HOW MANY GRADS DID WE REACH?
Through June 2021, 621 students have graduated from The Harbour School. Eight of our alumni are deceased. Five of our graduates are medically unable to work. Through mail solicitation, on-line surveys and follow-up phone calls, we were able to reach 460 of our graduates or 74.9%, up from 74% last year. This survey goes all the way back to 1991, our first graduating class.

GRADS WORKING AND IN SCHOOL
A total of 67% of our grads reported working. The longer the alumni were out of school the greater the likelihood that they were working. The study showed a dramatic drop in the number of students in school. Only 25% of all grads were in school, but 37% of recent grads were in school. Students with disabilities are disproportionately impacted negatively by online instruction and most institutions of higher learning went online during the pandemic. As schools reopen in person this fall, it will be interesting to see how the number of our alumni in school is impacted.

GRADS LIVING INDEPENDENTLY
News is good. Overall, 31.1% of grads are living independently, an increase of about 1.1% over last year. If we include students who have been out of school three or more years, 33% of our alumni are living independently. These data are particularly impressive given that they were collected 18 months into the pandemic when many young people have returned to their parents’ homes as unemployment soared. According to a 2013 study by Shaun Heasley reported in Disability Scoop, only 17% of people with autism ages 21–25 have ever lived independently. The current majority of our students has autism.

MARYLAND RECENTLY RELEASED DATA ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN MARYLAND
These data are not encouraging. In May of 2019, before our survey but also before the pandemic, 22.2% of people with disabilities were engaged in individual competitive employment. Compare this number to 84.5% of Harbour grads. We were eighteen months into the pandemic when these data were gathered. The percentage of employed was down about .5% year over year. Only 40 people were self-employed, .4%. In the Maryland study the largest percentage was 55% who were engaged in facility based non-work, probably some sort of care center. Altogether the study looked at 11,412 people; down just over 200 from two years ago. The largest increase was in community based non-work, again probably some sheltered work in the community. Harbour puts a great deal of emphasis on preparing our students for life after Harbour, whether that be in a job, post-secondary education or both. Some have criticized the school for not emphasizing test scores enough. But until someone can show the school data that correlates post-secondary success with high standardized test score, the school will keep believing in our own data.
Number of Harbour School grads in post-secondary education, working, or a combination: 92.8%
A slight increase over last year in spite of the pandemic.

THE HARBOUR SCHOOL BELIEVES IN OUR STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES. THIS IS WHAT THEY HAVE TOLD US:

• The Harbour School prepared me to continue my education to receive two degrees. Harbour helped me more than you think. It gave me confidence to obtain my social and educational development.
• My parents would say this school was a lifesaver for me. I really loved school, but needed more help when I graduated.
• I am a ServSafe certified food manager and a certified food handler also I completed a program in entrepreneurship and have applied for another job.
• I want you to know that Harbour saved his life. He is a totally different person after attending the school. He graduated from culinary school, interned at the Manor Tavern and is still working at Santori’s. I cannot say enough about Harbour! It not only saved his life but saved the entire family. He is truly a wonderful, responsible, young man.
• I recently graduated from AACC with a degree in human services.
• I still keep in contact with Dr. Jacobs via email and I cherish this connection. The Harbour School helped me to develop skills to advocate for myself. The high school listened to my concerns and put me in math classes more in synch with my ability. I am proud of my college degree.
• Unfortunately I was terminated from my job at Becton Dickinson on April 30. My training in Excel at Harbour helped me to in getting this data entry position.
• Harbour School prepared me very well for life after school, it builds my sense of independence and desire to work and live fully. I also loved how dogs were part of the school.
• I am working at the FDA.
• Pace is too slow and losing interest is a problem.
• I’m an Anne Arundel Community College class of 2021 graduate. I am currently employed at Chic-fil-A in Severna Park.
• Thank you for all your support during my time at Harbour. I do not know where I would be without it.
• Provide more specific job training, and perhaps coaching in getting a job.
• If it wasn’t for THS, I would not be living a complete life like I am now. It has helped me more than I can say and I am so grateful for it.
• I have been at Royal Farms for 7 years, have made many friendships there and I love it. I take Uber to and from work which is a service I receive from DDA. I am engaged to a graduate from the Baltimore campus, my life is very full.
• Harbour did a lot to prepare for the real world.
• No, we love Harbour, we love Dr. Jacobs.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE US TO KNOW, OR THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH HARBOUR?

• This past March I got a job as a substitute daycare/classroom aide in “Lower Township Elementary School District” (NJ). I would not recommend “The Workforce and Technology Center” to ANYONE!!! I had a terrible experience and I think this place has gotten other bad reviews.
• I have delivered 2 speeches, met with the Board of Directors at Melwood, and landed an internship in the finance department at Melwood.
• If it wasn’t for The Harbour School I don’t know what I would be doing. Harbour was amazing and helped me so much. Mrs. Pickhardt was such an inspiration in my life. She is the one who influenced me to want to work with special needs children. Thank you, Harbour School. Very sadly Ms Pickhardt passed away August 2021.
• I got divorced last year. (Looks like Harbour grads are not immune from marital problems.)
WHAT ARE THE DIRECTIONS FROM HERE? HOW DO WE BUILD AN EVEN BETTER SCHOOL?

• There is an alumni link to the school’s Facebook page and alumni have their own page.
• Harbour is back in school in person full time.
• Do a better job of helping students apply and being accepted into post-secondary schools.
• Harbour updated our transition program to include more parent participation and more cross-subject area involvement.

CONCLUSION

At The Harbour School we believe in the law of physics that nothing stays the same. We either get better or not. We are definitely committed to getting better. The Harbour School has just started its 40th year as a school. We have achieved a great deal. And there is much left to do.

• We were hugely challenged last year by the pandemic. We do not believe that online instruction meets our students’ educational needs. The two challenges of safety for students and staff and giving our students an appropriately challenging educational program are often at cross purposes. Thankfully the school is fully in person for the 21–22 academic year.

We need to continue to work with families on the benefits of soft-skill training. It is these skills that keep our students both in college or on the job. We believe that our fledgling birds will fly further and faster if they are not only well fed; but also have a clear focus on where they are going and the real challenges that lie ahead. The workplace has changed dramatically coming out of the pandemic and we are not there yet. The school is going to assess how that workplace has changed and what presents challenges for many of our alumni since they often require in-person supervision. On the positive side, our alumni often get service sector jobs and there are many openings in those areas with increased hourly wages and benefits. Our alumni are not immune from these changes and the school will need to adjust our programming to meet those challenges. We are a fine, fine school with fine, fine students and fine, fine teachers —it is no wonder we all just love this school.