

# 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 pre-school 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 postsecondary education and economic success in adulthood.<sup>1</sup> Students with disabilities are more likely than their peers to report social and academic difficulty in school.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3,4</sup> Once found eligible for special education, a student must be provided with an Individualized

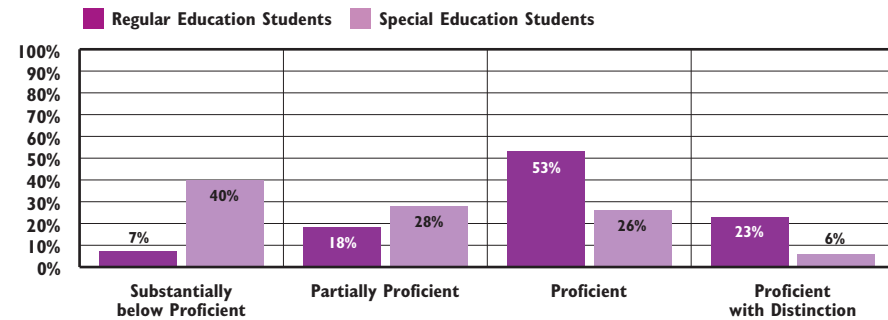
Education Program (IEP) laying out goals and outlining steps for achieving the goals. Services described in the IEP must be provided to students in the least restrictive environment (i.e., to the extent appropriate, integrated into a regular education setting).<sup>5</sup>

In the 2006-2007 school year, Rhode Island had the highest percentage of public school students with IEPs in the U.S. at 20%, compared with 13% in overall the U.S.<sup>6</sup>

In Rhode Island in the 2007-2008 school year, there were 26,100 (18%) students enrolled in special education. Forty-two percent of Rhode Island children enrolled in special education had a learning disability, 18% had a speech impairment, 17% had a health impairment, 10% had an emotional disturbance, 5% had an autism spectrum disorder, and 7% had other disabilities.<sup>7</sup>

Thirty-eight percent of Rhode Island special education students in 2007-2008 were ages five to 10; 33% were ages 11 to 14; 27% were ages 15 to 18; and 1% were ages 19 to 21. There were an additional 2,866 pre-school students in Rhode Island receiving special education services during the 2007-2008 school year. Of these preschool children, 48% were receiving speech and language services, 38% had developmental delays, 7% had autism, and 7% had other disabilities.<sup>8</sup>

**4th Grade Reading Proficiency Rates, by Special Education Status, Rhode Island, 2008**



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *New England Common Assessment Program*, (NECAP) 4th Grade, October 2008. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

- ◆ In Rhode Island, students with disabilities consistently achieve at lower levels than non-disabled students on the state assessments. On the 2008 fourth grade reading assessment, 26% of special education students were proficient, 6% were proficient with distinction and 40% were substantially below proficient. Fifty-three percent of regular education students were proficient in reading, 23% were proficient with distinction and 7% were substantially below proficient.<sup>9</sup>
- ◆ 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.<sup>10</sup>
- ◆ 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.<sup>11</sup> The Rhode Island special education four-year graduation rate for the class of 2008 was 56%, compared to an overall state graduation rate of 74%. The special education dropout rate was 25%, compared with 15% in the state overall.<sup>12</sup>
- ◆ Ensuring that all students are served in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their needs can help improve educational outcomes for special needs students. Of Rhode Island students ages six to 21 receiving special education services during the 2007-2008 school year, 70% 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.<sup>13</sup>

# Children Enrolled in Special Education

Table 37.

## Kindergarten through 12th Grade Students in Special Education by Primary Disability, Rhode Island, 2007-2008

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	3,383	36	35	122	140	12	118	13	476	14%
Bristol-Warren	3,455	26	22	29	197	31	101	11	417	12%
Burrillville	2,565	29	44	87	142	18	116	17	453	18%
Central Falls	3,339	12	68	73	463	51	105	21	793	24%
Chariho	3,619	38	20	45	115	24	95	13	350	10%
Coventry	5,210	33	54	86	553	31	111	30	898	17%
Cranston	10,207	105	150	345	853	45	234	59	1,791	18%
Cumberland	4,792	57	83	241	280	25	223	24	933	19%
East Greenwich	2,361	35	20	104	90	NA	67	12	334	14%
East Providence	5,629	47	183	389	509	43	266	44	1,481	26%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,917	16	36	72	89	11	86	NA	319	17%
Foster	268	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	19	NA	31	12%
Foster-Glocester	1,523	NA	12	32	54	10	28	NA	149	10%
Glocester	558	NA	NA	11	17	NA	41	NA	86	15%
Jamestown	697	14	NA	39	42	NA	17	NA	124	18%
Johnston	3,211	42	63	196	307	17	114	15	754	23%
Lincoln	3,336	34	64	125	187	21	82	15	528	16%
Little Compton	437	NA	NA	NA	40	NA	12	NA	66	15%
Middletown	2,385	29	45	81	226	11	54	14	460	19%
Narragansett	1,459	15	16	35	83	NA	75	10	237	16%
New Shoreham	142	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	24	17%
Newport	2,170	25	39	16	269	14	60	11	434	20%
North Kingstown	4,199	29	73	111	265	20	143	31	672	16%
North Providence	3,128	29	47	147	149	24	146	22	564	18%
North Smithfield	1,861	20	23	46	113	NA	76	NA	292	16%
Pawtucket	8,537	69	145	172	597	86	283	40	1,392	16%
Portsmouth	2,695	39	48	102	201	NA	93	NA	500	19%
Providence	24,194	119	709	286	2,244	314	784	109	4,565	19%
Scituate	1,733	14	NA	29	64	NA	97	NA	215	12%
Smithfield	2,496	19	10	49	114	10	49	19	270	11%
South Kingstown	3,633	45	72	141	220	11	132	31	652	18%
Tiverton	2,004	19	19	40	218	NA	60	19	383	19%
Warwick	10,710	107	136	533	776	49	300	66	1,967	18%
West Warwick	3,577	24	99	75	350	32	118	28	726	20%
Westerly	3,367	42	90	107	190	12	98	17	556	17%
Woonsocket	6,126	67	173	315	471	124	247	58	1,455	24%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>1,901</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>128</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>273</i>	<i>14%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,782</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>165</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>463</i>	<i>26%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>13%</i>
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>47,943</i>	<i>316</i>	<i>1,233</i>	<i>937</i>	<i>4,394</i>	<i>621</i>	<i>1,597</i>	<i>267</i>	<i>9,365</i>	<i>20%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>92,982</i>	<i>935</i>	<i>1,378</i>	<i>3,361</i>	<i>6,243</i>	<i>472</i>	<i>3,061</i>	<i>532</i>	<i>15,982</i>	<i>17%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>144,689</i>	<i>1,271</i>	<i>2,723</i>	<i>4,460</i>	<i>10,944</i>	<i>1,096</i>	<i>4,731</i>	<i>875</i>	<i>26,100</i>	<i>18%</i>

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE), 2007-2008 school year. Office for Diverse Learners, June 30, 2008. The denominator (number of students) is the "resident average daily membership" for the 2007-2008 school year provided by RIDE.

Due to changes in methodology, *Children Enrolled in Special Education* in this Factbook cannot be compared with Factbooks prior to 2008. Prior Factbooks included parentally-placed private school students and preschool students receiving special education services – these students are no longer included. Children attending schools in other districts are listed in the district in which the students reside. An additional 2,866 students ages three to five receiving special education services in preschools 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 the district totals and in the core cities, remainder of state and state 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

<sup>1</sup> American Youth Policy Forum. (n.d.). *Improving secondary education and transition services for youth with disabilities: A forum – December 5, 2003*. Retrieved on February 11, 2008 from [www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)

(continued on page 160)