

Differences among Young Adults Six Years after Graduation by Education Service Receipt in High School

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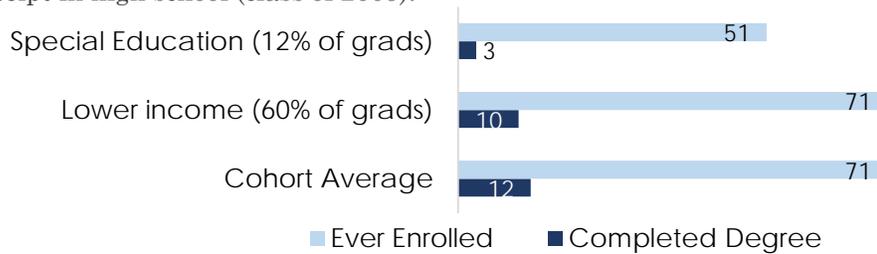
April 2018

This brief is the seventh in BERC’s [Launching into Adulthood series](#), which examines the trajectories of Baltimore graduates over six years. BERC established a partnership with Baltimore’s Promise and the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) that has made it possible to examine both college and earnings outcomes among City Schools graduates.

This brief considers graduates six years after high school, and whether college enrollment, degree completion, median annual earnings, and the percent earning a [livable wage](#) differ according to education service receipt in 12th grade. Specifically, we compare outcomes for graduates whose family income made them eligible for free or reduced-price meals (“lower-income”), graduates who received special education services, and the average for the graduating cohort as a whole. As background, about 60% of the cohort were from lower income families and 12% received special education services in 12th grade.

Enrollment and Degree Completion after Six Years

Figure 1. Percent ever enrolling in college and completing degrees within six years, by education service receipt in high school (class of 2009).

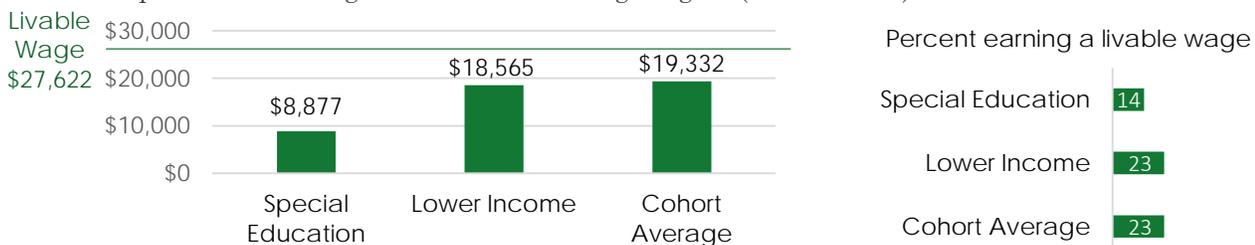


The percent of lower-income graduates who enrolled in college over six years was the same as for the graduating cohort as a whole (71%). The percent completing any type of degree was slightly lower, but on the whole similar (10% versus 12%). Graduates who received special education services were less likely to enroll in college, however, and the percent who completed a degree was 3% compared to the cohort average of 12%. (See Figure 1.) Next, we consider earnings differences for two groups: education service graduates who had completed a college degree within six years, and those who never enrolled in college.

Degree Completers

The median annual income in year six among lower-income graduates who had completed a college degree (\$18,565) was slightly lower than for the cohort overall (\$19,332). Median annual income for graduates who received special education services was \$8,877. (See Figure 2, left-hand panel.)

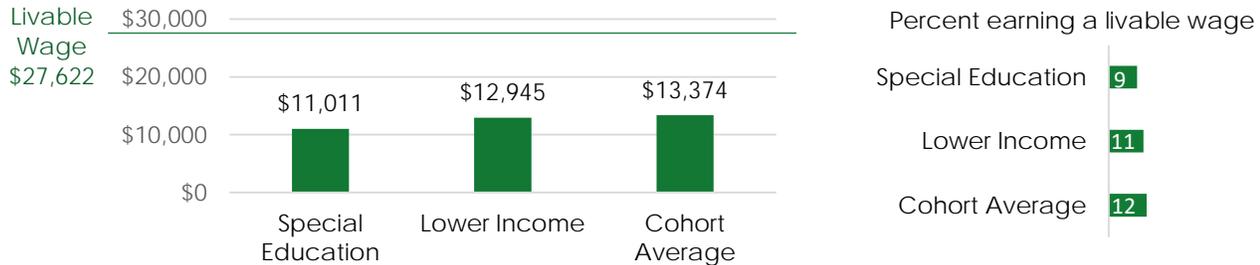
Figure 2. Median annual income and percent earning a livable wage after six years among lower-income and special education graduates with a college degree (class of 2009).



Whereas 23% of the full cohort and lower-income graduates with a college degree earned a livable wage, 14% of graduates with a degree who received special education earned a livable wage. (See Figure 2, right-hand panel.)

Young Adults with No College Experience

Figure 3. Median annual income and percent earning a livable wage after six years among lower-income and special education graduates who never enrolled in college (class of 2009).



Compared to the median annual income of \$13,374 for all cohort graduates with no college experience, the median annual income of graduates who received special education was \$11,011 after six years. For lower-income graduates who did not enroll in college, it was \$12,945. Whereas 12% of all graduates with no college experience earned a livable wage after six years, about 9% of non-enrollees who received special education earned a livable wage. About 11% of lower-income graduates who did not enroll in college over these six years earned a livable wage in year six.

Conclusions

We find that among high school graduates, being from a lower-income family did not relate to rates of enrollment in college, relative to the cohort average, and similar shares completed degrees in six years. Graduates who received special education services, however, were less likely to enroll in college and complete a degree. By comparison, a national study of students with disabilities found that 55% enrolled in college and 38% completed a degree within six years.ⁱ Further, even with a college degree, the median annual earnings for graduates who received special education was almost \$10,000 less in year six and 14% earned a livable wage, compared to 23% of all degree completers in the cohort.

We found fewer differences between education service groups and the cohort overall for those with no college experience. Whereas the median annual income in year six for those who received special education was \$11,011, median income for all graduates with no college was only slightly higher, at \$13,374. The percent earning a livable wage in year six was also more comparable (9% versus 12%).

It should be noted that students receiving special education services are not monolithic. This status indicates a variety of education-related needs among students, some of which are more relevant to postsecondary outcomes than others. Future research should examine how different learning needs among this group of students are related to college persistence and workforce opportunity.

For details about the data source and methodology [see *Launching into Adulthood Methodology brief*](#).

We are grateful for support from Baltimore’s Promise, which allowed BERC to complete this research.

ⁱ Newman, L., Wagner, M., Knokey, A. M., Marder, C., Nagle, K., Shaver, D., & Wei, X. (2011). The Post-High School Outcomes of Young Adults with Disabilities up to 6 Years after High School: Key Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2). NCSER 2011-3004. National Center for Special Education Research.