



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF FEDERAL TRIO PROGRAMS**

May 2002

# A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998-99





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# FOREWORD

To help ensure the full success of President Bush's education initiative, "No Child Left Behind," high-quality postsecondary educational opportunities must be available to all students. In keeping with this goal, the Federal TRIO Programs provide outreach and support programs to assist low-income, first-generation college students in progressing through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs.

On behalf of the Office of Federal TRIO Programs, I am pleased to present this report, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998-99*. The Talent Search Program identifies and assists youth (between 11 and 27 years of age) from disadvantaged backgrounds who have the potential to succeed in higher education. The program provides academic, career, and financial aid counseling, tutoring, exposure to college campuses, and assistance in preparing for college entrance examinations and in completing college admission and financial aid applications. The goal of the program is to increase the number of disadvantaged youth who graduate from high school and continue on to postsecondary institutions of their choice.

This report is the first in a series of reports that present a national profile of the Talent Search Program. Individual project reports, under separate cover, summarize the specific information submitted by each Talent Search project and provide aggregate information on other Talent Search projects in the same federal region, institutional sector, and for the nation. The 1998-99 performance report, submitted by the Talent Search projects, was the primary data source for both the national profile and individual project reports.

The Office of Federal TRIO Programs is proud to share with you national information on the Talent Search Program. It is our hope that the collection and dissemination of this information will foster communication aimed at assessing our mission and implementing measures to see how well we are doing. We look forward to this collaborative relationship as we work together to improve program services and postsecondary enrollment rates for low-income, potential first-generation college students.

Robert L. Belle Jr.  
Director  
Office of Federal TRIO Programs

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Publishing this report was a team effort and we appreciate the support of all who contributed. First, we thank the project staff members of the Talent Search projects who reported the data upon which the report is based. Computer Business Methods Inc. processed the data files. The Office of Federal TRIO Programs, directed by Robert L. Belle Jr., sponsored the report, and Frances Bergeron of the Office of Federal TRIO Programs coordinated the reporting process. Jessica Wilkens, August Parker, and Valerie Williams of Mathematica Policy Research Inc. deserve special mention for administrative support. Mary Fran Miklitsch designed this publication.



# HIGHLIGHTS

This report provides a comprehensive profile of the Talent Search Program using the 1998-99 performance report data. Performance reports were submitted by 98 percent of the projects (355 out of 361). The 349 projects that provided complete demographic data served a total of 307,451 participants. This report is intended to serve as a resource for the improvement of Talent Search services.

Below are highlights from the following sections: demographics of project participants and target schools, services and activities, and performance outcomes.

## Demographics of Project Participants and Target Schools

- Fifty-two percent of Talent Search participants continued from a previous year and 48 percent were new to the program.
- Seventy-four percent of participants met both the low-income and first generation college eligibility requirements.
- Thirty-five percent of participants were black or African American, 32 percent were white, 22 percent were Hispanic or Latino, and 10 percent were of other races or ethnic backgrounds.
- Thirty percent of all Talent Search participants were attending middle school, 65 percent were attending high school, and 5 percent had graduated from high school or dropped out of high school or college.
- Five percent of participants had limited English proficiency.
- A typical project served about 14 target schools and 41 percent of the students within Talent Search target schools qualified for the federal free lunch program.

## Services and Activities

- College orientation activities, test-taking and study skills development, counseling, and academic advising/course selection were the services most commonly offered to participants.
- Twenty-one percent of participants received tutoring services.
- Almost two-thirds of participants (65 percent) received services related to academic advising and course selection.
- More than three-fourths of participants (77 percent) received counseling, over one-half (54 percent) participated in college orientation activities, and one-third (33 percent) participated in cultural activities.

## Performance Outcomes

- Ninety-eight percent of middle school participants and 96 percent of high school participants remained in school.
- Ninety-four percent of participants who began the performance period as 12th graders graduated by the end of the period.
- Seventy-one percent of college-ready participants were admitted to, or enrolled in, a program of postsecondary education.
- Among those participants who went on to postsecondary education, 41 percent attended public 4-year schools, 40 percent attended public 2-year schools, 12 percent attended private 2- and 4-year schools, and 6 percent attended other types of schools.

# I. INTRODUCTION

This report is the first in a series addressing Talent Search projects. The report is presented in two documents. The first piece, the national report, provides feedback from Talent Search projects on the status of Talent Search performance reporting and gives the overall results from all projects. A second, companion document provides individual reports, which summarize data from each project.

The purpose of the reports is to share feedback and other information from the performance reports that Talent Search projects prepare each year. It is our hope that Talent Search projects can use the shared information to plan and improve their own services, which will increase educational opportunities for low-income and potential first-generation college students.

In both the national and individual project reports, we look at the data by type of host institution—public 4-year, private 4-year, and 2-year postsecondary institutions; and community organizations. We also present the reporting response rates by federal region.

Although Talent Search and Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) projects have a similar performance report form, these programs have different missions, participant characteristics, and services. To gather and present performance report information more fully for each of these programs, we have prepared separate but similar reports for both the Talent Search and EOC projects.

## A. Background

Talent Search projects identify and assist individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds who have the potential to succeed in higher education. The program provides academic, career, and financial aid counseling to its participants and encourages them to graduate from high school and continue on to the postsecondary school of their choice. Talent Search also serves high school dropouts by encouraging them to reenter the educational system and complete their education.

In 1998-99 (FY 1998) new grant awards increased the number of Talent Search projects from 319 to 361 projects. Talent Search projects are operated by 2- or 4-year colleges, public or private nonprofit agencies or organizations, or combinations of these sponsors. In each project, at least two-thirds of the participants must be both low-income and potential first-generation college students. Talent Search participants must also be 11 to 27 years of age<sup>1</sup> or have completed the fifth grade. Services

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<sup>1</sup>Projects may serve clients age 28 or older if no Educational Opportunity Center is available to serve them and doing so will not dilute the services they provide to the main target group.

provided by Talent Search projects include: academic, financial, career, or personal counseling; career exploration and aptitude assessment; tutoring; information on postsecondary education; exposure to college campuses; information on financial aid; assistance in completing college admissions and financial aid applications; preparation for college entrance exams; mentoring; and workshops for participants' parents.

It is helpful to place Talent Search in the context of the other direct service TRIO Programs—Upward Bound (UB), Upward Bound Math Science (UBMS), Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC), Student Support Services (SSS), and Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement (McNair). Table 1 gives the funding information and participant numbers for each of the direct service TRIO Programs in 1999-2000 (FY 1999). As shown, and in contrast to the very intensive and costly services provided by some of the other TRIO Programs, the Talent Search Program serves the largest number of persons (323,541) of any of the TRIO Programs at an average cost per person of \$304 in 1999-2000.

Table 2 gives TRIO funding levels in constant 1999 dollars. One can see from this table that Talent Search funding has increased about eightfold in constant dollars since its inception.

**Table 1. TRIO funding, number of grants, number served, average grant award, amount per person served, and average number served: 1999**

1999	Program funding	Number of grants	Number served	Average grant award	Amount per person served	Average number served
Talent Search	\$98,450,697	361	323,541	\$272,717	\$304	896
Educational Opportunity Centers	\$29,794,380	82	158,063	\$363,346	\$188	1,928
McNair	\$32,114,068	156	3,734	\$205,859	\$8,600	24
Student Support Services	\$178,916,836	796	178,099	\$224,770	\$1,005	224
Upward Bound	\$220,500,637	772	52,960	\$285,623	\$4,164	69
Upward Bound Math Science	\$29,276,284	124	6,200	\$236,099	\$4,722	50

*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, 1999.*

**Table 2. TRIO funding levels in constant 1999 dollars (millions)**

Year	TS	EOC	UB	SSS	McNair	UBMS
1967	\$12.4	—	\$139.7	—	—	—
1970	\$21.5	—	\$127.1	\$42.9	—	—
1975	\$18.6	\$9.3	\$118.6	\$71.2	—	—
1980	\$30.9	\$15.6	\$126.4	\$121.3	—	—
1985	\$32.1	\$14.2	\$114.0	\$108.5	—	—
1990	\$34.5	\$15.2	\$128.2	\$115.9	\$3.8	\$4.3
1995	\$85.7	\$26.9	\$208.3	\$156.9	\$20.9	\$20.8
1999	\$98.5	\$29.8	\$220.5	\$178.9	\$32.1	\$29.3

*Source: Calculated from information provided by United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs and the Consumer Price Index.*

## B. Performance report response

This report covers the 1998-99 reporting period. This was the first year that Talent Search projects used the new performance report form approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1998. For 1998-99, aggregate performance reports covering Sections I-V on the performance report form were submitted by 98 percent of the projects in operation at the time (Table 3). These records covered 307,451 participants in the reference year. Fifty-six percent of the Talent Search projects submitted reports over the Web.

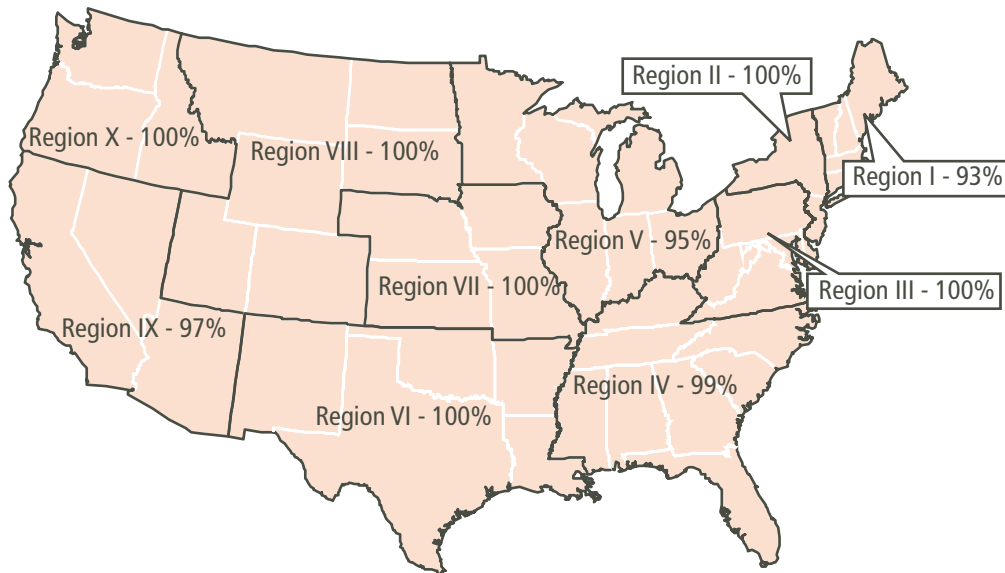
**Table 3. Number of Talent Search projects and projects reporting performance information, by type of host institution: 1998-99**

Sector	Total projects in 1998	Percentage of total TS projects	Project response rate	Number of participants reported	Percent distribution
Public 4-year	121	34%	98%	104,372	34%
Private 4-year	48	13%	96%	36,480	12%
2-year	124	34%	97%	90,217	29%
Community organizations	68	19%	98%	76,382	25%
All projects	361	100%	98%	307,451	100%

*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

Figure 1 and Table 4 give the percentage of projects reporting by region. The percentage reporting ranged from 93 percent in Region I to 100 percent in several regions (II, III, VI, VII, VIII, and X).

**Figure 1. Performance report response rates by region: 1998-99**



*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

**Table 4. Number of Talent Search projects and participants and percentage reporting performance information, by federal region: 1998-99**

Federal region	Total projects in 1998	Project distribution	Number of participants	Number of projects reporting	Response rate
Region I (Boston)	14	4%	11,508	13	93%
Region II (New York)	33	9%	31,059	33	100%
Region III (Philadelphia)	35	10%	41,678	35	100%
Region IV (Atlanta)	88	24%	70,815	87	99%
Region V (Chicago)	55	15%	36,428	52	95%
Region VI (Dallas)	48	13%	44,310	48	100%
Region VII (Kansas City)	20	6%	15,626	20	100%
Region VIII (Denver)	18	5%	15,684	18	100%
Region IX (San Francisco)	38	11%	33,031	37	97%
Region X (Seattle)	12	3%	7,312	12	100%
Total for nation	361	100%	307,451	355	98%

*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

### C. Structure of the report

The rest of this report is organized according to the structure of the performance report. Chapter II presents a demographic profile of Talent Search participants and target schools. Chapter III discusses the provision of project services. Chapter IV provides an analysis of performance outcomes, and Chapter V discusses data issues as well as plans for future years.

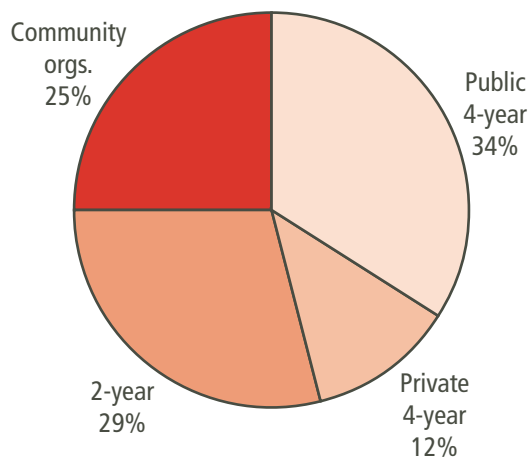
## II. DEMOGRAPHICS

This section summarizes the demographic information that was reported on the 1998-99 Talent Search performance reports. Statistics are given for Talent Search projects as a whole, as well as projects grouped by type of host institution, defined as 4-year public colleges and universities, 4-year private colleges and universities, 2-year colleges, and community organizations.

### A. Number of participants assisted

Three hundred forty-nine<sup>2</sup> Talent Search projects reported serving a total of 307,451 participants, or an average of 881<sup>3</sup> participants per project. As Figure 2 shows, 34 percent of participants were served by projects based in public 4-year colleges and universities. Twelve percent were served by projects located in private 4-year colleges and universities, 29 percent by 2-year colleges, and 25 percent by community organizations not affiliated with postsecondary schools.

**Figure 2. Participant distribution by type of host institution: 1998-99**



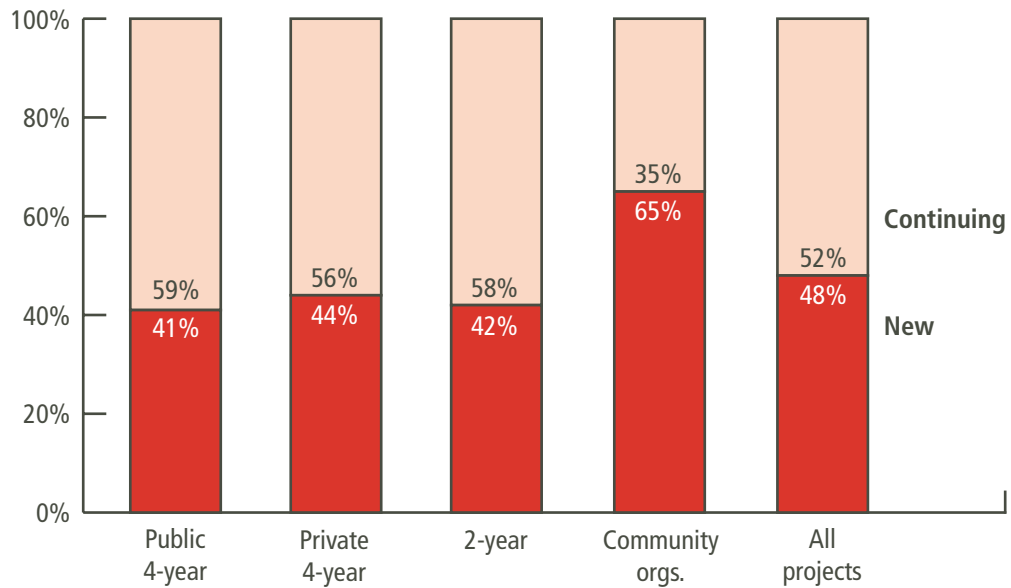
*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

<sup>2</sup>While 355 projects submitted performance reports, data from only 349 projects were used. Six projects used a previous version of the report form rather than the revised 1998-99 version.

<sup>3</sup>This number includes one unusually large project that served 14,731 participants during the 1998-99 reporting period. When this project is excluded, the average number of participants per project is 841.

Overall, there was a fairly even split between new and continuing participants. Fifty-two percent of the 1998-99 participants continued from a previous year, and 48 percent joined Talent Search for the first time (Figure 3). According to the instructions accompanying the performance report, a new participant is one served by the project for the first time during this reporting period. A continuing participant is one who was served by the project for the first time in another reporting period and who received project services during this reporting period.

**Figure 3. Participant distribution by status and type of host institution: 1998-99**



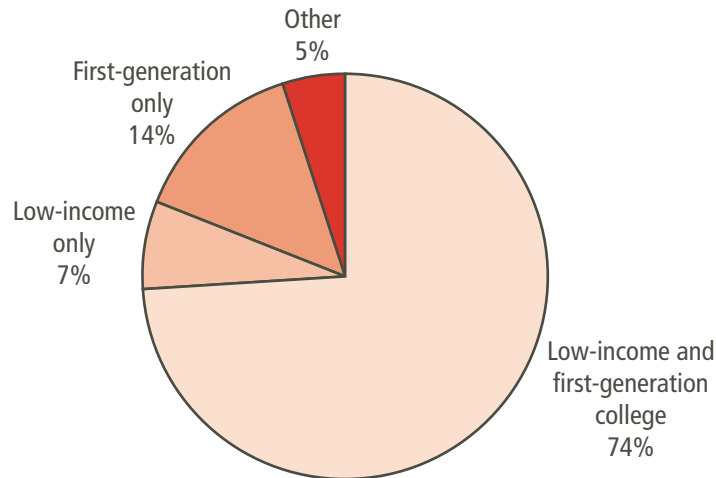
*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

The proportions of new and continuing participants were similar for host institutions based in colleges and universities of all types. The projects based in community organizations had a greater proportion of new participants. Sixty-five percent of the participants in community organizations were new, and 35 percent were continuing from a previous year.

## B. Participant distribution by eligibility

Talent Search projects overall exceeded the requirement that two-thirds of their participants be both low-income<sup>4</sup> and potential first-generation college students.<sup>5</sup> Seventy-four percent of the participants during the 1998-99 reporting period met both criteria. Twenty-one percent were either low-income or potential first-generation students. Five percent had other needs (Figure 4). The distributions of participants by eligibility status were consistent across the four sectors (Table 5).

**Figure 4. Participant distribution by eligibility status: 1998-99**



Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, *Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99*.

**Table 5. Participant distribution by eligibility status and type of host institution: 1998-99**

Sector	Low-income and first generation	Low-income only	First generation only	Other
Public 4-year	75%	7%	13%	5%
Private 4-year	75%	8%	13%	5%
2-year	73%	5%	17%	5%
Community organizations	73%	8%	13%	6%
All projects	74%	7%	14%	5%

Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, *Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99*.

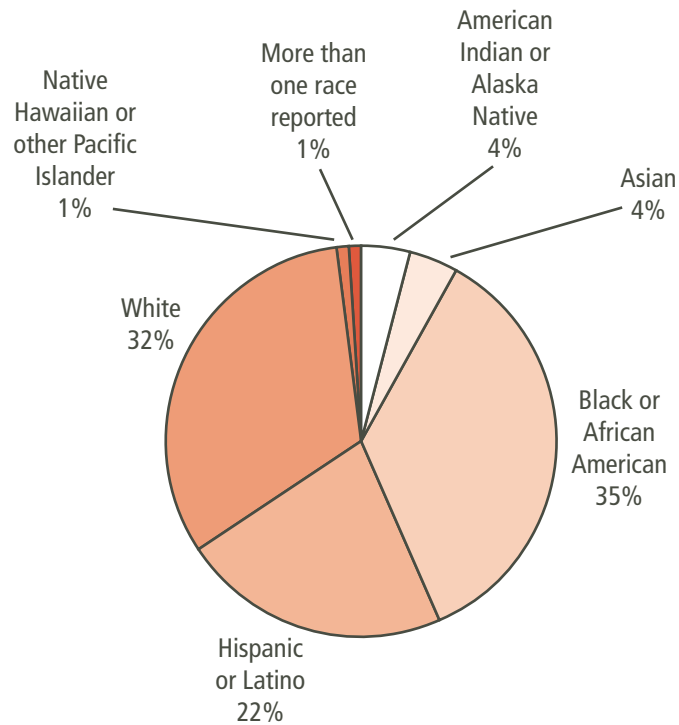
<sup>4</sup>A low-income participant is one whose family's taxable income was less than 150 percent of the poverty level amount. The U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, sets guidelines to determine the definition of poverty level.

<sup>5</sup>A potential first generation college student is one whose parents or guardians did not receive a baccalaureate degree.

### C. Participant distribution by ethnic background

Thirty-five percent of all Talent Search participants were black or African American, 32 percent were white, and 22 percent were Hispanic or Latino. Asians and American Indians/Alaskan Natives each made up 4 percent of the Talent Search participant population. One percent of participants were natives of Hawaii or other Pacific islands and another 1 percent were from a multi-ethnic background (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Participant distribution by ethnic background: 1998-99**



*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

The ethnic composition of projects differed somewhat among the sectors. For example, a higher proportion of black or African-American participants (45 percent) were served by projects hosted by private 4-year colleges than by projects overall (35 percent). In contrast, a higher proportion of Hispanic or Latino participants (39 percent) were served by projects hosted by community organizations than by projects overall (22 percent). Complete results are provided in Table 6.

**Table 6. Participant distribution by ethnic background and type of host institution: 1998-99**

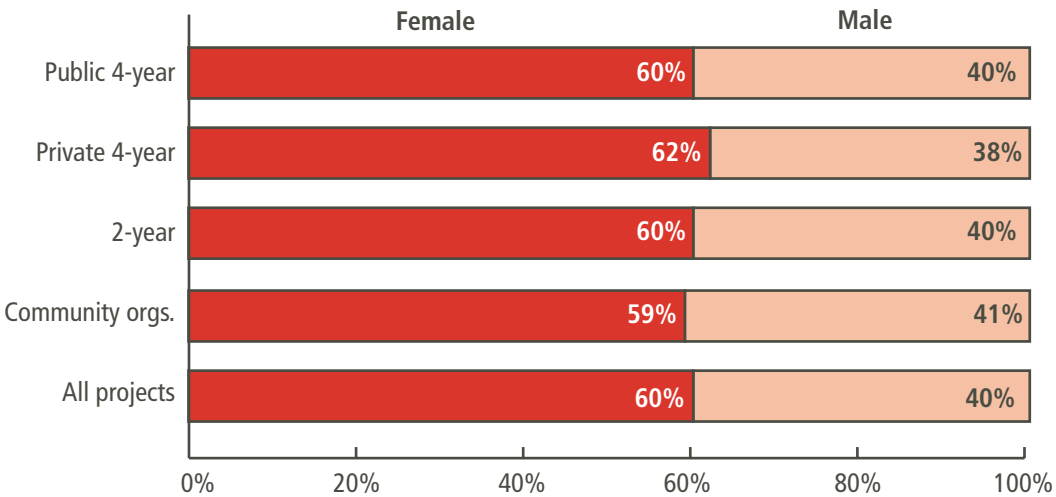
Sector	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	White	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	More than one race reported
Public 4-year	4%	4%	39%	20%	32%	1%	1%
Private 4-year	1%	2%	45%	21%	30%	0%	1%
2-year	6%	3%	32%	12%	44%	2%	1%
Community organizations	4%	5%	30%	39%	19%	1%	1%
All projects	4%	4%	35%	22%	32%	1%	1%

Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.

#### D. Participant distribution by gender

Consistent with the pattern for other TRIO Programs, Talent Search served more women than men. Sixty percent of Talent Search participants in 1998-99 were female and 40 percent were male. As Figure 6 shows, the proportions did not vary much across the sectors.

**Figure 6. Participant distribution by gender and type of host institution: 1998-99**

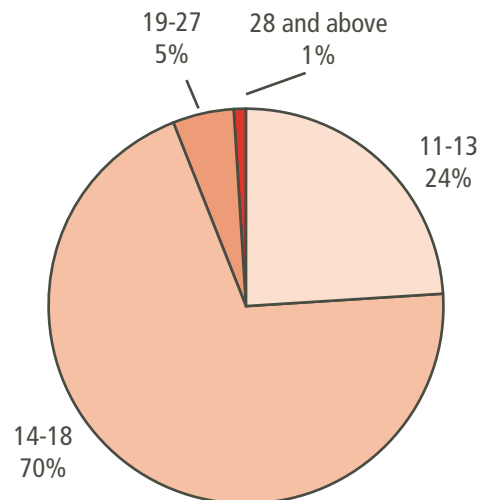


Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.

## E. Participant distribution by age

In 1998-99, most Talent Search participants, 70 percent, were 14-18 years of age. While recent years have seen increased program development for middle school students, more than three-fourths of Talent Search participants remain in the age groups over 14 (Figure 7). Percentages broken down by sector reveal a similar pattern: the largest group of participants comprised those who were 14-18 years of age (Table 7).

**Figure 7. Participant distribution by age: 1998-99**



*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

**Table 7. Participant distribution by age and type of host institution: 1998-99**

Sector	11-13	14-18	19-27	28 and above
Public 4-year	24%	70%	5%	1%
Private 4-year	29%	69%	2%	0%
2-year	29%	67%	3%	1%
Community organizations	18%	73%	7%	1%
All projects	24%	70%	5%	1%

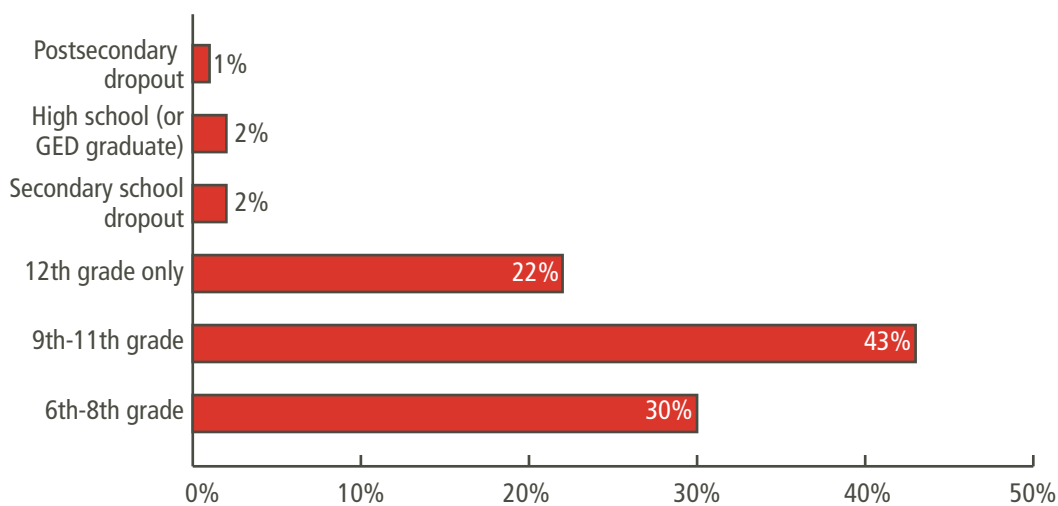
*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

## F. Participant distribution by grade level

Sixty-five percent of Talent Search participants were in grades 9-12 at the beginning of the 1998-99 reporting period and 30 percent of participants were in grades 6-8 (Figure 8). Two percent had not completed high school, 2 percent had graduated or received the GED, and 1 percent had dropped out of postsecondary school. The largest single grade was the 12th grade, with 22 percent of all participants.

The distribution across grades was similar for projects hosted by 4-year and 2-year institutions. However, community organizations less frequently served middle school participants and more frequently served 12th graders (Table 8).

**Figure 8. Participant distribution by grade level: 1998-99**



Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.

**Table 8. Participant distribution by grade level and type of host institution: 1998-99**

Sector	6th-8th grades	9th-11th grades	12th grade only	Secondary school dropout	High school (GED) graduate	Post-secondary dropout
Public 4-year	30%	46%	20%	2%	2%	1%
Private 4-year	34%	45%	17%	1%	2%	0%
2-year	35%	45%	16%	2%	2%	0%
Community organizations	24%	37%	33%	2%	3%	2%
All projects	30%	43%	22%	2%	2%	1%

Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.

## G. Veterans served

In 1998-99, the percentage of Talent Search participants who were veterans was very small, less than 1 percent.

## H. Participants of limited English proficiency

Five percent of Talent Search participants were reported to have limited English proficiency. A person of limited English proficiency is defined as one whose native language is not English and who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding English to prevent that person from learning successfully in classrooms in which English is the language of instruction. The figures for 1998-99 show that five percent of the students served by projects based in 4-year public schools had limited English proficiency. Six percent of students served by 4-year private schools, 5 percent of students served by 2-year private schools, and 3 percent of students served by community organizations had limited English proficiency (not shown in tables).

## I. Target schools

Talent Search projects served an average<sup>6</sup> of 14 target schools. Target schools, by definition, are secondary schools designated by the grantee as a focus of project services. Projects based in public 4-year colleges and universities generally served the largest number of target schools, an average of 16 schools per project (Figure 9). Private 4-year colleges and universities served an average of 12 schools, 2-year colleges served an average of 13, and community organizations served an average of 11 target schools.

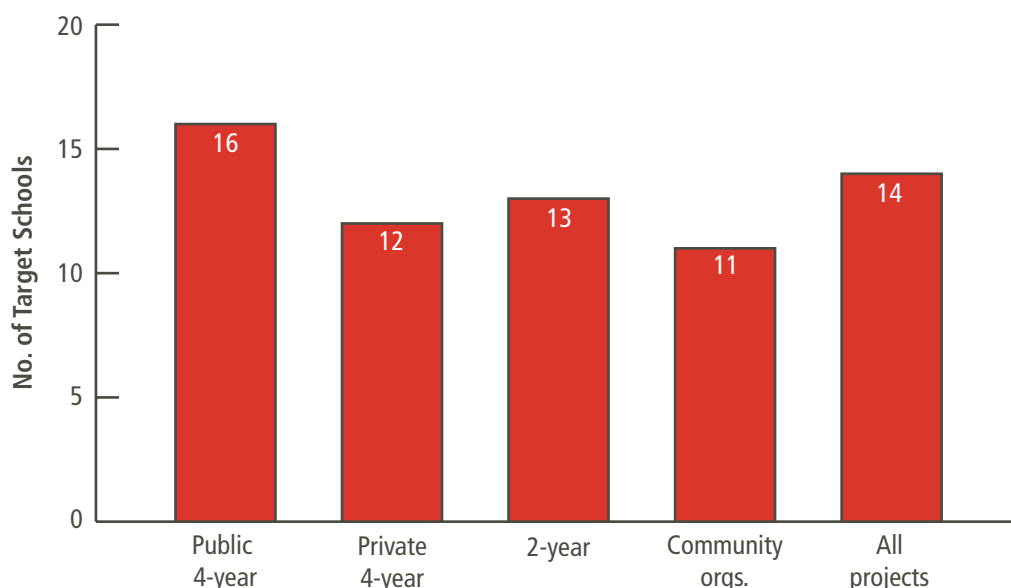
Of the 349 projects that completed the 1998-99 performance report, 341 submitted a list of target schools. These projects combined served a total of 5,105 schools.

The only information we have from the performance report data about a target school is the name and location (city, state, and zip code). In an effort to obtain more in-depth knowledge of the characteristics of Talent Search target schools, we conducted an experimental merge of target school names from the performance report with school names in the Common Core of Data (CCD). The CCD is a comprehensive database of elementary and secondary schools across the nation. The data are collected by the U.S. Department of Education, updated on an annual basis, and provide basic descriptive information about public schools in the United States. Data are provided at both the school and district levels.

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<sup>6</sup>The average refers to the median in this case. The median was used because one particularly large project served a total of 135 target schools, and this skewed the overall mean. The mean number of target schools served by Talent Search was 15 schools.

**Figure 9. Number of target schools per project by type of host institution: 1998-99**



*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

Matches to the CCD were found for 91 percent of the 5,105 target schools listed in the performance report. Errors in the names or locations of schools as provided in the performance reports may have contributed to the lack of a match for some schools. Some non-matches may also be attributed to the fact that the CCD information is one year older than the performance report data.<sup>7</sup>

One issue that the merge to the CCD allowed us to examine was the extent to which eligible students in the target schools were served by the Talent Search Program. A proxy measure of the number eligible for Talent Search is the number eligible for the free lunch program. This measure is not the same as the Talent Search eligibility criterion but it does give an indication of the proportion of economically disadvantaged students who were served. To be eligible for the free lunch program, family income must not exceed 130 percent of the poverty level. Overall estimates show that Talent Search served about 20 percent of the estimated number of students eligible for free lunch in the target schools.<sup>8</sup> State-by-state results, provided in Table 9, also show that this esti-

<sup>7</sup>The 1997-98 school year was the latest year for which the CCD was available when this analysis was conducted.

<sup>8</sup>The percentages were calculated by dividing the total number of participants in Talent Search in a given state by the total number of students eligible for the free lunch program in the target schools in that state.

**Table 9. Estimate of eligible students served by Talent Search: 1998-99**

State	Number of secondary students served by Talent Search	Number eligible for free lunch program in target schools	Number eligible for free lunch program in all secondary schools	Number served as percentage of number eligible for free lunch program in target schools	Number served as percentage of number eligible for free lunch program in all secondary schools
Alabama	19,621	66,518	142,287	29.5	13.8
Alaska	853	825	15,616	103.4	5.5
Arizona	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Arkansas	7,503	18,936	64,933	39.6	11.6
California	24,878	212,130	1,105,907	11.7	2.2
Colorado	4,479	13,505	62,616	33.2	7.2
Connecticut	1,583	10,122	44,445	15.6	3.6
Delaware	1,350	7,825	14,766	17.3	9.1
District of Columbia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Florida	5,825	47,683	344,627	12.2	1.7
Georgia	9,497	71,002	260,299	13.4	3.6
Hawaii	1,900	10,815	23,353	17.6	8.1
Idaho	2,698	8,601	24,500	31.4	11.0
Illinois	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Indiana	5,110	18,463	88,136	27.7	5.8
Iowa	6,845	15,045	45,759	45.5	15.0
Kansas	4,781	20,257	73,788	23.6	6.5
Kentucky	6,647	33,269	114,696	20.0	5.8
Louisiana	10,706	71,088	185,457	15.1	5.8
Maine	830	2,221	25,081	37.4	3.3
Maryland	3,048	16,190	84,842	18.8	3.6
Massachusetts	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Michigan	4,273	25,554	177,875	16.7	2.4
Mississippi	5,389	29,281	160,378	18.4	3.4
Missouri	2,387	8,266	103,219	28.9	2.3
Montana	2,092	3,951	14,757	52.9	14.2
Nebraska	1,613	9,200	26,875	17.5	6.0
Nevada	1,381	3,378	25,640	40.9	5.4
New Hampshire	1,222	1,178	10,478	103.7	11.7
New Jersey	6,340	28,351	167,262	22.4	3.8
New Mexico	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
New York	15,183	71,574	465,877	21.2	3.3
North Carolina	8,645	45,924	156,559	18.8	5.5
North Dakota	2,384	2,749	12,447	86.7	19.2
Ohio	8,903	35,979	168,130	24.7	5.3
Oklahoma	7,063	34,995	111,926	20.2	6.3
Oregon	2,060	8,683	58,531	23.7	3.5
Pennsylvania	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Rhode Island	865	6,770	16,513	12.8	5.2
South Carolina	7,114	31,897	120,090	22.3	5.9
South Dakota	1,035	3,303	23,094	31.3	4.5
Tennessee	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Texas	14,563	97,352	611,515	15.0	2.4
Utah	5,069	6,985	35,690	72.6	14.2
Virginia	1,300	2,247	14,869	57.9	8.7
Vermont	7,135	21,862	116,043	32.6	6.1
Washington	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Wisconsin	2,392	17,854	59,015	13.4	4.1
West Virginia	3,459	17,263	92,360	20.0	3.7
Wyoming	625	1,105	7,773	56.6	8.0
Outlying areas	10,636	37,664	262,605	28.2	4.1
Overall	241,282	1,197,860	5,740,629	20.1	4.2

Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99; National Center for Education Statistics, Elementary/Secondary and Libraries Studies Division, Common Core of Data, 1997-98.

mate varied a great deal across states. California, for example, served 11.7 percent of the “eligible population” while Alaska and New Hampshire served over 100 percent.<sup>9</sup>

Table 9 also presents the number of secondary school students<sup>10</sup> served by Talent Search as a percentage of the free-lunch-eligible students in all secondary schools, not just the target schools. Secondary schools were defined as schools serving students in grade 7 or higher. We limited our analysis to secondary schools because the Talent Search Program regulations require participants to be in grade 6 or higher. Overall, Talent Search projects served 4 percent of the students eligible for the free lunch program in secondary schools across the U.S. and outlying areas.

The second issue we considered was the difference in demographic characteristics between target schools and all other schools. We selected two variables from the CCD for this analysis: the percentage of free-lunch-eligible students in a given school and the ratio of pupils to full-time-equivalent teachers, or the pupil-teacher ratio. In Table 10, we present the data on free lunch status. The second column indicates the average percentage of free-lunch-eligible students for the Talent Search target schools in that state.<sup>11</sup> The third column provides the percentage of free-lunch-eligible students for all other secondary schools in that state.<sup>12</sup> The fourth column is the difference between the percentages for Talent Search target schools and for all other secondary schools.<sup>13</sup> The last column provides the percentages for all secondary schools, regardless of whether or not they are Talent Search target schools.<sup>14</sup> Table 11 provides information in a similar manner for the pupil-teacher ratio.

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<sup>9</sup>There are several possible reasons why some states exceeded 100 percent. First, the income guidelines for participation in Talent Search and participation in the federal free lunch program differ somewhat. For Talent Search, a participant’s household income must not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level. To qualify for free lunch, income must not exceed 130 percent. In addition, Talent Search requires that only two-thirds of the participants meet both the low-income and first generation eligibility requirements. The remaining one-third need not meet either of those criteria.

<sup>10</sup>Only secondary school students in states with free lunch data were included in the analysis.

<sup>11</sup>Percentages were calculated by dividing the total number of students eligible for free lunch in the target schools by the total enrollment in the target schools.

<sup>12</sup>Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of students eligible for free lunch in all secondary schools that were not targeted by Talent Search by the total enrollment in those schools.

<sup>13</sup>To calculate the difference, we subtracted the value in column 3 (percentages of free-lunch-eligible students in all other schools) from the value in column 2 (percentages of free-lunch-eligible students in the target schools).

<sup>14</sup>Percentages were calculated by dividing the total number of secondary school students eligible for free lunch in a given state by total enrollment in secondary schools in that state.

**Table 10. Percentages of students eligible for the federal free lunch program in Talent Search target schools, all other secondary schools, and all secondary schools, by state: 1998-99**

State	Talent Search target schools	All other secondary schools	Difference	All secondary schools
Alabama	41.3	30.1	11.2	32.8
Alaska	10.6	22.5	-11.9	21.2
Arizona	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Arkansas	35.0	27.1	7.9	28.8
California	50.1	36.2	13.9	37.9
Colorado	30.1	15.1	15.0	18.0
Connecticut	55.1	13.5	41.7	16.3
Delaware	27.8	23.8	4.0	25.8
District of Columbia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Florida	30.3	28.9	1.4	29.2
Georgia	50.4	33.7	16.7	37.1
Hawaii	32.1	23.0	9.1	25.6
Idaho	17.5	20.4	-3.0	19.4
Illinois	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Indiana	27.5	15.8	11.7	17.4
Iowa	20.6	15.6	5.0	17.0
Kansas	44.6	24.9	19.7	28.7
Kentucky	31.0	32.3	-1.4	32.3
Louisiana	52.6	40.6	12.0	43.5
Maine	28.4	19.7	8.7	20.2
Maryland	27.0	19.5	7.5	20.6
Massachusetts	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Michigan	48.8	18.7	30.1	20.5
Minnesota	35.1	15.2	19.9	16.5
Mississippi	68.0	52.9	15.1	55.1
Missouri	43.0	21.1	21.9	22.2
Montana	28.3	15.6	12.6	17.8
Nebraska	32.5	14.4	18.1	17.7
Nevada	16.2	18.5	-2.3	18.1
New Hampshire	10.0	9.0	1.1	9.1
New Jersey	56.5	22.2	34.3	24.3
New Mexico	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
New York	52.0	30.1	21.9	31.8
North Carolina	30.7	22.5	8.2	24.1
North Dakota	36.3	17.8	18.5	19.5
Ohio	40.2	14.6	25.5	16.9
Oklahoma	43.3	28.6	14.7	31.8
Oregon	27.9	18.9	9.0	19.9
Pennsylvania	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Rhode Island	44.8	16.3	28.5	22.1
South Carolina	33.8	35.3	-1.4	34.9
South Dakota	47.1	27.6	19.5	29.3
Tennessee	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Texas	45.5	29.8	15.6	32.1
Utah	20.1	14.2	5.9	15.1
Virginia	19.3	22.4	-3.1	22.0
Vermont	30.0	18.5	11.5	19.9
Washington	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Wisconsin	40.1	32.9	7.2	34.9
West Virginia	48.5	16.2	32.3	18.5
Wyoming	22.0	14.4	7.7	15.1
Outlying areas	61.5	74.0	-12.5	71.8
Overall	40.6	26.8	13.8	28.8

Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99; National Center for Education Statistics, Elementary/Secondary and Libraries Studies Division, Common Core of Data, 1997-98.

**Table 11. Average pupil-teacher ratios for Talent Search target schools, all other secondary schools, and all secondary schools, by state: 1998-99**

State	Talent Search target schools	All other secondary schools	Difference	All secondary schools
Alabama	17.1	16.5	0.6	16.7
Alaska	19.0	21.3	-2.4	21.3
Arizona	17.7	18.7	-1.0	18.6
Arkansas	15.6	16.5	-0.9	16.3
California	22.8	22.2	0.7	22.2
Colorado	15.6	17.0	-1.4	16.9
Connecticut	15.0	14.1	0.9	14.1
Delaware	16.4	13.4	3.0	14.5
District of Columbia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Florida	18.8	17.1	1.6	17.3
Georgia	16.2	16.3	-0.1	16.3
Hawaii	17.0	16.7	0.2	16.8
Idaho	17.6	15.7	1.9	16.1
Illinois	16.2	16.6	-0.5	16.6
Indiana	17.3	16.9	0.3	17.0
Iowa	14.1	14.0	0.0	14.1
Kansas	14.8	13.1	1.7	13.3
Kentucky	16.5	17.0	-0.6	16.9
Louisiana	17.1	15.9	1.2	16.1
Maine	13.9	14.3	-0.4	14.2
Maryland	17.0	16.1	0.9	16.2
Massachusetts	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Michigan	18.5	18.4	0.0	18.4
Minnesota	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mississippi	17.3	17.4	-0.1	17.4
Missouri	14.7	14.2	0.6	14.2
Montana	13.7	12.3	1.4	12.4
Nebraska	14.7	11.0	3.7	11.2
Nevada	21.8	18.6	3.2	18.9
New Hampshire	14.5	14.4	0.1	14.4
New Jersey	13.2	13.7	-0.6	13.7
New Mexico	15.6	15.8	-0.2	15.8
New York	17.7	15.4	2.3	15.5
North Carolina	13.8	13.4	0.4	13.5
North Dakota	11.4	13.4	-2.0	13.3
Ohio	17.1	16.9	0.2	16.9
Oklahoma	14.6	14.8	-0.2	14.8
Oregon	19.5	17.9	1.6	18.0
Pennsylvania	17.7	16.9	0.8	17.0
Rhode Island	14.1	13.0	1.1	13.1
South Carolina	15.7	15.7	0.0	15.7
South Dakota	17.9	13.7	4.2	13.9
Tennessee	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Texas	13.9	13.7	0.2	13.7
Utah	19.0	19.7	-0.7	19.6
Virginia	12.9	13.5	-0.6	13.4
Vermont	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Washington	19.5	20.3	-0.8	20.3
Wisconsin	15.1	14.8	0.3	14.9
West Virginia	16.2	15.7	0.4	15.7
Wyoming	16.3	13.7	2.6	13.9
Outlying areas	18.2	20.1	-1.9	19.0
Overall	16.5	15.9	0.5	16.0

Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99; National Center for Education Statistics, Elementary/Secondary and Libraries Studies Division, Common Core of Data, 1997-98.

Forty-one percent of students in the Talent Search target schools overall were eligible for the free lunch program. This is about 14 percentage points higher than for all other secondary schools. Pupil-teacher ratios, however, differed very little between target schools and all other schools when averaged across the U.S. and outlying areas. The average class in a Talent Search target school had about 17 students.

### III. PROJECT SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

This section provides an overview of the types of services and activities that Talent Search projects provide to their participants. The performance reports asked projects to list the number of activity sessions and the number of participants who attended each of 10 activities over the 1998-99 program year. Staff reported participants by age group—middle school, high school, and adult. Middle school participants were those in grades 6 to 8, and high school participants were those in grades 9 to 12 or who had dropped out of high school. Any participant who had completed high school or earned a GED was considered an adult.

Table 12 shows the percentages of projects that provided each service, broken out by education level. For example, the first row indicates that 72 percent of Talent Search projects provided tutoring to middle school students, 65 percent provided tutoring to high school students, 13 percent provided tutoring to adults, and 80 percent provided tutoring to participants overall. College orientation activities, test-taking and study skills development, counseling, and academic advising/course selection were the services most commonly offered overall. The numbers in the table illustrate that Talent Search services are geared more toward students in middle and high schools than toward adults.

**Table 12. Percentages of projects offering services to participants, by grade level: 1998-99**

Service	Middle School	High School	Adult	Overall
Tutoring	72%	65%	13%	80%
Assisted (computer) labs	48%	52%	12%	63%
Test-taking & study skills development	84%	88%	24%	92%
Counseling	86%	90%	43%	92%
Academic advising/course selection	80%	90%	39%	91%
Mentoring	50%	50%	9%	58%
Cultural activities	87%	80%	16%	90%
College orientation activities	81%	93%	36%	95%
Family activities	76%	79%	20%	84%
Referrals	39%	59%	32%	68%

*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

## A. Academic support services

The following four services, grouped as academic support services, were defined as follows in the performance report:

- Tutoring—individual or small group tutoring provided by professional staff or students who are either part-time paid staff, volunteers, or internship-for-credit students.
- Assisted (computer) labs—academic support or tutoring provided through a learning or computer center, which may include computer-assisted instruction.
- Test-taking and study skills development—workshops, tutoring, or individual assistance specifically designed to help students develop the skills necessary to do any of the following: 1) succeed in academic programs, 2) meet scoring requirements on national or state standardized tests for admission into a post-secondary educational institution, or 3) pass a high school equivalency exam.
- Academic advising and course selection—assisting students in making education plans, selecting appropriate courses, meeting academic requirements, planning for high school graduation, and gaining admission to a postsecondary educational institution.

Three different methods were used to look at the extent to which services were offered to participants. The first measure indicated the percentage of all Talent Search participants who received a service. The second measure was the average number of sessions per project (for only those projects that undertook that service). The third measure looked at the average number of sessions per participant (for those participants engaged in that service). Projects differed in the manner in which they counted sessions, but we included these data here as an indicator of intensity rather than a measure of the number of participant contacts. This measure underestimates the actual sessions per participant. When a project provided services to a group of five people, for example, the project was instructed to count the session as one rather than five sessions.

**Table 13. Percentages of participants receiving academic support services, average number of sessions per project, and average number of sessions per participant for participants overall: 1998-99**

Service	Percentage of participants receiving service	Average number of sessions per project	Average number of sessions per participant
Tutoring	21%	547	2.1
Assisted (computer) labs	13%	149	0.9
Test-taking & study skills development	47%	265	0.6
Academic advising/course selection	65%	673	1.1

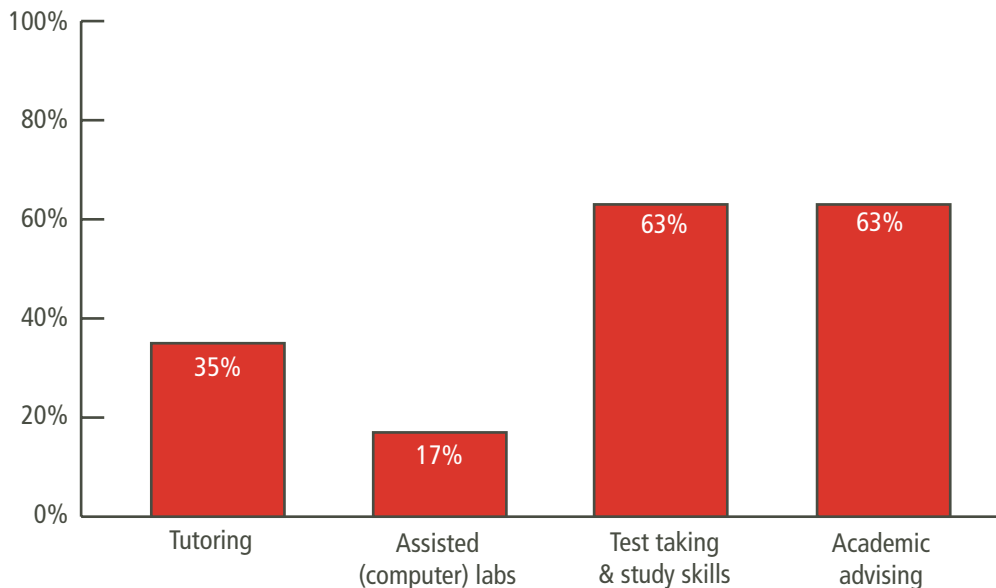
*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

Table 13 shows that 21 percent of participants overall received tutoring, 13 percent attended assisted labs, 47 percent attended test-taking and study skills development sessions, and 65 percent were advised on academic matters. Projects typically provided 547 tutoring sessions, 149 assisted labs, 265 test-taking and study skills development sessions, and 673 sessions related to academic advising/course selection over the 1998-99 program year. The average number of tutoring sessions per participant over this period was about two and the average for other academic support services was approximately one.

### 1. Middle school participants

As shown in chapter II, about 30 percent of the participants in Talent Search were in middle school (grades 6-8). More than half of participants in this group received academic advising and participated in activities designed to enhance test-taking and study skills. Figure 10 shows that 63 percent of middle school participants were involved in these activities. Other forms of academic support were less common. Thirty-five percent were tutored and 17 percent were assisted through the use of a learning lab potentially involving computer-assisted instruction.

**Figure 10. Percentages of middle school participants receiving academic support services: 1998-99**



*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

Each project provided an average of 390 tutoring sessions, 73 labs, 128 test-taking and study skill development sessions, and 214 academic advising/course selection sessions to its middle school participants (Table 14). The average number of tutoring sessions per participant was three, which was two sessions more than for assisted labs, test-taking and study skills development sessions, and academic advising/course selection sessions.

**Table 14. Average number of sessions per project and average number of sessions per participant for middle school participants: 1998-99**

Service	Average number of sessions per project	Average number of sessions per participant
Tutoring	390	3.0
Assisted (computer) labs	73	0.8
Test-taking & study skills development	128	0.7
Academic advising/course selection	214	1.0

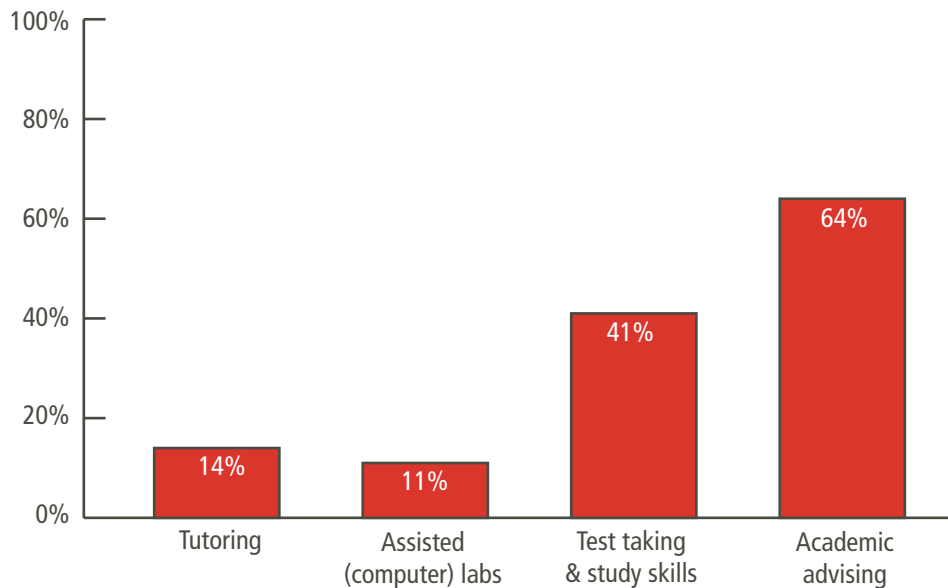
*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

## 2. High school participants

Sixty-four percent of the high school participants received academic advising through Talent Search (Figure 11). Another 41 percent attended test-taking and study skills development sessions, 14 percent attended tutoring sessions, and 11 percent were involved in assisted labs.

Academic advising and counseling related to course selection were the predominant means by which high school students received academic support. As shown in Figure 11, the participation level for academic advising was higher than for other academic support services, implying that services to high school students are geared more heavily towards college preparation. In addition, Table 15 shows that the average number of academic advising sessions was 462, higher than for any other academic support service.

**Figure 11. Percentages of high school participants receiving academic support services: 1998-99**



*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

**Table 15. Average number of sessions per project and average number of sessions per participant for high school participants: 1998-99**

Service	Average number of sessions per project	Average number of sessions per participant
Tutoring	230	1.8
Assisted (computer) labs	105	0.9
Test-taking & study skills development	143	0.5
Academic advising/course selection	462	1.1

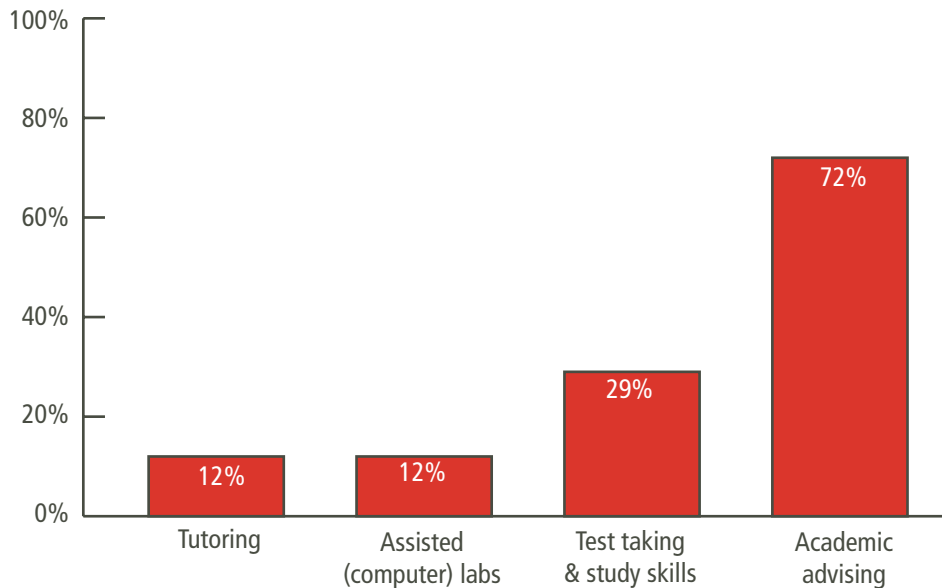
*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

### 3. Adult participants

Seventy-two percent of the adult participants in Talent Search received academic advising/course selection. Fewer participated in tutoring, assisted labs, or test-taking and study skills development services (Figure 12). Since adult participants are less likely to be enrolled in school upon entering Talent Search, services such as tutoring or computer assisted labs may be less applicable.

Academic support services for adults were less frequent than those provided to middle and high school participants. The average numbers of sessions per project ranged from 34 for assisted labs to 63 for academic advising and course selection (Table 16). The average number of sessions per participant was about one for all academic support services.

**Figure 12. Percentages of adult participants receiving academic support services: 1998-99**



*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

**Table 16. Average number of sessions per project and average number of sessions per participant for adult participants: 1998-99**

Service	Average number of sessions per project	Average number of sessions per participant
Tutoring	36	1.4
Assisted (computer) labs	34	1.3
Test-taking & study skills development	37	1.2
Academic advising/course selection	63	1.3

*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

## **B. Personal and career development services**

An additional six services and activities were grouped into a single category, comprising activities designed to enhance the personal and career development of Talent Search participants. These services, such as counseling and mentoring, often had a much broader function, involving help with academic decisions in addition to personal and career-related matters. The six activities were defined as follows in the performance report:

- Counseling—assistance with personal, educational, and career decision-making.
- Mentoring—a variety of personal or academic support activities provided by other students or professionals and designed to expose project participants to careers and other educational opportunities available to them.
- Cultural activities—any project-sponsored activities, such as field trips, special lectures, and symposiums, that are intended to enrich the project participants' academic progress and personal development.
- College orientation activities—workshops, college fairs, or project-sponsored trips to other postsecondary institutions to acquaint students with a variety of postsecondary educational opportunities.
- Family activities—events, workshops, meetings, and counseling designed to provide families with information on postsecondary educational opportunities and financial aid available and to involve them in the educational decisions of their children.
- Referrals to other service providers—the formal and informal network of social service programs and community organizations, including other TRIO Programs, available to help project participants.

Counseling topped the list as the service received by the largest number of participants overall (77 percent). Fifty-four percent participated in college orientation sessions, 33 percent in cultural activities, 30 percent in family activities, and 17 percent in mentoring. Twelve percent of participants received referrals to outside service providers (Table 17).

**Table 17. Percentages of participants receiving personal and career development services for participants overall: 1998-99**

Service	Percentage of participants receiving service	Average number of sessions per project
Counseling	77%	1,286
Mentoring	17%	233
Cultural activities	33%	59
College orientation activities	54%	217
Family activities	30%	94
Referrals	12%	27

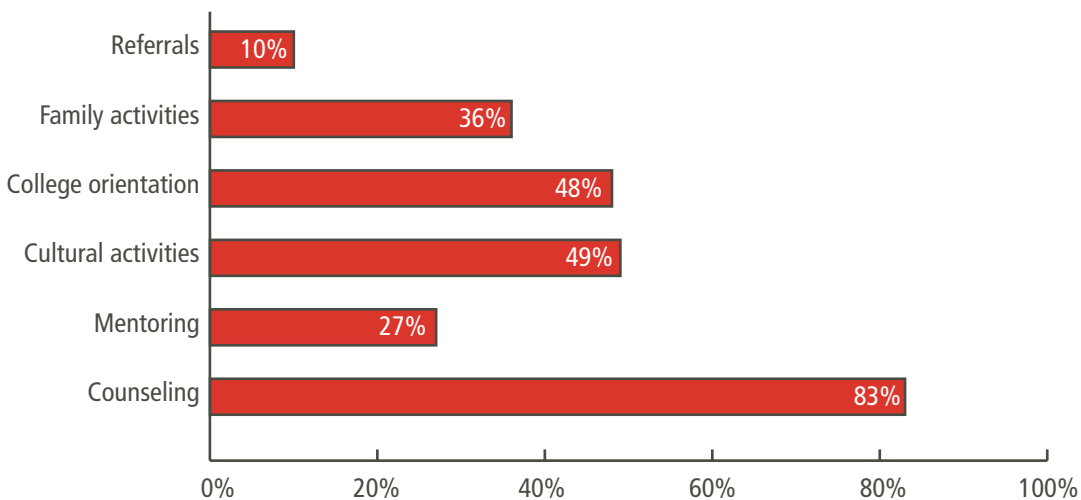
*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

Counseling was also provided more frequently than other personal and career development services. Each project, on average, conducted 1,286 counseling sessions during the 1998-99 program year. Each project also provided 233 mentoring sessions, 59 cultural activities, 217 college orientation activities, 94 family activities, and 27 referrals to external service providers. The large number of counseling sessions, relative to the other activities, may be due to the fact that counseling often occurs on an individual basis while other activities tend to occur in larger groups.

### 1. Middle school participants

In Figure 13, we present participation rates for personal and career development services for middle school participants. The chart illustrates that counseling is a vital part

**Figure 13. Percentages of middle school participants receiving personal and career development services: 1998-99**



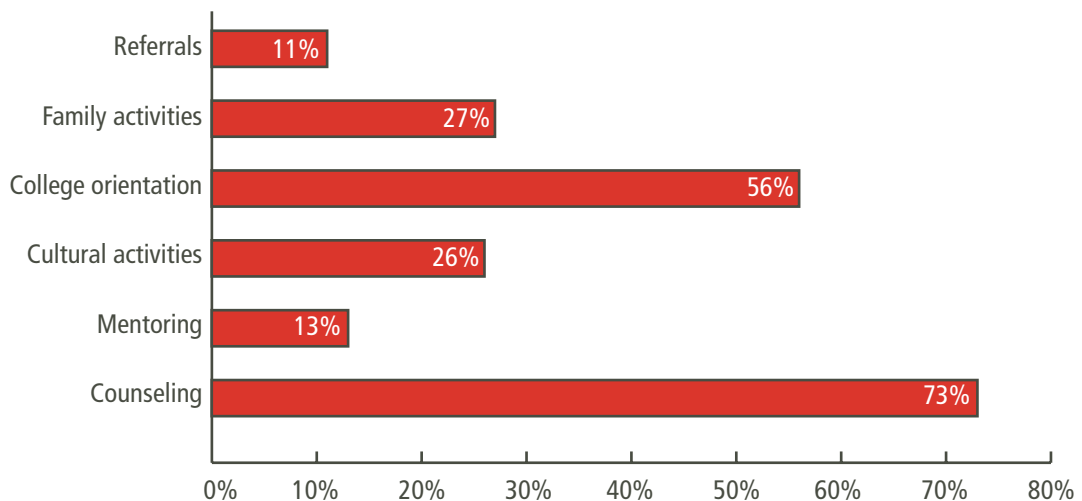
*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

of the Talent Search Program for middle school students, whereas referrals are not. College orientation and cultural activities were also popular with this group; approximately half of middle school participants (48 percent) attended each of these activities. Approximately one-third participated in mentoring (27 percent) or family activities (36 percent).

## 2. High school participants

No single service or activity was provided to all high school participants. Nevertheless, a large proportion of participants (73 percent) received counseling services (Figure 14). More than half of the high school students participated in college orientation activities (56 percent). Approximately one-quarter attended cultural or family activities (26 and 27 percent, respectively). Thirteen percent of students participated in mentoring, and 11 percent received referrals to service providers other than Talent Search.

**Figure 14. Percentages of high school participants receiving personal and career development services: 1998-99**

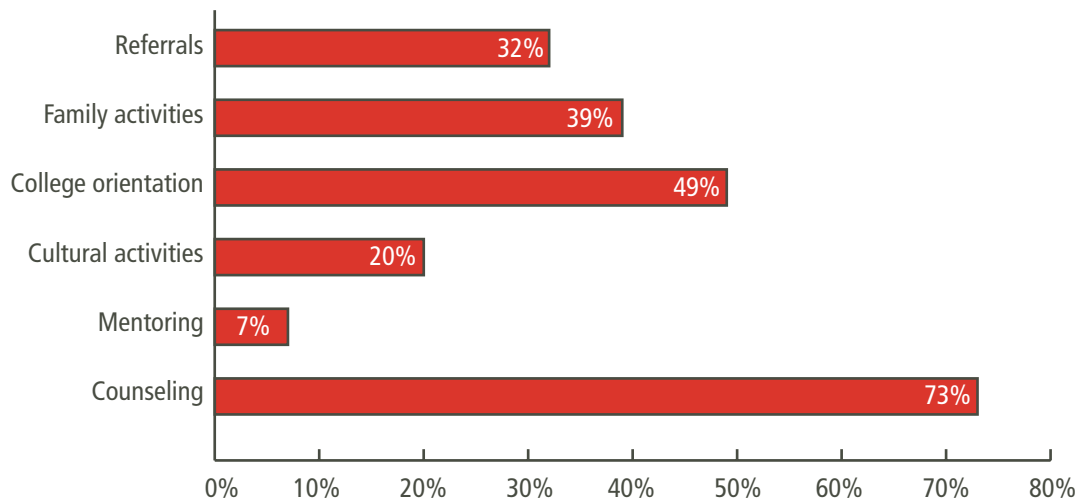


*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

## 3. Adult participants

Three-quarters of adult participants (73 percent) received counseling, and almost half (49 percent) participated in college orientation activities (Figure 15). Thirty-two percent received referrals, and 39 percent participated in family activities. Mentoring was the service provided to the smallest percentage of adult participants (7 percent).

**Figure 15. Percentages of adult participants receiving personal and career development services: 1998-99**



*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

### C. Historical perspective on service provision

Relatively little information is available on how the Talent Search Program and its services have evolved since the program began. A report by Elizabeth Eisner, however, provides one slice of the program's lengthy history by analyzing performance report data from the 1986-87 and 1990-91 program years (Eisner 1992). The 1986-87 data included 68 percent of the grantees while the 1990-91 data included 92 percent. Of the 177 projects in operation in 1990-91, 162 submitted performance reports. Only services and activities included for the 1990-91 program year were discussed in the Eisner report.

The performance report in 1990-91 differed somewhat from the current version of the report. Thus, direct comparisons between the 1990-91 data and the 1998-99 data are not possible for all of the service dimensions. In addition, definitions were not given for each of the services listed, providing no parameters for categorizing services. There were, however, five general areas of overlap in the performance report items: tutoring, development of study skills, counseling, cultural activities, and college orientation. In counseling, the overall participation rate was 9 percentage points lower in 1998-99 than in 1990-91. In tutoring, study skills, cultural activities, and college orientation, the 1998-99 levels exceeded those reported by Eisner for 1990-91 (Table 18). This information demonstrates the increased focus on academic services in Talent Search in the 1990s.

**Table 18.** Percentages of participants receiving each type of service, comparing performance report data from 1990-91 and 1998-99

Service	1990-91	1998-99
Tutoring	8%	21%
Study skills	5%	47%
Counseling	78%	77%
Cultural activities	9%	33%
College orientation	19%	54%

*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99 and Eisner, "Analysis of Talent Search Performance Reports, 1986-87 and 1990-91."*

## IV. PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

In the fourth section of the performance report, grantees were asked to report on their progress in meeting their approved objectives. These objectives were outlined in a project's grant proposal and needed to relate to the goals of the Talent Search Program as well as respond to the prior experience criteria as described in the program regulations. The outcomes addressed secondary school retention, graduation, and reentry. The outcomes also included application for admissions and financial aid for postsecondary education for college-ready participants. College-ready participants include adults, 12th grade high school students, and high school or high-school-equivalency graduates.

Only Talent Search projects with the following types of data were included in the objective and outcome calculations: 1) the applicable population (e.g., number of high school participants); 2) objective data; and 3) outcome data. Projects missing any of these three data types were not included in the calculations. In addition, some projects reported higher numbers in the outcomes than in the applicable population counts (e.g., more students graduating from high school than 12th grade participants). Thus, we capped the outcomes at the number reported in the population, so no calculation was over 100 percent.

### A. Secondary school retention, graduation, and reentry

Secondary school retention, graduation, and reentry were defined as follows in the instructions that accompanied the performance report form:

- Secondary school retention—all secondary students who will continue in middle and high school for the next academic term.
- Secondary school graduation—all high school seniors (and GED students or alternative education students) who received a high school diploma or completed a high school equivalency program during the reporting period.
- Secondary school reentry—all secondary school dropouts who reentered high school or enrolled in a high school equivalency program during the reporting period.

Projects did not appear to have difficulty meeting the objectives they had initially set. Ninety-eight percent of middle school participants and 96 percent of high school participants in Talent Search stayed in school (Table 19). Projects had expected 89 percent to do so. Ninety-four percent of high school students who were in the 12th grade at the beginning of the reporting period (September 1, 1998) had graduated by the end of the reporting period (August 31, 1999). In addition, 51 percent of those participants

who were reported as having dropped out of high school at the beginning of the reporting period had returned to school by the end of the reporting period (Table 19).

**Table 19. Comparison of approved objectives and actual achievements for secondary school outcomes: 1998-99**

Outcome	Approved objective	Actual
<b>Retention</b>		
Middle school	89%	98%
High school	89%	96%
<b>Graduation</b>		
Middle school	*	*
High school	88%	94%
<b>Reentry</b>		
Middle school	64%	**
High school	64%	51%

\*Not applicable for middle school participants. Although promotion from middle to high school was not included among the approved objectives, projects were asked to provide the number of middle school students who went on to high school. Projects reported 37,027 participants, or 40 percent of all middle school participants, were promoted from middle to high school. Performance report data on the number of middle school students eligible to be promoted were not available, so we were not able to determine the percentage of eligible students promoted.

\*\*The performance report did not ask projects to provide the number of participants who were middle school dropouts at the beginning of the reporting period. As a result, we were not able to determine the percentage of middle school dropouts that reentered middle school. Projects reported that 1,385 participants reentered middle school during the 1998-99 program year.

Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, *Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99*.

## B. Admissions and financial aid assistance

One of the aims of the Talent Search Program is to assist participants with the process of applying to college and obtaining financial aid, thus helping to overcome some of the barriers that economically disadvantaged students often face when pursuing post-secondary education. Program staff can offer assistance at various stages of the college application process—selecting schools to apply to, choosing appropriate courses, completing the application, and finding ways to finance a college education. Talent Search Program staff were asked to provide the following information to assess the extent to which participants were receiving these services:

- Applied for postsecondary admission—number of participants who received help with college entrance applications and the number who applied for post-secondary admission.
- Applied for student financial aid—number of participants who received help completing financial aid forms, including scholarship applications, U.S. Department of Education federal student financial aid forms, and state applications for financial aid; and the number who applied for financial aid.

Overall, projects had expected to assist 90 percent of their participants with applications for postsecondary admissions and student financial aid. Projects reported that 83 percent of participants applied to college, and 82 percent applied for financial aid (Table 20).

**Table 20. Comparison of approved objectives and actual achievements for assistance in applying for postsecondary admissions and financial aid: 1998-99**

Outcome	Approved objective	Actual
Assistance in applying for postsecondary admissions	90%	83%
Assistance in applying for student financial aid	90%	82%

*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

### C. Postsecondary admission and reentry

Postsecondary enrollment numbers were divided into the following two groups:

- Postsecondary admissions—number of high school graduates and participants who have completed requirements to obtain a high school equivalency degree, as well as other eligible individuals who have enrolled in programs of postsecondary education for the first time during this reporting period or for the fall term.
- Postsecondary reentry—number of participants who were previously dismissed or had halted their educational progress toward a postsecondary degree, but who reenrolled in a program of postsecondary education during the reporting period or for the fall term.

In the 1998-99 program year, projects expected 75 percent of eligible participants to enroll in college and expected about 65 percent of participants who had previously dropped out of college to reenroll. Talent Search projects reported that 71 percent enrolled for the first time and that 72 percent of the drop-out participants reentered school (Table 21).

**Table 21. Comparison of approved objectives and actual achievements for postsecondary outcomes: 1998-99**

Outcome	Approved objective	Actual
Postsecondary admissions	75%	71%
Postsecondary reentry	65%	72%

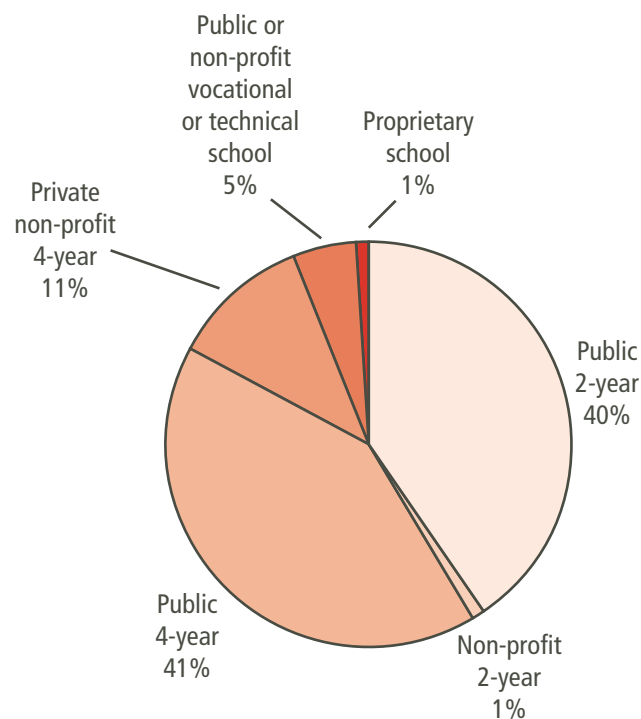
*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

## D. Postsecondary placement

In addition to the number of participants who enrolled or reenrolled in college, projects provided information on the types of colleges those participants chose to attend. For the Talent Search Program as a whole, 81 percent of those participants who went on to college attended a public institution; 41 percent attended a public 4-year school and 40 percent attended a public 2-year school (Figure 16). Another 11 percent enrolled in a private 4-year school. The remaining students chose to attend a vocational or technical school, proprietary school, or a 2-year non-profit school (Figure 16).

Among Talent Search projects based in postsecondary institutions, it was common for participants to attend college at an institution of the same type as the program's host institution. Students from programs based in public 4-year schools, for example, attended a public 4-year college at a rate of 48 percent, which is higher than from any other sector. Twenty percent of students from projects based in private 4-year schools also attended a private 4-year college and 55 percent of students from projects at 2-year schools attended a 2-year college (Table 22).

**Figure 16. Postsecondary placement of participants for Talent Search overall: 1998-99**



Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, *Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99*.

**Table 22. Postsecondary placement of participants by sector: 1998-99**

Sector	Percentage admitted to public 4-year	Percentage admitted to private 4-year	Percentage admitted to 2-year*	Percentage admitted to other types**
Public 4-year	48%	9%	34%	8%
Private 4-year	44%	20%	28%	9%
2-year	31%	8%	55%	6%
Community organizations	41%	12%	41%	5%
All projects	41%	11%	40%	6%

\*Includes 2-year public and non-profit schools.

\*\* Includes vocational or technical schools and proprietary schools.

*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*



## V. DATA ISSUES AND FUTURE PLANS

The following section highlights data issues, response rates, and possible future modifications to the Talent Search performance report. The rates of completion for individual data items and sections on the performance report were generally high (Table 23).

All items related to demographics and performance outcomes, with the exception of secondary school reentry and postsecondary school reentry, had response rates of 90 percent or higher. The response rates for items in the services section could not be determined from the given data. In this particular section, projects were given a list of 10 services to report on. They were asked to list the number of sessions they provided during the performance period and the number of participants served through each activity. Because not all projects provided all 10 services, it was not possible to determine whether a field was left blank because that particular service was never provided or because the project did not have the information on hand.

An additional difficulty in interpreting the services data was the lack of clarity about how the numbers of sessions and participants for a given service were calculated. The instructions on the performance report stated that “the number of sessions, activities, events, and organizations categories should reflect the total number of these provided. For example, the project may have conducted 50 tutoring sessions for 15 adults. Thus, under the ‘Tutoring’ column, the project should indicate No. of Sessions—50, No. of Participants—15.” In the given example, it is not clear whether each of the 15 participants attended 50 group sessions, or whether 50 individual sessions were held and split among 15 students.

Some additional data issues were as follows:

- The total numbers of participants did not always add up across some of the sections. For example, the total number provided in the participant distribution by eligibility section did not always equal the total for the participant distribution by age.
- When a field was left blank, we could not determine whether the field was not applicable or the data item was missing.

Some data quality issues remain to be addressed. The U.S. Department of Education has already added edit checks to the Web-based application to require the totals in each part of Section II of the report to add up to the total number served. The results of this change should be immediately apparent in the 1999-2000 performance data. The Department will continue to clarify the directions for completing the reports and to make revisions based on feedback from the project staff concerning the report form and instructions.

**Table 23. Section/item response rates: 1998-99**

Section/Item	Response rate
Number of participants assisted	100%
Participant distribution by eligibility	100%
Participant distribution by ethnic background	100%
Participant distribution by gender	100%
Participant distribution by age	100%
Veterans served	99%
Participants of limited English proficiency	99%
Target schools	98%
<b>Approved objectives:</b>	
Secondary school retention	96%
Secondary school graduation	94%
Secondary school reentry	74%
Assistance in applying for postsecondary admissions	90%
Assistance in applying for student financial aid	92%
Postsecondary admissions	96%
Postsecondary reentry	58%
<b>Participant status at the end of the reporting period:</b>	
Continued in middle school	97%
Promoted from middle school to high school	97%
Continued in high school	97%
Reentered middle school	92%
Reentered high school	94%
Received high school diploma	96%
Obtained a GED/high school equivalency degree	92%
Applied for admission to programs of postsecondary education	96%
Applied for student financial aid for postsecondary education	96%
Admitted to (or enrolled in) a program of postsecondary education	97%
Reenrolled in a program of postsecondary education	91%
Dropped out of middle school	95%
Dropped out of high school	97%
Other	96%
Unknown	92%
<b>Postsecondary placements (types of institutions)</b>	94%-98%

*Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99.*

# REFERENCES

Eisner, Elizabeth. "Analysis of Talent Search Performance Reports, 1986-87 and 1990-91." Paper included in the report from the Design Conference for the Evaluation of the Talent Search Program, hosted by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning and Evaluation, September 30, 1992.





