

Children Enrolled in Special Education

DEFINITION

Children enrolled in special education is the percentage of K-12 students who received special education services in Rhode Island public schools or who were placed in private special education programs by their district of residence. Unless otherwise specified, references to students enrolled in special education in this indicator do not include preschool or parentally-placed special education students.

SIGNIFICANCE

Effective and appropriate special education and related services are important resources for improving long-term outcomes for children and youth with special needs. Students with disabilities are more likely than students without disabilities to have lower student achievement, graduation rates, participation in post-secondary education and economic success in adulthood.^{1,2} Students with disabilities are more likely than their peers to report social and academic difficulties in school.³

The federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B* mandates that local school districts identify and evaluate students ages three to 21 whom they have reason to believe have disabilities. Once found eligible for special education, a student must be provided with an Individualized

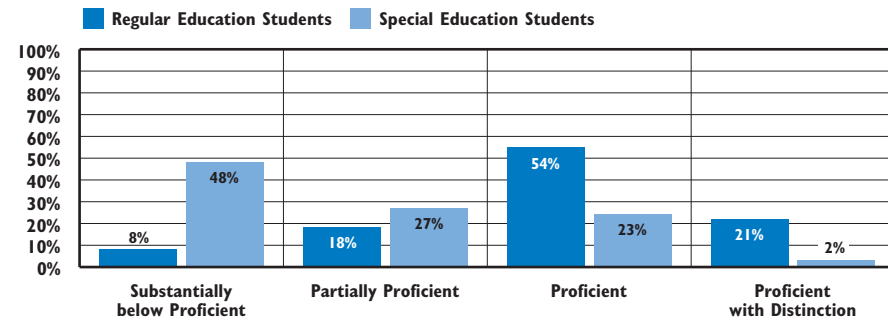
Education Program (IEP) laying out goals and outlining steps for achieving the goals. Services described in the IEP must be provided to students in the least restrictive environment (to the extent appropriate, integrated into a regular-education setting).^{4,5,6}

In the 2007-2008 school year, Rhode Island had the highest percentage of public school students with IEPs in the U.S. at 20%, compared with 12% overall in the U.S.⁷

In Rhode Island in the 2008-2009 school year, there were 24,302 (17%) students enrolled in special education. Forty-one percent of Rhode Island children enrolled in special education had a learning disability, 17% had a health impairment, 16% had a speech impairment, 10% had an emotional disturbance, 6% had an autism spectrum disorder, 4% had mental retardation and 5% had other disabilities.⁸

Thirty-seven percent of Rhode Island special education students in 2008-2009 were ages five to 10; 33% were ages 11 to 14; 28% were ages 15 to 18; and 2% were ages 19 to 21. There were an additional 2,635 preschool students in Rhode Island receiving special education services during the 2008-2009 school year. Of these preschool children, 46% were receiving speech and language services, 40% had a developmental delay, 7% had an autism spectrum disorder, and 7% had other disabilities.⁹

4th Grade Reading Proficiency Rates, by Special Education Status, Rhode Island, 2009



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)*, October 2009. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

- ◆ In Rhode Island, students with disabilities achieve at lower levels than non-disabled students on the state assessments. In 2009, 48% of special education students in Rhode Island were substantially below proficient, compared with 8% of regular education students.¹⁰
- ◆ The federal *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* requires states, districts and schools to demonstrate that students with disabilities make “adequate yearly progress” towards proficiency in reading and math. Together with IDEA, NCLB promotes accountability for the achievement of students with disabilities.¹¹
- ◆ Nationally, students with disabilities are much less likely than their peers to graduate from high school and are five times less likely to go on to post-secondary education than students without disabilities.¹² The Rhode Island four-year graduation rate among students receiving special education services for the class of 2009 was 59%, compared to the overall state graduation rate of 75%.¹³
- ◆ Of Rhode Island students ages six to 21 receiving special education services during the 2008-2009 school year, 71% were in a regular class for 80% of the day or more, 7% were in a regular class for 40% to 79% of the day and 15% were in a regular class for less than 40% of the day. The remaining students were in a residential or correction facility or were home-bound or hospitalized.¹⁴

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Table 41.

Kindergarten Through 12th Grade Students in Special Education by Primary Disability, Rhode Island, 2008-2009

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF RESIDENCE	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS	AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER	EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE	HEALTH IMPAIRMENT	LEARNING DISABILITY	MENTAL RETARDATION	SPEECH DISORDER	OTHER	TOTAL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	% STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION
Barrington	3,346	40	27	96	124	10	93	17	407	12%
Bristol Warren	3,442	30	23	25	169	29	96	15	387	11%
Burrillville	2,532	35	45	71	120	21	90	19	401	16%
Central Falls	3,118	12	51	73	403	50	90	35	714	23%
Charlho	3,458	42	20	51	104	24	65	29	335	10%
Coventry	5,225	36	52	88	469	30	104	46	825	16%
Cranston	10,244	112	119	310	827	43	137	77	1,625	16%
Cumberland	4,851	60	75	197	274	26	189	46	867	18%
East Greenwich	2,314	40	18	99	78	NA	64	22	327	14%
East Providence	5,668	51	166	384	497	41	283	51	1,473	26%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,885	20	42	61	78	11	78	11	301	16%
Foster	246	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	14	NA	26	11%
Foster-Glocester	1,431	NA	10	29	51	10	20	NA	135	9%
Glocester	590	NA	NA	10	14	NA	37	NA	74	13%
Jamestown	684	16	NA	36	41	NA	20	NA	126	18%
Johnston	3,131	47	56	196	316	15	106	36	772	25%
Lincoln	3,182	42	59	94	192	19	73	20	499	16%
Little Compton	421	NA	NA	NA	35	NA	NA	NA	57	14%
Middletown	2,356	30	35	79	205	14	44	18	425	18%
Narragansett	1,443	16	18	31	73	NA	64	13	217	15%
New Shoreham	132	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	19	14%
Newport	2,052	23	41	14	246	12	46	17	399	19%
North Kingstown	4,125	31	59	112	226	22	128	34	612	15%
North Providence	3,113	33	51	130	137	21	94	35	501	16%
North Smithfield	1,863	25	20	56	119	11	57	12	300	16%
Pawtucket	8,536	65	131	146	554	81	217	61	1,255	15%
Portsmouth	2,657	33	41	99	191	NA	64	NA	446	17%
Providence	23,246	123	669	276	2,025	271	689	191	4,244	18%
Scituate	1,664	14	NA	29	70	NA	78	NA	200	12%
Smithfield	2,471	21	14	41	110	12	27	18	243	10%
South Kingstown	3,609	53	62	125	193	12	87	34	566	16%
Tiverton	1,897	23	26	36	205	10	33	22	355	19%
Warwick	10,383	115	131	501	770	41	287	126	1,971	19%
West Warwick	3,475	23	93	76	318	25	91	51	677	19%
Westerly	3,210	48	74	101	212	16	69	23	543	17%
Woonsocket	5,912	79	150	298	376	98	183	84	1,268	21%
Charter Schools	2,020	11	23	46	117	NA	55	11	265	13%
State-Operated Schools	1,698	NA	100	132	132	NA	NA	71	445	26%
Core Cities	46,340	325	1,135	883	3,922	537	1,316	439	8,557	18%
Remainder of State	91,518	1,030	1,254	3,106	5,909	465	2,511	760	15,035	16%
Rhode Island	141,576	1,375	2,512	4,167	10,080	1,004	3,883	1,281	24,302	17%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE), Office for Diverse Learners, June 30, 2009. The denominator (number of students) is the "resident average daily membership" for the 2008-2009 school year provided by RIDE.

Due to changes in methodology, *Children Enrolled in Special Education* in this Factbook cannot be compared with Factbooks previous to 2008. Parentally-placed private school students and preschool students receiving special education services are no longer included in the table. Children attending schools in other districts are listed in the district in which the students reside. An additional 2,635 preschool students receiving special education services are not included in the table.

NA indicates that fewer than ten students are in that category; actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the core cities, remainder of state and Rhode Island totals.

The category "other" includes: developmental delay, visually impaired/blind, hearing impaired/deaf, multi-handicapped, orthopedically impaired and traumatic brain injury.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

Independent charter schools reported for this indicator are Beacon Charter School, Blackstone Academy Charter School, The Compass School, Highlander Charter School, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community Charter School, and Paul Cuffee Charter School. State-operated schools are William M. Davies Career-Technical High School, DCYF Schools, the Rhode Island Department of Corrections, Metropolitan Career & Technical Center and Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

References

^{1,3,12} *Students with disabilities in U.S. high schools* (fact sheet). (2009). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

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