

VII. MAINE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES DROPOUT ANALYSIS – 2003-2004

A general overview of the number and percentage of Maine students, ages 3 through 21, who exited from special education services during the 2002-2003 school year [*Maine Department of Education – EF-S-05 Reports, December 1, 2005 Child Count, State Totals Report by Exit Data and Age*] is presented in Table 12. It is important to point out that the data contained in Table 12 reflect the numbers and percentages of students who exited from special education services via any of the eleven means (categories) listed in the state “Exit Data Report.” The information pertains to all students, ages 3-21, who *exited*, including those students who exited to regular education, those students who moved out-of-district, known to be continuing, and those students who exited to school age special education services.

An inspection of the data contained in Table 12 indicates that 4.89 percent of all students, ages, 3-21, who *exited special education between December 1, 2002 and December 1, 2005* were considered to be dropouts. However, as was suggested earlier in this report, this method of determining the student dropout rate can be very misleading as it includes *all* students who exited --- *at all age levels* and by *any means*.

Thus, as also was cited earlier in this report, in an effort to provide a more valid and meaningful student dropout rate – and one that is consistent with the method currently employed by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs to calculate students with disabilities dropout rates – this study employed a different method for calculating the percentage of students who *dropped out*. The specific calculation formula, which was described in detail earlier in this section of the report, essentially involves determining the number and percentage of students, ages 14 and older, who dropped out of school out of all of those students who left school (*leavers*) via one of the following means: graduated with a standard diploma, graduated through certificate/fulfillment of I.E.P. requirement, reached the maximum age for services, died, or dropped out.