

# Financing Special Education in New Jersey

New Jersey School Boards Association

September 2007

## Special Education Placement Trends

**Trends in Preschool Placement Rates.** An analysis of the data on placement of students with disabilities ages three through five shows that 28.6% percent of the students with disabilities are in general education classes more than 80% of the school day. Students receiving speech services account for 5.8 of these percentage points. Another 7% are in general education between 40-80% of the school day and 54.2% are in general education less than 40% of the school day. Another 8.2% are in separate public or private schools. The remaining students receive speech or other related services at home or at a service provider. The placement categories for students who are ages 3 to 5 changed in 2006 to match those for ages 6-21. It is slightly problematic to compare these rates with previous years; however, they are approximated in the chart below. It appears that just over half of the students with disabilities in this age group attend district special classes (54%). The proportion in separate public and private schools has slightly decreased during the last five years from 12.6% down to 8.2%. *Districts are increasing their own preschool programs and increasing the amount of time students participate in general education.*

Year	General Education Early Childhood Setting	General Ed./Special Ed. Early Childhood Setting	Special Education Early Childhood Setting	Itinerant Services at Home	Itinerant Services Not at Home	Separate School Public	Separate School Private	Residential
2002	23.0	7.4	54.1	0.6	2.2	6.2	6.4	0.1
2003	13.5	11.1	54.4	0.6	9.4	5.3	5.5	0.0
2004	14.6	11.0	55.8	0.5	7.3	5.8	5.0	0.0
2005	14.5	12.1	55.0	0.5	8.3	5.1	4.5	-
	<b>More 80%</b>	<b>Separate Class and Less 40%</b>	<b>Between 40%-80%</b>	<b>Home</b>	<b>Service Provider Location</b>	<b>Separate School Public-Private</b>		<b>Residential</b>
2006	28.6	54.2	7.1	1.3	0.6	8.2		0.0

**Trends in Placements for Students Ages 5 or 6 through 21.** The number of students in each placement setting increased as the total number of students with disabilities increased over the last 15 years. The largest numerical increase was in the “More than 80%” setting (41,175). There were 15,448 more students in the “Between 40%-80%” setting and 4,694 more students in the “Less than 40%” setting than in 1995. The “Private Separate School” setting gained more students than “Public Separate School” setting. The numbers of students in “Private Residential” settings is very small, but did increase from 125 in 1995 to 237 in 2003. It decreased to 187 in 2005. The number of students on “Home Instruction” remained steady at just over 1,000 from 1995-2005.

Number:	Included in General Education	Separate Settings
---------	-------------------------------	-------------------

Year	More Than 80%	Between 40%-80%	Less Than 40%	Public Separate School	Private Day Schools	Private Residential	Home Instruction
1995	71,545	45,445	33,673	5,864	9,314	126	1,194
1996	73,362	47,262	35,511	5,099	9,215	110	1,202
1997	73,614	48,365	36,309	5,436	9,545	126	1,158
1998	74,799	46,161	40,398	7,082	10,025	129	1,133
1999	76,503	51,240	37,808	6,584	10,618	110	1,212
2000	77,767	56,966	37,079	6,887	11,157	130	1,131
2001	82,731	57,596	36,606	6,806	11,801	140	1,090
2002	84,425	62,671	35,948	7,345	11,887	201	1,163
2003	86,869	63,371	36,108	7,564	12,036	237	1,172
2004	88,870	62,849	37,769	7,632	12,628	223	1,004
2005	90,370	63,893	38,367	7,270	12,507	187	1,149

The chart below shows the percentages of students with disabilities in each setting from 1995 to 2005. The percentages of students with disabilities in various settings for the years 1995 through 2005 (1995-1997 included students ages 5-21; 1998-2005 included students ages 6-21) were found to have changed little over the past 11 years. There is a slight increase in the proportion of students placed in general education “Between 40%-80%” of the school day and a corresponding decrease in the “Less than 40%” placement group. The proportion in “Separate Public” and “Separate Private” settings was essentially unchanged. *Districts have made very little progress in placing students in less restrictive settings.*

Year	Included in General Education			Separate Settings			
	More Than 80%	Between 40%-80%	Less Than 40%	Public Separate School	Private Day	Private Residential	Home Instruction
1995	42.8	27.2	20.1	3.5	5.6	0.1	0.7
1996	42.7	27.5	20.7	3.0	5.4	0.1	0.7
1997	42.2	27.7	20.8	3.1	5.5	0.1	0.7
1998	41.6	25.7	22.5	3.9	5.6	0.1	0.6
1999	41.6	27.8	20.5	3.6	5.8	0.1	0.7
2000	40.7	29.8	19.4	3.6	5.8	0.1	0.6
2001	42.0	29.3	18.6	3.5	6.0	0.1	0.6
2002	41.5	30.8	17.7	3.6	5.8	0.1	0.6
2003	41.9	30.6	17.4	3.6	5.8	0.1	0.6
2004	42.1	29.8	17.9	3.6	6.0	0.1	0.5
2005	42.3	29.9	18.0	3.4	5.9	0.1	0.5

**Included More Than 80% of the School Day.** Students who received special education services through supported general education, supplemental instruction, in-class resource programs, and/or some of the out-of-class resource programs are included in this placement group. All of the students found Eligible for Speech-Language Services

(ESLS) were also included in this least restrictive setting. Beside the students found eligible under ESLS, Specific Learning Disabled constituted 45% of the students in this placement group. Just over a quarter of the students in this group come from eligibility categories other than these two. The overall percentage of students with disabilities included in general education “More than 80%” of the school day has remained at about 42% for the last eleven years.

Eligibility Category	Number of Students with Disabilities				Percent of Students with Disabilities			
	More than 80%	Between 40 and 80%	Less than 40%	Separate Settings	More than 80%	Between 40 and 80%	Less than 40%	Separate Settings
Eligible for Speech-Lang. Services	25,245	-	-	-	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Autism	1,153	750	1,995	2,766	17.3	11.3	29.9	41.5
Deaf Blindness	5	6	9	15	14.3	17.1	25.7	42.9
Emotionally Disturbed	3,065	2,413	2,547	3,706	26.1	20.6	21.7	31.6
Auditorily Impaired	598	317	262	275	41.2	21.8	18.0	18.9
Communication Impaired	4,303	5,922	3,420	335	30.8	42.4	24.5	2.4
Multiply Disabled	3,742	6,154	8,076	9,230	13.8	22.6	29.7	33.9
Cognitively Impaired	331	1,394	3,220	1,282	5.3	22.4	51.7	20.6
Other Health Impairments	10,768	7,226	2,929	1,228	48.6	32.6	13.2	5.5
Orthopedically Impaired	345	102	62	41	62.7	18.5	11.3	7.5
Specific Learning Disabled	40,235	39,122	15,409	1,982	41.6	40.4	15.9	2.0
Traumatic Brain Injured	336	411	402	233	24.3	29.7	29.1	16.9
Visually Impaired	244	76	36	20	64.9	20.2	9.6	5.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>90,370</b>	<b>63,893</b>	<b>38,367</b>	<b>21,113</b>	<b>42.3</b>	<b>29.9</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>9.9</b>

**Included Between 40% and 80% of the School Day.** From 1995 to 2000, the percentage of students with disabilities included with general education students “Between 40%-80%” of the school day increased slightly (from 27.2% to 29.8%) where it remains today. This group includes some students who received special education services in out-of-class resource programs and special classes (depending on the amount of time they also spend in general education programs). The students found eligible under “Specific Learning Disabled” constituted 61% of this placement group, with 11% from “Other Health Impaired.” Students in the other eligibility categories account for the remaining 28% placed in this setting.

**Included Less Than 40% of the School Day.** From 1995 to 2000, there was a decrease in the percentage of students included with general education students for “Less than 40%” of the school day (from 20.1% to 19.4%). Since then, the rate has stayed fairly steady at about 18% of the students with disabilities. This reflects students who received special education services mostly in special classes with some inclusion with general education students. Sixty-one percent of the students in this placement group were eligible either under Specific Learning Disabled (40%) or and Multiple Disabilities (21%). The other major categories in the setting were Communication Impaired (8.9%), Cognitively Impaired, Emotionally Disturbed (6.6%), Other Health Impaired (7.6%), and Autism (5.2%).

**More Restrictive Settings.** The proportion in public and private separate schools has remained at around 10% (2006: public, 3.4%; private day schools, 5.9%), for the last ten years. New Jersey continues to have a larger proportion of students in these more restrictive placement settings (public and private separate schools and home instruction) than all other states. The state with the next highest percentage in separate settings is Massachusetts (7.2%). The students in these separate settings were mostly eligible under the Multiply Disabled (43%), Emotionally Disturbed (17.6%) and Autism (13.1%) eligibility categories.

Eligibility Category	Percent Within Each Setting				Percent Within Each Eligibility Category				Tot
	More than 80%	Between 40 and 80%	Less than 40%	Separate Settings	More than 80%	Between 40 and 80%	Less than 40%	Separate Settings	
Eligible for Speech-Lang. Services	27.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
Autism	1.3	1.2	5.2	13.1	17.3	11.3	29.9	<b>41.5</b>	100
Deaf Blindness	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	14.3	17.1	25.7	<b>42.9</b>	100
Emotionally Disturbed	3.4	3.8	6.6	17.6	26.1	20.6	21.7	31.6	100
Auditorily Impaired	0.7	0.5	0.7	1.3	<b>41.2</b>	21.8	18.0	18.9	100
Communication Impaired	4.8	9.3	8.9	1.6	30.8	<b>42.4</b>	24.5	2.4	100
Multiply Disabled	4.1	9.6	21.0	<b>43.7</b>	13.8	22.6	29.7	33.9	100
Cognitively Impaired	0.4	2.2	8.4	6.1	5.3	22.4	<b>51.7</b>	20.6	100
Other Health Impairments	11.9	11.3	7.6	5.8	<b>48.6</b>	<b>32.6</b>	13.2	5.5	100
Orthopedically Impaired	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	<b>62.7</b>	18.5	11.3	7.5	100
Specific Learning Disabled	<b>44.5</b>	<b>61.2</b>	<b>40.2</b>	9.4	<b>41.6</b>	<b>40.4</b>	15.9	2.0	100
Traumatic Brain Injured	0.4	0.6	1.0	1.1	24.3	29.7	29.1	16.9	100
Visually Impaired	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	<b>64.9</b>	20.2	9.6	5.3	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>42.3</b>	<b>29.9</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>9.9</b>	100

**Placements Within Eligibility Categories.** Placements of students vary by eligibility category. Most students with Autism (41.5%) and Deaf-Blindness (42.9%) are placed in Separate Public or Public School settings with another quarter of each in the “Less than 40%” setting. Most students with Orthopedic Impairments (62.7%) and Visual Impairments (64.9%) are in general education “More than 80%” of the school day. The number of students in these two eligibility categories is relatively small. In addition, just under half of the students with Auditory Impairments (41.2%) are included in general education for “More than 80%” of the school day. Fifty-two percent of the students with Cognitive Impairments are in general education “Less than 40%” of the school day. The rest are placed in the “Between 40-80%” (22.4%) and “Separate Public or Private School” settings (20.6%). Most students with Specific Learning Disabilities fall either into the “More than 80%” of the day in general education category (41.6%) or the “Between 40-80%” (40.4%) category, with few in “Separate Public or Private School” settings (2.0%). Students with Emotional Disturbance, Multiple Disabilities or Traumatic Brain Injury are placed fairly evenly among the four ranges. *The greater the degree of disability, the more likely the placement will be in the more restrictive settings.*

**Placement Rates by District Group.** Districts in the central and southern regions place a slightly higher percentage of special education students in general education “More than 80%” of the school day. There is little or no difference in the percentages in the

“Between 40-80%” setting among the three regions. Districts in the north place a higher proportion of students in the “Less than 40%” setting. Districts in Northern and Central New Jersey place 10% of their students in “Separate Public or Private” settings, compared with 8.7% in the south. Districts in the higher socio-economic strata (District Factor Groupings GH, I and J) place a higher proportion of students in the “More than 80%” setting and much lower proportion in the “Less than 40%” and “Separate Public or Private School” settings. There is very little difference among the DFGs in the rates of placement in the “Between 40-80%” category.

Region	Total	More than 80% of the School Day	Between 40-80% of the School Day	Less than 40% of the School Day	Separate Public or Private Settings
North	81,476	39.6	30.2	20.1	10.0
Central	64,500	43.5	31.1	15.3	10.1
South	66,097	44.5	29.6	18.1	8.7
<b>DFG</b>					
A	39,254	26.7	24.4	33.9	15.0
B	22,935	35.1	36.0	18.5	10.4
CD	20,818	36.2	34.1	21.0	8.6
DE	28,226	45.9	29.5	16.0	8.6
FG	25,768	45.6	33.0	13.1	8.2
GH	28,931	49.8	28.8	11.8	9.5
I	33,094	54.8	29.0	8.8	7.3
J	6,855	61.3	25.3	7.0	6.5

Districts serving mainly lower grades (K-6 and small K-8) place a higher proportion of students (approximately 53%) in general education settings for “More than 80%” of the school day. Generally, the rate decreases as the number of students and range of grades served increases (e.g., medium and large K-8, approximately, 50%; and K-12, 45%, 42%, 38% for small, medium and large districts, respectively). An exception is secondary (high school) districts where 49.9% of special education students spend more than 80% of the school day in general education. The proportion of students in the “Between 40-80%” setting (approximately 32%) does not vary much except in the largest K-12 (28%) and the secondary districts (26%). Small K-8 districts place a small proportion of students (5.8%) in the “Less than 40%” setting. Most of the remaining district operating types place 10% to 13% of their special education students in this setting, except for the largest K-12 districts where 22.7% of students spend “Less than 40%” of the school day in general education. The proportion of students placed in “Separate Public or Private” settings was lowest in K-6 districts (4.4%), larger K-8 districts (5.6%), and medium K-8 districts (6.7%). This might be expected because of reluctance to send younger students too far from home.

Operating Type	Total	More than 80% of the School Day	Between 40-80% of the School Day	Less than 40% of the School Day	Separate Public or Private Settings
K-6	5,413	53.6	31.9	10.2	4.4
K-8 / 0-400	2,282	53.1	32.2	5.8	9.0
K-8 / 401-750	5,781	50.9	31.8	10.7	6.7
K-8 / 751+	24,772	50.2	33.7	10.5	5.6

K-12 / 0-1,800	12,096	45.2	32.8	12.6	9.4
K-12 / 1,800-3,500	23,557	42.5	33.5	13.3	10.7
K-12 / 3,500+	117,659	38.5	28.1	22.7	10.7
7-12 / 9-12	15,236	49.9	26.3	11.4	12.5
Vocational (FT)	3,541	27.4	38.5	33.7	0.3
Charter	1,359	56.9	36.1	2.1	4.9

Full time vocational schools have equal proportions of their students in the three in-district settings. Charter schools serve the largest proportion of their students with disabilities in the “More than 80%” setting (56.9%), possibly because their students have milder disabilities. Being small, charter schools have a very limited ability to support a wider continuum of programs and would not attract students with more substantial disabilities. In general, small districts with early primary grades place more of their students with disabilities in the least restrictive settings. Larger K-12 districts or secondary districts are able to offer a continuum of services; however, they also have a higher proportion of students sent to separate public and private schools.