

DATA NOTES FOR IDEA, PART B

These data notes contain information 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 notes provide explanations of significant changes 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 1-1
Differences in State Disability Reporting Practices for IDEA, Part B
Child Count Data and Educational Environments Data, 2004
Exiting and Discipline Data, 2003-04

	Multiple disabilities	Other health impairments	Deaf-blindness
Colorado		O	
Connecticut			
Delaware	P	O	
Florida	P		
Michigan			H
North Dakota	P		
Oregon	P		
West Virginia	P		
Wisconsin	P		
Notes	H = Reported in the hearing impairments category O = Reported in the orthopedic impairments category P = Reported in the primary disability category		

Table 1-2
 State Developmental Delay Reporting Practices for IDEA, Part B
 Child Count Data and Educational Environments Data, 2004
 and Discipline Data, 2003-04

	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	
Texas	X		
West Virginia		X	
Wyoming		X	

Tables 1-1 through 1-18: Child Count, 2004

Alaska—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.

Colorado—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 other health impairments.

Delaware—The state does not collect data on multiple disabilities or other health impairments. Children with multiple disabilities are reported according to their primary disability, and students with other health impairments are reported in the orthopedic impairments category.

Federated States of Micronesia—Micronesia attributed the decrease in its child count data of more than 100 children ages 3 through 5 to two factors. First, a typhoon in Yap State prevented Micronesia from accurately counting students with disabilities in this region. There were 60 fewer students reported in Yap State in 2004 compared to 2003. Second, the national government in Micronesia added a staff position to oversee data collection and reporting from the four states of Micronesia. As a result, Micronesia believes more accurate data are being reported and verified.

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

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

Idaho—The state reported that 381 children with disabilities were identified with noncategorical eligibility. Of these, 10 were ages 3 through 5, and 371 were ages 6 through 21. When reporting to OSEP, the state proportionately distributed these children into disability categories based on the disability distribution of students in the same age group and race/ethnicity category whose disability category was known.

The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 6 through 21 reported with autism to a change in the state’s definition of that disability category. In the 2002-03 school year, the state changed its definition of autism to include all pervasive developmental disorders listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV)*. These include: Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Autistic Disorder, Asperger’s Syndrome, or Pervasive Developmental Disorder: Not Otherwise Specified (PDD:NOS). These specific developmental disorders were not mentioned in the state’s previous definition of autism.

Maine—The state attributed the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported with autism to several factors. First, more staff are available to diagnose children with autism. Second, as these staff become better at identifying children with autism, some children previously identified under another disability are relabeled as children with autism. Third, public awareness about this disability has resulted in more referrals under this disability category. Finally, public schools are more becoming more comfortable than they were in the past with identifying and serving students with autism.

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

Minnesota—The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported with autism to improved child find efforts and an improved identification process. The state is attempting to identify children with autism at younger ages.

The state attributed the increase in the number of 6-year-olds reported with developmental delay to a change in how students' ages are calculated. In 2004, the state began correctly calculating students' ages as of December 1. In prior years, student age was calculated as of September 1. As a result, students whose sixth birthday falls between September 1 and December 1 are now reported as age 6, rather than age 5. Minnesota only uses the developmental delay category for children ages 3 through 6.

Missouri—Missouri attributed the increase in the number of 6-year-olds reported with developmental delay to a change in the state's definition of that disability category. Prior to the 2001-02 school year, the state's definition of developmental delay included only children who had not yet entered kindergarten. Beginning in 2001-02, students in kindergarten could also be included in the developmental delay category. The state reported that more children are retaining the developmental delay label as they enter kindergarten.

Montana—In Montana, a state statute allows school districts to identify a child ages 3 through 5 as a child with disabilities without specifying a specific disability category. However, Montana encourages schools to use one of the federal disability categories. As a result, districts reported a specific disability for 57 percent of the 3- through 5-year-olds served. The state imputed disability for the remaining 43 percent using the disability distribution for the 3- through 5-year-olds for whom disability data were reported. This is the fourth year that Montana used this method. Previously, the missing disability data for 3- through 5-year-olds was imputed based on the disability distribution for 6-year-olds.

New York—New York collects race/ethnicity for an aggregated count of all school-age students with disabilities (ages 4 through 21). It does not collect a separate count of race/ethnicity for students with disabilities who are ages 6 through 21 or for all students with disabilities who are ages 3 through 5. The reported race/ethnicity for 6- through 21-year-olds was estimated using race/ethnicity data from students with disabilities ages 4 through 21. 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 educational environments.

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

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

North Dakota 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.

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

South Carolina—South Carolina has a disability category called preschool child with a disability. The state reported that this category meets its defined and established eligibility criteria for developmental delay. As a result, in 2004 the state reported these children in the developmental delay category. In previous years, South Carolina reported these children in the other health impairments category.

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

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

Tables 2-1 through 2-7: IDEA Part B Educational Environments, 2004

Alaska—The state attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 served in early childhood special education environments and the increase in the number of children served in part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education settings to a program change in the largest district in the state. The district began providing some services in an early childhood environment rather than providing all services in self-contained special education preschool classrooms. Because this district serves 40 percent of Alaska's 3- through 5-year-olds, this program change affected state totals.

Arkansas—Arkansas attributed the increase in the duplicated count of children who receive special education in correctional facilities to more complete data reporting. In prior years, the Department of Corrections only provided the state with data on students who were receiving special education in one of the state's prisons. In 2004, the state received data for students receiving special education in all of the facilities in the Department of Corrections.

The state reported that its count of children ages 3 through 5 served in separate schools is an over count. Some early childhood programs in the state are run by the Department of Human Services Division of Disability Services (DDS). At the time the interagency agreement was developed with DDS, DDS programs were all operated as separate schools. However, over the years, some of the programs have evolved to include reverse mainstream preschools and Arkansas Better Chance for Success preschools. Despite these changes, because the interagency agreement requires that schools operated by DDS be classified as separate schools, all DDS early childhood programs continue to be reported as separate schools. Currently, the interagency agreement is being reviewed.

Georgia—The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 receiving special education at home to an increase in the number of children transitioning from Part C services to Part B whose IEPs recommend they continue to receive services in the home.

Guam—Guam's 2004 educational environments data contain errors for students ages 6 through 21 who were outside the regular classroom less than 21 percent of the school day and students who were outside the regular classroom greater than 60 percent of the school day. For these two categories, the number of students reported by disability is not equal to the number reported by race/ethnicity. In addition, the total number of students reported in the duplicated count of children in private schools, not placed or referred by a public agency did not match the total number reported in this category by race/ethnicity.

Illinois—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 crosswalks these students into the preschool categories for federal reporting purposes. Students reported outside the classroom less than 20 percent of the day are crosswalked 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 crosswalked into the part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education category.

Iowa—Iowa attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in reverse mainstream settings to a change in reporting practices. In prior years, the state reported students in the reverse mainstream category if they spent any amount of time in a reverse mainstream environment. In 2004, the state reported students in the reverse mainstream category only if they received all of their special education in that environment.

The state attributed the 55 percent increase in the number of children reported in private schools, who were not placed there by a public agency, to an error in the 2003 data. In 2003, the state included in this category those private school students who received their individualized education program (IEP) services at the private school, but failed to include private school students who received their IEP services at a public school. In 2004, the state included all private school students receiving IEP services.

Kentucky—The state reported that the increase in the number of children ages 6 through 21 reported as receiving special education outside the regular classroom less than 21 percent of the school day is due to state efforts to emphasize collaboration between general education and special education and to provide special education services in the regular classroom.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported in home/hospital environments to a change in the classification of two facilities in the largest district in the state. Previously, the facilities were considered a school-operated program, and the students in these facilities were reported according to the percentage of time they spent with nondisabled peers. In 2004, these facilities were reclassified, and students in these facilities are now reported in the home/hospital category.

Louisiana—The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 5 in reverse mainstream environments to an increase in the availability of reverse mainstream classes in the state. Because there are now more reverse mainstream classes available, more children are placed in this environment.

Louisiana attributed the decrease in the number of children who received special education in correctional facilities to efforts by the Louisiana Office of Youth Development (OYD) to develop and implement community-based treatment and rehabilitation programs for young offenders. These programs provide an alternative to incarceration.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 18 through 21 reported in the public separate school category to the closure of the E.C. Hayes School, a public separate school for children with disabilities. Children who attended this school now attend regular public schools and receive education and special education in separate classrooms.

Maine—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 percent 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.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in the home category to more accurate reporting by local education agencies (LEAs). In prior years, some students receiving services in early childhood environments were mistakenly reported as receiving services in the home. These students are now being reported in early childhood environments.

Massachusetts—Massachusetts attributed the increase in the number of students reported in the category outside the regular classroom less than 21 percent of the school day and the decrease in the number of students outside the regular classroom 21-60 percent of the school day to a change in the categories the state uses to collect these data. Massachusetts reported that prior to 2000, some of its definitions did not match federal definitions for time outside the regular classroom. The state tracked time outside the classroom in four categories: 100 percent of the day in the regular classroom, from 1 to 25 percent of the school day outside the regular classroom, from 26-60 percent outside the regular classroom and greater than 60 percent outside the regular classroom. When reporting to OSEP, the state reported students who spent 100 percent of the school day in a regular classroom in the category less than 21 percent outside the regular classroom. The state reported students who spent between 1 and 60 percent of the day in a regular classroom in the category 21-60 percent outside the regular classroom. The state accurately reported students who spent greater than 60 percent of the school day outside the regular classroom. As a result of this method of reporting, the state believes that the number of students outside the regular classroom less than 21 percent of the school day was underreported in the past. In 2000, the state began using the OSEP categories for time outside the regular classroom. Massachusetts reported that it has taken districts a few years to implement the new definitions for these categories.

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 additional 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—The state does not collect data on deaf-blindness. Children with deaf-blindness are reported in the hearing impairments category. Thirty-one students, ages 6 through 11 who received special education outside the regular classroom 21 to 60 percent of the school day, were erroneously reported as

deaf-blind. These students should be reported as having multiple disabilities. The state was not able to correct this error before these data were finalized for the *Annual Report to Congress*.

Minnesota—Minnesota reported students in the duplicated count of students in correctional facilities for the first time in 2004. Previously, the state did not report any students in this category. This year, in addition to reporting these students in the duplicated count, the state also incorrectly reported them in the public separate facility category. These students should be reported in one of the categories for the percent of time they spent outside the regular classroom. The state plans to correct this error in 2005.

Minnesota did not submit a duplicated count of children in private schools, not placed or referred by public agencies. Although the state collected these data through the student information system, the unit in the state education agency (SEA) that reports the data did not have access to the information. Students in private schools were reported according to the percentage of time they spent receiving special education outside the regular classroom. The state will have the ability to report a duplicated count of children in private schools in 2005.

New Mexico—The state attributed the increase in the number of children ages 3 through 4 reported in the home category to instructions provided to LEAs in September of 2003. The state instructed LEAs to report children ages 3 and 4 in the home category if they received therapy services and were not served in a center-based program.

New York—New York collects race/ethnicity for an aggregated count of all school-age students with disabilities (ages 4 through 21). It does not collect a separate count of race/ethnicity for students with disabilities who are ages 6 through 21 or for all students with disabilities who are ages 3 through 5. The reported race/ethnicity for 6- through 21-year-olds was estimated using race/ethnicity data from students with disabilities ages 4 through 21. 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 educational environments.

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

North Carolina—North Carolina 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 plans to report these data in 2005, when it begins collecting data using its new Comprehensive Exceptional Children Accountability System (CECAS).

Oklahoma—The state attributed the decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported in private separate schools to technical assistance provided to LEAs. The state believes that the number of students reported in private separate schools in 2003 may have included students who were home schooled. In 2004, the state provided technical assistance to LEAs that home-schooled children should be reported according to the percentage of time they receive special education outside the regular classroom and should not be included in the private separate school category.

Oregon—The state noted that its age ranges are different from the OSEP definitions. Oregon considers children who are 5 years old on or before September 1 to be school age. These 5-year-olds are included in the school-age educational environments with the 6- through 11-year-old age group rather than in the preschool environments with 3- through 5-year-olds.

Rhode Island—The state attributed the 100 percent decrease in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported in public residential facilities to a change in data collection methods. In prior years, the state incorrectly reported students in correctional facilities in the public residential facility category, as well as in the duplicated count of children in correctional facilities. In 2004, Rhode Island began correctly reporting these students according to the percentage of time the student received special education outside the regular classroom as well as in the duplicated count of children in correctional facilities.

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.

Virginia—The state attributed the increase in the number of students ages 6 through 21 reported in the category outside the regular classroom less than 21 percent of the school day and the decrease in the number of children reported in the categories outside the regular classroom 21 to 60 percent and greater than 60 percent of the school day to a correction of how the state operationalized these categories. In prior years, Virginia reported the percentage of the school day that special education was delivered, rather than the percentage of time spent outside the regular classroom receiving special education. In 2004, the state began correctly collecting and reporting data on the percentage of time students receive special education outside the regular classroom.

West Virginia—West Virginia attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 3 through 5 reported in the early childhood category and the increase in the number of children reported in the itinerant services outside the home and part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education categories to training provided to districts about the definitions of these categories. Previously, children who attended a regular preschool or kindergarten class and received speech services outside of that classroom were erroneously reported in the early childhood category. This year, most of these children were reported in the itinerant services outside the home category. Students who receive speech services in addition to consultation within their early childhood classrooms were reported in the part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education category.

Wisconsin—The state attributed the decrease in the number of children ages 6 through 21 reported as receiving special education outside the regular classroom greater than 60 percent of the school day to training provided to LEAs on how to report educational environments data. During statewide training in fall 2004, the SEA learned that some districts based the educational environments of students ages 6 through 21 on the percentage of time the students received special education rather than the percentage of time outside the regular class. The state instructed the LEAs to report students according to time spent outside the regular classroom for the 2004 environments report.

Tables 3-1 through 3-3: IDEA Part B Personnel, 2003

Alabama—The state attributed the increase in the reported number of fully certified speech pathologists to additional technical assistance provided by Alabama Special Education Services to LEAs. Through this technical assistance, the state provided more clearly defined instructions.

Alaska—Alaska did not report data on vocational education teachers, work-study coordinators, teacher aides and counselors. The state reported zero in these categories because it is not able to identify staff in these positions who are employed and contracted specifically to work with special education students. The state reported that it modified its 2004 personnel data collection to provide this information next year.

Arizona—Arizona does not have a standard state certification requirement for teachers' aides; therefore, all of these personnel were reported as fully certified this year. Last year, some teachers' aides were incorrectly reported as not fully certified.

The state reported that 2003 was the first year that public education agencies (PEAs) were able to submit FTE data on special education personnel using up to three decimal places. In prior years, PEAs were limited to two decimal places when reporting data to the state.

Arizona reported that the decrease in the number of diagnostic and evaluation staff may be due to districts' reporting these personnel in other personnel categories.

The state reported that the decrease in not fully certified non-professional staff may be due to staff seeking and obtaining the required credentials, certification and/or licensure.

Arkansas—The state counted personnel who provided speech services as special education teachers rather than as related services personnel. Speech is not considered a related service in Arkansas.

The state reported that most of the teacher aides reported as not fully certified work in the Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Disability program centers. The state is working with DHS to provide the three-module core training required for certification to all of these teachers' aides.

Colorado—Prior to 2003, Colorado did not have certification requirements for interpreters; therefore, all interpreters were reported to OSEP as fully certified. In 2003, the state implemented state certification requirements for interpreters, and only those interpreters who met the new requirements were considered by the state to be fully licensed. As a result, the data show a decrease in the number of fully certified interpreters.

Connecticut—Connecticut's personnel data are collected by grade level rather than by the age of the 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.

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 general 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 general education and special education students.

District of Columbia—The District of Columbia did not include contracted personnel on its 2003 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.

Georgia—The state attributed the decrease in the reported number of fully certified interpreters to a state rule implemented in the 2003-04 school year that provides stricter guidelines about certification requirements for interpreters.

The state reported that in a joint meeting between the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, Information Technology and the Division for Exceptional Students, the groups determined that in previous years some fully certified paraprofessionals were incorrectly reported as not fully certified. In 2003, all paraprofessionals have paraprofessional certification based upon state guidelines and have been reported as fully certified teachers' aides.

Georgia reported that in 2002, the state incorrectly reported data for special education teachers for ages 6 through 21 based on the number of people employed. In 2003, it correctly reported these data in FTEs.

Iowa—The state attributed the 4 percent increase in the total number of special education and related services personnel to a steady increase in the number of children eligible for Part B and the subsequent need to hire more service providers.

Maine—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.

The state attributed the decrease in the reported number of SEA supervisors/administrators to an error on last year's report. In 2002, the state reported 155.81 personnel in this category because some LEA supervisors/administrators were mistakenly included. The actual number of SEA supervisors/administrators that should have been reported for 2002 and 2003 is 16.

Massachusetts—Over the past several years, Massachusetts changed its method for collecting personnel data several times. These changes may affect the number and type of personnel reported over time. Prior to the 1999-2000 school year, Massachusetts collected personnel data using a paper form in use for over 30 years. In school years 1999-2000 and 2000-01, Massachusetts began using an electronic form to collect the data. The electronic form was extremely difficult for districts to use and may have inadvertently resulted in a decrease in the number of staff reported by districts. In school year 2001-02 and 2002-03, Massachusetts discontinued use of the electronic form and returned to a paper collection. For the 2003 personnel data collection, the state used an updated electronic data collection tool. In addition, for 2003, districts were required to report data at the school level, rather than at the district level used previously.

The 2003 personnel data collection is the second year that the state collected and reported data on personnel certification status. In prior years, the state did not collect data on certification. Prior to 2002-03, Massachusetts assumed licensure and reported all staff as fully certified.

The state reported that its new data collection system does not collect data on special education teachers according to the ages they serve. As a result, all special education teachers are reported to OSEP as special education teachers for ages 6 through 21. This count includes teachers who work with children ages 3 through 5. No special education teachers are reported to OSEP for ages 3 through 5.

The state began collecting data on personnel in the following categories in 2003: work study coordinators, audiologists, recreation specialists, diagnostic and evaluation staff and counselors.

The state attributed the decrease in the number of school social workers to a change in the state's data collection categories. In 2003, the state began collecting data on school adjustment counselors and reporting them in the counselors category. Previously, these personnel were reported in the social workers category. The social workers category now includes only those personnel who work as special education social workers.

Minnesota—In 2001 and 2002, Minnesota included special education teachers who served children ages 3 through 5 in the count of teachers serving ages 6 through 21. In 2003, the state was able to separately report teachers for ages 3 through 5 and 6 through 21.

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

Missouri—Missouri attributed the decrease in the reported number of school social workers and other support/ancillary staff positions to LEA budget cuts.

Montana—Montana reported that its special education teachers frequently teach students of all ages. In order to report data to OSEP, the number of teachers for children ages 3 through 5 and the number of teachers for students ages 6 through 21 was estimated from the total based on the percentage of special education students in each age group.

Montana attributed the increase in the number of nonprofessional staff to a change in the way the state collects personnel data. In 2003, the state revised its data collection and added seven new categories of special education aides or assistants. These new categories are reported to OSEP in the nonprofessional staff category. The state emphasized the reporting of these nonprofessional special education staff during trainings conducted throughout the state prior to the data collection. The state believes that the change in the data collection and increased awareness of nonprofessional staff categories led LEAs to report staff that they failed to report in previous years.

New Hampshire—New Hampshire did not submit 2003 personnel data.

New York—New York reported that it included the following positions in the category special education teachers for ages 3 through 5: preschool teacher of special education; preschool teacher of special education-bilingual; teacher of English as a second language; teacher of the speech and hearing handicapped-certified only; teacher of the speech and hearing handicapped-bilingual, certified only; teacher of the deaf and hearing impaired; teacher of the deaf and hearing impaired-bilingual; teacher of the blind and partially sighted; and teacher of the blind and partially sighted-bilingual.

The state reported that it included the following positions in the category special education teachers for ages 6-21: teacher of special education; teacher of special education-bilingual; teacher of English as a second language; teacher of the speech and hearing handicapped-certified only; teacher of the speech and hearing handicapped-bilingual-certified only; teacher of the deaf and hearing impaired; teacher of the deaf and hearing impaired-bilingual; teacher of the blind and partially sighted; teacher of the blind and partially sighted-bilingual.

New York included teachers of English as a second language (ESL) in its counts of special education teachers. For ages 6 through 21, 428 ESL teachers were reported as special education teachers (in FTEs). Although these teachers worked with children with disabilities ages 6 through 21, they did not provide special education and related services and should not be included in the count of special education teachers.

That state reported that it included the following positions in the category other professional staff: teacher assistant; teacher assistant-bilingual; physical therapist assistant; physical therapist assistant-bilingual; occupational therapist assistant; occupational therapist assistant-bilingual; 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.

In prior years, the state included instructional volunteers and administrative volunteers in its count of nonprofessional staff. In 2003, the state stopped collecting data for these types of nonprofessional staff since these staff are not employed or contracted by the school districts or other service providers.

North Carolina—The state reported that its personnel counts do not include personnel from two charter schools. These schools failed to report 2003 personnel data, even though they served children with disabilities in the 2003-04 school year.

South Dakota—The state attributed the 99 percent decrease in the number of fully certified teachers' aides to a change in the certification requirements for paraprofessionals. South Dakota's count of teachers' aides only includes those paraprofessionals working in a Title I program. According to the new certification requirements, paraprofessionals working in a program supported by Title I Part A funds must be qualified under the provisions of *No Child Left Behind* by January 8, 2006. They may meet this requirement in one of three ways:

- Earning an associate's degree or higher;
- Earning a minimum of 48 college credits; or
- Passing the designated state test.

The South Dakota Department of Education will grant certificates to paraprofessionals once they have met the appropriate requirements.

Texas—Texas reported that there is no state certification requirement for substitute teachers in Texas. It reports all substitute personnel as fully certified.

In 2003, Texas began collecting and reporting data on the certification status of interpreters. In prior years, the state reported all interpreters as fully certified.

In Texas, educational aides and interpreters are considered nonprofessional staff. However, these personnel are reported to OSEP in the personnel categories teachers' aides and interpreters.

Vermont—The state reported that it includes behavior specialists in the other professional staff category.

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.

Wyoming—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, 2003-04

Alabama—The state attributed the decrease in the number of students reported in the reached maximum age category to the effect of diploma options that the state began offering to students in 1997 and 2000. The diploma options, such as the Alabama Occupational Diploma (first available to students in 1997) and the Alabama Adult High School Diploma (first available to students in 2000), prepare students for postsecondary employment. As more students obtain these diplomas, fewer students are remaining in school until they reach maximum age. Specifically, more students with specific learning disabilities,

emotional disturbance and mental retardation are exiting with an Alabama Occupational Diploma or the Alabama Adult High School Diploma and then entering the work force.

Alaska—Alaska attributed the 25 percent decrease in the total number of students reported as exiting special education to a change in data collection methods. In the 2003-04 school year, the state began collecting exiting data using a new, end-of-year, student-level data collection that includes both special education and general education students who were enrolled at any time during the school year. In prior years, districts submitted aggregate data to the SEA, and the state believes that districts were not accurately unduplicating counts of exiting students. Much of the decrease in the number of reported exits occurred in those categories most likely to be duplicated, such as dropouts and students who move out of a district. The state reported that these counts are significantly lower now that the data are unduplicated by the SEA. The state reported that it expects that its exiting data will fluctuate for the next few years as it trains districts on the use of the new data collection method.

The state reported that it estimated race/ethnicity data for 15 students: four 14-year-olds, two 15-year-olds, three 16-year-olds, four 17-year-olds and two 18-year-olds.

American Samoa—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 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.

The state no longer reports 22-year-old exiters. Reporting 22-year-olds on the exit table is optional.

Arizona attributed the increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities reported in the moved, known to be continuing category to better tracking and follow-up procedures by PEAs.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities who were reported in the dropped out category to a new focus on Arizona academic standards rather than electives (i.e., vocational education courses). This change may have led some students with disabilities to drop out of school.

Bureau of Indian Affairs—When reporting exits according to students' age year, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) had errors in the number of students who moved and were not known to continue, the number who dropped out and the total number of students who exited. The total number of children (all disabilities combined) reported in each exit category and in each age year (e.g., 14, 15, 16) should equal the sum of the number of children reported in these categories by age year and disability type (e.g., specific learning disabilities, mental retardation). BIA's data do not pass this edit, and BIA did not correct these errors before data were finalized for the *Annual Report to Congress*. As a result, BIA's data should not be analyzed according to individual age year for the categories moved, known to continue; dropped out and the total number of students who exited. However, no errors were detected in the data for the age group 14 through 21.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs reported that, in most cases, BIA schools use the graduation standards of the states in which they operate. As a result, BIA does not have data on whether students with disabilities reported as graduating with a regular high school diploma met the same criteria for graduation as students without disabilities.

Colorado—Data reported for school year 2003-04 are for students exiting between December 2002 and December 2003.

Colorado attributed the increase in the number of students reported in the no longer receives special education category to LEAs that reviewed their processes for identifying students for special education. The majority of the students who no longer receive special education are in the specific learning disabilities category. In 2002-03, LEAs with identification rates above the state average for specific learning disabilities reviewed their identification processes. Some students who received special education returned to regular education when identification processes were modified as a result of these reviews.

District of Columbia—When reporting exits according to students' age year, the District of Columbia had errors in the number of students who moved and were not known to continue, students who dropped out, students who graduated and the total number of students who exited special education. The total number of children (all disabilities combined) reported in each exit category and in each age year (e.g., 14, 15, 16) should equal the sum of the number of children reported in these categories by age year and disability type (e.g., specific learning disabilities, mental retardation). The District's data do not pass this edit, and it did not correct these errors before data were finalized for the *Annual Report to Congress*. As a result, the District's data should not be analyzed according to individual age year for the categories moved, not known to continue; dropped out; graduated with a regular high school diploma, and the total number of students who exited. However, no errors were detected in the data for the age group 14 through 21.

Georgia—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.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students reported in the category moved, known to be continuing and the decrease in the number of students reported in the category moved, not known to be continuing to an error in prior years' data. In prior years, a student who transferred to another district was reported in the moved, not known to be continuing category unless there was evidence the student was continuing in special education. This year, students who transferred to another district and were known to be continuing in an educational program were correctly reported in the moved, known to be continuing category, regardless of whether they were known to continue in special education. This is consistent with OSEP's definition of this category.

Georgia attributed the increase in the number of students who no longer receive special education to an increased emphasis on collaborative and co-taught classes, in an effort to serve students in the least restrictive environment. The state believes that the increased access to the general curriculum provided in these classes is facilitating the return to general education for more students.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students with specific learning disabilities who received a certificate-of-completion to more rigorous graduation requirements that go into effect during the 2005-06 school year. Graduates in Georgia will be required to complete a high school program of study of a minimum of 22 Carnegie Units and pass four subject areas (English, mathematics, science and social studies) of the Georgia High School Graduation Test and the Georgia High School Writing Test. In addition, students must complete a prescribed endorsement program in either or both College Prep or Vocational. In 2003-04, in preparation for the implementation of these requirements, students receiving Carnegie Units had to take an end-of-course exam, and as a result, the rigor of many classes increased. The state reported that many students with learning disabilities had difficulty achieving success on all

components of the enhanced requirements and exited high school with a special education diploma. Those students receiving a modified diploma were reported in the received-a-certificate category.

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

Florida—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, 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.

Idaho—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.

Illinois—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—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.

Kansas—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—The state attributed the increase in the number of children reported as moved, known to continue to a change in data collection methods. In 2003-04, the state began using a student-level tracking system that allows districts to better notify one another when a student enrolls in a new district after moving out of another district.

Maine—Maine reported that its exiting data for 2003-04 are for the period from December 1, 2002, through November 30, 2003.

Massachusetts—Massachusetts attributed the large changes in the disabilities of students reported as exiting special education to a change in data reporting methods. The 2003-04 school year is the first that the state used student-level data to report students by disability on the exit report. In prior years, the state estimated the disability distribution for exiting students by applying the proportion of students in each disability category among the student population to each of the exiting categories. This year, all exiting students were reported according to their identified disabilities, with the exception of students reported in the dropout category. The state continued to estimate disability for approximately 25 percent of students

in the dropout category for whom disability data were unavailable. Massachusetts plans to report actual disability data for all exiting students in its 2004-05 data.

The state reported that the 2002-03 school year was the first year that students must pass a statewide assessment to receive a high school diploma. Students who did not pass the assessment 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—Michigan reported that in December 2001 it implemented a new statewide electronic data collection system, the Michigan Compliance Information System (MI-CIS). This system allows the state to track student exits from special education more effectively. Because LEAs use a wide variety of codes to report exiters, the SEA revised its technical manual to list all acceptable exit codes and how each is reported to OSEP. The revised manual was made available to LEAs prior to the December 2003 collection. The state provided feedback to LEAs and Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) on how their data look when reported to OSEP and ranked districts according to their dropout rates. The state also conducted error checks to ensure that all students are reported as either active or exited. As a result of these activities, districts are paying more attention to the codes they use to report exiting students.

The state attributed changes in its exiting data to districts that changed their data collection and reporting practices to match the technical manual definitions and paid more attention to their comparative performance within the state. The state believes that increased SEA attention to exiting data has provided an incentive for LEAs to examine their data and report accurately.

Minnesota—School districts in Minnesota do 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. The state reported that in 2004-05, it plans to report these students in the received-a-certificate category rather than the graduated with a high school diploma category.

Missouri—The state reports students who received a regular high school diploma, but did not meet the same standards for graduation as students without disabilities in the category graduated with a regular high school diploma. As a result, the graduated with a high school diploma category includes graduates who obtained the necessary number of credits as well as graduates who met the goals and objectives of their IEPs. The state data collection cannot currently differentiate between the two groups. This is inconsistent with the OSEP definition of graduated with a high school diploma.

The state reported that it awards a certificate-of-attendance to students who have reached maximum age, but who have not met graduation requirements. These students are reported in the received-a-certificate category.

Montana—The state reported that the 21 percent (60 student) increase in the total number of American Indian/Alaska Native students who exited special education reflects the cumulative effect of small

changes throughout the state. A review of state data indicated that the change is not due to an increase in the number of American Indian/Alaska Native students served in special education nor to an increase in enrollment of American Indian/Alaska Native students in the state. A review of district-level data showed no significant changes between 2002-03 and 2003-04. The largest district in the state reported the largest change—an increase of nine American Indian/Alaska Native students who were reported as graduating with a high school diploma.

The state reported that because it does not have an individual student-level data collection system, a student may be reported in a different race/ethnicity category from one year to the next. This variation in reporting could result in the American Indian/Alaska Native exit data changes observed this year. In addition, in the last couple of years, Montana has implemented several programs that target American Indian students in an effort to increase graduation rates and decrease dropout rates.

New Hampshire—When reporting exits according to students' age year, New Hampshire had errors in the number of students who moved and were known to continue and students who moved and were not known to continue. The total number of children (all disabilities combined) reported in each exit category and in each age year (e.g., 14, 15, 16) should equal the sum of the number of children reported in these categories by age year and disability type (e.g., specific learning disabilities, mental retardation). New Hampshire's data do not pass this edit, and the state did not correct these errors before data were finalized for the *Annual Report to Congress*. As a result, New Hampshire's data should not be analyzed according to individual age year for the categories moved, known to continue and moved, not known to continue. However, no errors were detected in the data for the age group 14 through 21.

New Jersey—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 attributed the decrease in the number of students reported in the graduated with a high school diploma category to the state's use of this category as a focused monitoring indicator. As a result, districts are reporting more accurate data. Students who receive a career diploma or an ability diploma are reported in the category received-a-certificate.

New York—The state reported that students who are deaf are not included in the 2003-04 exiting data, but children with other types of hearing impairments are included. After the data were finalized for the *Annual Report to Congress*, the state submitted a revision of its exiting data that included deaf students.

North Carolina—The state reported that its exit data do not include exiting students from two charter schools. These schools failed to report 2003-04 exiting data, even though they served children with disabilities during the 2003-04 school year.

The state incorrectly included 22-year-olds in its exit data by race/ethnicity. The exit data by race/ethnicity should only include exiting students ages 14 through 21. Because the state collected aggregate data, it cannot remove the 22-year-olds from the totals this year. The state reported that it corrected the problem for the 2004-05 data, which were collected using CECAS. The new system includes individual student records rather than aggregate counts of students.

North Dakota—The state reported that the increase in the total number of American Indian/Alaska Native exiters from 2002-03 to 2003-04 was primarily due to an increase in the number of American Indian/Alaska Native students in the moved, known to continue category. From 2002-03 to 2003-04, the

number of these students who moved and were known to continue increased from 81 to 118. The state reported that although moving may lead to academic and social disruptions for students, this does not represent a negative outcome because these students are known to be continuing in an educational program. The state reported that the increase in American Indian/Alaska Native exiters can also be partially attributed to smaller increases in the number of these students who returned to regular education (an increase of 16 students) and who moved and were not known to continue (an increase of 12 students). The Standing Rock Indian Reservation is located within North Dakota and South Dakota. The state reports students who move from one state to another within the reservation in the moved, not known to continue category if it is unable to confirm that they are continuing in an educational program.

Ohio—Ohio requires students to pass a “high stakes” exam to receive a high school diploma. However, students with disabilities may be excused from the consequences of this exam by their IEP teams and therefore may receive a high school diploma without passing the exam. In addition, 1 percent of students with the most severe cognitive disabilities may take an alternate exam to receive a high school diploma. Both of these groups of students were reported in the received a regular high school diploma category, although they did not meet the same standards for graduation as students without disabilities. Ohio did not report students in the received-a-certificate category.

Oklahoma—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.

The state incorrectly included 22-year-olds in its exit data by race/ethnicity. The exit data by race/ethnicity should only include exiting students ages 14-21. Because the state collects aggregate data, it cannot remove the 22-year-olds from the totals this year.

The state attributed the 22 percent decrease in the number of children reported as dropouts to collaboration between the special education and alternative education sections in the state. Although the state did not make any specific policy changes that affected these sections, the two groups have worked together with educators in the state to help keep students in school.

Oregon—Data reported for school year 2003-04 are for the period from December 2002 to December 2003.

The state reported that for the current data, students’ ages were reported according to their age as of the child count prior to their exit. This is consistent with OSEP reporting instructions. In prior years, the state reported students according to their age as of the child count after their exit.

In prior years, some students who were not yet age 14 on the date of child count prior to their exits were mistakenly included in the state’s exiting data. In addition, some students who were age 21 at the date of the child count prior to their exits but were age 22 on the child count following their exit were mistakenly excluded from the data. The state indicated that the change in the date used to report age affected the data for three reporting categories:

- The state reported that younger students are more likely to return to regular education. Because the state’s previous method of reporting student exits included a younger population of students, the number of children who returned to regular education was higher in prior years.

- The state reported that a large number of young students fall into the moved, known to continue category. Because the state’s previous method of reporting student exits included a younger population of students, the number of children who moved and were known to continue was higher in prior years.

The state attributed the increase in the number of students who reached maximum age to the inclusion of older students in the 2003-04 exiting data. Prior to 2003-04, students were not included in the report if they were age 21 on the child count date prior to their exits but were age 22 on the child count following their exits.

Oregon reported that this was the second year that the state required LEAs to account for all students previously reported as eligible for special education. In prior years, some LEAs failed to report some of their students. As a result, the number of students reported as exiting increased slightly.

Oregon attributed the 53 percent increase in the number of students reported as moved, not known to continue to a large district in the state that was unable to track a large portion of students who exited. The problem of tracking exiting students was due to new staff and the district’s conversion to a new data system. The district reported approximately 300 of these “unknown” exiters in the moved, not known to continue category. The state reported that this problem has been corrected for future data submissions.

Texas—Data reported for school year 2003-04 are for the period from August 2002 to August 2003.

Texas reports students who graduate and did not meet the same graduation criteria as regular education students in the exit category received-a-certificate.

Texas reported that it imputed disability information for 1,021 students reported on the exiting table. 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. for the remaining students on the table. The state estimated disability data in the following categories: graduated with a regular diploma (359), received a certificate (113), died (10), moved, known to continue (376), moved, not known to continue (17) and dropped out (146).

Vermont—Data reported for school year 2003-04 are for the period from December 2002 to December 2003.

The Vermont Department of Education recognizes the diploma as the only legal exit document in the state. All students in the state are expected to exit high school with a diploma. The diploma is earned through the accrual of credits. Each district determines the number of credits that all students need to accrue in order to receive a diploma. Students with disabilities, through their IEPs, often take an alternative route to credit accrual.

Virginia—Virginia reported that the large number of students reported in the moved, not known to continue category is partly the result of the large number of transient military families in many LEAs. The state also reported that it has difficulty tracking students who move and continue in education because several large urban LEAs are close to large LEAs in neighboring states. The state reported that it believes that many of the students currently reported as moved, not known to continue, are likely continuing in education elsewhere.

Washington—The state reported that it is in the process of implementing a new data collection system. This year, as a result of these changes, no data were collected on students who returned to regular education. As a result, zero students are reported in that category; the actual number of students who returned to regular education in Washington in 2003-04 is unknown.

The state reported that it implemented a new data collection system, the Core Student Record System (CSRS), at the beginning of the 2002-03 school year. At that time, the system collected student demographic, enrollment status and exiting information. Additional categories were added in the 2003-04 school year to fulfill most reporting requirements for adequate yearly progress and *No Child Left Behind*. This system includes built in edits of the exiting data, including verification of grade, checks for missing data elements and duplicate records, verification of correct exit dates (e.g., exit date must fall within the current reporting period) and checks for appropriate enrollment, ethnicity, gender, disability, limited English proficiency status and socioeconomic variables. In addition, the system checks to ensure that data are reasonable based on each grade level (e.g., in grade 12, there should be more completers than students continuing in school). Finally, it compares the current data to the previous year's data at both the building and district levels. If any anomalies are identified, the entire school or district is reviewed for data consistency and quality. The state then contacts the school or district in an effort to review and resolve the data issues identified. The state reported that this new process has resulted in more accurate data.

West Virginia—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—Data reported for school year 2003-04 are for the period from December 2002 to December 2003.

Wyoming—Wyoming believes that there is some duplication of students reported as exits. The state reported that districts have two options for creating student identifiers. They can either create district-level student identification numbers for their students or use students' Social Security numbers. Because districts across the state use different methods for creating identification numbers, the state cannot completely unduplicate student exit data if the student exits from more than one district. For example, students who move more than once in a school year may be reported more than once in the moved, known to continue category. Wyoming is in the process of updating all of its record systems, and it plans to begin assigning student identification numbers at the state level. Under the new system, a student's ID number will remain the same as long he or she attends a Wyoming school. The Wyoming Department of Education anticipates that this will provide a more accurate count of students who move or exit special education.

The state reported that it experienced an increase in the number of American Indian/Alaska Native students who dropped out, moved and are known to continue and graduated with a high school diploma. As a result, the total number of American Indian/Alaska Native students exiting special education increased. The state provided the following information about these increases:

- The number of American Indian/Alaska Native students who dropped out increased from 12 in 2002-03 to 24 in 2003-04. In response to an increase in the number of American Indian/Alaska Native students who dropped out of school, the Wyoming Department of Education and the schools serving Native American students in the state are working to develop programs to keep these students in school. In the 2004-05 school year, the state implemented virtual high schools on the reservations. This program targets students who have dropped out of school and allows them to come back to school, on their own time, to graduate at their own pace through online course completion. The state and the reservation schools hope that this program will help to lower the number of dropouts.
- The increase in the number of American Indian/Alaska Native students who graduated from 11 in 2002-03 to 21 in 2003-04 was attributed to programs implemented on or near the Wind

River Indian Reservation. These programs are intended to help American Indian/Alaska Native students complete high school.

- The increase in the number of American Indian/Alaska Native students who moved and are known to continue from 10 in 2002-03 to 27 in 2003-04 was attributed to the students on one reservation. Students living on or near the Wind River Indian Reservation frequently move between the schools on the reservation and those in the surrounding towns. As a result of the student identifier issue described above, some of these students may be reported in the exit data more than once. The state believes that when it implements new state-level student identification numbers, the Wyoming Department of Education will better be able to track these students as they move and ensure that they continue to receive needed services.

Tables 5-1 through 5-4: IDEA Part B Discipline, 2003-04

Alaska—Alaska reported that it changed the method it uses to collect discipline data from LEAs. In 2003-04, it implemented a new incident-level, online reporting tool. In prior years, districts reported aggregate data to the SEA, which did not allow the state to conduct many edit checks on the data. The state cautioned that the data collected in the new system are not yet reliable. It is currently working to redesign the online form to require LEAs to submit more complete data. It is also working to improve communication and data exchange between general education and special education departments within districts. The state believes that these efforts will lead to more reliable discipline data for the 2004-05 school year.

Colorado—The state attributed the decrease in the number of children reported as unilaterally removed by school personnel for drug or weapon offenses to efforts by LEA special education directors to convene the IEP team when one of these offenses is committed. The IEP team, rather than a single person at the LEA, makes a decision regarding the student's removal.

The state attributed the increase in the number of children with multiple short-term suspensions summing to greater than 10 days to improved data collection systems at the school level. Most LEAs in the state do not have automated systems in place to capture these data.

Connecticut—In 2003-04, the state stopped collecting data on certain offenses that result in out-of-school suspensions, such as skipping class, chewing gum and talking back. This resulted in an undercount of suspensions and a decrease in the total number of students reported with suspensions. The state plans to collect data on these offenses again in 2004-05, at which time it expects the number of children reported with suspensions to increase.

District of Columbia—The 2003-04 discipline data submitted by the District of Columbia contained significant errors; therefore, these data are not included in the *Annual Report to Congress*. The District did not correct these errors until after data were finalized for the *Annual Report to Congress*.

Iowa—The state attributed the decrease in the number of students reported as removed to an interim alternative education setting by school personnel for drug or weapons offenses to an error in the 2002-03 data. Prior to 2003-04, Iowa reported all removals for drugs or weapons in this category, regardless of the duration of the removal. Beginning in 2003-04, the state only reports students in this category if they were removed for more than 10 days.

Maine—Maine attributed the increase in the number of children with other health impairments and specific learning disabilities who were reported with removals for discipline offenses to an increase in the population of students with these disabilities.

The state reported that there was a decline in the number of children with emotional disturbance in the state who were reported with removals for discipline offenses.

Massachusetts—The state reported that it changed its method of collecting discipline data in 2003-04. The state now collects student-level data for discipline events. In prior years, the state collected aggregate counts from LEAs.

Massachusetts reported that, due to concerns about the validity of LEAs' discipline data, it is providing training to LEAs on how to report students removed by a hearing officer for likely injury and by school personnel for drug or weapon offenses.

Michigan—Michigan reported that for the first time in 2003-04, it used one system to collect discipline data for students in special education, rather than using multiple systems. The number of students reported for discipline offenses increased in every category. The state attributed these increases to the use of a single system to collect the data and increased LEA awareness of the importance of the data. The state reported that in the next several years, it expects the number of children reported for discipline offenses to continue to increase.

Montana—This is the second year Montana used its data collection system for collecting the number of students who have been suspended or expelled from school. The system includes both students with and without disabilities. The state reported that it made one change to its data collection for 2003-04 that may have affected the state's discipline data. The weapon offenses now include possessing a handgun, shotgun/rifle, other firearms, knife (blade 2.5 inches or greater) or dangerous weapon. Last year, this category also included other weapons. This year, the state eliminated other weapons because it believed the removals included did not meet the definition of dangerous weapon.

Nevada—The state attributed the increase in the number of children with multiple short-term suspensions to LEAs' better understanding the legal requirements governing suspension of children with disabilities and to the implementation of zero-tolerance policies for misconduct. The state reported that in previous years, many districts hesitated to suspend students with disabilities because of the complicated legal rules governing the suspension of students in this group. However, districts have become more confident in their ability to navigate the legal framework and are less hesitant to suspend children with disabilities. In addition, the state reported that zero-tolerance policies for misconduct (codified in state as well as federal law) have resulted in an increase in suspensions for students with and without disabilities.

New Mexico—The state reported that its data are showing an increase in discipline events for both students with and without disabilities, but that there have been no policy changes or changes in data collection procedures that might explain the change.

New York—The state reported that students who are deaf are not included in the 2003-04 discipline data, but children with other types of hearing impairments are included. After the data were finalized for the *Annual Report to Congress*, the state submitted a revision of its discipline data that included deaf students.

North Carolina—The state reported that its discipline data do not include discipline data from two charter schools. These schools failed to report discipline data even though they served children with disabilities in the 2003-04 school year.

Oregon—The state attributed the decrease in the number of children reported as unilaterally removed by school personnel for drug or weapon offenses to the effect of new edit checks implemented for the 2003-

04 data. LEAs submit aggregate discipline data to the SEA using a web-based system. The new edit checks help prevent single students from being reported multiple times in an unduplicated count, providing warnings when data entered may have errors in the unduplicated count of children reported.

Texas—Texas reported that it no longer includes students who are removed to disciplinary alternative education programs (DAEPs) on its discipline report. Some DAEPs are on campus, and some are off-campus, and the state’s database cannot differentiate between the two. The state believes that removals to on-campus DAEPs are similar to in-school suspensions, which are not included on the discipline report. Because it cannot differentiate between on and off campus DAEPs, the state did not report any students removed to these programs. The state only reported expulsions and out-of-school suspensions in the suspension/expulsion categories.

West Virginia—West Virginia reported that its data collection system was revised to more accurately record whether days of removal were cumulative or concurrent when two removal actions were recorded on the same date.