

Educational Environments and Student Performance

How are Pennsylvania Students Doing?

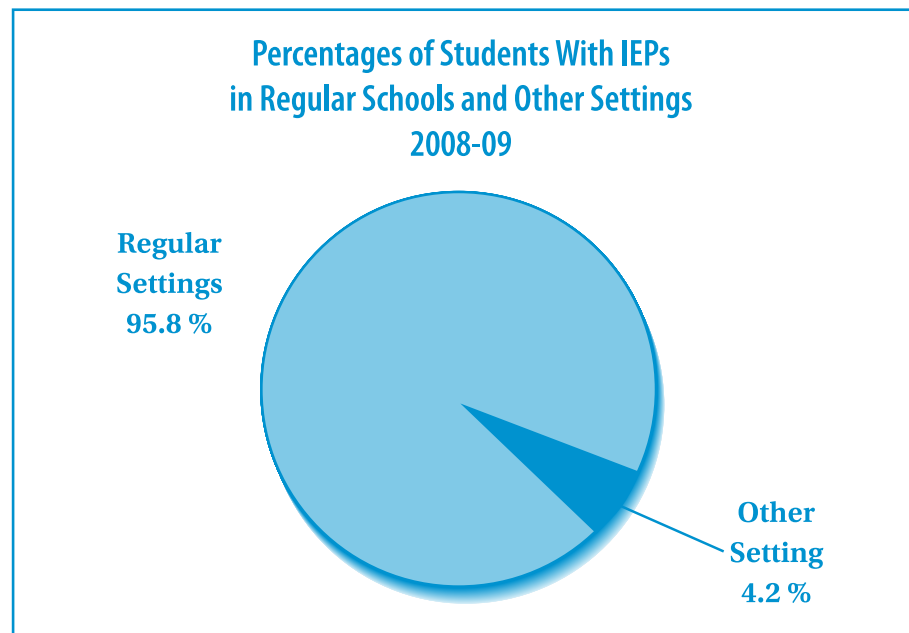
Pennsylvania continues to improve in educating students with disabilities. Every year more students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are educated for more time inside regular classrooms with nondisabled peers.

Educational Environments (see Figure 1):

- The majority of students with disabilities, over 95 percent in Pennsylvania, are educated in regular schools. These students spend varying amounts of time in classrooms with nondisabled peers, depending upon their IEP. The amount of time that a student spends in classrooms with nondisabled peers is determined by the student's IEP team, which includes their parents. This time spent in classrooms with nondisabled peers is called the Least Restrictive Environment and is required to be reported to the Department of Education.
- The remaining students with disabilities are educated in a variety of other settings which include: Approved Private Schools (day and residential), Public/Private Facilities (day and residential), Instruction Conducted in the Home, Correctional Facilities, Hospitals/Homebound, and Out of State Facilities.

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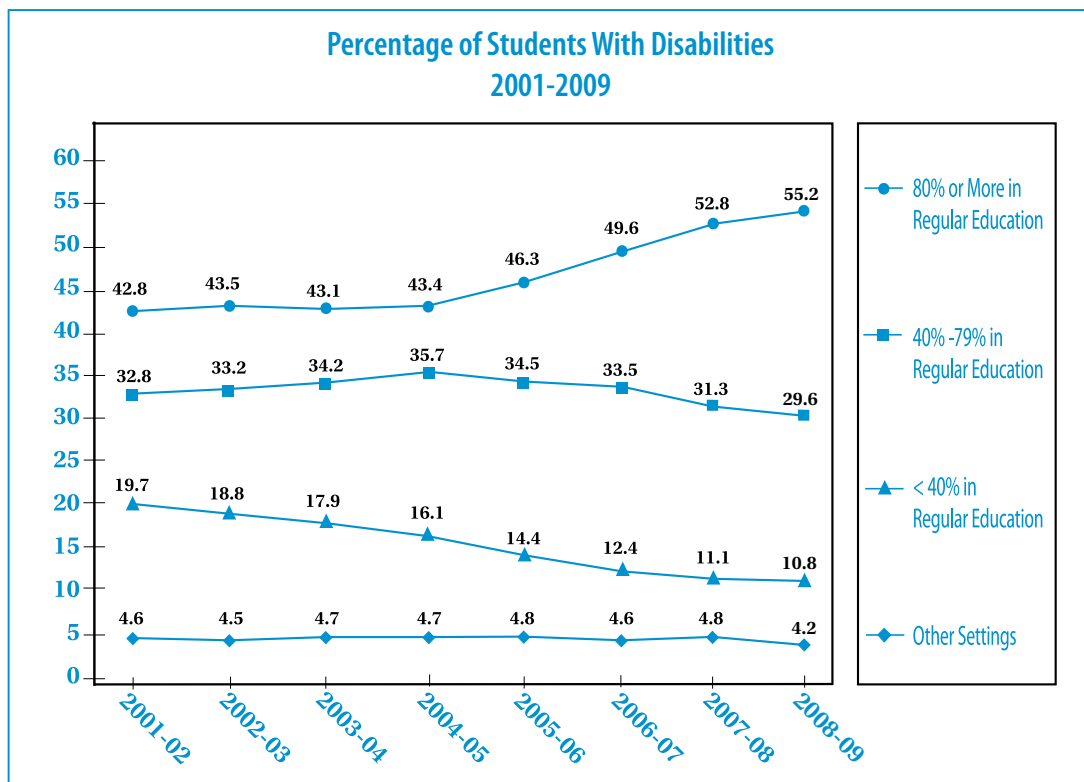
Figure 1



Least Restrictive Environment – Improvements Over Time (see Figure 2):

- Over half of Pennsylvania’s students with disabilities were educated for 80 percent or more of their school day in regular classrooms in the 2008-09 school year.
- For each of the last four years, the percentage of students with IEPs in the most inclusive category has increased from 43.4 percent to 55.2 percent.
- Over the same period of time, we have seen associated decreases in the percentages of students with IEPs who are educated for lesser amounts of the school day in regular classrooms with nondisabled peers.
- Pennsylvania data showed the largest decrease from almost 20 percent in 2000-01 to 10.8 percent of students with disabilities being educated in regular classrooms for less than 40 percent of the school day in the 2008-09 school year.

Figure 2



The percentage of students with IEPs in the most inclusive category has increased to 55.2 percent.

There are more students with IEPs scoring proficient and advanced today than there were students with IEPs participating in statewide assessment 10 years ago.

Student Achievement:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) require the participation of all students with IEPs in statewide assessments. In the 2000-01 school year, the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) began and all students with IEPs currently participate in: (1) the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) without accommodations; (2) the PSSA with accommodations; or (3) the PASA.

In the 1997-98 school year, 20,000 students with IEPs were tested, while in 2005-06, over 152,000 students with IEPs were tested. There are more students with IEPs scoring proficient and advanced today than there were students with IEPs participating in statewide assessment 10 years ago.

How Does Pennsylvania Compare to Other States?

Highlights:

- In both 2007 and 2008, Pennsylvania received the highest level of recognition from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education based upon full approval of the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report for Part B. Pennsylvania was one of 14 states and territories to receive this determination in 2008, and one of only four states that received this distinction for two consecutive years.
- Pennsylvania ranks 4th in the number of students with disabilities graduating with a diploma.
- Pennsylvania ranks 6th in the fewest number of students with disabilities dropping out of schools.

Future Challenges*:

- Over the last 7 years (2001-2008), Pennsylvania has engaged in focused efforts on inclusive practices training and technical assistance and has seen an increase of 12.4 percent in the percentage of students receiving education in the regular class for more than 80 percent of the school day. Although ranked 43rd in this category, Pennsylvania's data is consistent with states that are comparable in size and population, including California, Florida, Illinois, Ohio, New York, and Texas.
- Though Pennsylvania ranks 34th in the percent of students receiving education inside of the regular class for less than 40 percent of the school day, Pennsylvania ranks above similar states, including Michigan, Florida, California, Illinois, and New York.
- While Pennsylvania ranks 39th in students receiving special education in separate settings, comparable and neighboring states, including Michigan, Illinois, and New York, rank lower.

** All data is reported publicly in the 27th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2005.*

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