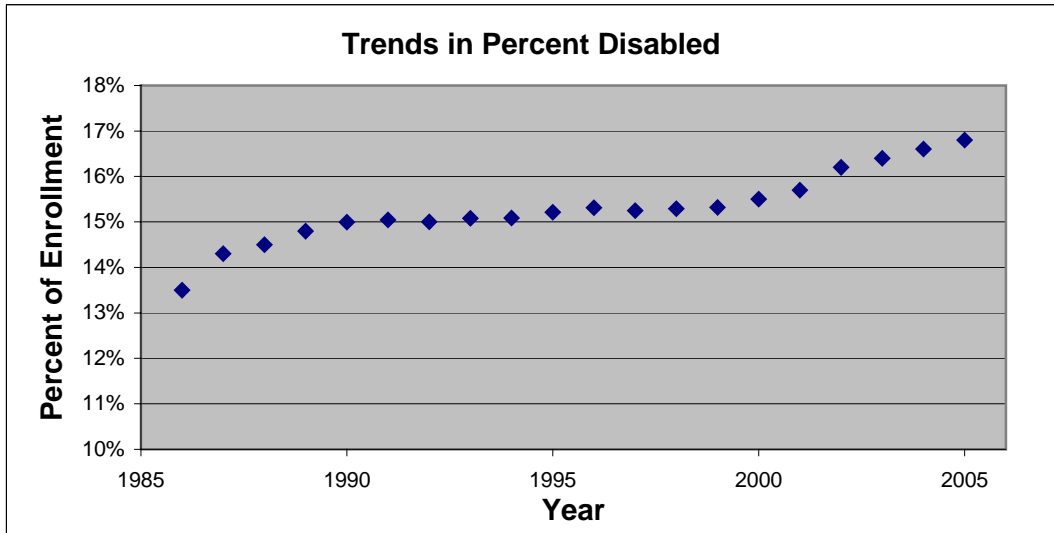


Financing Special Education in New Jersey

New Jersey School Boards Association

September 2007

Special Education Classification Trends



As of Dec. 1st	Total Public Enrollment	Students with Disabilities Ages 3-21	Percent Total Classified
1990	1,089,646	163,100	15.0
1991	1,109,796	166,648	15.0
1992	1,130,560	169,964	15.0
1993	1,151,989	173,496	15.1
1994	1,174,253	177,789	15.1
1995	1,195,729	181,553	15.2
1996	1,224,974	186,214	15.3
1997	1,248,139	189,214	15.2
1998	1,267,057	193,590	15.3
1999	1,297,573	198,321	15.3
2000	1,311,570	205,527	15.5
2001	1,347,929	212,027	15.7
2002	1,397,292	221,188	15.8
2003	1,389,493	225,840	16.3
2004	1,394,638	229,771	16.5
2005	1,397,292	232,894	16.7
2006	1,387,963	233,228	16.8
After 2001, figures also include students with disabilities in nonpublic and state agencies			

Trends in Classification Rates. New Jersey has the 4th highest percentage of students with disabilities in the nation. This high ranking is due primarily to the large numbers of students with speech-language impairments (7th highest) and students with specific learning disabilities (4th highest). The chart on the left shows the total public school enrollment, the number of public school students with disabilities, and the proportion of the public school enrollment that they represent. The number of students with disabilities increased at about the same rate as enrollment until 2001. Since then, the increase in the number of students with disabilities has outpaced enrollment; however, some of that increase is due to the fact that, after 2001, statistics on the number of students with disabilities began including those placed in nonpublic schools and state facilities. Without these students, the percentage of the enrollment that is disabled would have leveled off at about 16%.

Trends in the Percent of Public Enrollment by Eligibility Category (Ages 3-21)

Year	Eligible for Speech Language Services	Autistic	Emotionally Disturbed	Communication Impaired	Multiply Disabled	Cognitively Impaired	Specific Learning Disabled & Traumatic Brain Injured	Pre-school Disabled	Other	Total
1990	3.9	0.0	1.2	0.3	0.7	0.4	7.4	0.5	0.6	15.0
1991	3.8	0.0	1.2	0.3	0.7	0.4	7.5	0.5	0.6	15.0
1992	3.6	0.0	1.2	0.3	0.7	0.3	7.6	0.5	0.6	15.0
1993	3.5	0.1	1.1	0.3	0.8	0.4	7.7	0.6	0.6	15.1
1994	3.4	0.1	1.1	0.3	0.9	0.4	7.8	0.6	0.7	15.1
1995	3.3	0.1	1.1	0.4	1.0	0.4	8.1	0.6	0.2	15.2
1996	3.2	0.1	1.0	0.4	1.1	0.4	8.2	0.6	0.2	15.3
1997	3.1	0.1	1.0	0.4	1.2	0.4	8.2	0.6	0.2	15.2
1998	2.8	0.1	1.0	0.4	1.2	0.4	8.2	0.7	0.5	15.3
1999	2.5	0.2	1.0	0.5	1.3	0.4	8.1	0.7	1.0	15.3

2000	2.3	0.2	1.0	0.6	1.5	0.4	8.1	0.7	1.2	15.9
2001	2.2	0.3	1.0	0.7	1.6	0.5	7.9	0.7	0.9	15.7
2002	2.0	0.3	1.0	0.8	1.8	0.5	7.7	0.8	1.2	15.8
2003	2.0	0.4	1.0	0.9	1.9	0.5	7.5	0.8	1.4	16.3
2004	2.0	0.5	0.9	1.0	1.9	0.5	7.3	0.8	1.6	16.5
2005	1.9	0.5	0.9	1.1	2.0	0.5	7.1	0.9	1.8	16.7

Other includes: Deaf-Blind, Auditorily Impaired, Other Health Impaired, Orthopedically Impaired, and Visually Impaired

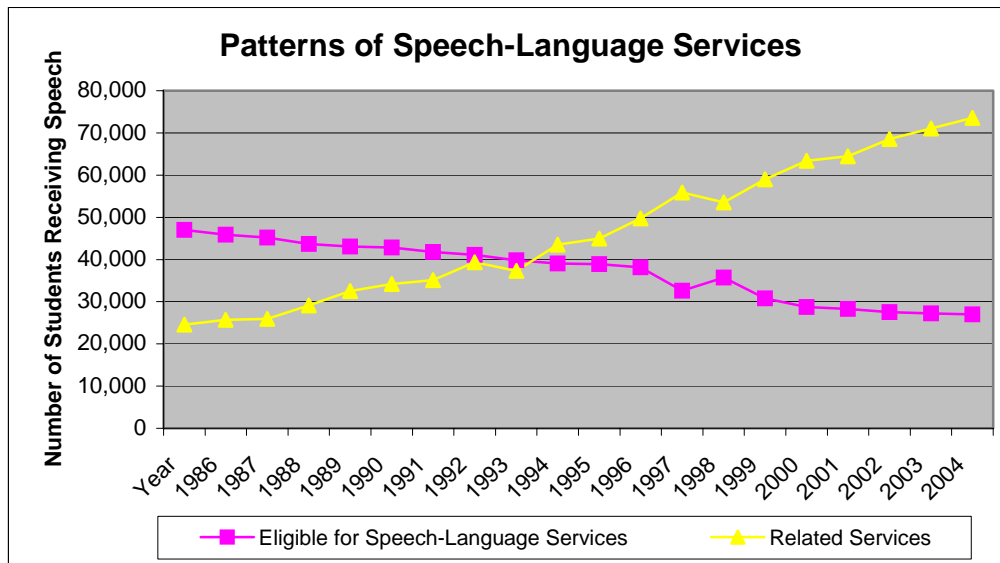
After 2001, the figures also include students in nonpublic schools and state agencies in addition to public schools.

Some eligibility categories have increased over the last 15 years while others have stayed about the same or decreased. The largest eligibility category is Specific Learning Disabled (97,844 students; 7.0% of enrollment) but its rate has been decreasing since 2002. Multiply Disabled (28,370; 2.0%) is the next largest category, and it has increased from 0.7% to 2% of enrollment since 1990. Although their numbers are smaller, the rates of Other Health Impaired and Communication Impaired have increased over that same time period, but are still less than 2% of enrollment. Preschool Disabled, Cognitively Impaired have increased very little while Emotionally Disturbed has decreased. Autism began to be counted in 1993, increased steadily and now constitutes 0.5% (7,396) of the enrollment. As a percent of enrollment, some categories have changed in ranking since 1990, but the overall percentage of the enrollment that is classified has leveled off.

Preschool Classification Rates. Among students ages 3 through 5 who are classified, two-thirds are 3- and 4-year-olds designated as preschool disabled. Another 10% are classified as Eligible for Speech-Language Services. The remaining are 5-year-olds classified under one of the other categories (Communication Impaired 5.7%; Specific Learning Disabled 4.8% and Autism 4.5%; and Other Health Impairments 3.7%).

Traumatic Brain Injury Definition. In 1998, the New Jersey Administrative Code redefined the special education eligibility category of Neurologically Impaired (NI) as Traumatic Brain Injured in conformance with the federal definitions. As the NI students were re-evaluated, almost all were found eligible under other disability categories, about two-thirds Specific Learning Disabled and one-third among Other Health Impaired and Cognitively Impaired. Most of the increases from 1998-2002 in these categories were due to this reevaluation process.

Speech Rates and Service. New Jersey ranks seventh highest in the nation in the percentage of students (7.2% of total enrollment, or 100,533 students) eligible for speech-language services. However, only 26,997 students (1.9% of total enrollment) receive speech-language services as their *only* special education program. The vast majority, 73,536 students (5.3% of total enrollment) receive speech-language services as a related service in addition to the rest of their special education program. Since 1995, the number of students receiving speech as a related service exceeded the number receiving speech only and has increased every year. This may be partly due to the increasing classification rates in other categories where students also need speech services.



Over the last 20 years, approximately 7% of the public school enrollment received speech-language services. Given the very high rates of students receiving speech-language services, NJ-DOE issued guidelines to all districts in the early 1990s dealing with the identification and standards needed before speech-language services would be indicated. As a result, fewer students are identified as needing *only* speech-language services; at the same time, there has been a concomitant increase in the number of students receiving speech as a related service. The overall demand for speech-language services remains stable. However, the staff-to-student ratio (speech-language specialist to students receiving speech-language services) dropped from 1:58 in 1985 to 1:46 in 2005. The ratio has generally been in the mid-40s since the early 1990s. Over the years, the nature of speech services has shifted from articulation remediation to language development, and the intensity from once a week to two to three times a week.

The survey of school districts, performed as part of this study, indicated that students receive about 60 minutes of speech-language services each week, with about 70% provided by district staff. Students in South Jersey receive about 54 minutes; in the North, it averaged 63 minutes, and in Central New Jersey, 65 minutes. There is not much variation in the number of minutes of speech-language services among district operating types; however, K-6 districts typically provide slightly fewer minutes (53) of service per week than do other types of school districts (57-62). Medium-sized K-12 districts provide somewhat more time (69 minutes). In terms of socio-economic status, districts in the lowest ranking, District Factor Group (DFG) A, provide fewer minutes per week (18) than those in DFGs B, CD, DE and FG (54-59). Districts in highest socio-economic rankings (DFGs GH, I, and J) provide substantially more time (65 to 72 minutes). *It appears that the amount of speech-language services provided is related to district resources.*

Year	Eligible for Speech-Language Services	Speech as a Related Service	All Speech Services	Percent Eligible for Speech-Language Services	Percent Speech as a Related Service	Total Percent Receiving Speech Services	Number of Speech-Language Specialists	Ratio of Students Receiving Speech to Speech-Language Specialists
1985	NA	22,509	NA	NA	2.0	NA	1,224	58
1986	47,041	24,536	71,577	4.2	2.2	6.5	1,226	58
1987	45,913	25,681	71,594	4.2	2.3	6.6	1,254	57
1988	45,183	25,903	71,086	4.2	2.4	6.6	1,363	53
1989	43,658	29,085	72,743	4.1	2.7	6.8	1,448	51
1990	43,085	32,496	75,581	4.0	3.0	6.9	1,549	49
1991	42,856	34,227	77,083	3.9	3.1	6.9	1,441	54
1992	41,745	35,106	76,851	3.7	3.1	6.8	1,668	48
1993	41,137	39,365	80,502	3.6	3.4	7.0	1,728	47
1994	39,809	37,315	77,124	3.4	3.2	6.6	1,751	45
1995	39,032	43,500	82,532	3.3	3.6	6.9	1,679	49
1996	38,867	44,997	83,864	3.2	3.7	6.9	1,846	45
1997	38,180	49,756	87,936	3.1	4.0	7.1	1,857	47
1998	32,571	55,862	88,433	2.6	4.4	7.0	1,765	51
1999	35,726	53,568	89,294	2.8	4.1	6.9	1,781	50
2000	30,808	58,973	89,781	2.3	4.5	6.8	1,852	48
2001	28,712	63,393	92,105	2.1	4.7	6.8	1,992	46
2002	28,281	64,489	92,770	2.1	4.7	6.7	2,004	46
2003	27,556	68,527	96,083	2.0	4.9	6.9	2,070	46
2004	27,228	71,032	98,260	2.0	5.1	7.0	2,164	45
2005	26,997	73,536	100,533	1.9	5.3	7.2	2,170	46

District Classification Rates by Region, Operating Type and DFG. The Eligible for Special Education and Related Services (ESERS) classification rates exclude students who are eligible for speech-language services. The state average ESERS rate is 14.7%. Rates, however, vary by region, district factor grouping and operating type. South Jersey has the highest rates (15.8%); the north is second (14%), while the central region has the lowest rate (13.3%). ESERS classification rates are inversely proportional to district factor grouping, with rates ranging from a high of 16.2% in the poorest ranking, DFG-A, to a low of 11.7% in the wealthiest school districts, DFG-J. However, advantages of wealth are not as noticeable when comparing classified students to the general education population. The percentage of classified students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (23.7%) is only slightly higher than the proportion of poor students in the general education population (20.1%) – a difference of less than four percentage points.

Region	ESERS Rate	Operating Type	ESERS Rate
North	14.0	K-12 / 751+	12.7
Central	13.3	K-12 / 0-1,800	15.2
South	15.8	K-12 / 0-400	14.8
ED	15.2	K-12 / 1,800-3,500	14.3
		K-12 / 401-750	13.5
		K-12 / 3,500+	14.5

DE	14.6		7-12 / 9-12	15.9
FG	13.7		Vocational (FT)	15.2
GH	13.5		Charter	9.3
I	12.6			
J	11.7			

The ESERS classification rates by operating type are not linear. The lowest rates are in charter schools (9.3%) as would be expected because they are too small to offer a range of services and, therefore, would be less likely to attract parent interest in enrolling their children if they have significant disabilities. Large K-8, K-6 and medium-sized K-8 districts have rates lower than average – 12.7%, 12.8% and 13.5%, respectively. District operating types that are at the state average include small K-8, medium K-12 and large K-12 districts at 14.8%, 14.3% and 14.5%, respectively. The highest rates are found in the secondary (high school) districts (15.9%) and vocational schools (15.2%). This is to be expected because students are less likely to be classified in the earlier grades. There is also a tendency in smaller school districts (many elementary-only districts) to wait hold off on referral until the students are ready to be promoted to their next school. *In general, districts that only serve the lowest grades will have lower classification rates than districts that cover a wider grade range.*