected disability to developmental delay. These assessments were used to ensure that the children were properly diagnosed.

Virginia—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Washington—The state attributed an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with hearing impairments, multiple disabilities and autism to increased identification. State data have been verified and are correct. It is not clear whether the reported increase is attributable to a rise in occurrence or due to improved means for identifying children in these categories. The state will look further into this question in the coming year.

The state attributed an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with autism to an increase in the number of students being identified in this disability category. State data have been verified and are correct.

The state attributed an increase in the number of Asian children ages 3 through 5 to an increase in the number of Asian children in the state. State data have been verified and are correct.

West Virginia—The Hispanic percentage in school enrollment increased from 0.62 percent in 2004 to 0.73 percent in 2004 in West Virginia. The percentage of Hispanic students ages 6 through 21 with disabilities increased from 0.46 percent in 2004 to 0.54 percent in 2005. Therefore, the increase in Hispanic students with disabilities parallels an increase in the state's school enrollment.

The number of students ages 6 through 21 with autism served by the state continues to increase, consistent with previous years. The data are correct as reported in individual student records. The number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with mental retardation continues to decrease. The state speculates that students with characteristics previously thought to be mental retardation are now reported with autism, which is relatively new. The state has not changed any definitions or eligibility criteria.

The state does not collect data on multiple disabilities. Children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability.

Wisconsin—The state attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with specific learning disabilities to difficulty identifying children with the disability at the preschool level. The state will continue to monitor these data in the future.

The number of children and students ages 3 through 21 with autism continues to increase each year, as does the national trend. Wisconsin has done extensive training of staff in the area of autism, which has led to better identification and programming for students with autism. Wisconsin also has a reputation as providing good services as well as having good medical facilities for students with autism, which has led to more students moving to Wisconsin from out of state. In reviewing the 2005-06 data, the greatest increases in the number of preschoolers and students identified with autism occurred in the larger school districts in the state. The increases, however, did not seem out of line for the districts. Many LEAs in the state have only one preschooler or student identified with autism.

The increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 identified with OHI is an area of concern for the state. As a result, the state has begun conducting in-services in the documentation of OHI and has developed an OHI checklist for LEA use.

The state had an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 with developmental delay. The state's definition of developmental delay is limited to those students who are ages 3 through 5. A student may continue to be identified as having developmental delay through the school year in which the child turns age 6 provided the student's birth date is after the start of the school year (September 1). In other words, the use of developmental delay for children age 6 is dependent on the child's birth date. There were more children in school year 2005-06 who could continue to be identified as developmental delay because their birth dates fell between September 2 and the count date of December 1 than those who could continue during the previous school year of 2004-05.

The increase in the number of Hispanic children ages 3 through 5 identified with a disability coincides with the state's overall enrollment increase for Hispanic children. The specific LEAs showing the greatest increase in the number of Hispanic preschoolers are also the LEAs showing the greatest increase in overall Hispanic enrollment in the state. Hispanic students also showed the greatest percentage increase in school-age (ages 6 through 21) students with disabilities.

Wyoming—The state has been looking critically at the accuracy of state data submitted over the last two years and has discovered some mapping and definition errors in the state’s internal databases. The state is currently continuing work to resubmit corrected data, but because this is a complicated study and the state has had a turnover in staff, this process has been difficult to complete. The state was unable to submit corrected data prior to the snapshot deadline for the *29th Annual Report to Congress*. The state believes that the changes in child count data have a great deal to do with more accurate data definitions and better follow up between the SEA and LEA. The state plans to continue to resubmit data to get better historical data recorded.

Tables 2-1 Through 2-10: IDEA Part B Educational Environments, 2005

Alabama—The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *separate schools* to normal fluctuation in the data.

The state recognized the increase in the number of students with disabilities *outside the regular class less than 21 percent of the day*. This has been a state trend since 2002. The state determined that inclusion would be a primary focus for encouraging greater student participation in the regular education environment. This emphasis was accomplished through the focused monitoring process and increased technical assistance to local systems.

Alaska—The state attributed a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *separate schools* to the closure of a special education *separate school* that served a large portion of these students. The closure of the *separate school* also increased the number of children in *early childhood special education* settings. As the school moved toward closure in 2004, it moved many of the students to other settings. Upon closure in 2005, more students were moved to *early childhood special education* settings, greatly reducing the number of students served in *separate school* settings.

American Samoa—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Arizona—The state data system allows LEAs to submit all disabilities for each eligible student receiving special education services. To determine the primary disability, a hierarchy was used. Beginning in FY 2007, the state will require LEAs to indicate which disability is the primary disability for each student with more than one disability.

During the 2005-06 school year, the Arizona Department of Education no longer allowed LEAs to submit data on preschoolers attending Head Start programs and students attending approved private special education schools or those incarcerated in certain *correctional facilities* using an old data entry program called DELREP. For the first time, the state Information Technology (IT) department implemented a new Web-based application for LEAs to report these students. However, this application has had numerous problems up to the end of the fiscal year, which resulted in the 3 through 5 child count and *correctional facilities* count changing significantly from last year. The state IT department hopes to have all remaining issues resolved for FY 2007 data reporting, resulting in more accurate counts.

The explanations for individual data changes are provided below.

- The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 receiving *itinerant service outside the home* to an increase in children in general and lack of space, so parents and districts are opting to serve many children with speech-language impairments itinerantly.

- The increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *reverse mainstream* settings may be due to an improvement in data reporting.
- The state believes that the decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *private residential facility* counts is due to appropriate IEP placements versus court placements. Placements for non-IEP-driven reasons may also contribute to the decrease in this category.
- Some possibilities for the decrease in *correctional facility* counts may be due to a combination of the following:
 - In some counties, presiding juvenile court judges have placed fewer students in juvenile detention facilities, which could lead to a decrease in identified students in the correctional system.
 - Some facilities may have been double counting students, and as reporting requirements have become more centralized, double counting has occurred less.
 - In contrast, it is also possible that some of the larger juvenile detention facilities have been underidentifying students in the chaos they have experienced over the last year. This would result in a decrease in numbers.

Arkansas—The increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 receiving services in *public separate schools* and the decrease in the number of students receiving services in *public residential facilities* are correlated. The state-operated deaf and blind schools are seeing a decrease in the number of students living at the schools. Instead parents are opting to have their children live at home and attend the school only during the day.

The increased count of students being served in *correctional facilities* is due to the reporting on all state prisons and youth facilities. Prior to 2005, these organizations only reported on primary locations.

There was a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in the *separate school* setting by more than 50 percent from 2004. Part of the early childhood programs are operated through the Department of Health and Human Services DDS. When the interagency agreement was entered into, the DDS programs were strictly *separate schools*; however, over the years, the programs have grown to include *reverse mainstream* preschools, and a few have Arkansas Better Chance for Success preschools.

Bureau of Indian Affairs—The Bureau reported the increase in the two educational environment categories for children ages 3 through 5, *early childhood* setting and *part-time early childhood/part-time special education* setting, is consistent with the increase in the count reflected on the child count. This change is normal fluctuation. The Bureau will monitor the data to watch for future trends.

The increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *homebound/hospital* settings is not attributed to any reason at this time. This change is normal fluctuation. The Bureau will monitor the data to watch for future trends.

California—California notes a review of local data indicates that the differences are based on accurate reporting, and they are normal data variations. The change in data is due to improvements in the data system of one of the largest school districts in the state.

The state noted the increases in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in the *residential facility setting* and *separate school setting* are due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in the *public residential facility setting* is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level. The state was unable to explain why the change occurred.

The state noted the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in the *private residential facility setting* is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

Colorado—There was an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 served in *home* settings. Although this was a 50 percent change from 2004, there were no significant changes in any individual LEA's data. This change is normal fluctuation. The state will monitor the data to watch for future trends.

There was a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 served in *part-time early childhood/part-time special education* settings. A review of data submitted by individual LEAs did not indicate a significant change in the data submitted from any individual LEA. This change is normal fluctuation. The state will monitor the data to watch for future trends.

There was an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *homebound/hospital* settings. A review of data submitted by individual LEAs did not indicate a significant change in the data submitted by any individual LEA. The change was the result of small differences in LEA-level data that, when summed, produced an overall increase of 117 students statewide. From 1996-2001, Colorado had a decrease every year for this data element, then an increase in 2005. The state is unable to attribute a reason for the switch, but will watch the data for further trends.

The state attributed an increase in the number of students in *correctional facilities* to Colorado's Adult Correctional system, which hired a full-time special education director who has focused on identification of inmates with disabilities. Prior to 2005, Colorado's Adult Correctional system was cited by the Colorado Department of Education for inadequate identification processes

Connecticut—When OSEP announced changes to the definitions for children ages 3 through 5 in 2005 that reflect where children attend school, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) trained school districts to report information using the new definitions. However, when OSEP announced later in 2005 that states were to use the previous definitions based on where special education services are provided, the CSDE was given permission to cross-walk data because the state has information on where students attend school, their school hours and the amount of time they spend with nondisabled peers (TWNP). Students were coded depending on a combination of education location, education, school hours, grade and TWNP variables that closely matched the definitions.

- Students in certain education locations that have 100 percent TWNP and have more than 3 hours a week of total school hours were coded as 1 – *early childhood setting*.
- Students in certain education locations that have 79 percent or less TWNP and have more than 3 hours a week of total school hours were coded as 2 – *early special education childhood setting*.
- Students reported in an education location of *home* were coded as 3 – *home*.
- Students in certain education locations that have a range of 79.1 – 99.9 TWNP and have more than 3 hours a week of total school hours were coded as 4 – *part-time early childhood/part-time early special education childhood setting*.
- Students reported in certain education facilities were coded as 5 – *residential special education*.

- Students reported in certain education facilities were coded as 6 – *separate special education setting*.
- Pre-kindergarten students in certain education locations that have 3 hours or less a week of total school hours were coded as 7 – *itinerant service*.
- Pre-kindergarten students in certain education locations that have more than 3 hours a week of total and special education school hours and have a range of 50 – 99.9 TWNP were coded as 8 – *reverse mainstream setting*.

Once the cross-walk was completed, the state compared it with the educational environments data for 2004 and found the numbers to be comparable. Data changes in environments for children ages 3 through 5 are due to the crosswalk of data.

Changes in educational environments for students ages 6 through 21 show a decrease in the number of students who received special education *at least 21 percent to 60 percent* and *more than 60 percent of the day outside the classroom*, while students who received special education *less than 21 percent of the day outside the regular classroom* has increased. This is due to the ongoing efforts of the CSDE and school districts to meet free appropriate public education (FAPE) requirements.

The decrease in the number of students in *correctional facilities* and in *private schools, not placed by public agency* is a reflection of the overall decrease in the total *IDEA* child count.

No comments are provided for changes in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *private separate* and *public residential* settings because the numbers are too small to derive any meaningful explanation.

Delaware—The state attributed an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *early childhood special education* setting to improved understanding of definitions. Districts that previously counted speech-only students in other categories are now counting them in the *early childhood special education* setting.

The state attributed an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in the *part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education* setting and a decrease in the number of children in *separate schools* to one district moving 33 students from a *separate school* to more inclusive settings. 2005 was the first year the district moved the students. The students have been permanently moved.

The state attributed an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *reverse mainstream* settings to districts, prior to 2005, counting children in other settings when they were in settings designed primarily for children with disabilities but include 50 percent or more regular education students. In 2005, districts began counting these students as *reverse mainstream*.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 who are *outside the regular class 21 to 60 percent of the school day* and *outside regular class more than 60 percent of the school day* to districts moving students to less restrictive environments. Districts are making this shift due to: (1) focused monitoring on districts with a low percentage of students in the setting *outside regular class less than 21 percent of the school day*; (2) the inclusive schools initiative, which gives districts, schools and teachers training in inclusive practices and curriculum that support all students; and (3) the pilot funding program that allows districts to place students in less restrictive environments and receive funding based on the intensity of the needs of the student. The traditional funding system requires students to have 12.5 or more hours of special education to be counted as a full-time special education student to receive the full funding based on their disability type.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *private* and *public residential* settings and an increase in the number of students in *homebound/hospital* settings to improved district understanding of definitions. Students receiving treatment in *hospital/homebound* settings, prior to 2005, had been counted in the *private* and *public residential facility* categories but are counted in *homebound/hospital* settings in 2005.

The state attributed an increase in the number of students in *private schools not placed by public agency* to improved understanding of reporting requirements. Due to training in 2005 and requirements for districts to work with private schools within their district, districts are more aware of requirements to report students who are attending private schools and receiving special education services.

District of Columbia—The District of Columbia attributed an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *early childhood settings* and in *early childhood special education settings* to an increased involvement of its charter schools in the counting process.

The District of Columbia noted the decrease in the number of students ages 3 through 5 in *part-time/part-time settings, residential facilities,* and in *separate schools* is due to normal fluctuation in the data. The District of Columbia will monitor the data to look for trends.

The District of Columbia noted the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 *outside the regular classroom less than 21 percent of the school day* and a decrease in the number of students *outside the regular class 21 through 60 percent of day, in public separate schools* or in *private residential facilities* is due to normal fluctuation in the data. The District of Columbia will monitor the data to look for trends.

Florida—In 2005-06, Florida implemented a Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) for all 4-year-olds in the state. The state believes this has created more inclusive settings for provision of specially designed instruction and related services, which reduces the number of children with disabilities receiving services at *home* or in *early childhood special education* settings. Florida also used *itinerant services* for the first time in 2005. Children reported under this category were previously reported under *early childhood special education* settings.

The state continues to see increases in students ages 6 through 21 in *private schools, not placed by a public agency* as a result of Florida's scholarship programs, including the McKay program for students with disabilities.

Georgia—During the 2005-06 school year, the Georgia Department of Human Resources closed three *public residential facilities*. These closures influenced data on private placements and *separate school* placements for children ages 3 through 5 with significant service needs. As a result, in 2005, the following changes were reported:

- An increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *separate schools,*
- An increase in the number of children ages 6 through 21 in *private separate schools,*
- An increase in the number of children ages 6 through 21 in *private residential facilities,*
- An increase in the number of students in *private schools, not placed by public agencies,*
- A decrease in the number of students in *public residential facilities.*

Georgia collects aggregate data using a single multiracial category. The racial/ethnic category of some students is unknown. The state estimated race/ethnicity for students using the district-level data racial/ethnic distribution as prescribed by OSEP in *Handling Missing Data When Reporting Race/Ethnicity*.

In the age group 3 through 5, some 598 children (2.94 percent of the 20,370 children ages 3 through 5 with disabilities) were reported as multiracial. In the age group 6 through 21, a total of 4,054 students (2.29 percent of the 177,359 students with disabilities ages 6 through 21) were reported as multiracial.

Guam—Guam noted the increase in children ages 3 through 5 in *early childhood settings* is offset by a decrease in the number of children in *early childhood special education settings*. More students are being placed in natural environments with their non-disabled peers.

Hawaii—Hawaii had a number of changes from data reported in 2004 to data reported in 2005. Individual changes in the data included:

- A decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *private separate schools*;
- A decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *public residential facilities*; and
- A decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *homebound/hospital* settings.

The changes in the state data can all be attributed to random fluctuation. There is no pattern of consistent change, but the state will work to understand the changes in the data.

Idaho—The state had no explanation for the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *separate school* settings. This is a random fluctuation in numbers.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 educated *outside the regular classroom 21 to 60 percent of the school day* to improved data validations added to the state data system that correlate total amount of time of special education and related services received and the environment where students received the education. Additionally, the state provided extensive training on educational environments coding.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 educated *outside the regular classroom more than 60 percent of the school day* to improved data validations added to the state data system that correlate total amount of time of special education and related services received and the environment where students received the education. Additionally, the state provided extensive training on educational environments coding.

The state had no reason to explain the decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *public residential facilities*. This is a random fluctuation in numbers.

The state explained the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *homebound/hospital* settings as miscoding of home-schooled students. Increased training by the state on educational environments coding will reduce errors.

Illinois—The increase in the *early childhood special education* setting may be attributed to data coding and input issues. Trainings are being provided to assist districts in appropriate submission of data.

The state reported that districts had the option of reporting 3- through 5-year-olds in either the preschool or school-age educational environments, and most of these students were reported by the districts in the school-age categories. The state cross-walks these students into the preschool categories for federal

reporting purposes. Students reported *outside the classroom less than 20 percent of the day* are cross-walked into the *early childhood* category. Students reported *outside the classroom 21-60 percent of the day* and *more than 60 percent of the day* are cross-walked into the *part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education* category.

Indiana—Based on guidance and direction received from the U.S. Department of Education at the 2005 Data Managers’ meeting in Washington, D.C., Indiana used the presented draft forms for all data collections required during the 2005-06 school year. Thus, the reported data represent a best case, good faith effort on Indiana’s part to cross-walk the data from the new draft forms to the old standard forms. As a result, the number of children in *early childhood settings* and in *separate schools* increased, and the number of children in *early childhood special education settings, at home, and in part time early childhood/part-time special education* decreased.

The state collected the 2005 educational environment data using the new revised format. Thus, all separate school and residential student data are reported under *public separate school* and *public residential facility* respectively.

Iowa—The state attributed a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 at *home, in separate schools, and receiving itinerant services outside the home* to increased state emphasis in serving children in preschool settings rather than *home*.

The state attributed an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *part-time early childhood/part-time special education* setting to an increased state emphasis in serving children in preschool settings rather than *home*.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 served *outside the regular class more than 60 percent of the school day* to the increased emphasis on monitoring educational environments of students. Educational environments received more attention through dissemination of area education agency (AEA) and LEA data tables and maps. Placement in least restrictive environments is a state monitoring priority, and the SEA disseminated detailed data by AEA and LEA, which raised awareness and improved placement practices.

The state attributed an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *private residential facilities and correctional facilities* to more accurate tracking of resident students served out of state.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of students in a *private school, not placed by a public agency* to more accurate tracking of resident students served out of state.

Kansas—The decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 receiving services in *reverse mainstream* settings is parallel to the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *early childhood special education* settings. This shift can be attributed to:

1. A change in the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) administration;
2. A change in the KSDE collection methodology, resulting in re-formulating the cross-walking of KSDE placement/setting codes and *IDEA* categories on the educational environments table.

Since 1988, the KSDE has collected data on an individual student basis. Each student record collected has included all special education services listed on the IEP, reported in terms of frequency, duration and location. One of the location options for children ages 3 through 5 has been (since 1994) a setting called

integrated. Over the years, the integrated setting has been defined very vaguely as a blended program. The definition did not clearly address ratios of students with disabilities and those without disabilities. Under the reporting requirements of *IDEA 97*, Kansas' data showed a large proportion of its 3 through 5 population in the *early childhood special education* category.

In 1998, the KSDE administration decided to begin using the optional category of *reverse mainstream* settings and to populate this category with the students coded as receiving services in an integrated setting.

In 2004, the KSDE had a change in administration; the Part B coordinator had retired, and a new director was acting as Part B coordinator. After attending an OSEP conference, the KSDE received clarification on the collection of early childhood placement data. The decision was made by the then current KSDE administration to add a new placement category to the collection methodology called *reverse mainstream*, define this category according to OSEP direction and only count children on the educational environments table in the *reverse mainstream* setting who were coded as such. It was also decided that the integrated setting be re-defined as a program intending to have a population of at least 50 percent children with disabilities and to count those coded as such in the *early childhood special education* settings on the educational environments table. This issue is based on a KSDE decision to align our collection, coding and methodology with OSEP requirements, resulting in a one-time shift in numbers for December 1, 2005.

There continues to be a statewide effort to provide more special education services in the regular education classroom. District-level educational environments data were disseminated last year as part of the state's Focused Assistance and Monitoring System. This new method of data dissemination has heightened the awareness to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. KSDE believes this shift is an indication of this movement. The state had decreases in the number of students ages 6 through 21 receiving services *outside the regular class more than 60 percent of the school day, in public separate schools, in private separate schools, in public residential facilities and in private residential facilities.*

Kentucky—In 2005, there was an increase in the number of students ages 3 through 5 in the *part-time early childhood/part-time special education* setting. The state noted this requires an ongoing explanation with school districts who continue to want to treat these placements the same as the percentages for the 6 through 21 age range. At trainings across the state in 2005, continuing emphasis was placed on the fact that for ages 3 through 5, the placement is where the child receives his or her special education services.

For ages 3 through 5, the placement categories are: with regular education peers, with special education students and a combination of the two. No percentages are reported; the student is either educated with regular education students, not educated with regular education students or a combination of the two. In addition, data are reported for this age range only for time in special education, not other educational portions of the child's day where special education is not being provided. For ages 6 through 21, there are three percentage categories as opposed to the absolutes. These categories are based on the entire educational day, not just special education services. Districts, however, want to apply the same rule to the 3- through 5-year-olds when reporting in these three placement categories. The ongoing training and emphasis is to try to overcome that tendency. It appears now that the new placement categories will change such that children ages 3 through 5 will be reported similarly to the 6 through 21 age range.

Louisiana—Louisiana child counts have decreased from previous years across all categories due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Some students evacuated to other states and have not returned to Louisiana.

Maine—The state attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *home* environments to the decline in enrollment of children ages 3 through 5 and to a state initiative to educate children in the least restrictive environment with their peers.

Children who receive special education and related services in *correctional facilities* should be reported in the duplicated count of children in *correctional facilities* as well as in one of the categories for the percentage of time spent outside the regular classroom. Maine reported children in *correctional facilities* in the *public residential facility* category.

The state did not report any children in the duplicated count of children in *private schools, not placed by a public agency*; however, there were children in the state who were placed by their parents in private schools. Maine reported all of these parentally placed children in either the *private separate school* or the *private residential facility* category.

Maryland—Maryland attributes the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *early childhood* settings and *separate schools* and the increase in the number of children in the *part-time early childhood/part-time special education* setting to a better understanding of the preschool environment definitions in the local school systems. The increase in understanding of the definitions resulted in better data reporting.

Massachusetts—The state believes that there is great confusion over reporting for children ages 3 through 5 in the *part-time early childhood/part time special education* setting. The state cannot explain the increase in the number of children in the setting. The state has been discussing how to increase clarity of reporting for this age group.

The state had an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 receiving services *less than 20 percent of the day outside the regular class* and a decrease in the number of students receiving services in *homebound/hospital* settings and *outside the regular class 20 to 60 percent of the school day*. As noted in the Massachusetts State Performance Plan, Massachusetts has made considerable efforts to improve the quality and accuracy of educational environments data reporting for students ages 6 through 21. Additionally, the Massachusetts Department of Education continues to implement and support initiatives that promote the education of students in inclusive environments.

Prior to 2003, Massachusetts reported all children ages 3 through 5 in either the *early childhood* category or the *home* category. Beginning in 2003, Massachusetts began using all required educational environment reporting categories for this age group. The state collects data on children ages 3 through 5 according to the percentage of time they are in inclusive environments with nondisabled peers, rather than according to the environment in which they receive special education and related services. This is inconsistent with OSEP reporting instructions. Children ages 3 through 5 are reported by Massachusetts as follows:

- The state reported children in the *early childhood* category if they attended an early childhood program that was fully inclusive and were removed from the early childhood program for 20 percent or less of their time to receive special education and related services. These children may have received special education or related services during the early childhood program hours and may have received services from the school in addition to the hours of the early childhood program.

- The state reported children in the *early childhood special education* setting if they did not participate in an inclusive early childhood program or if they participated in an inclusive early childhood program but were removed from this environment for more than 80 percent of their time to receive special education and related services.
- The state reported children in the *part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education* category if they received special education and related services in some combination of an inclusive early childhood program, a partial inclusion setting or a *separate* setting and if the children were removed from the inclusive *early childhood* setting to receive special education and related services for more than 20 percent of their time.

Michigan—Michigan significantly altered its methodology for collecting data on students ages 6 through 21 who are removed from the general education classroom in the three categories *less than 20 percent of the school day, 21 to 60 percent of the school day* and *more than 60 percent of the school day*. In previous years, Michigan used student full-time equivalency (FTE) in special education to compute these values. In the current year, Michigan asked districts to self-report on each student from the student's IEP as to the amount of time he/she is removed from the regular education classroom. This should have significant impact on better accuracy in data reporting.

The OSE/EIS has emphasized to ISDs, schools and LEAs the need to increase data accuracy with respect to special education data/information. In addition, the LEA and the ISD data are now publicly reported, further increasing the content validity of data on students with disabilities. Programs such as the Continuous Improvement and Monitoring System (CIMS) have broadened the state's monitoring emphasis, moving from mainly a compliance orientation to a focus on improving education results for students with disabilities in Michigan. In turn, CIMS has also focused on assessing and improving the quality of data the OSE/EIS receives from school districts. These interventions have resulted in more accurate data reporting, resulting in better data being submitted to OSEP.

The state noted an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 served at *home*, in *part-time/part-time* settings or *receiving itinerant services outside the home* represents year-to-year changes that can be expected in terms of identification. However, the state notes that, in 2005, Michigan changed its rubric for the collection of environmental settings for students. Districts are improving their reporting by utilizing this new rubric and are providing more accurate data.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *separate schools* to state emphasis on the placement of children with more time in regular education settings. This has become a priority for the state's CIMS. These changes reflect state priorities for children with disabilities.

The state had an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 *outside the regular class more than 21 percent of the day*, in *public separate schools*, in *public and private residential facilities* and in *homebound/hospital* settings. Data verification procedures revealed a number of districts incorrectly reported students as residing in a *public residential facility*. Nonetheless, the number of students with disabilities in a *public residential facility* environment changes from year to year, especially depending upon the number of students placed in institutions and classified as emotionally impaired. The increase in the number of students in *homebound/hospital* settings, reflects year-to-year variations. The number of students who are too ill to attend school on a regular basis changes from year to year with no predictable pattern.

The state noted that the increase in the number of students in *correctional facilities* and the decrease in the number of students in *private schools, not placed by public agency* were due to the move to a new rubric by the OSE/EIS for the collection of school environment data. Changes in these categories may reflect the utilization of this new rubric by local school districts.

The state does not collect data on deaf-blindness. Children with deaf-blindness are reported in the hearing impairments category.

Minnesota—The state attributed a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 educated in *separate schools* to a greater understanding on the part of staff members in districts about how to accurately report settings for young children.

The state attributed an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 *receiving itinerant services outside the home* to a shift in how IEP teams are choosing to meet the needs of young children with delays exclusively in the area of speech/language.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *private separate schools* and *public and private residential facilities* to a clarification in data reporting procedures/methods. Prior to a policy memo that was distributed February 9, 2005, districts were incorrectly reporting students in *separate schools* and *public and private residential facilities* as if those programs were special education only. This resulted in a reduced number of students reported in this environment with an increase in the number of students correctly reported. Prior to the policy memo, LEAs were incorrectly overreporting students as being served in separate settings when the services were actually not being provided in separate settings. The state sent out the clarifying policy memo, and the accuracy of the LEA data is improving and reflects fewer students served in separate settings. They are now correctly reported in the settings in which they are being served.

The state attributed an increase in the number of students in *correctional facilities* to a change in reporting procedures. In 2005, Minnesota was able to disaggregate and report data through every *correctional facility* in the state that serves children and youth ages birth through 21 with disabilities. The change resulted in fluctuations in the number of students reported in *correctional facilities*.

Mississippi—Mississippi suffered on August 29, 2005, when Hurricane Katrina left devastation on the state's Gulf Coast. The state has worked with districts to help them take in displaced students from the Mississippi Gulf Coast as well as many from Louisiana (New Orleans in particular). The state also worked with other states to take in students. After Katrina, the state spent the next three months filling thousands of requests from within and outside the state concerning student records that the state could provide to assist the displaced students' new schools. Due to the thousands and thousands of families and students who were displaced, the state's 2005-06 data will be somewhat skewed due to students coming into the state from Louisiana and from students leaving the state.

Missouri—The decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in *home* settings is offset by the increase in the *early childhood* setting. The state is unable to attribute a reason to the shift; however, the state will watch the data for trends in the coming years. The increase in the *part-time early childhood/part-time special education* setting category is most likely offset by a decrease in the number of children in the *early childhood special education* setting. The state is unable to attribute a reason to the shift; however, the state will watch the data for trends in the coming years.

A small decrease in numbers results in a large decrease in the percentage of students ages 6 through 21 in *private residential facilities*. IEP teams make these placement decisions, and the individual reasons for the decrease are not known. A large part of the increase in *homebound/hospital* placements was in one large urban district. The reason for the change of placements is unknown.

Nebraska—The state had an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *early childhood* settings and a decrease in the number of children in *early childhood special education* settings, in *separate schools*, and receiving *itinerant services outside the home*. The changes in the four settings reflect an emphasis on serving children in natural environments. Extensive training has been provided to help service providers understand the concept of coaching care providers to allow children with disabilities to participate in settings with their nondisabled peers. The data changes reflect the movement of children from more restrictive to less restrictive settings.

Training was provided to school districts to improve the accuracy and precision of the data reported concerning the amount of time students ages 6 through 21 participate in general education. The web-based IEP system used by the majority of school districts in the state was modified to include the amount of time students participate in regular education instead of the previous recording of percentage of time in special education. This elimination of an additional calculation has improved accuracy. These changes can be attributed to the increase in students receiving services *less than 21 percent of the day outside the regular class* and a decrease in students receiving services *outside the regular class more than 21 percent of the school day*.

Nebraska revised the state administrative rule regarding the approval of programs providing special education services to students (92 NAC 18). It is suspected that the increase in students in *public separate schools* and *residential facilities* is a result of better understanding and clarification of the correct reporting of students in these categories. Nebraska is continuing to investigate the source of the increase in the number of students reported in *private separate schools*.

The state had a decrease in the number of students reported in *correctional facilities*. *Correctional facilities* operate schools that are approved under 92 NAC 18. It is suspected that students attending programs operated by *correctional facilities* were reported by their resident school district in other categories. The Nebraska Department of Education will continue efforts to clarify accurate reporting requirements for this category.

The Nebraska Department of Education has conducted training on students in *private schools, not placed by public agency*. It is suspected that the increase in this category is due to more accurate reporting because of improved understanding.

Nevada—The state attributed a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *early childhood* settings and the increase in the number of children in *early childhood special education* settings and *receiving itinerant services outside home* to difficulties associated with establishing and maintaining placements in regular community-based preschools. Placements in regular community-based preschools have been declining while *itinerant service* placements have been increasing. *Early childhood special education* placements have been increasing in response to the nature and severity of students' needs.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 educated *outside regular class more than 60 percent of the school day* to training and results that show access to the regular curriculum improves academic performance for students with disabilities.

The state attributed the increase in the number of children and students in *parentally placed private schools* to increased options and interest in private school education as public education comes under increased accountability.

New Hampshire—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

New Jersey—The state noted there was an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *part-time early childhood/part-time special education* settings and *receiving itinerant services outside the home*. These two categories also showed increases in the 2003 and 2004 school years. Clearly, increasing numbers of students are being placed in these categories. The state is unclear whether this reflects true placement trends or perceived placement trends (given the difficulty districts have had over the years with the definitions of the 3 through 5 placement categories). It will be interesting and useful to observe if these same trends exist with the newly proposed placement categories.

There has been a noticeable decrease in all *public* and *private residential facilities* placements. Efforts throughout the year, including correspondence with districts, communication and visits from monitors and ongoing trainings with districts to clarify the placement categories and improve the relatively high numbers of children placed in these setting may be contributing to these trends. The fact that the numbers for students in *private residential facilities* decreased more so than the others is not alarming given the overall trends.

Since 2002, the number of students in *homebound/hospital* settings has been about 1,100. There has been some variation from this but not a great deal. The increase this year cannot be clearly explained. In 2002 and 2003, the numbers of students receiving services in these environments were 1,162 and 1,173, respectively. There was a substantial drop during the 2004 school year, which appears to be a natural variation in numbers. This may be due, in part, to the tenuous nature of *homebound/hospital* care.

New Mexico—The state had a decrease in the number of students served *outside the regular class more than 60 percent of the school day*. Districts demonstrating decreases in the number of students with disabilities served *outside the regular class more than 60 percent of the school day* were contacted. They reported the following:

- Statewide least restrictive environment initiatives affecting how IEP teams determine where students with IEPs will receive services;
- Increase in team teaching and inclusion programs in districts;
- Heightened awareness of regular education as the first option for students with disabilities when making service and setting decisions by IEP teams;
- Adequate yearly progress (AYP) status of districts; providing students with IEPs access to the regular curriculum in order to meet AYP goals; and
- Overall statewide decrease in the total number of students with disabilities (with IEPs).

The state had an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in the *home* setting. OSEP defines the *home* setting as, “total of preschoolers who receive all of their special education services and related services in the principal residence of the child’s family or caregivers.”

The state determined through the analysis of district data that one district was notably discrepant in the number of children reported in the *home* setting between 2004 and 2005. The district was contacted and provided the following explanation:

- Some preschoolers who were not involved in center-based programs, but were receiving therapy-only services at schools were being reported in a segregated setting. In order to more accurately reflect the fact that these therapy-only students were not involved in a center-based program, the district began reporting the students in the *home* setting.
- Additionally, between 2004 and 2005 the largest increase in the number of children receiving services in the *home* setting was for students receiving speech-language therapy.

New York—The state noted that a few individual districts counted for the majority of the change in the educational environment categories. The state will monitor the data to look for further trends and patterns that may emerge.

North Carolina—The state attributed the increase in children ages 3 through 5 being served in the *early childhood* setting, *early childhood special education* setting, and in *home* settings to more children receiving services in the least restrictive environment. Due to Medicaid funding cutbacks, there has been a decrease in the number of children receiving services in *separate schools*, receiving *itinerant services outside the home*, and in *reverse mainstream* settings.

There has been a decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 attending *private separate schools* and *public residential facilities* due to Medicaid funding cutbacks. Students in these facilities have returned to their local school system. This may contribute to the increase in the number of students placed in *private residential facilities*.

North Dakota—The state attributed an increase in the number of American Indian or Alaska Native children ages 3 through 5 to an effort to better report this category electronically during the 2005-06 school year. Often, these students receive minimal supports in their *home* environment, and schools found little financial benefit in reporting this category. In 2005, the state worked with each of the state's 31 special education units to improve the reporting of this population.

The state attributed an increase in the number of black (not Hispanic) students ages 6 through 21 to three special education units in North Dakota. The Fargo Special Education Unit is the state's largest and most urban growth center. Fargo had an increase of 14 black (not Hispanic) students identified. The state attributes the increase at two other units to United States Air Force Bases, one in Grand Forks and the other in Minot. In the first instance, the state has a growing population, and in the second, the state has transient populations. Both conditions may account for the increased numbers of black students identified.

Northern Marianas—Northern Marianas reported that with the creation of two centers for children with autism and for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and staff getting intense specialized training, combined with an increase of child care facilities, there has been an environmental placement shift from *early childhood* settings to *part-time early childhood/part-time special education* settings.

Northern Marianas attributed the decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *private separate schools* to an error in reporting in 2004. In the 2004 report, the number reported in *private separate schools* was the number of children *placed in private schools by their parents* (Federal Statute Section 612(a)(10)(A)).

Northern Marianas attributed the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported in the *outside the regular classroom more than 60 percent of the day* category to better identification of students with *autism* and an increase in discipline and emotional problems that necessitate one-to-one assistance.

Ohio—The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *early childhood* settings and *early childhood special education* settings to additional clarification of data definitions and technical assistance from the Ohio Department of Education on reporting data.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education* settings and *separate schools* to additional clarification of data definitions and technical assistance from the Ohio Department of Education on reporting data.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *public separate schools* and *private separate schools* to a decrease in non-public school enrollment within the state for the last 3 years. A decrease in the number of students in *public* and *private separate schools* is a reflection of statewide trend.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of students in *correctional facilities* to data reporting/timing issues. Since the child count is taken on December 1, it is a snapshot of the number of children in *correctional facilities* at one point in time and may not represent what is happening within the state.

Oklahoma—The observed changes from 2004 to 2005 were likely the result of several edit checks that were added to the online reporting system. Therefore, the Oklahoma State Department of Education is confident that the data submitted to the U.S. Department of Education are an accurate portrayal of the educational environment data for special education students as of December 1, 2005.

Oregon—The state attributed an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *early childhood special education* settings to a total increase in the number of children in the 619 program and to changes in service delivery models or errors in coding in previous years. Two large programs reported high numbers of children in *reverse mainstream* settings in 2004 and none in 2005.

The state noted that an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *home* settings was scattered across programs. The highest increase, 12 children, occurred in one large urban program.

The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *part-time early childhood/part-time special education* settings to one program. This program increased from 23 children to 77 children receiving services in this type of setting.

The state noted that two large programs that reported high numbers of children ages 3 through 5 in *reverse mainstream* settings in 2004 reported none in 2005. This is due to a change in the service delivery model and errors in coding in previous years. The new coding system should help reduce errors in coding in the future.

Oregon noted the Children's Mental Health Systems Change Initiative (sponsored by another agency) led to a change in the way that students are placed in *separate schools* and *residential facilities*. This change led to an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 served *outside of the regular class for more than 60 percent of the school day* and in *private residential facilities* and a decrease in the number of students being served in *private separate schools* and *public residential facilities*.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *homebound/hospital* settings to a hospital program serving 17 students that was shut-down. The students were placed into other environments.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students in *correctional facilities* to a decline in the count reported from three youth *correctional* facilities, which together accounted for 85 percent of the decline.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students in *private schools, not placed by public agencies* to one large district that incorrectly reported far fewer parentally placed students in 2004. This district accounted for much of the reported increase.

Oregon does not collect data on multiple disabilities. Students and children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability.

For students ages 3 through 5, the state's data contain information on 3-year-old, 4-year-old and 5-year-old children whose fifth birthday fell on or after September 2, 2005. These children were not yet eligible for school-age services and continued to be served and were reported by the 619 program. All 5-year-olds who were age 5 by September 1, 2005, are school age and are reported by the school system as being in one of the school-age education environment categories with students ages 6-11. Therefore, the number of children shown in the educational environments table will not match the number of children on the child count table.

Palau—The territory has seen a decrease in the number of 6- through 21-year-old students receiving special education services *outside regular class less than 21 percent of the school day* and an increase in the number of students receiving special education services *outside the regular class 21 percent to 60 percent of the school day*. The territory indicates that the shift in categories reflects its policy that teachers have to strengthen the student's specific needs before the students are mainstreamed into a regular classroom.

Pennsylvania—The Bureau of Special Education determined that inconsistencies and incorrect use of the federal definitions of the education environments were occurring among preschool agencies. The state developed a stakeholder group to analyze the data and clarify the PennData Resource Guide to align it with the federal education environment definitions. Changes in categories reflect this effort.

Puerto Rico—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Rhode Island—The number of children ages 3 through 5 decreased in the *early childhood special education setting* as school districts focused on a more inclusive setting for students with disabilities and started to report them in the *early childhood setting*.

The state had a decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported in *homebound/hospital* settings. In 2004, the local school districts were still reporting students who had previously not had an IEP, but who had incurred an accident or illness. These students were given a temporary IEP. Starting in 2005, the new regulations had taken effect, and local school districts could no longer continue this practice. They had to change their policy on these students. They still had to provide services, but these students were no longer provided an IEP, and they were no longer reported on the census. This caused the numbers to decrease.

South Carolina—For children ages 3 through 5, the *early childhood* and *home* settings have increased due to an increased emphasis on improving the child find process. The state also has emphasized serving children in least restrictive environments and thus has had a significant decrease in the number of students ages 3 through 5 being served in *separate schools* and receiving *itinerant services outside the home*.

South Carolina counts students who are receiving services at *home* due to medical reasons and due to discipline issues. The state has begun the implementation of positive behavioral supports in the school-wide model. The state anticipates an increase in this area until the state has the new system completely implemented.

South Dakota—The state has reviewed the educational environment data and verified they are accurate. The state preschool educational environment categories do not clearly align with OSEP's current data collection preschool environment categories, which may account for the new data manager's interpreting the definitions differently from the previous data manager. In order to make things more accurate in the coming year, South Dakota is adopting the new preschool educational environment categories into the state data system.

The state is unable to determine an exact cause for the changes in the data. The state is not aware of any policies or procedural changes that would cause a change in the coding of the disabilities. State special education staff have provided clear direction and training to school districts and in recent years have done a post-audit of the child count data, which may have resulted in a more thorough review of reported data. All districts have been provided a detailed 2005 child count that includes the primary disability, age levels, placement category and services provided. All districts have verified these counts. The South Dakota School for the Deaf closed its *residential facilities*. This is the only residential program closure that South Dakota had. There has not been a decrease in funding.

Tennessee—The decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *early childhood* settings and *receiving itinerant services outside the home* and increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *early childhood special education* settings, in *separate schools* and in *reverse mainstream* settings are attributed to the technical assistance provided by preschool consultants to LEAs regarding the appropriate categorization of service types and locations.

The increase in the number of students *outside the regular class less than 21 percent of the school day* and decrease in the number of students in the categories *outside the regular class between 21 and 60 percent of the school day* and *greater than 60 percent of the school day* along with the significant decreases in students receiving services in *public* and *private separate schools* are primarily attributed to LEA efforts to provide students with disabilities greater access to the general curriculum. The implementation of the new statewide special education student data system by 135 of the 143 reporting LEAs also allowed the districts greater capacity to clearly report the provision of special services in regular education settings.

Texas—The state did not report race/ethnicity data for students in *private schools, not placed or referred by a public agency* because it does not collect these data.

The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Utah—The state launched a new data collection system to collect the educational environments data by the federal percentages. This is the sole reason for the changes in the state report. The state now collects the data as required and can report them more accurately.

Vermont—The number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in *separate schools* decreased 51.72 percent, from 29 to 14. This was the result of an additional data cleaning check that was implemented to ensure that this category is properly reported. As a result of this edit check, it was discovered that some students reported in *separate school* placements should have been reported in *early education* settings, *early childhood special education* settings or *part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education* settings.

The number of students ages 6 through 21 reported in *public separate schools* decreased 71.37 percent from 241 to 69. This was the result of an additional data cleaning check that was implemented to ensure that this category was properly reported. As a result of this edit check, it was discovered that some students reported in *public separate schools* often should have been reported as being in *private separate school* placements or other environments.

The number of students ages 6 through 21 in *private separate schools* increased 24.51 percent from 408 to 508. This is the result of an additional data edit check that was implemented to ensure that this category was properly reported. As a result of this edit check, it was discovered that some students reported in *public separate schools* often should have been reported as being in *private separate school* placements or other environments.

The number of students ages 6 through 21 in *public residential facilities* decreased 100 percent from 11 to 0. This is the result of an additional data edit check that was implemented to ensure that this category was properly reported. As a result of this edit check, it was discovered that some students reported in *public residential facilities* often should have been reported as being in *private residential facilities* placements or other environments.

The number of students ages 6 through 21 reported in *private residential facilities* decreased 10.74 percent from 149 to 133. This may have been the result of an additional data edit check that was implemented to ensure that this category was properly reported. As a result of this edit check, it was discovered that some students reported in *private residential facilities* often should have been reported as being in *private separate school* placements or other environments.

The number of students ages 6 through 21 in *homebound/hospital placements* decreased 34.21 percent from 38 to 25. This may have been the result of an additional data edit check that was implemented to ensure that this category was properly reported. As a result of this edit check, it was discovered that some students reported in *homebound/hospital placement* often should have been reported in other environments.

The number of special education students reported in *correctional facilities* increased from 46 to 60, a 30.43 percent increase. These data have been verified, and no changes in state policy or data collection methodologies are thought to be attributable to this change. Future changes in this placement category will be analyzed to understand if this is a trend.

The number of special education students receiving services in *private schools, not placed by public agency* decreased from 67 to 46, a 31.34 percent decrease. These data have been verified, and no changes in state policy or data collection methodologies are thought to be attributable to this change. Future changes in this placement category will be analyzed to understand if this is a trend.

Virgin Islands—Virgin Islands attributed the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported *outside the regular class less than 20 percent of the school day* and concomitant decreases in the number of students *outside the regular class 21-60 percent of school day* and *more than 60 percent of the school day* to district efforts to increase the total hours of education in the general education environment.

Virginia—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Washington—The state attributed an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *early childhood* settings and *reverse mainstream* settings as a result of a target of the state’s Annual Performance Reports and State Performance Plan. The state is seeing movement to more inclusive settings as a result of state activities, including developing a rating scale to assist districts in analyzing their performance data and identifying districts in need of technical assistance, training and targeted review and/or assistance in the revision of district policies/procedures for determining appropriate placements for special education students.

The state attributed an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *public separate schools* and a decrease in the number of students in *residential facilities* to the fact that more students are able to be served in the regular classroom in their resident districts or in day schools than are being placed in *residential facilities*.

West Virginia—In 2005, West Virginia discontinued the *reverse mainstream* optional category for children ages 3 through 5. The change was a result of changes in service delivery, including the requirement for collaborative community general education/special education programs under Policy 2525: *Universal Pre-K. Reverse mainstream* is no longer an accurate description of recommended service delivery. Students reported in this category prior to 2005 are now reported in other categories.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported *outside the regular class 21 to 60 percent of the day* and *outside the regular class more than 60 percent of the day* to West Virginia’s focused monitoring and district self-assessment targets for increasing placement in *outside the regular class less than 21 percent of the day*.

Wisconsin—The state attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in the *home* category to one of the largest districts in the state. In comparing the preschoolers who had been reported in this district in 2004 in the educational environment category of *home*, it was noted that only 10 children continued to be reported in that educational environment category for the 2005 school year. The majority of the children had been moved to the educational environment category of *early childhood* setting.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in *separate schools* to one district that closed its *separate school* for preschoolers beginning with the 2005-06 school year. There were also several districts in the state that were placing preschoolers in a separate county-run school. A discretionary grant has been awarded to these districts to look at alternative placements for their preschoolers. It was noted that several of these districts are now placing more of their preschoolers in district-run programs.

The state attributed an increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 in *private separate schools* to districts that may have reported students incorrectly in that environment category. The state will continue to monitor these data and will continue to provide training emphasizing that students should be reported in the *private separate school* educational environment category only when the school is for students with disabilities and only when the placement is for educational purposes.

The state hypothesizes the increase in the number of students *parentally placed in a private school* who are receiving special education services is due to the increased consultation between the LEA and the private school representatives as required by *IDEA 2004*. The state will continue to monitor these data in the future. The biggest increase is in the number of students receiving speech and language services.

Wyoming—The state has been looking critically at the accuracy of state data submitted over the last two years and has discovered some mapping and definition errors in the state’s internal databases. The state is currently continuing work to resubmit corrected data, but because this is complicated and the state has had a turnover in staff, this process has been difficult to complete. The state was unable to submit corrected data prior to the snapshot deadline for the *29th Annual Report to Congress*. The state believes that the changes in educational environment data have a great deal to do with more accurate data definitions and better followup between the SEA and LEA. The state plans to continue to resubmit data to get better historical data recorded.

Tables 3-1 Through 3-3: IDEA Part B Personnel, 2004

Alabama—Alabama attributes the increases in personnel to efforts to hire additional personnel to provide special education and related services for students with disabilities in response to federal mandates. The state has an increase in the following categories of personnel employed by the state:

- Vocational education teachers,
- Physical education teachers,
- Psychologists,
- School social workers,
- Occupational workers,
- Counselors,
- Supervisors/administrators,
- *Other professional staff*, and
- Nonprofessional staff.

Alaska—The increase in the number of fully certified special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5 is attributed to specific statewide activities designed to increase the number of early childhood professionals. In the past two years, the state Department of Education and Early Development worked with the University of Alaska to create and promote the university’s master’s in *early childhood special education* program. It also helps to fund this education program. Recently, the first cohort of students completed their degrees. As more of these graduates are placed in Alaska’s schools, the state expects to report more fully certified special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5. In addition, the teacher certification unit within the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development instituted the special education teacher waiver program to encourage more teachers to complete special education training necessary to achieve full certification. These waivers give regular education teachers temporary waivers to teach special education while they complete the special education certification requirements. The waivers were instituted in the 2003-04 school year. Many of the teachers who were on a waiver for 2003-04 completed their special education training in 2004 and added the endorsement to their regular certificate. For the 2005-06 school year, those teachers would have been fully certified for teaching special education.

Due to changes in Alaska’s data collection system in 2004, Alaska is now able to report the number of FTE vocational education teachers, work-study coordinators, teacher aides and counselors. In 2002 and 2003, this information was not reported because it was not included in the state’s data collection system. Prior to 2002, this information was reported by Alaska Teacher Placement (ATP) at the University of Alaska - Fairbanks. However, the contract with ATP was not renewed for the 2002-

03 school year. At that time, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development began modifying its staffing data collection system to include these personnel categories. Alaska does not certify teacher aides; therefore teacher aides are all reported as fully certified.

Alaska explained specific changes in its data as follows:

- The overall increase in the number of special education teachers for students ages 3 through 5 is attributed to the nearly 30 percent increase in the number of preschool students enrolled in special education. As a result of this increased enrollment, more special education teachers are required.
- The decrease in the number of noncertified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 is also attributed to the University of Alaska graduating an increased number of students with a master's in *early childhood special education*. As these graduates are placed in Alaska schools, fewer emergency waivers are required to meet the special education teacher needs in the state. To receive a waiver the teachers must:
 - Hold full certification for teaching;
 - Have completed nine semester hours of special education coursework;
 - Be enrolled in a special education program that they can complete within three years; and
 - Submit a letter from the district indicating that the district has advertised for a certified special education teacher to fill a vacancy and was unable to find a candidate and therefore will hire this regular education teacher to fill the special education position if a waiver is granted.
- An overall increase in the number of special education related services staff, and the number of fully certified staff, is attributed to the modifications to the data collection, mentioned above, that allow Alaska to report teacher aides. Teacher aides add a significant number of FTEs that were not included in Alaska's personnel data for the past three years.
- An overall increase in teacher aides, and the increase in the number of fully certified teacher aides is also the result of the modifications to the data collection system. This is the first year Alaska has been able to report special education teacher aide FTEs.

American Samoa—American Samoa hires and recruits teachers who graduated from its local community college with an associate of arts or associate of science degree. American Samoa was also able to hire some personnel as teacher aides with a minimum of a high school diploma or some kind of teaching certificate. Therefore, the number of not fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 has increased.

The decrease in the total number of not fully certified staff is a reflection of personnel upgrades in qualifications. Six of the eight diagnostic and evaluation staff who were not fully certified in 2003 are now certified. Additional *other professional staff* have accomplished certifications based on their role and are considered fully certified in their field.

Arizona—The state student population increased as did the number of LEAs. This overall increase resulted in an increased need for and subsequent number of special education teachers.

Teacher aides, physical therapists and occupational therapists currently do not have state certification requirements, thus they were all reported as fully certified.

Because LEA training efforts continue, the state believes its data continue to improve in accuracy. Every year, the state offers workshops on the web-based application that is used to collect much of the data required by OSEP under *IDEA*. This workshop covers the federal definitions from the data dictionary used in the various data collections, all of the instructions/business rules associated with the various data collections and a complete walkthrough of the online web-based application used to collect the required data.

Workshop participants include LEA staff—special education secretaries and/or administrative assistants, special education directors, Student Accountability Information System (SAIS) coordinators, special education teachers, psychologists, etc.

Arkansas—Arkansas has seen an increase in the number of school social workers, counselors, *other professional staff* and nonprofessional staff in the 2004-05 school year. The growth in social workers, counselors and *other professional staff* is due in part to the growing school-based mental health initiative across the state. In addition, nonprofessional staff has increased due to the growing need for support staff in special education at the school district and educational cooperatives.

Arkansas has a shortage of special education teachers. The increase in the number of teachers not fully licensed in special education reflects the number of regular education teachers who are pursuing an additional licensure endorsement in special education. The increase in not fully licensed supervisors/administrators appears to be largely due to increased retirements of such professionals, which is anticipated to continue over the next several years, and more individuals being on additional licensure plans to get these administrative credentials added to existing teacher licenses. The increase in *other professional staff* may be linked in part to the growing school-based mental health initiative, as well as other district-level programs designed to increase student learning.

The overall growth of special education personnel reflects the growing changes within the state. With mental health services becoming more important, the need for social workers, counselors and *other professional staff* has increased. The shortage of fully licensed special education teachers has left many districts and programs relying on teachers who are on additional licensure plans pursuing their special education credentials to fill the gaps. In addition, schools are providing more support services that use additional support staff.

Because speech is not considered a related service in Arkansas, the state reported all personnel providing speech services as special education teachers for students ages 3- to 5-years-old. It did not report these personnel as related services personnel.

To be considered a certified teacher aide for special education, teacher aides must complete the special education three-module core training. Most of the noncertified teacher aides are in the Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Developmental Disability program centers. Recently, the Arkansas Department of Education began working with DHS to provide the three-module core training to all special education teacher aides. As a result of these training sessions, the state reported an increase in the number of fully certified teacher aides.

Bureau of Indian Affairs—The BIA had a significant increase in the number of fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 and teacher aides coupled with a decrease in not fully certified *other professional staff*.

The BIA also had an increase in the total number of employed special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21. This is a change BIA schools have been trying to make so as to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The BIA has contracted with institutions of higher education across the country

to help with professional development to address needs in the area of special education. Some universities have focused on paraprofessional training or providing supplemental training for teachers; others have focused on degree-related programs. School personnel have also been able to apply for financial support to achieve appropriate degrees in special education.

The BIA has had difficulty with sufficient certified staff for special education for many years. One solution has been to provide paraprofessionals to work under the supervision of certified staff. There has also been a tendency of not clearly understanding when students might need one on one paraprofessional support. There has been a significant recruiting effort to replace paraprofessionals with certified staff. There has also been technical assistance provided to schools to better understand when a student needs one on one assistance and when this is not a real student need.

The BIA also had a decrease in the number of *other professional staff*. In the past years, there has been an effort to better define, across states, each listed professional category. It is believed that more professional positions have been specifically identified rather than being placed in the generic *other* category. This is an ongoing task.

California—California notes a review of local data indicates that the differences are based on accurate reporting, and they are normal data variations. The change in data is due to improvements in the data system of one of the largest school districts in the state.

The state noted the increase in the number of fully certified work-study coordinators, school social workers, interpreters and nonprofessional staff is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the decrease in the number of fully certified diagnostic and evaluation staff is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the decrease in the number of not fully certified nonprofessional staff, *other professional staff*, supervisors/administrators, speech pathologists, teacher aides, psychologists and special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the increase in the number of not fully certified audiologists and interpreters is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

Colorado—Teacher FTE is reported according to caseload.

The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Connecticut—The state reports this is the 13th year that the Connecticut State Department of Education has collected personnel data electronically. The numbers reported are the sum of the FTEs for all special education teaching assignments.

Connecticut's personnel data are collected by grade level rather than by the age of children served. The state's count of special education teachers for ages 3 through 5 includes teachers who work in prekindergarten and kindergarten. Special education teachers for ages 6 through 21 include teachers who work in grades 1 through 12.

In school year 2004-05, Connecticut collapsed several specialization areas into more general groupings: Special Education Pre-Kindergarten, Special Education Kindergarten and Special Education Grades 1-12 classification. The former areas included: Learning Disabilities, Socially and Emotionally Maladjusted, Mentally Intellectually Disabled, Physically and Orthopedically, Other Disabled, Autism and General Education Resource Room.

The state reported that, because it is unable to distinguish physical education and vocational education teachers who serve special education students from those who serve regular education students, the state did not include these staff in its personnel data.

The state-reported data for the psychologists and school social workers categories include staff who serve both regular education and special education students.

Delaware—The state attributed the decrease in the number of special education teachers and the increases in the number of audiologists and speech and language pathologists to the state's decision to change how it reports speech/language staff. Beginning in 2004-05, the state reported speech/language staff according to service provided instead of as special education teachers. Districts began recoding the speech pathologists in 2003-04, but all were not recoded until 2004-2005. At that point, the state began reporting them to OSEP separately from teachers.

The state reported it improved the personnel categories used by the Delaware personnel data system. The revised categories allow more accurate reporting of paraprofessional staff. For example, the state previously could not report audiologists. The state began reporting the new categories in 2004-05.

District of Columbia—The District of Columbia did not include contracted personnel on its 2004 personnel report. No physical therapists are reported because the District did not directly employ any physical therapists; it contracted with personnel to provide these services.

The District of Columbia provides bus transportation to special education students and students receiving services under Section 504. It does not provide bus transportation to other students. Bus drivers and bus attendants are included in the count of nonprofessional staff.

Directors and supervisors in the central office of the District of Columbia public schools were reported as SEA supervisors/administrators. Principals and supervisors at the school level were reported as LEA supervisors/administrators.

Florida—The significant increase in nonprofessional staff and interpreters may result from an increase in the number of students with disabilities being supported in regular education settings.

The decrease in the number of not fully certified special education teachers may be a result of increased efforts in Florida to recruit and retain qualified teachers, including special education teachers. There is a similar increase in the number of fully certified special education teachers.

Georgia—The state attributes an increase in the number of personnel reported to the inclusion of staff from three state schools and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Teachers and related-service providers from the three state schools and the DJJ are not reported as part of Georgia's Comprehensive Personnel Inventory (CPI) and, as a result of this practice, were not previously included in the personnel data. However, students from these entities were reported in the child count. State school and DJJ personnel data were collected and reported for the first time in 2004-05. We believe this more accurately represents the actual number of personnel serving students with disabilities in Georgia.

Hawaii—There may be a different person completing the personnel data every year, and as a result it is difficult to get consistency in reporting. For example, a position title may vary from district to district and may not match the exact position title in the personnel table. So the decision of whether to count a person with a similar title on the personnel table depends on the person completing the report. OSEP Data Training sessions with district personnel have improved data gathering for the personnel data collection. The state had the following changes in the data:

- An increase in the number of psychologists, teacher aides, diagnostic and evaluation staff and *other professional staff*;
- A decrease in the number of school social workers; and
- An increase in the total number of staff employed.

Idaho—The state attributed a decrease in the number of fully certified school social workers to budget constraints in larger school districts. Larger school districts are the most likely to hire social workers in the state.

The state is unable to determine the reason for the increase in the number of not fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 and speech pathologists. The state believes the changes are possibly due to changes in data collection and reporting systems.

The state attributes the increase in the number of special education teachers for students ages 3 through 5 to the move from early childhood certificate to early childhood blended certificate for the developmental age group. There are financial scholarships for early childhood blended certificates for the developmental age group.

Illinois—Illinois does not collect personnel data by ages served. As a result, the state is only able to provide a separate count of teachers serving 3- through 5-year-olds when their services are provided in an early childhood or preschool setting. All other personnel who may be serving students ages 3 through 5 are reported as serving 6- through 21-year-old students. As a result, the number of teachers for children ages 3 through 5 is an undercount, and the number of teachers for students ages 6 through 21 is an overcount.

Illinois's personnel data does not include personnel employed by private agencies or staff serving in nonpublic schools. In addition, Illinois's personnel data do not include the 3,225 personnel providing special education services in a *home* or *hospital* environment. As a result of these omissions, Illinois's related services personnel data are also an undercount.

Indiana—The increase in the number of teacher aides, physical therapists and interpreters is a result of the need for additional personnel providing these services. The decrease in social workers and counselors reflects budget cutbacks at the local school level.

The increases in the number of not fully certified reflects the ongoing difficulty of having a sufficient supply of fully licensed special education teachers. This increase represents personnel working under an "emergency permit."

Iowa—The state attributed an increase in the number of not fully certified staff to a change in the definition of not fully certified. In 2002, Iowa estimated the number of personnel not fully certified based on data about temporary endorsements. In 2003, a decision was made that all personnel were fully certified. The decision was reversed in 2004 because of interpretations in highly qualified teachers. The reversal resulted in the same procedures that were used in 2002 being used in 2004. The change resulted

in an increase in the number of special education teachers for children and students, psychologists and *other professional staff* from 2003 to 2004.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of audiologists and interpreters to a decrease in the number of hearing impaired students ages 3 through 21 from 2003 to 2004. Audiologists decreased by 19 percent, and interpreters decreased by 17 percent. The number of children ages 3 through 5 with hearing impairments decreased by 7 percent, and the number of students ages 6 through 21 with hearing impairments decreased by 5 percent.

The state attributed an increase in the number of special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5 to an increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 with IEPs. Special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5 increased by 16 percent, and the number of children ages 3 through 5 with IEPs increased by 1 percent.

Kentucky—The state noted that it is difficult to explain some of the changes in data as districts change directors, and criteria and reporting of data vary. For instance, the number of fully certified vocational education teachers increased by nearly 15 FTE in 2004, and the number of not fully certified vocational education teachers decreased by just over 12 FTE. However, the overall total of vocational education teachers changed only by 2.23 teachers.

The number of fully certified counselors decreased because of an emphasis placed on reporting only the percentage of counselors' time spent providing special education and related services to students.

The number of special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5 has decreased. The state noted there are problems with this category in determining when to count or not to count a teacher as a preschool special education teacher. The definition or instructions provided in the federal data tables make it hard to determine in many cases whether these teachers get reported, and if they do get reported, what is the appropriate percentage of time to report. The state has a hard time trying to determine if a special education teacher for children ages 3 through 5 was hired specifically for special education because of the blended nature of the preschool programs offered by local districts. One year a teacher may be reported and the next year not, then the following year reported again. Until such time that the definition can be clarified, there is too much potential for varying interpretations to have a consistent standard applied in all districts from year to year. The specific direction that is problematic says not to include regular preschool teachers who work with students with disabilities. Kentucky operates a blended program that often will have at-risk students and special education students. Sometimes the preschool teachers work exclusively with students with disabilities; sometimes they do not. This makes it difficult to get an accurate and consistent feel for these data from one year to the next.

The decrease in special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5 who are not fully certified is a result of initiatives that have been ongoing in Kentucky to increase the number of certified teachers in all areas. For special education, Kentucky funds a traineeship program that offers tuition incentives that allows teachers to become special education certified. Not only did the 2003 to 2004 numbers decrease for the number of not fully certified special education teachers, but there is a similar drop from 2004 to 2005.

There was an increase in the number of fully certified teacher aides in the state. Teacher aides do not require certification, and often a district will report teacher aides as not fully certified. This was not caught in the reporting of these data to OSEP. The state was not able to correct the data for the deadline of the *29th Annual Report to Congress*.

The state noted the number of interpreters employed is more a result of availability and need versus any specific reason for changes in the total from one year to the next. There is a program in Kentucky for certification for interpreters, but it is hard to explain why there is an increase of 10 interpreters across the state. One reason could be that the interpreter licensure law went into effect in 2003. The numbers could easily have jumped around as people became accustomed to the new requirements. Many people have dropped out of the field as a result of increased standards. However, many people have become interpreters to meet the even greater demand in the LEAs. Job descriptions in the LEAs have also changed in response to the law, with a subsequent transfer of personnel from one category to another.

Kentucky attributed the decrease in the number of not fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 to a statewide emphasis on improved teacher performance and highly qualified teachers. Districts are placing more emphasis on employing teachers with appropriate certification.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of counselors reported to the fact that districts use psychologists and other trained evaluators instead of counselors to meet the growing demand for evaluations. This explanation is based on discussions with district personnel, not quantifiable data. However, the increase in the reported number of psychologists and the number of diagnostic and evaluation staff FTEs is similar to the decrease in the number of counselor FTEs reported.

Louisiana—The state attributed a decrease in the reported number of employed, not fully certified, special education teachers for children and students and *other professional staff* to a statewide effort to hire more fully certified personnel. Additionally, the state reported an increase in the number of teacher certification programs available. The certification programs are in conjunction with local universities. Louisiana is attempting to improve the overall education environment. The teachers who work in the state must meet the state certification criteria. Some teachers are meeting the national certification standards as personnel goals, which attributes to the statewide increase.

Maine—Maine attributed changes in personnel to *IDEA 2004* revisions and additional requirements under *NCLB* which have caused LEA changes. The movement to get students with reading only problems out of special education and Response to Intervention (RTI) activities have resulted in the first decline in special education enrollment since 1991. The decline included a decrease of 669 students identified as having specific learning disabilities. Maine also saw declines in other categories of exceptionality: mental retardation, emotional disabled and developmentally delayed students. The decline in special education teachers for students 3 through 5 years old, since most of these students are developmentally delayed, is attributed to the decline in students. The decline in teachers for students 6 to 21 years old is due to a decline in the four categories of disabled students.

The decline in students and teachers has also affected the number of educational technicians, and this number is declining. It has resulted in declines in not fully certified occupational therapists, physical therapists, and diagnostic staff. The real effect has been on teachers and educational technicians. The number of not fully certified teachers and teacher aides will continue as long as Maine issues provisional certificates. The number of occupational therapists, physical therapists and diagnostic and evaluation staff may be due to some confusion of what categories were affected by *NCLB*'s highly qualified staff provision; a number of these personnel are contracted personnel.

Additionally, the Department of Education in Maine has a new funding formula that limits the amount of special education funding to 15 percent of special education students in the student body overall, with reduced levels of funding to those LEAs that exceed the 15 percent. The funding formula may be forcing units to re-examine the special education populations and its delivery system. It is too early to determine what impact this formula may be having on special education enrollment and special education staff.

Maine will continue to monitor special education. The funding formula was established in 2005 so its impact, if any, on enrollment is minimal.

The state reported speech pathologists and other personnel who provide services to students ages 5 through 20 with speech-language impairments as special education teachers for ages 6 through 21. Speech pathologists who serve children ages 3 and 4 were reported as speech pathologists in the related services personnel count.

Maryland—Maryland attributes changes in personnel data to several factors:

- Maryland attributes changes from year to year in personnel data to fluctuations in student enrollment that impact the personnel required to provide services.
- All LEAs submitted personnel data in 2003; however one large LEA did not submit complete personnel data in 2004. The omission caused several personnel categories to appear significantly lower and is not a comprehensive representation of the state. Maryland continues to work with the LEA to obtain accurate 2004 personnel data and will revise the 2004 personnel submission to OSEP to reflect the additional data after the snapshot deadline for the *29th Annual Report to Congress*.
- To further facilitate consistency in reporting, in the future Maryland will provide LEAs with the OSEP Data Dictionary and the OSEP General Instructions for completing personnel data.

Massachusetts—In 2004, the staff/personnel data collection was modified. Mild and moderate categories were combined into one moderate category. The exclusionary categories for each were re-named to refer to special education teachers who are the sole content instructors in the core academic areas. This instruction may be provided in a variety of settings but will likely be in resource rooms or self-contained classrooms. These educators should meet the highly qualified standard in the core academic area in which they are the sole instructor and must be fully licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Education. The inclusionary categories were re-named as Supportive Content Instructors. These teachers provide supportive content instruction to students in various settings. These services may be provided in a regular education classroom, resource room or self-contained setting. The students receiving services from these educators also receive direct content instruction in core academic areas from a teacher who meets the highly qualified teacher requirements; therefore, these educators are not required to meet the highly qualified standard. However, they must be fully licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Education.

As a result of the change to the data categories, there were some adjustments to the data. Although there were clear instructions on how to cross-walk the 2003 data into the 2004 categories, the state believes some of the moderate data were misreported. The increase from 2003 to 2004 in the Moderate Disabilities Supportive Content Instructors data are similar to the decrease from 2003 to 2004 in the Moderate Disabilities Sole Content Instructor in Core Academic Areas category. For this reason, the state believes it is possible that districts used the opposite moderate category for approximately 3,500 teachers. The state does not plan to resubmit the data. The Severe Disabilities Supportive Content Instructors category increased by 369 teachers from 2003 to 2004.

The state attributes the increase in the vision category to an additional vision category on the data collection tool in 2004. The increase in data for this category may be a result of double counting by districts, although they were instructed to count teachers only once.

Explanations of year-to-year changes in the data are found below. The majority of the changes in the data are most likely corrections by districts from one year to the next. In some categories, districts either reported staff in categories for 2005 they did not report in 2004 or corrected overreporting of staff from 2004.

- The state attributed the increase in fully certified vocational education teachers to one district within the state that did not report any educators in this category in 2004 and had a significant increase in 2005. The state attributed the increase in fully certified physical education teachers, psychologists, school social workers and counselors to select districts either increasing their numbers between 2004 and 2005 or reporting educators in these categories in 2005 when they did not report any in 2004. The state does not plan to resubmit the data.
- The state attributed a decrease in the number of fully certified *other professional staff* to districts reporting far fewer staff in this overall category and the other related special education staff category, from 2004 to 2005. The state does not plan to resubmit the data.
- The state attributed an increase in the number of not fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 and speech pathologists to an overall trend in the categories.
- The state attributed the increase in the number of not fully certified nonprofessional staff to an increase in one large district within the state and increases in special education administrative aides and administrative clerks/secretaries.
- The state attributed the decrease in the number of not fully certified supervisors/administrators and *other professional staff* to a significant drop in staff in one of the state's largest districts from 2004 to 2005. The current year seems to be more accurate and reliable given what was reported in previous years. The state does not plan to resubmit the data.

Michigan—The state had a decrease in the number of fully certified special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5, work-study coordinators, interpreters and *other professional staff*. Requiring public reporting of data pertaining to special education has resulted in improved data quality. In addition, improvements in the definitions of special education personnel have produced more valid data. The state notes that, beginning in 2006, Michigan will be capturing these data in the Registry of Educational Personnel (REP), maintained by the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). The REP not only has improved definitions of special education teachers, coordinators, etc., but also includes data on the primary age group served by special education personnel, thus further improving the quality of the data being gathered and reported. Therefore, the state anticipates more significant changes with respect to data quality in the upcoming years.

The state attributes an increase in the number of fully certified supervisors/administrators to more accurate data recording and reporting practices used by schools throughout Michigan.

An increase in not fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21, psychologists, school social workers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech pathologists, interpreters and total not fully certified staff can be attributed to job turnover of these professionals. Over the last several years, Michigan has experienced a significant decline in the number of fully certified supervisors and administrators, necessitating the hiring of professionals without full certification. Supervisors and administrators with only partial certification are filling this void, while at the same time working toward full certification through a department approval process.

The state noted there was an overall decrease in special education teachers for students ages 3 through 5, work-study coordinators and *other professional staff* and an overall increase in the number of physical therapists, supervisors/administrators and nonprofessional staff. Improvements in the definitions of

special education personnel have enabled the state to improve the quality of data on special education staff, thus improving the validity of the data.

Minnesota—Minnesota attributed the increase in the number of work-study coordinators and the decrease in the number of vocational education teachers between 2003 and 2004 to confusion by the state about which staff meet the definition of work study teacher and which staff are career and technical education teachers. As the state has made concerted efforts to clarify the issue with special education, career and technical education and licensure staff in the Minnesota Department of Education, it is expected that the problem is now corrected, and the data will be correctly reported in the 2005 data collection.

Minnesota does not collect data for recreation and therapeutic recreation specialists or rehabilitation counselors.

Mississippi—In 2004-05, Mississippi state legislators did not fund the state add-on programs (special education programs, vocational programs, gifted programs, transportation and alternative education programs) as part of the state's previous funding practices. As a result, the districts were not required to submit personnel data for funding. The state believes the personnel data were underreported. The state reported that when districts do not receive any funding for the add-on programs, they tend to not review their data. The districts will enter the data but they generally will not update as well as they do in a funding year. In 2005-06, legislators did fund teacher units so districts paid more attention to their personnel data entries. However, in 2005-06 many of the districts in the southern part of the state and on the coast lost teachers after Hurricane Katrina; as a result, the state expects the numbers to be down.

The state's Office of Special Education will continue to work with districts to try to ensure that they do enter their data, but it has no control over the legislators or state law. The state Office of Special Education has plans over the summer to do some intensive regional training concerning personnel and teacher units.

Missouri—The increase in the number of FTE work study coordinators is the result of a change in reporting practices. The increase is due to the fact that the data are now reported according to the time teachers spend coordinating work study programs, rather than the case management time of the coordinators.

The state attributed the increase in psychologists and decrease in diagnostic and evaluation staff to a change in reporting by one very large school district. Staff prior to 2004-05 reported by that district as school psychological examiners were reported as psychologists in 2004-05.

Montana—Montana reported that special education teachers frequently teach across all age levels. The state reported the breakout by age group for 3- through 5-year-olds and 6- through 21-year-olds is a proportionate breakout based on the number of special education students from the child count in each age group.

Nebraska—Historical data show that the number of fully certified and total special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5 has consistently been between 250 to 280 each year. In 2003, there was an aberrant decrease. The 2004 data are consistent with Nebraska's historical data.

In 2003, the number of fully certified occupational therapists and physical therapists holding a license from Health and Human Services was previously erroneously omitted from the count of fully certified personnel. As a result, the number reported in 2004 showed a substantial increase. The state was unable to correct the error before the *Annual Report to Congress* data submission deadline.

The decrease in fully certified and total teacher aides is unexpected, and Nebraska is reviewing the data to determine the relevant factors causing the decrease.

There was a decrease in the number of not fully certified occupational therapists, physical therapists and speech-language pathologists who are licensed by the Health and Human Services System. In 2003, these staff positions were erroneously counted as not fully certified. However, they do meet full state licensure.

New Hampshire—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

New Jersey—The state attributed the increase in the number of fully certified vocational education teachers, work-study coordinators and nonprofessional staff to *NCLB* and statewide policy changes. Current teachers are becoming certified across an array of fields and areas. This increase in these areas may demonstrate this trend.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of recreation specialists to an increased district reliance on subcontractors.

The state attributed an increase in the percentage of not fully certified *other professional staff* to using the category as a catch-all area. The category fluctuates considerably from year to year.

New Mexico—The state attributed the increase in the number of fully certified social workers to:

- Increased need for social work services being determined at the IEP level; and
- The use of social work services rather than more expensive psychological services.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of fully certified physical therapists to a district salary structure that is not able to compete with private sector salaries.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of fully certified *other professional staff* (defined as a staff member who performs assignments requiring a high degree of knowledge and skills usually acquired through at least a baccalaureate degree, but not necessarily requiring skills in the field of education) to decreased funding due to declining student enrollment, resulting in elimination of positions.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of not fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 to:

- Teachers not meeting state certification or licensure requirements, such as highly qualified at the secondary level;
- Teachers opting to retire earlier than anticipated rather than meet highly qualified requirements;
- Paperwork load required of special education teachers;
- Stress related to the occupation; and
- Transfer to regular education.

The state had an increase in the number of not fully certified speech pathologists. Speech therapists with a master's degree participating in their Clinical Fellowship Year (CFY) under the supervision of a master's degree speech pathologist with their Certificate of Clinical Competence are provisionally licensed by the American Speech-Hearing Association. These therapists are funded by a caseload of students at the district level. However, the New Mexico Public Education Department Licensure Bureau does not recognize these individuals as fully certified, and therefore they are reported as not fully certified.

New York—The increase in the number of fully certified special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5 is because the state's certification structure was revised effective February 2004. There were significant changes in reporting categories.

The increase in the number of fully certified vocational education teachers is due to one district that reported inaccurate data. Its data have subsequently been revised; however, the data were not submitted in time for the *29th Annual Report to Congress*.

The decrease in the number of fully certified recreation specialists and diagnostic and evaluation staff is because the state stopped collecting data for these titles and instructed all programs to report such staff under *other professional staff*. The change also caused an increase in the number of fully certified *other professional staff* reported.

The increase in the number of fully certified counselors is attributed to state instructions that changed regarding how to count guidance counselors. Fifty-one districts accounted for most of the difference.

The increase in the number of fully certified speech pathologists is due to one district that underreported in 2003. It has subsequently revised its data; however, the data were not submitted in time for the *29th Annual Report to Congress*.

The state revised its form and directions for collecting not fully certified staff. This led to the significant decrease in the number of not fully certified *other professional staff* and all staff. The forms and directions were revised again for 2005, which may result in an increase in staff reported in this category.

The increase in the total number of vocational education teachers is due to one district that reported inaccurate data. Its data have subsequently been revised; however, the data were not submitted in time for the *29th Annual Report to Congress*.

The decrease in the total number of recreation specialists and diagnostic and evaluation staff is because to the state stopped collecting data for these titles and instructed all programs to report such staff under *other professional staff*. The change also caused an increase in the total number of *other professional staff* reported.

The increase in the total number of counselors is attributed to state instructions that changed regarding how to count guidance counselors. Fifty-one districts accounted for most of the difference.

The increase in the total number of speech pathologists is due to one district that underreported in 2003. It has subsequently revised its data; however, the data were not submitted in time for the *29th Annual Report to Congress*.

The state explained that it reports the following state teacher categories as special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5:

- Preschool teacher of special education;

- Teacher of students with disabilities (birth-grade 2);
- Preschool teacher of special education-bilingual;
- Teacher of students with disabilities (birth-grade 2)-bilingual;
- Teacher of English as a second language;
- Teacher of English to speakers of other languages (all grades);
- Teacher of the speech and hearing handicapped-certified only;
- Teacher of speech and language disabilities (all grades)-certified only;
- Teacher of the speech and hearing handicapped-bilingual-certified only;
- Teacher of speech and language disabilities (all grades)-bilingual-certified only;
- Teacher of the deaf and hearing impaired;
- Teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing (all grades);
- Teacher of the deaf and hearing impaired-bilingual;
- Teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing (all grades)-bilingual;
- Teacher of the blind and partially sighted;
- Teacher of the blind and visually impaired (all grades);
- Teacher of the blind and partially sighted-bilingual;
- Teacher of the blind and visually impaired (all grades)-bilingual.

The state also explained that it reports the following state teacher categories as special education teachers for children ages 6 through 21:

- Teacher of students with disabilities (birth-grade 2);
- Teacher of students with disabilities (birth-grade 2)-bilingual;
- Teacher of special education;
- Teacher of special education-bilingual;
- Teacher of students with disabilities (grades 1-6);
- Teacher of students with disabilities (grades 1-6)-bilingual;
- Teacher of students with disabilities (grades 5-9);
- Teacher of students with disabilities (grades 5-9)-bilingual;
- Teacher of students with disabilities (grades 7-12);
- Teacher of students with disabilities (grades 1-6)-bilingual;
- Teacher of English as a second language;
- Teacher of English to speakers of other languages (all grades);
- Teacher of the speech and hearing handicapped-certified only;
- Teacher of the speech and language disabilities (all grades)-certified only;

- Teacher of the speech and hearing handicapped-bilingual-certified only;
- Teacher of speech and language disabilities (all grades)-bilingual-certified only;
- Teacher of the deaf and hearing impaired;
- Teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing (all grades);
- Teacher of the deaf and hearing impaired-bilingual;
- Teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing(all grades)-bilingual;
- Teacher of the blind and partially sighted;
- Teacher of the blind and visually impaired (all grades);
- Teacher of the blind and partially sighted-bilingual;
- Teacher of the blind and visually impaired (all grades)-bilingual.

When reporting special education teachers by staff classification, the state combined the following titles and reported them to OSEP as personnel for 6- through 21-year-olds:

- Teacher of students with disabilities (birth-grade 2);
- Teacher of students with disabilities (grades 1-6);
- Teacher of students with disabilities (grades 5-9);
- Teacher of students with disabilities (grades 7-12).

The count of personnel for 6- through 21-year-olds also includes the same titles as above that have the “bilingual” extension.

The reported number of counselors includes the following state titles:

- Guidance counselor; and
- Guidance counselor-bilingual.

The count of *other professional staff* includes the following state titles:

- Teacher assistant;
- Teacher assistant-bilingual;
- Physical therapist assistant;
- Occupational therapist assistant;
- Orientation and mobility instructor;
- Orientation and mobility instructor-bilingual;
- Registered nurse;
- Registered nurse-bilingual;
- Licensed practical nurse;
- Licensed practical nurse-bilingual; and

- Other professional staff.

The state reported that it no longer includes the following state titles in the data it reports to OSEP:

- Recreation and therapeutic recreation specialists;
- Diagnostic and evaluation staff; physical therapist assistant-bilingual; and
- Occupational therapist assistant-bilingual.

The number of nonprofessional staff reported to OSEP includes the state title: nonprofessional staff

North Carolina—There was a significant decrease in the number of special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21. North Carolina changed the special education licensure process to align with the *NCLB* requirements. The new special education license was changed to include indicators of ability to teach reading and elementary math. The increase in the number of teacher aides may also be attributed to the *NCLB* requirements. The number of related services personnel may have increased due to vacant positions being filled across North Carolina.

North Dakota—Teachers aides reported as not fully certified include new hires. New hires have up to one calendar year to complete the 20 hours of training required by North Dakota’s Administrative Rule 67-11-14 to meet the certification requirements for special education paraprofessionals. Many of the training courses for paraprofessionals are not available to new hires until after the certification data are reported to OSEP.

Northern Marianas—The increase in the number of teacher aides is due primarily to increased need.

The total number of fully certified personnel increased due to need and better identification of children and students with special needs.

Oklahoma—The state reported a substantial decline in the number of special education teachers employed to serve children ages 3 through 5 with disabilities. However, the state believes the decline is the result of past reporting errors and does not reflect an actual change in personnel employed. In 2003, the state reported 885 teachers. In 2004, the state reported only 398 teachers in this age group. The state believes that the count for 2004 is accurate and reflects the proportion of teachers’ time spent serving preschool children with disabilities. In the past, the state believes that districts incorrectly reported the number of teachers serving the students rather than the number of FTEs. That is, it believes the reported numbers were inflated. In addition, Oklahoma implemented a new web-based data system for this fiscal year. This new system includes edits that flag unusually high or low numbers. The state contacts districts with unusual numbers and asks them to verify the count and hand checks each district’s data for accuracy.

Oregon—Only those special education teachers who teach children ages 3 and 4 and some 5-year-olds with disabilities are included in Oregon’s count of special education teachers for students ages 3 through 5. In Oregon, children who have reached age 5 as of September 1 are considered school age. Special education teachers of children who reached their fifth birthday and are in school are reported as special education teachers of students ages 6 through 21. Oregon has a seamless system of Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education. School districts are not involved with preschool students until students attend (or begin transition into) school. Oregon law considers children school age who are age 5 on or before September 1 each year. So, many 5-year-olds are school age (and in kindergarten) as of the December 1 census. Therefore, teachers who teach school-age 5-year-olds are included in the school-age portion of the Part B personnel census, and special education staff for 5-year-olds not in school as of December 1 (plus all 3- and 4-year-olds) are included in the preschool (619) personnel counts.

An endorsement area is a state licensure qualifying a teacher to teach in a specific area. The state-reported special education endorsement area is the newest endorsement area and is increasing relative to the older endorsement areas of handicapped learner and severely handicapped learner. This trend should continue. Newly licensed teachers are granted the special education endorsement area. Other endorsement areas are no longer being issued (though many current teachers still have these endorsements on their license). Therefore, if there are no changes, over time there will be attrition of the older categories and an increasing number of newer teachers with the more general special education endorsement area.

Oregon is currently redesigning its personnel collection and plans to have the new collection in place for the 2006-07 school year. This new system is a staff-level system (i.e., not aggregate) for the collection of personnel data from all teachers, service provider personnel, administrators, etc. This has come about, in part, from an effort to address inconsistencies in the *IDEA* aggregate personnel collection that have existed through 2005-06. The inconsistencies resulted in:

- An increase in the number of fully certified vocational education teachers, *other professional staff* and nonprofessional staff;
- A decrease in the number of fully certified interpreters;
- An increase in the number of not fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 and interpreters; and
- An increase in the total number of vocational education teachers, interpreters, *other professional staff* and nonprofessional staff.

Pennsylvania—The state attributed the increase in the number of fully certified vocational education teachers to greater emphasis in career and vocational training and to additional grant opportunities becoming available.

The state had no explanation to attribute to the increase in the number of fully certified work-study coordinators and diagnostic and evaluation staff. The state noted this is an accurate reflection of a routine increase in number of staff hired across LEAs.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of fully certified speech pathologists to difficulty in recruiting and maintaining staff in this area. Pennsylvania has routinely identified this as a regional difficulty, and the state anticipates seeing fluctuation across the state.

The state attributed the increase in the number of fully certified supervisors/administrators (SEA) to state hiring. The state had a number of resignations and vacancies and has made significant gains in filling vacated staff positions.

The state had no reason to attribute to the decrease in the number of fully certified rehabilitation counselors. The state noted this is an accurate reflection of routine decrease in number of staff across LEAs.

The state attributed the increase in the number of fully certified *other professional staff* to intensive efforts on behalf of the Bureau of State Employment to support more inclusion throughout Pennsylvania. Districts have seen a rise in the number of support personnel across the state.

The state had no reason to attribute to the increase in the number of not fully certified special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5. The state notes this is an accurate reflection of routine increase in number of staff hired across LEAs.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of not fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21, nonprofessional staff and supervisors/administrators to state efforts under *NCLB* to ensure that all mandated personnel meet certification requirements. The state anticipates this decrease will continue. Pennsylvania has promoted the hiring of staff that meet the requirements.

The state had no reason to attribute to the decrease in the number of not fully certified *other professional staff*. The state notes this is an accurate reflection of routine increase in number of staff hired across LEAs.

The state attributed the increase in the number of vocational education teachers, work-study coordinators, occupational therapists, diagnostic and evaluation staff and supervisors/administrators to the increase in special education across the state. The state anticipates that the hiring trend for increased number of personnel required would continue until the number of students in special education either plateaus or begins to decrease.

The state attributed the decrease in the total number of speech pathologists to difficulty in recruiting and maintaining staff in this area. Pennsylvania has routinely identified this as a regional difficulty, and the state anticipates seeing fluctuation across the state.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of rehabilitation counselors to annual fluctuations relative to the needs identified for individual students' IEPs. This category is typically related service personnel; the variability from year to year will continue to fluctuate relative to the identified needs of students' IEPs.

Puerto Rico—Puerto Rico attributed the increase in the number of personnel to the increase in the number of special education students. In 2004, there was a 15 percent increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 served under *IDEA*, Part B. In 2004, there was a corresponding increase (14 percent) in the total number of personnel employed in special education. Puerto Rico has increased school districts' personnel with supervisor/administrator personnel, diagnostic/ evaluation staff and *other professional staff* for evaluation and therapy services for special education students.

Rhode Island—The number of fully certified special education teachers for children and students ages 3 through 21, occupational therapists, speech pathologists and related services providers continues to increase and includes and reflects the demand in low-incidence disabilities.

The number of physical education teachers has increased. The number more accurately reflects the count in the state and can be attributed to the change in the state's data management system.

Personnel completed certification programs resulting in an increase in the number of fully certified supervisors/administrators and decrease in the numbers of not fully certified supervisors/administrators on emergency certificates.

South Carolina—The state attributed the significant changes in the number of staff reported to the inability of the Statewide Student Information Systems to capture these data. Districts are collecting and managing these data differently, and thus, reporting from year to year varies. The state is in the process of implementing Special Education Software for the 2006-07 school year and will be able to more accurately capture these data and thus anticipates an improvement.

South Dakota—South Dakota attributes an increase in the number of fully certified teacher aides to more paraprofessionals working toward becoming highly qualified/fully certified under *NCLB*.

The state attributes the increase in the number of fully certified counselors to an error on the 2003 report. South Dakota suspects the LEAs may have miscoded counselors in 2003. The 2002 data for fully certified counselors are nearly the same as the 2004 count.

The state attributes a decrease in the number of not fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 to an increase in the number of teachers becoming fully certified.

The state attributed a decrease in the number of psychologists to an increase in the diagnostic and evaluation staff. Districts may be using psychometrists to do more evaluations and coding them under diagnostic and evaluation staff instead of hiring a school psychologist. Some districts are reorganizing school psychologist positions to include shared administrative duties, counseling duties or to serve as behavior interventionists. This would decrease the FTE of school psychologists by splitting the FTE into other areas.

The state attributes the increase in the number of *other professional staff* to districts needing more services from specialists such as special education nurses, orientation and mobility specialists, psychiatrists and occupational technicians.

South Dakota reported an increase in the number of nonprofessional staff. This includes personnel who were employed on an emergency, provisional or other basis and do not hold a standard state certification or licensure for the position to which they are assigned. It also includes those who do not meet other existing state requirements for the position held. Nonprofessional support staff are also included in this total. This increase may be due to districts' having to hire nonprofessional staff because there were no fully certified professionals available to hire in their area of the state.

Tennessee—The decrease in the number of not fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 in Tennessee is attributed to efforts to move toward 100 percent highly qualified personnel under *NCLB*, including the public awareness campaign and financial assistance guidance offered through the Become a Special Educator in Tennessee Program (<http://www.state.tn.us/education/base-tn/>).

The increase in the number of fully certified and total number of school psychologists is inversely related to the decrease in the number of fully certified and total number of diagnostic and evaluation staff. Tennessee does not have a certification specifically for diagnostic and evaluation staff only for school psychologists. In the past, some LEAs have employed certified special education teachers to provide support to school psychologists by completing individualized achievement testing, observations, and other aspects of the individualized evaluation process. Efforts to move toward 100 percent highly qualified personnel under *NCLB* have increased the efforts to hire fully certified psychologists.

The state-reported data for psychologists and school social workers include some personnel who serve both regular and special education students.

The state provided technical assistance to several LEAs regarding the need to report personnel employed through contractual agreement, leading to an increase in the number of fully certified and total number of occupational therapists reported by LEAs.

The personnel data reported by Tennessee on the personnel table are currently provided to the state by each LEA at the end of each school year. In the past, these data have not been cross-checked against the state's teacher licensure/employment databases to ensure accuracy of the licensing/employment categories that can be reviewed in those databases.

Texas—Because the state has no certification requirements for substitute teachers, when reporting the number of special education teachers of children ages 3 through 5 and 6 through 21, the FTEs of substitute teachers are all reported as fully certified.

Texas indicated that not all staff serving children ages 3 through 5 are included in the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) database. That is, SBEC does not maintain certification/licensing information for all types of professionals reported to OSEP. When the state is unable to determine certification from the SBEC system, it reports the staff as fully certified. The state also indicated that the number of certified personnel reported could be affected by the time lag of reporting.

In Texas, educational aides and interpreters are considered to be nonprofessional staff. However, these staff are reported to OSEP in the counts of teacher aides and interpreters and not as nonprofessional staff.

Utah—The state has had an increase in the use of counselors in secondary schools in special education services. The state is watching to see if the trend continues.

The state has had double reporting of *other professional staff* and supervisors and administrators for 2004. The state is unable to correct the problem for the 2004 data collection, but the problem will be corrected for the 2005 data collection.

The state wrongly reported all teacher aides in Utah as fully certified in 2003. The state certifies aides only in Title I schools. This also has a large effect on the total certified staff count.

Many of the state's interpreters are leaving education for the regular work force where they can make more money.

The state continues to suffer from shortages in special education teachers. Utah is using an alternative route to licensure, but still saw an increase in the number of not fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 in 2004.

The decrease in the number of evaluation and diagnostic staff is due to the fact that the state has had a slight increase in the number and availability of psychologists to do testing and evaluations.

The state's preschool population increased by 7.25 percent in 2003-04, resulting in an increased need for special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5. There was an increase of 10.16 percent of special education teachers for children ages 3 through 5.

Vermont—The category *other professional staff* includes professionals categorized in Vermont as behavior specialists.

Vermont explained changes in its personnel data:

- The state attributed the increase in the number of *other professional staff* to efforts to recruit, train and place related service personnel in rural locations. These efforts have been spearheaded by the Higher Education Collaborative, whose mission is to provide special personnel development training opportunities in local settings to directly effect outcomes for students with disabilities. The increase was 27.69 FTE or 33.23 percent of the previous year's count. Fully certified *other professional staff* include behavior specialists, nurses, psychiatrists and other specialized staff trained to provide services to children ages 3 through 21 with disabilities.

- The state attributed the decrease in the number of not fully certified special education teachers for students ages 6 through 21 to ongoing efforts to increase the number of fully certified special education teachers in the state. Vermont had a decrease from 93.20 FTE in 2003 to 78.12 FTE in 2004. This is a difference of 15.08 FTE or 16.18 percent of the 2003 count . During the same period, Vermont had an increase in the number of fully certified special education teachers of 29.74 FTE. This suggests a developing trend in Vermont toward decreasing the number of not fully certified special education teachers while increasing the number of fully certified special education teachers.

Virgin Islands—The decrease in the reported number of fully certified special education teachers and teacher aides was due to retirement, relocation stateside, heavy recruitment from stateside educational systems, special education teacher/teacher aide burnout and collective bargaining problems.

The increase in the reported number of not fully certified teachers aids resulted from the noncompetitive wages offered.

The increase in the reported total number of supervisors/administrators resulted from an increase of students eligible for special education and related services.

Virginia—The state reported speech pathologists and *other personnel* who provide services to students with speech/language impairments as special education teachers. No speech pathologists were reported in the related services personnel count.

The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Washington—The state attributed changes in the personnel data to a change in the type of students being served. In both 2004 and 2005, there was a 20 percent increase in the number of autistic students served. The state needs project (the Autism Outreach Project) provides peer support to parents and families of autistic students. It also conducts staff training all over the state to assist staff in properly interacting with the autistic population. As the number of students increase, so does the number of staff serving them.

The state also contracts with a company called teachers-teachers.com. This is a free service for people looking for a job in Washington to post their resume and for districts looking for specific staff. The state has had an increase in the number of personnel staff for special education students because it is able to match up applicants to jobs by using this service. The state began advertising the program in September of 2003.

West Virginia—West Virginia attributed the increase of nonprofessional staff of 217.91 FTE and the decrease of *other professional staff* of 289.87 FTE to a change in how the state reported bus drivers. For 2004, West Virginia clarified the definition of nonprofessional staff, indicating that bus drivers are nonprofessional staff, in accordance with the example give in the OSEP Data Dictionary. Prior to 2004, the state had interpreted the description of *other professional staff* to include bus drivers and bus aides and reported these personal accordingly.

Wisconsin—Wisconsin continues to conduct license checks of special education staff during the school year and provide LEAs with summary reports of staff who are not appropriately licensed. This practice has led to LEAs being more responsive in ensuring that staff are appropriately licensed. The state believes this has contributed to the:

- Increase in the number of not fully certified special education teachers reported for children and students ages 3 through 21; and
- Increase in the number of not fully certified teacher aides reported for students.

Wyoming—The state reported it cannot extract the amount of time counselors and social workers spend with special education students. The state staff report verifies certification but does not track how much time is spent on special education. Many staff have not had their certification status verified. When certification status cannot be determined, staff are reported as not fully certified.

The state reported that it includes special education clerks, job coaches and related service aides in the nonprofessional staff category. It includes psychological therapists, case managers and school nurses in the *other professional staff* category.

Tables 4-1 Through 4-4: IDEA Part B Exiting, 2004-05

Alabama—The decreases for students with mental retardation and emotional disturbance were 22 percent and 37 percent, respectively. The state believes the smaller population of students in these disability areas affected the percentage of those exiting.

The state attributes the increase in the total number of students with speech or language impairments and OHI transferring to regular education to efforts to increase the number of students with disabilities educated with their nondisabled peers in regular education curriculum. The Alabama State Board of Education adopted rules that added alternative routes for students with disabilities to receive the Alabama High School Diploma (AHSD). The impact has been that more students with disabilities are graduating with the AHSD in the regular education curriculum. The rules were adopted May 13, 2004. There was an upward trend for students with speech/language impairments from 2000-01 until 2003-04, followed by a decrease. There was a downward trend for students with emotional disturbance from 2000-01 through 2003-04. In 2004-05 there was an upward turn in both disability areas.

The state attributes the decrease in the number of students with specific learning disabilities transferring to regular education to the rise in students with specific learning disabilities who are pursuing the Alabama Occupational Diploma (AOD) (an exit option available to students with disabilities). The first school year that the AOD was in effect was 1997-98. State data show a decreasing trend in the number of students with disabilities who returned to regular education from 2000-01. The only increase occurred in 2003-04. During that same time, there was an upward trend in the number of students with disabilities who pursued the AOD, followed by a decrease in 2003-04. In 2004-05, the upward trend continued.

The state attributes the decrease in the total number of students with emotional disturbance who *received-a-certificate* to efforts to increase the number of students with disabilities who are educated with nondisabled peers in the general education curriculum.

The state attributes the decrease in the number of students with mental retardation who *received-a-certificate* to the increase in students with mental retardation who are pursuing the AOD.

The state attributes the increase in the number of students with mental retardation, emotional disturbance and specific learning disabilities who *reached maximum age* to increased opportunities to earn the AHSD. Students in Alabama must pass a rigorous graduation exam to be awarded the AHSD. The rules provide for the exemption from one portion of the exam based a number of factors, including that the student must complete all required course credits; the student must meet attendance requirements of the local school system; the student must pass all but one part of the exam; there must be documentation that the student's

disability poses substantial limits in the area of the exam that is not passed; the student must have maintained a cumulative C average in grades 9 through 12; the student must have attempted the failed part numerous times; the student must have participated in school-sponsored exam remediation activities.

The state attributes the increase in the number of students with speech and language impairments, OHI or specific learning disabilities who *moved, and are known to be continuing* to improved student tracking through an electronic statewide, student-level student information management system. The elimination of the *moved, not known to be continuing* category for the 2004-05 data collection required the state to report students as *dropouts* and has contributed to efforts to determine the status of students.

The state attributes the decrease in the number of students with mental retardation and emotional disturbance who *dropped out* to opportunities to earn the AHSD. There has been approximately a 15 percent reduction of students in each of these disability areas and a rise in the number of students with disabilities who are pursuing the AOD.

The state attributes the increase in the number of students with speech or language impairments, OHI, multiple disabilities or traumatic brain injury to increases in the population in these disability areas, the requirement to count students as *dropouts* when they move and cannot be tracked to determine if they are continuing in special education and possibly, in some instances, to the severity and extent of the disabilities of some of the students in these disability areas.

The state attributes the decrease in Hispanic students who exited to a reduction in the number of *dropouts* in this race/ethnicity category. Factors contributing to this decrease include: (1) there is increased emphasis in educating students with disabilities in inclusive environments to the extent appropriate; (2) the increased effort to ensure that students with disabilities are pursuing the highest possible exit option; (3) the Alabama Board of Education approved the exemption from one part of the graduation exam for students with disabilities who are pursuing the AHSD based on very stringent criteria; and (4) students with disabilities may pursue the AOD, which prepares them for post-school employment.

Alaska—The race/ethnicity of 13 exiting students was estimated for this report.

This (2004-05) is the second year of exit data Alaska collected using its new, end-of-year, student-level data collection that includes both special education and regular education students enrolled at any time during the school year. In the past, Alaska collected aggregate exit counts from districts and believes that districts did not accurately unduplicate counts of exiting students. The state continues to train districts in this new data collection system. In 2003-04, there was confusion about how the state collected *transferred to regular education*, so it modified the data collection system to better capture these data. As a result of these revisions and the recent changes in the data collection system, Alaska expects variations in the data for a few more years.

Alaska explained specific changes in its data as follows:

- The state believes that the apparent decrease in the number of students reported as *transferring to regular education* is actually the result of an overreport in 2003-04. The overreporting of students *transferring to regular education* was due to district confusion about the new data collection system. The state modified the system for 2004-05 to reduce overreporting in this exit type.
- The state attributes the decrease in the number of students reported as *graduating with a high school diploma* to the new high school graduation exam requirement. Beginning in 2003-04, Alaska requires students to pass a high school competency test, the High School Graduate

Qualifying Exam (HSGQE), to receive a high school diploma. However, if they met all the other requirements for graduation, this requirement was not applied to students with disabilities until 2004-05.

- The state attributed the increase in the number of students *receiving-a-certificate* to the new high school graduation exam requirement. In 2004-05, not all students with disabilities were able to meet the new graduation requirement and instead *received certificates-of-completion*.
- The state also attributed the decrease in the number of students reported in the *reached maximum age* category to the new graduation exam requirement. Some students with disabilities took advantage of the one-year waiver and left school with a diploma rather than staying in school until they *reached the maximum age* for services and risking the possibility of not passing the required exit exam.
- The state believes the increase in the number of students reported as *moved and known to be continuing* is the result of closer tracking of students who move. The elimination of the *moved, not known to be continuing* category and OSEP's decision to treat students who move and are not known to be continuing as *dropouts* made it particularly important for districts to make an effort to determine whether students who move from their district are enrolled in a different district. The new data system also allows districts to more accurately track these students. Because the system is only in its second year, the state is uncertain whether the numbers will stabilize over the next few years.
- The overall increase of exiting students with mental retardation, OHI or multiple disabilities may reflect the correction of the unexplained decreases in the number of exits reported for these categories for 2003-04. The number of exits reported for these disability categories for 2004-05 are similar to those reported for 2002-03.
- The state could not explain the overall decrease in the number of exiting students with speech or language impairments.

American Samoa—American Samoa explained the changes in its data as follows:

- The territory attributed the increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities *graduating with a regular high school diploma* to an increase in the number of students with IEPs in the 12th grade. In 2003-04, there were 35 senior students with IEPs; in 2004-05 there were 47 senior students with IEPs. In 2003-04, a total of 23 students *graduated with regular diplomas* compared to 42 students in 2004-05. A large percentage of senior students have specific learning disabilities.
- The territory attributed the increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities *dropping out* to students who have problems with immigration status.
- The territory attributed the increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities exiting for any reason to an increase in the number of students with IEPs. The increase in total number of students with specific learning disabilities exiting for any reason reflects the increase in the number of students who *graduated with regular diplomas*, those who *return to regular education* and those who *dropped out*.

American Samoa's requirements for *graduation with a standard diploma* are the same for students with and without disabilities. Students with disabilities who cannot meet standard graduation requirements are issued *certificates-of-completion*.

Arizona—Arizona does not collect data on which students with disabilities *graduated with a regular high school diploma* and met the same the requirements as students without disabilities and those who did not. Arizona offers a *regular high school diploma* only, provided that students meet the graduation requirements as outlined in statute. Graduation requirements for special education students are specified in the students' IEPs. OSEP's instructions state to report students who did not meet the same standards as students without disabilities as *receiving-a-certificate* instead of *graduated with a regular high school diploma*.

Arizona does not issue *certificates-of-completion*. Students who received a *regular diploma* but did not meet the same standards for graduation as students without disabilities are reported in the *graduated with a high school diploma* category. This is inconsistent with the OSEP definition of *graduated with a high school diploma*. Certificates are not sanctioned by the state, but they are issued by LEAs. In 2006-07, the state plans to implement *received-a-certificate* as an exit category in the state data collection in order to allow more appropriate reporting of students who receive *certificates-of-completion*.

The state believes that ongoing LEA trainings continue to improve data accuracy. Every year, the state offers workshops to LEAs on the use of the web-based data collection application used to collect much of the data reported to OSEP. The workshops cover the federal definitions of terms used in the various data collections, all of the instructions/business rules associated with the various data collections, and a complete walkthrough of the online web-based application used to collect the required data. Workshop participants include LEA staff—special education secretaries and/or administrative assistants, special education directors, Student Accountability Information System (SAIS) coordinators, special education teachers, psychologists, etc.

Arkansas—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Bureau of Indian Affairs—The Bureau of Indian Affairs had no explanation for the decrease in the number of students with specific learning disabilities *transferring to regular education*. This change is normal fluctuation. The state will monitor the data to watch for future trends.

The BIA attributed the decrease in the number of students *graduating with a regular high school diploma* to states that tighten the requirements for a *regular diploma*, which means fewer students with disabilities are able to meet expectations.

The BIA attributed the increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities who *received-a-certificate* to the decrease in the number of students with the same disability who were able to meet state requirements for graduation. Some of these students were provided with a *certificate-of-completion*.

The BIA had no explanation for the decrease in the number of students with specific learning disabilities reported as *moved, known to be continuing*. This change is normal fluctuation. The Bureau will monitor the data to watch for future trends.

California—California notes a review of local data indicates that the differences are based on accurate reporting, and they are normal data variation. The change in data is due to improvements in the data system of one of the largest school districts in the state.

The state noted the increase in the number of students with mental retardation, hearing impairments, speech/language impairments or orthopedic impairments *transferring to regular education* is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level. The state had no reason to attribute to the change.

The state noted that the increase in the number of students with OHI *transferring to regular education* is due to improvements in reporting practices in one of the largest districts in the state. The district has implemented a new management system that has enhanced capacity to capture student level information.

The state noted the increase in the number of students with autism *transferring to regular education* is due to a statewide trend in the increase in identifying students with autism. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the decrease in the number of students with mental retardation and speech/language impairments *graduating with a regular high school diploma* is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level. The state had no reason to attribute to the change.

The state noted the increase in the number of students with hearing impairments and emotional disturbance *graduating with a regular high school diploma* is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level. The state had no reason to attribute to the change.

The state noted that the increase in the number of students with OHI *graduating with a regular high school diploma* is due to improvements in reporting practices in one of the largest districts in the state. The district has implemented a new management system that has enhanced capacity to capture student level information.

The state noted the decrease in the number of students with mental retardation and orthopedic impairments *reaching the maximum age* is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level. The state had no reason to attribute to the change.

The state noted the decrease in the number of students who *died* with mental retardation is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the increase in the number of students with hearing impairments, visual impairments, and multiple disabilities reported as *moved known to be continuing* is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level. The state had no reason to attribute to the change.

The state noted that the increase in the number of students with OHI reported as *moved known to be continuing* is due to improvements in reporting practices in one of the largest districts in the state. The district has implemented a new management system that has enhanced capacity to capture student level information.

The state noted the decrease in the number of students with deaf-blindness reported as *moved known to be continuing* is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the increase in the number of students with autism reported as *moved known to be continuing* is due to a statewide trend in the increase in identifying students with *autism*. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the increase in the number of students with mental retardation, visual impairments, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments or traumatic brain injury who have *dropped out* is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted that the increase in the number of students with multiple disabilities, specific learning disabilities, hearing impairments and OHI *dropping out* is due to improvements in reporting practices in one of the largest districts in the state. The district has implemented a new management system that has enhanced capacity to capture student level information.

The state noted the increase in the number of students with autism *dropping out* is due to a statewide increase identifying students with autism. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the increase in the number of black students exiting for any reason is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the increase in the number of Hispanic students exiting for any reason is due to a statewide increase in migration. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

Colorado—The state had an increase in the number of students with speech or language impairments and orthopedic impairments who *transferred to regular education*. There was no significant change in any individual LEA's data attributing to this change.

There was a statewide increase in the number of students with mental retardation and orthopedic impairments who *graduated with a regular diploma*. One of the reasons for this change is an increased emphasis on graduation requirements throughout the state. However, no individual LEA's data indicated a significant change from the previous year.

There was a decrease in the number of students with multiple disabilities who *graduated with a regular high school diploma*. This change cannot be attributed to data from any individual LEA(s).

The state had an increase in the number of students with orthopedic impairments and a decrease in the number of students with multiple disabilities who *received-a-certificate*. It could not be attributed to data submitted by any individual LEA(s).

There were increases in the number of students with mental retardation, orthopedic impairments, multiple disabilities and all disabilities who reached the *maximum age*. Although there were no significant increases in data reported from any individual LEA(s), this is the result of more transition programs and services throughout the state.

The state had an increase in the number of students with speech or language impairments, orthopedic impairments or multiple disabilities who were reported as *moved, known to be continuing*. Colorado LEAs are instructed not to report any students with this exit category unless they have verified that the family no longer lives in the district. They do this by sending a certified letter to the last known

address. Therefore, there is documentation in the file of all students reported as *moved, known to be continuing* that indicates that the student, in fact, no longer lives in the district. If the student is in school somewhere else, the district will get a request to transfer records.

The state had decreases in all disability categories of students *dropping out*. The state continues to provide training about the definition of *dropouts*, but there is still inconsistency in the data. Colorado is currently in the process of revising all of the state data systems. As part of the new systems, the state will build in error checks similar to those used by OSEP/Westat to assist the state in identifying anomalies in the data.

There was an increase in the number of Asian/Pacific Islander students exiting for any reason with disabilities. Although this was a change of 11.05 percent, the number was too small to trace to any individual LEA(s).

There was a decrease of 774, or 11.45 percent, in the number of white students exiting for any reason. A review of individual LEA data did not identify significant changes in any specific LEA's data.

The reporting period for the data is December 2003 to December 2004.

Connecticut—The increase in the number of students with multiple disabilities who *transferred to regular education* is due to normal fluctuations in the data.

The number of students with speech/language impairments who *transferred to regular education* has been increasing an average every year of 32 percent since 1995. The state is unable to explain this change.

The number of students with hearing impairments who *graduated with a regular diploma* has increased an average every year of 42 percent since 1998. This year there was a decrease. The state was unable to explain the change.

Overall, the number of students who are *moved, known to be continuing* has increased since 1995. The number of students with speech/language impairments reported as *moved, known to be continuing* has increased due to a better reporting mechanism that dovetails with PCI, our special education data collection tool. The state now has the Public Student Information System, so the state can collect information on individual students instead of reporting aggregate data. Students are registered when they enter a district and unregistered when they leave.

There is a significant decrease in the total number of students who *dropped out*, including some disability subgroups. This reflects the overall decrease in all Connecticut students who have *dropped out* over the past few years. This decline also affects the special education population. Hopefully, this downward trend will persist as the state continues efforts to increase the number of students who *graduate* and decrease the numbers who *drop out*.

Delaware—The state attributed increases in the category *transferred to regular education* to data system changes at two of the largest districts in the state. The districts are now on the statewide data system, which more accurately reflects students who move to regular education.

The state attributed decreases in the number of students with mental retardation who *received-a-certificate* to changes in Department of Education policy regarding *certificates* and *diplomas*. Prior to 2004-05, a student had to complete high school in four years to get a *regular diploma* with his/her graduating cohort. Students who did not complete in four years were given a *certificate-of-completion*. Now students whose IEP allows them to take more than four years to graduate can continue to try to get a

regular diploma and be included in the cohort year in which they actually graduate instead of getting the certificate after four years. Many of these students are students have mental retardation.

The state also attributed the decrease in the number of students with mental retardation who *received-a-certificate* to reporting timelines. The final status of many students is not known when the special education exit report is prepared during the summer. Districts allow students to attend summer school and retake the state assessment before their final status is determined. Students have until September 30 to return to school if they want to continue (until they are 21) or if they want to work toward a *diploma*. The final status for many students may not be determined until December or January. This is when the September 30 enrollment is complete and verification of *dropout* and *diploma/certificate* data is finalized.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students who *moved, and are known to be continuing* to changes in policy that require the district to be able to provide documentation that the student is continuing at another school. If the district is not able to provide documentation, the student must be reported as *dropped out*.

Another reason for decreases in the number of students who *moved, and are known to be continuing* is due to the change in the OSEP data collection instructions, which now say to only include students “who were in special education at the start of the reporting period, but were not in special education at the end of the reporting period.” Students who entered after the beginning of the school year and left before the end of the school year would no longer be included in the exit report.

The state attributed decreases in the number of students who *dropped out* to increased efforts and programs to reduce the number of special education students *dropping out*. The dropout rate for special education students in grades 9 through 12 decreased from 8.6 percent in 2003-04 to 5 percent in 2004-05.

District of Columbia—District of Columbia Public Schools has implemented two new data systems with in the past two years, and exiting data has been problematic. The systems are maturing and showing promise for the upcoming school year. The fluctuations in the 2004-05 exiting data are due to the new system. The changes in the data include:

- An increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities and all disabilities who *transferred to regular education*.
- A decrease in the number of students with mental retardation, specific learning disabilities and all disabilities who *received a certificate*.
- An increase in the number of students with emotional disturbance and all disabilities who *moved, and are known to be continuing*.
- A decrease in the number of students with mental retardation, speech or language impairments, emotional disturbance, OHI, specific learning disabilities, multiple disabilities and all disabilities who exited for any reason.
- A decrease in the number of black, Hispanic, white and total students who exited for any reason.

Florida—The increase in the number of students who *transferred to regular education* with mental retardation, orthopedic impairments, OHI or specific learning disabilities may be a function of improved instruction, especially a focus on reading, which may reduce the need for special education services. The reasons for a decrease in the number of students with speech and language impairments who *transferred to regular education* are unclear.

The decrease in the number of students with mental retardation and hearing impairments *graduating with a regular high school diploma* is attributed to increased rigor in the high school curriculum coupled with requirements for high school students who are struggling readers to be enrolled in intensive reading courses as electives. The reasons for an increase in the number of students with speech and language impairments who *graduated with a regular high school diploma* are unclear.

The increase in the number of students with emotional disturbance, OHI, orthopedic impairments or autism *receiving-a-certificate* is attributed to increased rigor in the high school curriculum coupled with requirements for high school students who are struggling readers to be enrolled in intensive reading courses as electives. These new requirements have decreased the number of students *graduating with a regular diploma* and increased those *receiving-a-certificate*.

The state had no explanation for changes in the number of students who *died; moved, and are known to be continuing; or dropped out*.

Prior to the 2002-03 school year, the state did not report students with disabilities in the *graduated with a regular high school diploma* category unless they passed the state graduation test. As a result of a law passed in 2003, students with disabilities who met all graduation requirements except for passing the state graduation exam received a *regular high school diploma* if the IEP team determined that the test did not reflect their academic abilities and they had taken the test in both 10th and 11th grades and had been provided with remediation opportunities. These students are reported in the *graduated with a regular high school diploma* category.

Georgia—Prior to the 2004-05 submission of special education exiting data, Georgia's exit report contained student-level data collected in aggregate. After close review by the state, it was determined that the data would be more accurately reported using individual student-level data and then aggregating at the state level. 2004-05 is the first year that districts have submitted individual special education disaggregated data to the Georgia Department of Education.

The state reported that several LEAs allow students who have not yet met graduation requirements to participate in graduation activities with their age appropriate class but return to school. These students are not reported as exiting until they actually *graduate* or *reach maximum age*.

Guam—Guam reported that its *graduation* and *dropout* numbers are lower than previous years because the territory corrected its exit reporting period from a 13-month (July through August) to a 12-month period (July through June). A large amount of the paperwork about exiting students (*graduates, moved, cannot locate, dropouts, etc.*) is reported during July and August, and previously August was counted twice.

Guam does not issue *certificates-of-completion*. Students with disabilities must meet the same *graduation* criteria as students without disabilities.

Hawaii—Hawaii had decreases in all disability categories of students exiting for any reason. Decreases are likely due to the requirement for the exiting table to include only students who were in special education at the start of the reporting period and were not in special education at the end of the reporting period. This requirement reduced the population for this table, which used to include all exits for all special education students, whether they were in the system at the start of the year or not.

Additionally, a new data collection system was developed that allows schools to monitor and verify their exit data via a report that updates daily based on exit information entered by the schools. This system gives schools access to their exit data and the opportunity to monitor the accuracy of the report. As schools gain training and experience with this report, the state expects data accuracy to increase.

Idaho—The state attributed an increase in the number of students with speech or language impairments *transferring to regular education* to the following reasons:

- Growing awareness of disproportionality issues.
- State training regarding appropriate identification practices for second-language learners and districts using more appropriate practices when re-evaluations occurred.

The state attributed an increase in the number of students with OHI *transferring to regular education* to child count verification and monitoring that found that students identified with ADD/ADHD were found eligible based on a doctor's diagnosis but they failed to meet all three prongs of eligibility in regard to adverse effect and need for specially designed instruction. The state expects that some of these students were subsequently returned to regular education.

The state had no reason to attribute to the increase in the number of students with mental retardation who *graduated with a regular high school diploma*. This category increased steadily from 1995-99, then decreased from 1999-2003, now the category is increasing again. The state was unable to explain the trend in the data.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students with hearing impairments and OHI who *graduated with a regular high school diploma* to an unusually large cohort of hearing impaired students reaching graduation age.

The state attributed an increase in the number of students with emotional disturbance *graduating with a regular high school diploma* and a decrease in the number of students with emotional disturbance *dropping out* to significant efforts across the state to improve the collaboration between Children's Mental Health and school districts to provide better wrap-around services for students with emotional disturbance.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students reported as *moved, known to be continuing* to the increasing number of charter school LEAs that are opening in the state. Students who transfer to these charter schools are coded in this category. Any other reason for the increases is unknown.

The state had no reason to attribute to the increase in the number of students with speech or language impairments who *dropped out*. This is a normal fluctuation in the data. The state will watch the data further for trends.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students with emotional disturbance *dropping out* to the following reasons:

- There have been significant efforts across the state to improve the collaboration between Children's Mental Health and school districts to provide better wrap-around services for students with emotional disturbance.

- The state continued to offer the positive behavior supports grant that enables districts to access assistance in dealing with students with challenging behaviors and to build the capacity of teachers, schools and districts to proactively address problem behaviors, keeping students in school.

The population of black students enrolled in Idaho schools is growing significantly as a result of adoptions, out-of-state placement of students in Idaho group homes, diversity recruitment efforts by large employers, and because of large clusters of immigrants from Africa. As the black population in the state increases as much as 10 percent a year, so the number of black students identified with disabilities also increases. Therefore, an increased number of black students also move, graduate, meet IEP goals and return to regular education, etc.

Statewide training on appropriately identifying and serving students who are acquiring English as a second language is resulting in the exit of some Hispanic students who were inappropriately identified as having a disability.

Prior to 2004-05, students who received a *regular diploma* but did not meet the same standards for graduation as students without disabilities were reported in the *graduated with a high school diploma* category. In 2004-05, Idaho began reporting graduation data consistent with the data definitions from OSEP. Annual training continues to emphasize those definitions.

Illinois—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

The state does not know whether students reported in the *graduated with a high school diploma* category met the same standards for graduation as students without disabilities because it does not collect information about students' courses of study. Decisions on the issuance of diplomas are made at the local school district level. Districts issue diplomas when they determine that students have met the requirements for graduation. A *certificate-of-completion* is also offered in Illinois. Students who received a *certificate-of-completion* rather than a *diploma* are the only students reported in the *received-a-certificate* category.

Indiana—The increase in the total number of students *transferring to regular education* represents systematic efforts to return students to general education who no longer require special education services. These efforts were targeted at higher functioning students, such as students with speech impairments, emotional disturbance, OHI or specific learning disabilities.

The increase in the number of students with hearing impairments, emotional disturbance or OHI *graduating with a regular high school diploma* represents efforts to ensure that more students with disabilities are being served in programs that will allow them to qualify for a regular diploma. The specific reasons for the decrease in the area of speech or language impairments are unknown. However, there was an increase in students with speech or language impairments who *dropped out* during the 2004-05 school year.

The decrease in the number of students with emotional disturbance *receiving-a-certificate* is because more of these students received a *regular diploma*. The increase in the number of students *reaching maximum age* is a result of students staying in school through age 21. The state Department of Education believes the reasons that more students with emotional disturbance *received a regular diploma* and more students exited by *reaching maximum age* (22) is a result of a commitment on the part of the SEAs and LEAs to keep students in school longer and provide them with educational programming which results in

the issuance of more regular diplomas. This primarily involves districts making changes which have the greatest impact on students with disabilities.

The increase in the number of *moved, known to be continuing* students is a result of diligent efforts by local school districts to determine if students who have moved are receiving services in order to avoid reporting students as *dropping out* who have moved, but are not receiving services. The reason for the decrease in the number of students with hearing impairments reported as *moved, known to be continuing* is unknown.

The total number of students who *dropped out* decreased by 53 students or 1.01 percent. There were no unusual circumstances or contributing factors identified to explain the specific decrease in the number of students who *dropped out* with speech impairment or the increase in the number of students who *dropped out* with OHI.

In Indiana, students must pass the Indiana Graduation Qualifying Exam to receive a *diploma*. Students who do not pass the test, but complete other requirements, *receive-a-certificate* instead of a *diploma* and are reported in the *received-a-certificate* category.

Iowa—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Kansas—Kansas has a decrease in the number of students *dropping out* and a corresponding increase in special education students *transferring to regular education*. This shift represents a statewide trend of decreasing *dropout* rates for all students over the past 5 years. Across the state, an increase in the number of alternative high school programs has occurred during the past 5 years. These programs have supported students to stay in school rather than *drop out*. The increase in the number of students *returning to regular education* is a result of standards-based reform and use of a tiered model to support students in the regular education setting. These practices have dramatically increased in Kansas over the past 5 years.

Kansas does not issue *certificates-of-completion*. All students in the state must meet the same standards for *graduation* in order to receive a diploma. Students with disabilities who do not *receive a diploma* are reported in the *reached maximum age* for services category if they continue to receive services until age 21. If these students exit prior to *reaching maximum age*, they are reported as *dropouts*.

Kentucky—Kentucky explained specific changes in its data as follows:

- *Transferred to Regular Education:*
 - The state could not attribute an increase (71 to 85) in students with mental retardation *transferring to regular education* to a substantial change that can be traced to any particular reason.
 - The state attributed a decrease (307 to 264) in the number of students with specific learning disabilities *transferring to regular education* to an overall decrease in Kentucky's child count of this disability over the several years. From the December 2003 to the December 2004 child count, Kentucky's population of students with a specific learning disability dropped by 1,093 students or just over 6 percent. As the population of students in this category decreases, it is anticipated that the number of students exiting this category for any reason will also decline.

- *Graduated with a High School Regular Diploma:*
 - The state attributed the increase (2,708 to 2,990) in the total number of students *graduating with a regular diploma* to an increase in the total number of students in the program. This number reflects the increasing expectations of students with disabilities as the state tries to close the performance gap between students with and without disabilities. Strategies in place to reach proficiency by 2014 result in improved student performance, and as a result, a higher percentage of students with disabilities are graduating with regular diplomas. Closing the achievement gap is a major priority in Kentucky, and the state strives to have students with disabilities closer to proficiency. Kentucky has a cadre of highly skilled educators (HSE) who work with districts to help them improve student performance in a variety of ways. These methods vary from district to district, but also from HSE to HSE.
 - The state could not attribute an increase (789 to 873) in students with mental retardation *graduating with a regular high school diploma* to a clear cause. The state found no similar increase in child count. The state looked at individual districts and found that there was no clear trend, with many up a few students and many down. An 84-student change is less than a single child for every two districts on average. The state is unable to explain the change in the data.
 - The state could not attribute the increase (174 to 214) in students with emotional disturbance *graduating with a regular diploma* to a clear cause. This population as a whole only had a slight increase that would not explain the change. Reviewing district by district, there does not appear to be widely different data. The state attributes the overall change to improved student performance. The state is unable to explain the change in the data.
 - The state could not attribute the increase (20 to 34) in students with orthopedic impairments *graduating with a regular diploma* to a clear cause. However, most of this change occurred in the largest district as it alone accounted for eight additional *graduates* from this category of disability. This is a normal fluctuation in state data. The state will investigate this further to see if patterns occur.
 - The state attributed the increase (329 to 459) in the number of students with *other health impairments graduating with a regular diploma* to an increased count by nearly 14 percent. OHI is one of the fastest growing categories of disability in Kentucky. Two districts accounted for the increase of 57 of these students.
 - The state could not attribute the decrease in students with deaf/blindness *graduating with a regular high school diploma* to a clear cause. This change is a pattern of normal fluctuation. The state will monitor the data to watch for future trends.
 - The state attributed the increase (77 to 94) in students with multiple disabilities *graduating with a regular high school diploma* to an increase of 472 students or a 14.45 percent increase in the count for this category of disability.
- The state attributed the increase (302 to 372) in the number of students who *received a certificate of completion* to two disability categories (OHI and multiple disabilities) which experienced increases in the child count of over 14 percent. With these increases in child count, the relative increase in these two categories does not reach the threshold of being significant.

- The state could not attribute the increase (16 to 26) in the number of students who *reached maximum age* to a clear cause. This change is a pattern of normal fluctuation. The state will monitor the data to watch for future trends.
- The state could not attribute the increase (19 to 35) in the number of students who *died* to any one factor.
- The state attributed the increase (2,866 to 3,611) in the number of students who were reported *moved, known to be continuing* to the state's student information system. The system is starting to go online statewide, and districts are better able to contact or notify other districts about the status of children who have exited their districts. As Kentucky moves to a statewide student-level tracking system and a statewide catchment area for this data table, it is suspected this number will drop, as students will be discovered not to have exited special education within the state.
- The state attributed the increase in exiters by race/ethnicity to increases in the total percentage of the total number of exiters. Specifically, white, non-Hispanic, which is the predominant race category, increased at a rate of 10.54 percent while the overall total increased a similar percent of 10.40 percent. The exiting of the Hispanic population increased by 43.86 percent; however, this was a total of only 25 students. Statewide, the population of Hispanic students on the child count increased by nearly a third from the previous year to this year. As a result, an increased percentage of Hispanic exiters was expected.

Louisiana—The state attributes an increase in the number of students who were reported in the exit category *transferred to regular education* to a data system and a procedural change. In the past, the state's data system included a code for exiting students whose parent withdrew them from special education when they enrolled in private schools or home school, or just refused special education services (withdrawal of approval). That code has been eliminated from the system. These students are reported in the exit category *transferred to regular education*. In the past, these students were not reported.

The state attributed an increase in the exiting category *moved, known to be continuing* to a change in data collection categories. Prior to 2004, Louisiana's data system included an exit code moved/transferred out of state. In 2004, this exit reason has been removed and replaced with the exit reason *moved, known to be continuing*.

The state reported a decrease in the number of *dropouts*. It attributed this change to educating LEAs using the exiting question-and-answer document provided by OSEP. As a result of the training, LEAs report exiting students more accurately. Students who do not meet any of the other exit categories are now reported as a *dropout*.

Maine—The state attributed the decrease in the number of students with emotional disturbance and OHI *transferring to regular education*, students with mental retardation and all disabilities *receiving a certificate* and students with specific learning impairments who exited for any reason to declining enrollment in regular education as well as in special education. This year, the state had a decline in 10 disability groupings.

The state had an increase in the number of students with OHI and multiple disabilities *graduating with a regular high school diploma*. The state also had an increase in the number of students with emotional disturbance, OHI, specific learning disabilities or multiple disabilities *dropping out*. The priorities of the Maine Department of Education include improving the *graduation* rate and decreasing the *dropout* rate. The state is having success with the improved *graduation* rate and with the *dropout* rate. However, our three large categories of disabilities, emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities and multiple

disabilities, show less improvement in the *dropout* area, even though overall the *dropout* rate is improving. The state plans to continue efforts to affect these populations. The state continues to work to keep students in school by offering alternative education and other options.

In Maine, there are some changes due to the decline in general enrollment and special education enrollment. Yet, the state sees some old trends continue, like the increases in autism for 3 through 21-year-olds and higher than average *dropout* rates for students with emotional disturbance or specific learning disabilities.

The reporting period for the state's exiting data was November 2003 to December 2004.

Maryland—Maryland reviewed students who exited in June 2004 and also appeared in the October 2004 child count. This review caused local school systems to more closely analyze and clean their data. Local school systems and therefore Maryland are now reporting better, more accurate data in both child count and exiting. The review of students who exited and also appeared in the child count will be conducted annually.

Massachusetts—The state had a decrease in the number of *dropouts* in all disability categories. Massachusetts continues to implement initiatives that increase the number of students with disabilities staying and succeeding in school. For detailed information on state policies for which a decreased number of dropouts is a potential result, see Indicators #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, and #13 of the Massachusetts SPP at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/spp/>.

The state attributes the increase in the number of students *moved, known to be continuing* to districts that may be reporting this information more correctly. With the advent of the state individual student reporting, the state has found districts are more able to determine prior school placements for Massachusetts students.

When the data were reported for the 2003-04 school year, there was a variable specifically designated for special education "Reason for Leaving School District." For the 2004-05 school year, this variable no longer exists. Therefore, the state code for "transferred" was used instead. The state thought originally that OSEP was asking for a count of students who were continuing in special education, but then later realized OSEP was asking for a count of students who were continuing in school (i.e., transferred, not *dropped out*), so the state dropped the variable since the state could get that data from the enrollment status at time of data collection. This was confusing for districts, and the state thinks this change might have affected the data reported.

The state reported that the 2002-03 school year was the first year that students had to pass a statewide assessment to receive a high school diploma. Students who did not pass the assessment and met local requirements were issued certificates-of-attainment. Prior to 2002-03, diplomas were granted based solely on local criteria, and certificates-of-attainment were not issued in the state. In 2002-03, Massachusetts reported students who met local graduation criteria but did not pass the statewide assessment in the *graduated with a regular diploma* category. It did this because the state could not differentiate between students who passed the state assessment and received diplomas and those who did not pass the assessment and received a *certificate-of-completion*. In 2003-04, the state reported students who received certificates-of-attainment in the *received-a-certificate* category. Prior to 2003-04, the state did not report any students in the *received-a-certificate* category. This year, students reported in the *graduated with a regular high school diploma* are only those students who met the same standards for graduation as students without disabilities.

Michigan—OSE/EIS has emphasized to ISDs, schools and LEAs the need to increase data accuracy with respect to special education data/information. In addition, the LEA and the ISD data are now publicly reported, further increasing the content validity of data on students with disabilities. Programs such as CIMS have broadened the state’s monitoring emphasis, moving from mainly a compliance orientation to a focus on improving education results for students with disabilities in Michigan. In turn, CIMS has also focused on assessing and improving the quality of data the OSE/EIS receives from school districts. These interventions have resulted in more accurate data reporting, resulting in better data being submitted to OSEP.

The state had a decrease in the number of students with mental retardation, speech or language impairments, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, specific learning disabilities and all disabilities who *transferred to regular education*. There have been no significant policy changes related to these special education disability categories, and the state believes such a decrease can be attributed to more accurate data and public reporting.

The state had an increase in the number of students with OHI who *transferred to regular education* and a decrease in the number of students with orthopedic impairments who *graduated with a regular high school diploma*. In the past, orthopedic impairments, OHI and traumatic brain injury were combined into one state category: physical and otherwise health impaired. Changes to the state data collection methods and systems enabled us to report these disabilities separately, beginning December 1, 2005. That change accounts for some of the changes in state data.

Michigan had an increase in the number of students with mental retardation, hearing impairments, visual impairments, emotional disturbance, OHI, specific learning disabilities, autism, traumatic brain injury and all disabilities who *graduated with a regular high school diploma* and a decrease in the number of students with mental retardation, speech or language impairments, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, specific learning disabilities and all disabilities who *received-a-certificate*. In Michigan, there has been an overall emphasis on improving graduation rates for all students. In addition, the OSE/EIS has implemented policies and practices to evaluate and improve schools’ graduation rates for students with disabilities. For example, CIMS includes monitoring practices carried out on a sample of school districts throughout Michigan. Based on results obtained, schools have implemented new policies/practices, resulting in increased graduation rates and decreases in the number of students with disabilities who receive *certificate-of-completion*.

The state had a decrease in the number of students with orthopedic impairments who were reported as *moved, known to be continuing*. In the past, orthopedic impairments, OHI and traumatic brain injury were combined into one category: physical and otherwise health impaired. But changes to the state data collection methods and systems enabled Michigan to report these disabilities separately, beginning December 1, 2005.

Michigan had an increase in the number of students with mental retardation, OHI and traumatic brain injury who were reported as *moved, known to be continuing*. The OSE/EIS has stressed to schools the need to follow more closely students who move, so that their records can go with them. More emphasis is now placed on data accuracy, which has also improved the data collected and reported. Finally, classification of these special education disabilities has changed.

The state had a decrease in the number of students with mental retardation, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, specific learning disabilities, autism and all disabilities who *dropped out*. Again, the OSE/EIS has implemented policies and practices to evaluate and reduce schools’ *dropout* rates for students with disabilities (e.g., CIMS). Because of this work, schools have implemented new policies/practices, resulting in lower *dropout* rates.

Minnesota—Minnesota state statute requires that a *regular diploma for high school graduation* is granted at the local district level. There is no state diploma, and there are no alternatives to the regular diploma. The decision to grant a diploma is made at the local level. School districts in Minnesota do not issue *certificates-of-completion*.

The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Mississippi—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Missouri—The category *graduated with a regular high school diploma* includes all graduates who received a high school diploma. This includes graduates who obtained the necessary number of credits as well as graduates who met the goals and objectives of their IEPs. Data collection is not currently set up to differentiate between the two groups. Missouri has a certificate of attendance available for students who have *reached maximum age*, but have not met graduation requirements. The certificate of attendance is awarded in these cases if attendance requirements have been met. These are the students reported in the *received-a-certificate* category. The increase in the number of students who *graduated with a regular high school diploma* and decrease in *dropouts* is attributed to efforts related to increasing postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities, which was identified as a priority area for the state by its Special Education Advisory Panel.

The increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities and all disabilities who *received-a-certificate* is due to reporting by the Department of Corrections, where students can earn a GED (reported as a *certificate*) rather than a *regular high school diploma*. This explains the overall increase in the *received-a-certificate* category.

The decrease in the number of students with mental retardation who *received-a-certificate* indicates a shift toward awarding *diplomas* rather than *certificates*. This is also related to the state's efforts toward increasing postsecondary outcomes.

The increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities *reaching maximum age* is due to reporting by the Department of Corrections.

Decreases in the multiple disabilities category for *graduated, moved known to be continuing* and *dropouts* are due to a shift in reporting by State Schools for the Severely Handicapped. In 2003-04, for the child count and exit data, all students were reported under the multiple disabilities category, but for 2004-05, all students were reported in the mental retardation category.

Increases in the number of students with OHI reported as *moved, known to be continuing* and *dropped out* are attributed to an overall increase in the number of students with OHI.

The increase in the number of students with speech/language impairments who *dropped out* is attributed to an overall increase in the number of students with speech/language impairments.

The decreases in the number of students with emotional disturbance and specific learning disabilities who *transferred to regular education* were seen in many districts across the state where decisions on the need for continuing services are made on a student-by-student basis.

The increase in the number of Hispanic students exiting special education corresponds with an increase in the number of Hispanic students receiving special education services in the state.

Montana—There were flags on 17 categories in this report that represent a significant change in data reported from 2004 to 2005. Exiting data for 2004 and for 2005 were disaggregated to the district level to determine if there were any districts that meet the criteria for significant change. In Montana, there were 450 school districts in 2004 and 446 in 2005. Total public school enrollment is under 150,000 students, with a special education child count of fewer than 20,000 students. Fifty-six percent of our schools have fewer than 100 students enrolled. The category *graduated with a regular high school diploma* increased for 2005. This is consistent with the emphasis in Montana to decrease *dropout* rates and increase *graduation* rates. Montana's focused intervention process specifically targets districts for intervention services using these data, and programs have been implemented at the district level to address these issues. There were seven districts in which the change in exiting data could be explained by a change in child count data.

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) has awarded a contract to a company for a student information system, data warehouse and special education records and information management system (SERIMS). It is anticipated that the system will be fully operational in the 2008-09 school year. When in place, the system will allow the OPI to use student-level data for reporting, which will enhance the validity and consistency of the data across programs.

Below are explanations for changes in the data:

- The state attributed the increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities *transferring to regular education* to one school district in Montana that showed a significant change between 2004 and 2005 of 11 students. This district converted to a student-level database system for all students in the district in the fall of 2004. Subsequent data reporting is believed to be more accurate.
- The state had an increase in the number of students with OHI who *graduated with a regular high school diploma*. There were 45 districts that reported data in this category for 2004 and/or 2005. A careful review of the data at the district level did not indicate any noticeable issues. Minor changes at the district level may have a significant change at the state level, but do not indicate a problem at the district level.
- The state attributed an increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities who *graduated with a regular high school diploma* to one district. In a review of the district's records, errors were found in the 2004 data. Those data will be corrected, and an amended 2004 exiting report will be submitted to OSEP.
- The state had an increase in the number of students with multiple disabilities who *graduated with a regular high school diploma*. Careful review of the data at the district level did not indicate any noticeable issues. Minor changes at the district level may roll up to a significant change at the state level, but do not indicate a problem at the district level.
- The state had an increase in the number of students with emotional disturbance and OHI who *moved, and are known to be continuing*. A careful review of the data at the district level did not indicate any noticeable issues. Minor changes at the district level may roll up to a significant change at the state level, but do not indicate a problem at the district level.
- The state had an increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities who *moved, and are known to be continuing*. Data for three school districts in Montana showed a significant change between 2004 and 2005. All three districts are large high school districts

that have issues of students transferring in and out from smaller high school districts in the surrounding area. This fluctuation of the data is not new. An additional factor may be the deletion of the exiting category of *moved, not known to be continuing* and the instructions that any students who would have previously been reported under this category should now be reported under the category of *dropped out*, which has prompted school districts to dig a little deeper when a student leaves to discover where the student goes.

- The state had an increase in the number of students with all disabilities who *moved, and are known to be continuing*. Data for four school districts in Montana showed a significant change between 2004 and 2005. Three of the districts have been discussed above. The fourth district was contacted and its data reviewed. Errors in the 2004 data will be corrected, and an amended 2004 exiting report submitted to OSEP.
- The total number of students with specific learning disabilities exiting for any reason increased. Data for nine school districts in Montana showed a significant change between 2004 and 2005. Two districts experienced an increase in child count of students with specific learning disabilities between 2004 and 2005 proportionate to the increase in exiting of students with specific learning disabilities. In one small district, there is frequent moving of students between this and two other districts, making data collection a challenge. This district will be targeted for technical assistance in this area in the future. In one district, there was a decrease in students exiting. A large part of that decrease was in students who *dropped out*. The district has implemented several new programs to target at-risk students and has successfully reduced its *dropout* rate.
- There was an increase in the number of Hispanic students exiting for any reason. While there were 40 districts that reported data in this category for 2004 and/or 2005, no district met the criteria for significant change. Minor changes at the district level may roll up to a significant change at the state level, but do not indicate a problem at the district level.
- There was an increase in the number of white students exiting for any reason. Data for 13 school districts in Montana showed a significant change between 2004 and 2005. The category covers 78 to 79 percent of all students who exited in 2004 and 2005. The other major category is American Indian (17 to 18 percent).

Nevada—Certificates in Nevada include an adjusted diploma for IEP students based upon IEP requirements, as well as students who *receive a certificate* of attendance because they have earned all units required for a *regular diploma* but cannot pass the High School Proficiency Examination.

The increase in number of students reported as *received-a-certificate* and the decrease in number of students reported as *received regular education diploma* is the result of the state's implementing a high-stakes exit examination. To receive a *regular high school diploma*, students must pass the examination. Although the exam was implemented in the 1980s, over time it has become more difficult to pass, particularly for students with disabilities. Cut scores have increased over time, and the content has been aligned to more rigorous standards for knowledge and skills partly in response to the standards-based reform initiatives begun in the 1990s and continuing through today under *No Child Left Behind*.

New Hampshire—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

New Jersey—The state explained individual year-to-year changes in the data as:

- The state attributed an increase in the number of students with speech or language impairments, OHI, specific learning disabilities or multiple disabilities *transferring to regular education* to the variation in the movement of students in these classifications (especially speech) from special education to regular education and vice versa from year-to-year. The state does not find the differences between the 2003-04 and 2004-05 data to be unusual or surprising.
- The state attributed a decrease in the number of students with emotional disturbance *transferring to regular education* to a statewide decrease over the past 5 years in students with emotional disturbance. The state expects that the overall number of students returning to regular education from year to year will also decrease. The percentage of students with emotional disturbance of all students with disabilities was 6.24 in 2001, 6.19 in 2002, 5.88 in 2003, 5.56 in 2004 and 5.25 in 2005. This suggests that of all students with disabilities, the percentage of students classified with emotional disturbance has been steadily decreasing. The percentage of students with emotional disturbance exiting special education was 16.0 in 2001, 14.8 in 2002, 15.9 in 2003 and 15.1 in 2004.
- The state attributed an increase in the number of students with speech or language impairments, OHI, multiple disabilities or autism *graduating with a regular high school diploma* to the state's increasingly working with districts to put into place policies and procedures that will help more students with disabilities graduate and do so with a *regular high school diploma*. Many of the efforts that are in place are having a positive effect as reflected in the trends above within the specific classification categories. The state recently invested resources in developing a data warehouse that assists statewide monitors in providing feedback to districts they are working with. The system allows monitors to use very specific data (such as graduation rates, discipline, disability counts, etc) in a way that was not as accessible and available in previous years. Monitors can work and share information with districts in new ways with this information. In addition, there is considerable emphasis to increase the number of students with disabilities who graduate with diplomas. This is more evident now with the requirements and statewide efforts of New Jersey's SPP and the goals and objectives set within.
- The state attributed a decrease in the number of students with orthopedic impairments and traumatic brain injury *graduating with a regular high school diploma* to the extremely small numbers involved and the likelihood of year-to-year fluctuations. The percentages of students exiting classified as having traumatic brain injury and orthopedic impairments are 1 percent and 0.1 percent, respectively. With such small percentages overall, it seems likely that there will be a fair amount of fluctuation when broken down by exiting reason. For this reason, the state suspects that this decrease is more likely the result of chance than trend.
- An increase in the number of students with speech or language impairments, emotional disturbance, OHI or multiple disabilities reported as *moved, known to be continuing* may be due to the relatively high transient nature of students in the classifications above (especially speech) moving from special education to regular education and vice versa. The state does not believe the differences between the 2003-04 and 2004-05 data to be unusual or surprising.
- The state attributed the increase in the number of students with hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, OHI, specific learning disabilities or multiple disabilities who *dropped out* to the overall annual increase in students with disabilities. In 2002, New Jersey reported 221,188 students with disabilities and 21,171 exiting. In 2003, the numbers were 225,837 students and 23,823 exiting. In 2004 there were 229,773 students with disabilities

and 25,536 exiting. The state believes that the increased number of students in certain categories is responsible for these increasing trends.

- The state attributed the decrease in the number of students with orthopedic impairments and traumatic brain injury *exiting for any reason* to an overall decrease in the number of students classified in these two categories from 2003-04 to 2004-05. The state believes this is reflected in the total numbers reported as exiting special education. Since 2000, traumatic brain injury and orthopedic impairments have been decreasing. Traumatic brain injury exits dropped from 3.03 percent of total exits in 2000 to 0.71 percent of exits in 2004. For orthopedic impairments, the percentage dropped from 0.31 in 2000 to 0.25 in 2004.
- The state attributed an increase in the number of American Indian, Asian and Hispanic students exiting for any reason to the fact that these racial groups are increasing substantially in the state population. The state believes that this increase will also be reflected in disability classifications for these groups.

New Jersey does not award *certificates-of-completion*. Students with disabilities who complete their IEPs are awarded diplomas and are included in the *graduated with a high school diploma* category. The state data collection cannot currently differentiate between graduates who met the goals and objectives of their IEPs and students who met the same graduation criteria as students without disabilities. This is inconsistent with the OSEP definition of *graduated with a high school diploma*.

New Mexico—The state had a decrease in the number of students *receiving a certificate*. New Mexico has three graduation pathways for students with disabilities. These options include the standard graduation pathway for all students and two alternative pathways, all leading to a *regular high school diploma*. For federal purposes, New Mexico is only allowed to report those students graduating on the standard graduation pathway as receiving a *regular diploma*. Students graduating on one of the alternative pathways are reported as *receiving a certificate* even though they exited with a *regular high school diploma*. State rules implemented in 2004-05 require districts to maintain an accurate accounting of students with disabilities graduating on an alternative pathway and limits the percentage of students exiting on the alternative options, thus reducing the number of students exiting with a *certificate*. Students are continuing their educational program beyond the standard number of years in order to graduate on the standard pathway, which will reduce the number of students *receiving a certificate* in a given year.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students who were reported as *moved, known to be continuing* to one district that reported a high mobility rate due to a military installation.

The state attributed the decrease in students who *dropped out* to one district that had a significant decrease in students *dropping out* for all disabilities. Another district had a significant increase in *dropouts* for students with specific learning disabilities.

The state attributed changes by ethnicity to four active military installations and one out-of-state installation (Fort Bliss Army Base borders New Mexico) that affect multiple districts that process students with disabilities within the United States and overseas. Districts providing educational services to military installations report high mobility rates, which directly affect all areas.

New York—The state noted a few individual districts counted for the majority of the change in the exiting categories. The state will monitor the data to look for further statewide trends and patterns that may emerge.

North Carolina—There was a significant decrease in the number of students with mental retardation who *dropped out* of high school. This decrease is due to more courses of study being made available to all high school students in North Carolina. Students now enter high school with a rigorous course of study that leads to acquisition of a *high school diploma*. In addition, with the statewide implementation of the four courses of study, there has also been an increased emphasis locally on provision of support, guidance/counseling and comprehensive transition services. By providing more comprehensive support services and alternate assessments, the number of students with mental retardation participating in the general curriculum has increased significantly. Greater participation in the general curriculum has resulted in slight increases in the number of students with mental retardation who can now meet requirements for *graduation with a regular high school diploma* versus *receiving a certificate*.

Over the past few years, the number of students identified as having a specific learning disability has consistently decreased. This may contribute to the significant increase in the OHI category. It appears that more and more children diagnosed with ADD and ADHD are being identified in the OHI category. Since many LEAs are implementing positive behavior support (PBS), there has been a decrease in the number of students identified as having behavioral-emotional disabilities who *dropped out* and an increase in the number of students in this group who *graduated with a regular high school diploma* and *received-a-certificate*.

North Dakota—North Dakota used a web-based student data collection system for the first time during the 2004-05 school year that incorporates unique student identifiers as the link to all special education section 618 data requirements. However, as exiting data are based on the previous school year, the web-based data collection system could not be used to collect exiting data for the 2003-04 school year. Therefore, the state is comparing student data that cross two different collection processes. Exiting data for the 2003-04 school year were collected via paper and pencil; the 2004-05 exiting data were electronically collected via the state On-Line Reporting System (ORS), which automatically populates various special education federal reporting data spreadsheets. The new system prevents the duplication of student records that the state has sometimes seen in the past due to excessive mobility of segments of the student population. It will take two to three years for all school districts to be adequately trained with the new system. North Dakota believes the exiting data collected electronically this year are considerably more accurate than the data collection processes from the past.

The state attributes a decrease in the number of students exiting in 2004-05 (19.4 percent) to an overall reduction in the number of students in special education from 2003-04 to 2004-05 (5.4 percent decrease).

Ohio—The decrease in the number of students reported as *graduating with a regular high school diploma* is the result of a change in how students who do not pass the high stakes exit exam are reported. The data for 2004-05 are the first time Ohio reported students who did not pass the exit exam in the *received-a-certificate* reporting category. In the past, students with disabilities who were excused from the consequences of this exam by their IEP teams were reported in the *regular diploma* category. In addition, the 1 percent of students with the most severe cognitive disabilities who took an alternate exam to receive a high school diploma were also previously reported in the *diploma* category. They are also now reported in the *received-a-certificate* category because they did not meet the same standards for *graduation* as students without disabilities.

Oklahoma—The state attributed year-to-year changes in its exit data to a change in the state's data reporting system. Prior to the 2004-05 reporting period, districts aggregated their exit totals for each disability category and race and reported the aggregate to the state. This year, districts reported individual child data (the same system by which the state collects child count information), and the state aggregated the counts electronically. The state believes that, as a result, the data are more accurate.

The state did not report students in the *received-a-certificate* category. Oklahoma state law prohibits graduation with certifications other than a *high school diploma*. All special education students who graduated were reported in the *graduated with a regular high school diploma* category, regardless of whether they met the same criteria for graduation as students without disabilities.

Oregon—The state has no reason to attribute to the decrease in the number of students with emotional disturbance who *transferred to regular education*. This change is normal fluctuation. The state will monitor the data to watch for future trends.

The state has had an increase in the number of students with OHI who *transferred to regular education* since 1997. The clarification (in *IDEA 97*) in the definition of OHI to include ADD/ADHD might have resulted in identification of a more mildly disabled population than previously identified as having OHI, which would mean that the students could benefit from a shorter duration in special education services and increased *transfer out to regular education*. This is supported by the data on the number of children eligible to receive services under the category of OHI. From the 2001-02 to 2005-06 school years, the number of students reported as eligible for OHI has increased by over 2,000, for an average increase of over 500 students per year. This increase, combined with statewide monitoring and technical assistance, has led to improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

The state has no reason to attribute to the decrease in the number of students with mental retardation, hearing impairments or orthopedic impairments who *graduated with regular high school diploma*. This change is normal fluctuation. The state will monitor the data to watch for future trends.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students with speech or language impairments who *graduated with a regular high school diploma* to one large district that significantly overreported the previous year. This was corrected in the 2004-05 data and accounts for the entire decrease in this area.

The state has had an increase in the number of students with emotional disturbance who *graduated with a regular high school diploma* since 1995. This change can be attributed to a state effort to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Educational outcomes are a major focus of Oregon's special education monitoring system, and districts are required to address any concerns in their improvement plans. Oregon also has a Transition Advisory Committee (a subcommittee of the State Advisory Committee for Special Education) that helps to coordinate training and technical assistance related to improving outcomes for students with disabilities throughout the state. In addition to statewide monitoring of special education programs and technical assistance, regular education requirements (e.g., high school reform efforts, school and district report cards, *NCLB* accountability, etc.) have led to an even greater focus on accurately reporting the exiting status of students with disabilities. This focus has led to improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

The state has no reason to attribute to the increase in the number of students with autism who *graduated with a regular high school diploma*. This change is normal fluctuation. The state will monitor the data to watch for future trends.

The state has had an increase in the number of students with mental retardation who *received-a-certificate* since 1995. This change can be attributed to a state effort to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

The state has no reason to attribute to the increase in the number of students with autism who *received-a-certificate*. This change is normal fluctuation. The state will monitor the data to watch for future trends.

The state had an increase in the number of students with speech/language impairments who *received-a-certificate* since 1995. This change can be attributed to a state effort to improve outcomes for students with disabilities

The state attributed the decrease in the number of students with OHI who *received-a-certificate* to a simultaneous increase in the number of students with OHI *transferring to regular education or graduating with a regular diploma*. The trend can be attributed to a state effort to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

The state has no reason to attribute to the increase in the number of students with autism who *reached maximum age*. This change is normal fluctuation. The state will monitor the data to watch for future trends.

The state has had an increase in the number of students with all disabilities who *reached maximum age* since 1995. During this same period, Oregon has had a severe fiscal crisis that resulted in very limited services for adults with disabilities. This in turn resulted in students staying in school longer to receive needed services. The decrease in services for adults with disabilities, combined with the efforts of the Transition Advisory Committee to coordinate training and provide technical assistance to districts throughout the state, has led to greater district capacity to provide services for students who are 18 to 21.

Oregon attributed the increase in the number of students with speech or language impairments or autism who *moved, and are known to be continuing* to one large district that reported an increase from 15 to 19.

Oregon attributed the increase in the number of students with emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities or OHI who *moved, and are known to be continuing* to one large district. In conversation with this district, it has improved its follow-up capacity.

Statewide, the number of students *dropping out* decreased across the vast majority of districts. This is because of a concerted effort to inform districts that *dropouts* and the old *moved, not known to continue* categories are used in monitoring. Also the state generated some new reports that assist the districts in locating students who have left their district but may be receiving services in other districts. Districts have been using this to find students who would otherwise have been coded as *dropped out*. Decreases occurred in the following disability categories: mental retardation, speech or language impairments, emotional disturbance, OHI, specific learning disabilities and all disabilities.

The state had no reason for the decrease in the number of students with hearing impairments or visual impairments who exited for any reason.

The state had no reason for the increase in the number of students with autism or traumatic brain injury who exited for any reason.

The state had no reason to attribute to the decrease in the number of American Indian/Alaska Native students who exited for any reason.

As per OSEP's instructions, students' ages were reported according to their age as of the child count prior to their exit. Prior to 2003-04, Oregon reported students according to their age at the time of exit.

Palau—Palau found that a significant number of students exited special education and *transferred to regular education*. The students no longer needed special education services. Others have left school for other reasons like graduating and family problems. Palau's students fall into the same race and ethnicity category, Asian or Pacific Islander.

Pennsylvania—The number of students with visual impairments who *transferred to regular education* decreased. This is a reflection of the positive impact of the effectiveness of the services provided through the visual impairment program in successfully transitioning students back to regular education. This is due to the natural fluctuations in this low-incidence population from year to year.

The number of students with orthopedic impairments who *transferred to regular education* decreased. This reflects the positive impact of the effectiveness of the special education services provided in successfully transitioning students back to regular education. This is due to the natural fluctuations in this low-incidence population from year to year.

The decrease of students with specific learning disabilities who *transferred to regular education* can be attributed to an increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities who *graduated with a regular high school diploma*. It is anticipated that fewer students would be *transferring to regular education* because of the rise in graduates. This is due to a statewide effort to increase graduates. A lot of emphasis in Pennsylvania is devoted to ensure all students receive an appropriate education following the Pennsylvania standards, which reflect *NCLB*.

The state attributes the increase in the number of students with hearing impairments, visual impairments, orthopedic impairments, OHI and traumatic brain injury *graduating with a regular high school diploma* is due to the natural fluctuations in this low-incidence population disability category. The state anticipates fluctuations on a year-to-year basis. The state anticipates a continued increase in the number of students with hearing impairments, visual impairments, orthopedic impairments, OHI or traumatic brain injury *graduating with a regular high school diploma*.

The state attributes the increase in the number of students with emotional disturbance *graduating with a regular high school diploma* to the continued efforts on behalf of the Bureau of Special Education of the Pennsylvania Department of Education SPP initiatives to ensure the graduation of students with disabilities with a *regular high school diploma*. The state anticipates seeing an increase in these numbers. The state anticipates the increase to be reflected in other disability categories in the future.

The state attributes the increase in the number of students with autism *graduating with a regular high school diploma* to the natural progression of students with autism approaching graduation. The rate of *autism* has increased significantly over the past five years; the state anticipates seeing this increase reflected in the *graduation rates* over the subsequent years.

The state attributes the increase in the number of students with mental retardation, emotional disturbance and specific learning disabilities *reaching the maximum age* to the natural fluctuations in this low-incidence population disability category. The state anticipates fluctuations on a year-to-year basis.

The state has no reason to attribute to the decrease in the number of students with emotional disturbance and specific learning disabilities *dying*. These circumstances are outside of the control of Bureau of Special Education of the Pennsylvania Department of Education and will reflect the natural fluctuation of this population during any given year.

The state attributes the increase in the number of students with hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, emotional disturbance, OHI or traumatic brain injury who *moved, and are known to be continuing* to the elimination of the previous category of moved, not known to be continuing and the subsequent requirement for greater accountability on this reporting item. The state anticipates that this trend will continue.

The state attributes the decrease in the number of students with mental retardation, hearing impairments, emotional disturbance, OHI or specific learning disabilities *dropping out* to the significant efforts of the SPP initiatives to improve dropout prevention. The state anticipates this trend to continue as the state attempts to have more students continue on education through *dropout* prevention. This initiative is part of the training of stakeholders on the Pennsylvania SPP.

Rhode Island—During the 2003-04 school year, 79 students with speech/language impairments *transferred to regular education* as all of their IEP objectives were met. In 2004-05, there were 110 students who *transferred to regular education*. There was an increase of 31 students who *transferred to regular education* from 2003-04 or a 39.24 percent increase. This was an improvement and was a result of progress monitoring toward moving students to achieve all of the goals on their IEP.

During the 2003-04 school year, there were 303 students with specific learning disabilities. During the 2004-05 school year, there were 272 students with specific learning disabilities. There was a decrease of 31 students or a 10.23 percent decrease from the previous school year. As fewer students are designated statewide in this category of specific learning disabilities and the numbers continue to decrease, the number of students exiting will also go down.

During the 2003-04 school year, there were 262 students in the 12th grade identified as mentally retarded. Out of those initial 262 students, 189 of them continued onto the next school year. Forty-eight of the 12th graders in the mentally retarded category *graduated with a regular high school diploma*. Sixteen students of the 12th graders who were classified as mentally retarded left school because they *reached the maximum age*. Nine of the 12th grade students classified as mentally retarded *dropped out*. Seventy-three students were eligible to *graduate with a regular diploma*. There were no students reported in the 12th grade who *received-a-certificate* instead of a diploma. During the 2004-05 school year, there were 292 students identified with mental retardation in the 12th grade. Out of those initial 292 students, 230 of these 12th graders continued onto the next school year. Thirty-five of the 12th graders *graduated with a regular high school diploma*. Thirteen students of the 12th graders left school because they *reached the maximum age*. Fourteen of the 12th grade students *dropped out*. Forty-nine students were eligible to *graduate with a regular diploma*. There were no students reported in the 12th grade who *received-a-certificate* instead of a diploma. Comparing the number of eligible students in the 12th grade who were mentally retarded and who were eligible to *graduate with a regular high school diploma*, in 2003-04 there were 73 students eligible and in 2004-05 there were 62 students eligible. The state is unable to explain why the change occurred in the data.

There was a decrease in the number of students with emotional disturbance *graduating with a regular high school diploma*. The number of students reported for 2005 for the December 1 child count decreased from 2004, so there are fewer students to graduate. The decrease in this category could be attributed to the shift from some students who were previously reported as having emotional disturbance and are now reported as having autism.

South Carolina—The state attributed the significant changes in the number of exiting students reported in the exiting data report to the inability of its Statewide Student Information Systems to accurately capture these data. Districts are collecting and managing these data differently and, thus, reporting from year to year varies. The state is implementing a statewide Special Education Software Package for the 2006-07 school year and will be able to more accurately capture these data, which is anticipated to improve the data reporting.

South Dakota—South Dakota has a new data manager who was not involved in the collection and/or reporting of the 2003-04 exiting data. South Dakota cannot fully explain the annual changes between the 2003-04 exiting data and the 2004-05 exiting data. The state did not change the category, definition or the

method of collecting data. In reviewing the data for 2002-03, the numbers are more consistent with the data reported for 2004-05. In order to receive accurate data from the local districts, South Dakota has developed a training tool that will be used with districts in the fall of 2006 to ensure that the district personnel who are encoding data into the Student Information Management System (SIMS) understand all current coding requirements and vocabulary. South Dakota will also be reviewing district data for changes annually. An initial live training for SIMS data coordinators is scheduled to be held on October 5, 2006. This training will be replicated and made available to all districts via Dakota Digital Network presentations, video streaming or Web-X. The state will post training materials on the web following the preliminary training. The state is also putting additional information into the fall SIMS newsletter, which will include links to the data dictionary and updated information that district personnel need to know. This SIMS newsletter is published at least twice a year.

Tennessee—The increases in the number of students with mental retardation, speech or language impairments, OHI, specific learning disabilities and all disabilities who *graduated with a regular high school diploma* and the decrease in the number of students with speech or language impairments who *received-a-certificate* are attributed to the expansion of efforts by LEAs to provide inclusive education to students with disabilities and efforts to close the student achievement gap under *NCLB*. This includes the awareness work conducted by the Tennessee Closing the Achievement Gap statewide task force. These same efforts appear to have contributed somewhat to the increase in the number of students with speech or language impairments, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, specific learning disabilities and all disabilities who *transferred to regular education* and, as an unintended consequence, to the increase in the number of students with speech or language impairments, emotional disturbance, OHI, specific learning disabilities, multiple disabilities and all disabilities who *dropped out*.

Improved LEA followup on transient students and continued improvement in the accuracy of reporting data for transient students account for the increase in the number of students with mental retardation, speech or language impairments, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, OHI, specific learning disabilities and all disabilities who were reported as *moved, known to be continuing*. The elimination of the *moved, not known to be continuing* exit category appears to have helped encourage LEAs to do better followup on transient students and also significantly increased the state's count of students who *dropped out*.

The decreases in the number of students with hearing impairments who *graduated with a regular high school diploma* and those who exited for any reason is attributed in part to the Tennessee School for the Deaf's implementation of a secondary/postsecondary school program to provide students with hearing impairments and deafness more specialized transition training before they exit the high school education setting.

No policy or program change was identified that may have led to the decrease in the number of students with mental retardation *transferring to regular education*.

Texas—The state anticipates continued positive increases in graduation rates long term for all students as a result of statewide activities such as the implementation of the state-required Personal Graduation Plan (beginning with the 2003-04 school year) for students at risk of not graduating. These statewide efforts have increased the number of students who *graduated with a regular diploma* and decreased the number of students who *dropped out*.

Texas reported that its 2004-05 exit data are actually for the 2003-2004 school year.

Students with disabilities who *received a regular high school diploma*, but did not meet the same standards for graduation as students without disabilities are reported as *received-a-certificate*.

The state imputed the disability category of 1,243 exiting students with disabilities. These students did not have a recorded disability category because of difficulties merging different databases. The state imputed disability for these students based on the distribution of the disabilities of students with the same exit reason whose disabilities were known. The state estimated disability data in the following categories:

- Graduating with a regular high school diploma (439),
- Received-a-certificate (162),
- Died (8),
- Moved, known to be continuing (450), and
- Dropped out (184).

Utah

- The decrease in the number of students *transferring to regular education* is only 51 students and varies from year to year. The reason for the decrease is unknown.
- The state had some difficulty with the data collection accuracy for *graduation with a diploma* and *receiving a certificate* as the state is shifting to an electronic collection of these data. Utah believes this will be corrected in the 2005-06 data collection.
- Students who *die* vary from year to year, and the state has no reason to question these data.
- The overall exiting numbers in all categories have decreased in 2005 due to the state transition to an electronic collection. Utah believes this decrease will level off in the years to come.

Vermont—Overall, Vermont reported a reduction of 25.67 percent, from 2,002 to 1,488 students, in the number of students reported as exiting special education. This decrease is attributable to a new data edit check that was implemented to ensure that all students reported as exited from special education were not also in special education elsewhere within Vermont (the reporting catchment area) at the end of the reporting period.

As a result of this new data collection methodology, there were significant decreases in the number of students reported as exited in every disability category: mental retardation, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, emotional disturbance, OHI and specific learning disabilities. These data will be used as the baseline for comparison for future significant changes in exiting students across disability categories.

The reporting period of the exiting data is December 2003 to December 2004.

Virgin Islands—The increase in the reported number of students with specific learning disabilities and all disabilities who *graduated with a regular high school diploma* resulted from more students with disabilities participating in the regular curriculum with modifications and accommodations.

A decrease in the reported number of students with all disabilities who were reported as *moved, known to be continuing* resulted from students exiting, returning to the territory, and reregistering.

The increase in the number of students with mental retardation who exited for any reason resulted from *graduation with diplomas* or *received-a-certificate*, parent/student withdrawals, *reached maximum age*, and *moved, known to be continuing* in other school districts.

Virginia—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Washington—Washington did not submit 2004-05 exiting data.

West Virginia—The state revised its exit data collection procedures to ensure consistency of data reported to meet accountability requirements under *NCLB* and *IDEA*, Part B. The state data collection for dropouts and graduates for general education and students with disabilities have been merged. In addition to separate data verifications previously conducted for each report, the two data collections are now cross-checked. Districts and the state correct any discrepancies between the two data sources. This has improved the accuracy of both reports.

The state reported that some students who received a GED may be included in the *received-a-certificate* category. According to OSEP's reporting instructions, these students should have been reported as *dropouts*.

Wisconsin—Some of the changes in the exiting data can be attributed to the fact that there were more students overall ages 14 through 21 during the 2004-05 school year (Wisconsin report year of December 1, 2003, through December 1, 2004) rather than the 2003-04 school year (Wisconsin report year of December 1, 2002, through December 1, 2003). Many of the changes in the data are positive for the state. The graduation gap is one of the focused monitoring indicators for the state, so attention is given to the *graduation* and *dropout* data. In 2004-05, the state had an overall increase in both the number of students who *dropped out* and the number who *graduated with a regular high school diploma*.

Because the current exiting special education reporting system is limited to a catchment area of the LEA, the *moved, known to be continuing* category is a catch-all category. Wisconsin has developed a new exiting reporting system that will be able to expand the catchment area across the state.

The data reported for 2004-05 are actually for the reporting period from December 1, 2003, through December 1, 2004. The catchment area is the LEA.

Wyoming—The state has been critically looking at the accuracy of state data submitted over the last two years and has discovered some mapping and definition errors in the state's internal databases. The state is currently continuing work to resubmit corrected data, but because this is a complicated study and the state has had a turnover in staff, this process has been difficult to complete. The state was unable to submit corrected data prior to the snapshot deadline for the *29th Annual Report to Congress*. The state believes that the changes in exiting data have a great deal to do with more accurate data definitions and better followup between the SEA and LEA. The state plans on continuing to resubmit data to get better historical data recorded.

Tables 5-1 Through 5-4: IDEA Part B Discipline, 2004-05

Alabama—Alabama attributes the increases to better reporting of discipline data via a statewide, electronic student-level information management system. The state has had increases in the number of:

- Children unilaterally removed to interim alternative educational settings;
- Children suspended for more than 10 days;
- Children with single suspensions/expulsions more than 10 days; and
- Children with multiple short-term suspensions/expulsions summing to more than 10 days.

Alaska—Alaska is in its second year of gathering and reporting discipline data through an on-line, student-level, incident-level reporting tool. Prior to 2003-04, Alaska collected aggregate discipline data from districts. Alaska collects these data for all students, not just for special education students. A unique student identifier is used in the database, and no names are stored. As the result of data entry errors in the identifier, the state continues to have difficulty determining which students in the discipline database are special education students. However, the state believes it increased the accuracy of these data for the 2004-05 submission. As the result of less data entry error, more students in the discipline database were identified as students with disabilities. Although it appears that the number of students with disabilities subject to disciplinary action increased, the state believes that this actually reflects an undercount in past reports.

Alaska has redesigned the data entry screens for the 2005-06 data submissions. This redesign will allow the person keying the data to see the student's name and demographics associated with the student identifier. This will help the person entering see immediately if an incorrect student ID has been entered (the wrong student name will show up) and be able to correct the error. The person entering the data will also no longer have to key the demographic data, thus reducing the number of errors. The state reported that modifications to the student ID(s) will also allow Alaska to improve data for calculating *multiple short-term suspensions*.

Arkansas—Arkansas implemented a school-based mental health network in 2004-05, decreasing the number of behavioral incidents leading to long-term suspension/expulsion. As a result, the number of *suspensions more than 10 days* has decreased by 16 percent.

Bureau of Indian Affairs—The BIA attributes the increase in the number of *suspensions/expulsions* and *unilateral removals* to two agencies that reported suspensions in all categories significantly above the BIA average.

California—California notes a review of local data indicates that the differences are based on accurate reporting, and they are normal data variations. The change in data is due to improvements in the data system of one of the largest school districts in the state.

The state noted the increase in the number of students *unilaterally removed for drug offenses to an interim alternative educational* setting is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the decrease in the number of students *unilaterally removed for weapon offenses to an interim alternative educational* setting is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

The state noted the decrease in the number of students with *multiple short-term suspensions summing to more than 10 days* is due to normal variations in the data. The data were reported accurately and reflect what has been reported at the student level.

Colorado—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Connecticut—In the 2004-05 data collection, all offenses resulting in an out-of-school suspension were collected. This allowed school districts to report incidents that would normally go unreported on the ED166 Disciplinary Offense Data Collection. Prior to 2004-05, out-of-school suspensions were collected for only a subset of incident types, i.e., serious offense. Adding this new offense type to the state data

collection allowed for accurate reporting of all out-of-school suspension by school districts. This explains the overall increase in the number of suspensions reported on the 2004-05 discipline table to OSEP. The change in reporting resulted in an increase in the number of:

- Children removed to an interim alternative educational setting based on a hearing officer determination regarding likely injury,
- Unduplicated count of children suspended or expelled for more than 10 days, and
- Number of children with multiple suspensions/expulsions summing to more than 10 days.

Delaware—Increases in the number of students and incidents of *suspensions or expulsions for more than ten days* is attributed to additional training on reporting of incidents and improved reporting by the districts.

District of Columbia—The District of Columbia is continuing to investigate why the numbers reported on the discipline table for 2004-05 are lower than the numbers reported on the discipline table in 2003-04. The District is continuing to review the discrepancies presented on the tables.

Florida—In general, the numbers are very small (increases of less than 30 students statewide). The state attributes the increases in the number of *children unilaterally removed to an interim alternative educational setting*, *children unilaterally removed to an interim alternative educational setting for weapons* and the number of *suspensions for more than 10 days* to increased zero tolerance policies in schools.

Georgia—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Guam—Guam attributed the increase in the number of students who were *unilaterally removed* and the number of *unilateral removal for drugs* to very overcrowded high schools and serious drug problems. Guam has had an ongoing challenge to improve the discipline data collection component of Guam Public School System's data system.

Guam attributed the decrease in the number of students *suspended* and the number of *multiple short-term suspensions* to schools that are providing more in-school suspension options rather than excluding students. The change has resulted in a decrease in greater-than-10-day suspensions.

Hawaii—The state attributed the increase in the number of *children with multiple suspensions/expulsions summing to more than 10 days* to a new report. A new suspension report was developed to provide the schools with data on their special education *students expelled or suspended more than 10 days*. Schools monitor and verify these data. The state expects increased accuracy of these data as districts acquire further training on monitoring this report. Due to monthly reports on discipline for special education students, administrators are inputting data on a more consistent basis.

Idaho—Reductions in numbers of *students suspended* may be the result of Idaho's ongoing provision of Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) training. PBS training is contracted by the Idaho State Department of Education through the University of Idaho and is made available to schools and districts without cost.

Originally, PBS activities focused on problem-solving activities and writing a behavior intervention plan for a specific student who presented staff with exceptionally challenging behaviors. PBS training has progressed over the years and is now directed toward entire schools or districts, including both general and special educators and administrators, and is increasing staff capacity to proactively deal with

challenging behaviors. The result is that discipline referrals and suspensions have been significantly reduced.

Illinois—The increase in discipline data may be attributed to data coding and input issues. Due to the concerns about the validity of the LEAs' discipline data, Illinois is providing continued training on how to accurately report the data.

Iowa—The state attributes the year-to-year changes in the discipline data to changes in Iowa's data collection procedures. In 2003-04, discipline events were reported by LEAs to Area Education Agencies (AEAs) and then summarized and sent to the state department. In 2004-05, the process was computerized, with LEAs directly uploading discipline events from their student information systems to the new state student-by-student database.

Kansas—More often, school staff are making the connection between improved student outcomes and behavior that results in *suspensions and expulsions*. Increased accountability in meeting AYP and proficiency goals have prompted educators to consider alternative discipline practices for all students; as a result, all discipline categories have decreased.

Kentucky—The state attributes the decrease in the number of suspensions to the CHAMPS program. CHAMPS is a school-wide behavior management system. In 2004-05, Kentucky middle schools completed their second year of CHAMPS Implementation, and selected high schools introduced the schoolwide behavior management program.

The decrease in the number of students reported as *suspended/expelled for more than 10 days* is the result of data from one district. Details affecting specific changes are below.

Kentucky addressed specific changes in the data:

- *Removal for drugs*: The state attributed the increase in the number of *removals for drugs* to Kentucky statute, which is more restrictive than federal law in removing children to an interim alternative educational setting regardless of the reason. A change in 10 students from year to year, although representing a high percentage, is not a substantial number indicative of a trend or concern.
- *Children suspended and multiple short-term suspensions*: The state attributed a decrease in the number of students suspended to Kentucky's largest district. The district has been actively monitoring school suspension rates for many years. Since 2002-03, the district reported increasing its monitoring efforts by having a retired administrator call schools and review the suspension records of every student suspended over five days during the school year. This ongoing monitoring increased focus on these students and has significantly affected suspension rates.

Louisiana—The state attributed the decrease in the number of *unilateral removals for weapons* for 2004-05 to an increase in the number of security staff in schools. There has also been additional training of security staff. The training is conducted by individual schools and districts. The training is conducted at the LEA and school level and varies between districts. The training has reinforced discipline guidelines.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of *suspensions and expulsions greater than 10 days* and those *summing to 10 days* or more to holding schools accountable for FAPE requirements of *IDEA* and the required manifestation determination reviews. The state has a state and local level monitoring system, and LEAs conduct self-reviews.

Maine—Maine reports that students in special education with specific learning disabilities and students with emotional needs have had the greatest number of suspensions and expulsions. The state attributes a decline in suspensions and expulsions to a decline in these two disabilities.

The state attributes a decline in incidences involving drugs and weapons to a culture change plus the focus of the work being done by the Safe and Drug Free consulting staff and the technical assistance provided to LEAs. The state has reported that with the preponderance of drugs in schools and threats of violence, i.e., shootings and bomb scares, there is an increase in awareness of behaviors that might lead to these incidences. Consequently, schools have hired law enforcement officers for the school to address these problems. Many schools still employ resource officers for their schools. Safe and Drug Free funding intended to affect these areas, special education funding alternatives for special education students and more training in the area of school climate (bullying, under-age drinking, etc.), have affected the schools in a positive way.

Safe and Drug Free consulting staff are collecting better data, and those data are being used by districts to plan change. The Safe and Drug Free consultants are assisting districts in the use and interpretation of the data and information provided in a positive and constructive way.

Maryland—Maryland attributes an increase in the number of *children unilaterally removed* to the Maryland State Department of Education conducting intensive suspension data audits at the local school system level over the past several years to improve the accuracy of reporting *unilateral removals*. This increase reflects an improvement in the accuracy level of such reporting brought about as a result of corrective action plans and improvement plans. For example, between March 2004 and August 2005, suspension record reviews were conducted in seven local school systems. A total of 258 records were reviewed in this process. The state is planning to conduct such reviews for at least five additional local school systems prior to September 2006.

Maryland attributes a decrease in the *unduplicated count of children suspended for more than 10 days* and the *number of children suspended for more than 10 days* to the Maryland State Department of Education's commitment to continued implementation of positive behavior interventions and supports training provided to all Maryland local school systems. Currently, 289 school teams are trained and actively functioning, including 94 teams trained during the summer of 2005. The schools represent all 24 local school systems in Maryland. Since 1999, we have trained 150 behavior support coaches to provide leadership and support to local school teams. It is anticipated that as many as 75 additional school teams will be trained during the summer of 2006.

Massachusetts—The 2003-04 discipline data included *students with suspensions more than 10 days* in the *number of children with multiple suspensions/expulsions summing to more than 10 days*. As a result, the data for 2003-04 are higher in the *unduplicated count of children* and the *number of single suspensions/expulsions more than 10 days* than the data in the 2004-05 data submission. The state has removed the cases where students were suspended for more than 10 days and only counted occurrences of 10 days or less to determine if the student should be counted in the *number of children with multiple suspensions/expulsions summing to more than 10 days*.

The 2004-05 data in the *number of single suspensions/expulsions for more than 10 days* is consistent with the data the state submitted in 2003-04.

Michigan—The state had a decrease in the number of students who were *unilaterally removed* and an increase in the number of students who were *removed by hearing officers*. The CIMS has worked with districts to maintain better records on students with disabilities who are *unilaterally removed* or *removed by a hearing officer*. As part of CIMS, Focused Monitoring (FM) practices have worked to help schools

better identify and report on students removed from typical educational environments. In addition, CIMS also provides assistance to schools in improving policies and practices related to student removals.

Michigan had a decrease in students who were *unilaterally removed for drugs or weapons to an interim alternative educational setting by school personnel*. The state attributed the decrease in the number of students with disabilities removed for drugs and weapons to:

- An increase in the unduplicated count of children suspended;
- An increase in the number of suspensions more than 10 days;
- An increase in multiple short-term suspensions.

The OSE/EIS has implemented discipline data verification practices to ensure that schools are properly recording and reporting suspensions of students with disabilities. For example, we contacted those schools that had reported either zero suspensions/expulsions of students with disabilities or left these data fields blank in order to verify discipline data. Those schools that have significantly high numbers of students with disabilities who accrued *multiple suspensions that equaled greater than 10 days* and/or who had high numbers of students with disabilities who received a *single suspension greater than 10 days* will be subject to focused monitoring. These schools' discipline practices/policies will be closely reviewed, and they will be asked to implement practices to reduce these numbers.

Minnesota—The number of students reported for disciplinary incidents in 2004-05 has increased from 2003-04. The Minnesota Department of Education attributes the increase to a statewide implementation of a new data collection system that has increased accountability built into the reporting process. LEAs that had not entered data into the 2004-05 system were personally contacted by the Minnesota Department of Education in order to ensure that all students and incidents were reported. The data collection system was open until mid-November of 2005 in order to allow all LEAs to enter the 2004-05 data. The Minnesota Department of Education believes this new system more accurately reflects the actual incidence of disciplinary actions than data prior to 2004-05.

Mississippi—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Missouri—Discipline policies vary from district to district and are under district control. Due to the local control of discipline policies, it is not known if the changes in reporting from the 2003-04 school year in several categories are due to actual changes in the types of discipline incidents or the policy dealing with the incidents. Also, discipline data reported by large school districts will be amended, but it is not yet known what impact the changes will have on these data.

Montana—Montana attributed a decrease in the *unduplicated count of children unilaterally removed to an interim alternative educational setting by school personnel for weapons or drugs*, an increase in the *unduplicated count of children suspended or expelled a single time for greater than 10 days* and *children suspended short-term (10 days or less) multiple times during the year that sum to greater than 10 days* and an increase in the *number of children with multiple suspensions/expulsions summing to more than 10 days* to inconsistency and inaccuracies in data reporting at the level of individual districts. Montana is in the process of developing a statewide student-level database system that will replace many of the individual data collection systems currently being used, including the school discipline application. This system will increase the accuracy of the data reported on students with disabilities. The new system is expected to be fully operational by the 2008-09 school year.

Nebraska—The state noted data submission training and support has increased accuracy of district data. The Nebraska State Improvement Grant has implemented positive behavioral supports in school districts that included the two largest systems. The decrease in disciplinary actions is attributed to increased use of positive behavioral supports. The state has had a decrease in the number of all incidents reported.

Nevada—The state attributed a decrease in the number of *single suspensions of more than 10 days* and the increase in the number of *multiple short-term suspensions* to local-level policy decisions about the length of time for suspensions. The data suggest that different policy decisions are being made within school districts for offenses that do not involve drugs or weapons.

The increase in numbers of Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native students *suspended or expelled for more than 10 days* are for small populations and are therefore particularly sensitive to what are in fact very small numerical increases.

The increase in Hispanic students and decrease in white students *removed for weapons offenses* may reflect patterns of gun-possession activities connected with juvenile crime, but further analysis would be required. The data changes are not the result of changes in policies or procedures or in data collection methods.

New Mexico—The state updated the data shortly after the deadline because the state was awaiting accurate data and information at the LEA level to ensure the data reported were valid with a high confidence level. The updated data were not included in the *Annual Report to Congress*. In comparing the 2004-05 and 2005-06 child count tables and the specific district data submitted with regard to *removals for drugs and weapons*, one district has incorrectly reported the number of removals; these data were not corrected in time for the *Annual Report to Congress*.

The district had incorrectly reported:

- Removals for drugs for 2004-05: 1,322 students;
- Removals for weapons for 2004-05: 1,313 students.

The district was contacted and provided the corrected data as follows:

- Removals for drugs for 2004-05: 13 students;
- Removals for weapons for 2004-05: 5 students.

Corrected statewide totals are as follows:

- Removal for drugs: 645;
- Removals for weapons: 202.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of *students suspended or expelled for more than 10 days* and the number of *multiple-short-term suspensions summing to more than 10 days* to:

- Districts utilizing functional behavior assessments to identify problem behaviors and designing behavior intervention plans to address the behaviors;
- Districts utilizing behavior intervention plans in lieu of suspensions for less serious rule infractions;

- Statewide initiative positive behavior support provides schoolwide intervention training for staff, including administrators;
- Triennial and Directors Academy have included professional development training for district special education directors; and
- An increase in the use of social work services to provide support for students who may exhibit behaviors that would otherwise result in a discipline referral.

The state attributes the increase in the number of *single suspensions or expulsions for more than 10 days* to districts utilizing the interim alternative educational setting option for students in order to continue to provide special education services. This gives the district time to complete any evaluations or gather additional information that the IEP team will need in order to determine the appropriate service and setting for the student.

New York—The state attributed the decrease in the number of students *unilaterally removed* to one school district. The state attributed the decrease in the number of students *unilaterally removed for drugs* to one school district. The state attributed the decrease in the number of students *removed by a hearing officer* to one school district. The state attributed the increase in the number of *children suspended* to two school districts. The state attributed the increase in the number of *suspensions more than 10 days* to one school district. During 2005-06, this district was required to engage in a self-review of its suspension procedures. The state attributed the increase in the number of *multiple short-term suspensions* to three school districts. The state will monitor the data for statewide trends.

The state attributed the increase in the number of black students and white students *unilaterally removed* to one school district. The state attributed the decrease in the number of black students *removed by a hearing officer* to one agency that revised its definition for reporting in this category to make it consistent with reporting instructions. The state attributed the increase in the number of black, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian *children suspended* to three school districts. The state attributed the increase in the number of black, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian students with *suspensions more than 10 days* to one school district. During 2005-06, this district was required to engage in a self-review of its suspension procedures. The state attributed the increase in the number of black, Hispanic and Asian students with *multiple short-term suspensions* to three school districts. The state will monitor the data for statewide trends.

Ohio—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Oklahoma—The observed changes from 2003-04 to 2004-05 were likely the result of several edit checks that were added to the online reporting system. Therefore, the Oklahoma State Department of Education is confident that the data submitted to the U.S. Department of Education are an accurate portrayal of the discipline data for special education students.

Oregon—Oregon has revised the discipline collection for 2005-06. This new system is a student-level system for the collection of discipline data for all students. This has come about, in part, to address inconsistencies in the *IDEA* aggregate discipline collection that existed through 2004-05. This collection affects the categories *unduplicated count of children unilaterally removed to an interim alternative educational setting*, *removals for weapons to an interim alternative educational setting* and *children removed by hearing officer*. This decrease was due to several districts that in the past had misunderstood the definition of “hearing officer” and incorrectly reported incidences in this category that should have been reported in a different category. This was corrected for the 2004-05 school year, which correctly

reported no incidence of *removal by a hearing officer*. The students are now reported in whichever category is appropriate to the type of removal in question.

The student-level data system also affected the *unduplicated count of children suspended for more than 10 days, number of suspensions/expulsions for more than 10 days and multiple short-term suspensions summing to more than 10 days*.

Pennsylvania—The Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education continues collaborating with the Violence and Safe Schools Office to improve the quality of the state’s discipline data. Data are verified at the intermediate unit, contractor and state levels for accuracy. The data reported for the 2005-06 are accurate. They reflect the fact that the population reported for this table fluctuates from year to year.

Rhode Island—The state attributed an increase in the number of students *suspended or expelled for more than 10 days* to the integration and refinement of a statewide student identifier system with the state’s data collection process.

South Carolina—The state attributed the significant changes in the number of students reported in the discipline data report to the inability of the Statewide Student Information Systems to capture these data. Districts are collecting and managing these data differently, and thus, reporting from year to year varies. The state is implementing a statewide Special Education Software Package for the 2006-07 school year and will be able to accurately capture these data and anticipates an improvement.

South Dakota—The state attributed an increase in the number of *multiple short-term suspensions* to two large districts.

One district had a substantial increase in the number of students who transferred to a school within the district. Many of the students had IEPs from their former schools and contributed to the increase in suspensions. When students move into a new district they have to deal with new friends, new teachers, new curriculum and new rules. The students moving into this district had a difficult time adjusting. Normally, districts do not have such a substantial increase in students moving into a district.

Another district attributed the increase in suspensions to changes in both the middle school and high school handbooks and a change in staffing (vice-principal) at the high school level. The new vice-principal took a consistent stance on dealing with infractions. Prior to 2004-05, there was a fairly flexible hierarchy of discipline options. The previous principal was inconsistent in the number of days he would assign for suspensions. In 2004-05, the new principal enacted a more equitable system. For example, a student’s first fight may receive a 2-day suspension, the second a 4-day suspension, etc. For those repeat offenders the total number of days increased, causing a total increase in the overall numbers.

The listing of infractions also increased in the state. Prior to 2004-05, the state did not have viable cell phone service. In 2004-05, the state got service, so the number of infractions dealing with cell phone usage increased dramatically.

There was also an increase in the number of staff that were available to patrol school grounds. This also accounted for an increase in the number of students caught smoking or skipping class.

Tennessee—The state attributes the decrease in the number of *unilateral removals for weapons to an interim alternative setting* to an effect of multiple projects being conducted through the SEA’s Tennessee School Safety Center, including the No Bullying program and the Yes to Kids 2004 program that provided training to school resource officers, counselors and others.

Texas—The number of *removals by hearing officer* has decreased in the state because the number of decisions by hearing officer has decreased. The increase in *multiple short-term suspensions* may be attributed to the addition of disciplinary action codes to the annual federal data report.

Utah—The state sees positive behavior intervention emphasis making a big difference in state schools. This is an increased effort to get more schools and districts involved in this behavior initiative. The state has seen decreases in the number of suspensions and expulsions where this initiative has been implemented. Teachers are learning to deal more positively with students on a daily basis, thus relationships are improved and disciplinary problems have decreased. The state is also emphasizing better reporting of all discipline issues through a reporting program called RISEP, which is an electronic data collection system that can at any time report expulsions, suspensions, weapon incidents, etc.

Virginia—The state had year-to-year numeric changes greater than 10 and more than 10 percent in one or more categories for these data. The state did not provide a data note explaining why the change occurred.

Washington—Districts must review their 618 discipline data and determine activities in this area annually in their application for federal flow-through funds. Many activities the districts include in the plan are to continually provide training to staff (some districts multiple times during the school year) on behavioral intervention plans/functional behavioral assessments and appropriate behavior plans for students in special education programs. Safe schools have become a priority for all students, not just special education students, so an overall decrease is starting to become apparent on a district by district case.

Additionally, a couple of the districts had significant declines in the *unduplicated count of children unilaterally removed to an interim alternative educational settings by school personnel*, the number of *unilateral removals for drugs* and the number of *suspensions or expulsions for more than 10 days*. These districts are those that have participated in the BEACONS project (Behavioral and Emotional Assessment and Curriculum for the Ongoing Needs of Students with or At-Risk of Developing Emotional Disturbance). This federal grant was originally funded in 1998 but has grown and received more state support so as to be implemented in more schools statewide. This has been a slow process, but the state has a decline in the number of suspensions/expulsions for all students in some of those districts.

Additional schools have been trained and will begin implementing positive behavior supports, so the state hopes to see a steady decline in suspension/expulsion referrals as that program develops in those sites. This is a project/goal within Washington's State Improvement Grant (SIG).

Wisconsin—The state had a decrease in the number of *children unilaterally removed to an interim alternative educational setting* and a decrease in the number of *unilateral removals for drugs*. *Unilateral removals by school personnel to an interim alternative educational setting (IAES)* seem to be incident specific. Approximately the same number of LEAs *unilaterally removed students to an IAES* during the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years, but of those LEAs, only one-third *unilaterally removed students to an IAES* two years in a row. For the majority of LEAs, it is one or two students that are being *unilaterally removed to an IAES*. The largest district in the state reports the greatest number of students *unilaterally removed to an IAES*. This district reported 10 fewer students as being *unilaterally removed to an IAES* for the 2005-06 school year. With fewer overall *unilateral removals* during the 2005-06 school year as compared to the prior year, it can be expected that the number of incidents (drug or weapon related) would also be less than the prior year.

In comparing the 2004-05 discipline data to the 2003-04 discipline data, there were fewer students overall that had a *single suspension/expulsion more than 10 days*. For the 2005-06 school year, the state will provide LEAs with summary reports of the discipline data submitted. For the 2006-07 school year, the

state is rewriting its discipline data collection to be student/incident specific versus the current aggregate reporting. The state will monitor the data for changes or trends.

Wyoming—Wyoming attributed the increase in the number of *students who were suspended* and the increase in the number of *suspensions for more than 10 days* to reporting at a large district. The district tightened its attendance and discipline policies and put an increased effort in the collection and reporting of the discipline data. This change was implemented at the start of the 2004-05 school year (September 2004). The district held a meeting at the beginning of the 2004-05 school year to ensure that all building administrators and district administrators were aware of the expectations for recording disciplinary events. It also revised its student conduct policy on June of 2004 and revised its attendance policy in March and April of 2004. In Wyoming, the number of students is so small that when a larger district makes policy and collection changes, the state numbers are drastically affected.