

K-12 Students Receiving Special Education Services

DEFINITION

K-12 students receiving special education services is the percentage of students in grades K-12 who received special education services in Rhode Island public schools or who were placed in private special education programs by their district of residence.

SIGNIFICANCE

Approximately 17% of U.S. children ages three to 17 have a developmental delay or disability. Developmental disabilities are more common in boys and among children in low-income and less educated families. Young children living in poverty often have adverse early experiences and multiple risk factors that can negatively impact brain development and lead to increased prevalence of developmental disabilities.¹

The federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* guarantees a free appropriate public education to every child with a disability. Prior to passage of the original 1975 federal law, many children with disabilities were excluded from public school. Since its passage, outcomes for children with disabilities have steadily improved. More students with disabilities are being educated in neighborhood schools, included in general education classrooms, reaching proficiency standards, graduating from high school, enrolling in postsecondary

education programs, and becoming employed as adults.² Concerns remain that not all children who could benefit from services are identified, that Children of Color are less likely to receive special education services than their white peers, and that special education funding is not adequate.³

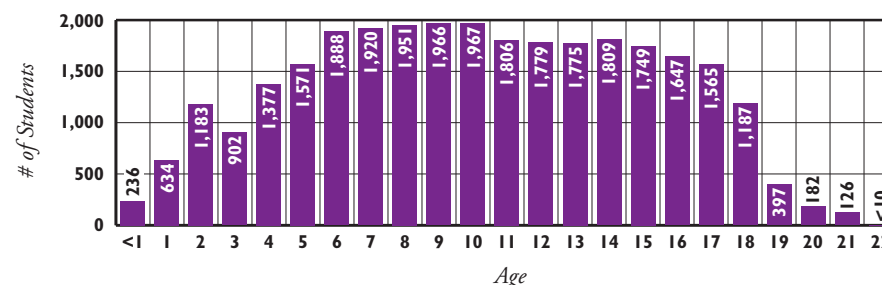
Despite improvements in high school graduation rates and postsecondary school enrollment, students with disabilities are still less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to be suspended than students without disabilities.^{4,5} Nationally, 65% to 75% of youth under age 18 who are involved in the justice system have mental, emotional, behavioral, and/or physical health problems and 33% qualify for special education.⁶

Students with disabilities are much less likely to meet or exceed expectations on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*. In 2023-2024, only 10% of third graders with a disability met or exceeded expectations in ELA and 15% in math, compared with 44% in ELA and 45% in math for students without special education needs.⁷

In Rhode Island, the four-year graduation rate for students receiving special education services in the Class of 2024 was 65% compared to 88% for students not receiving these services.⁸ Some students enrolled in special education may take additional time to graduate.



Students Ages Birth to 22 Receiving Early Intervention and Special Education Services, Rhode Island, June 2024



Source: Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Center for Child and Family Health, Early Intervention enrollment, June 30, 2024. Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Diverse Learners, Special Education Census, June 30, 2024. Includes parentally placed students.

◆ As of June 2024, there were 23,574 students in grades K-12 (18% of all kindergarten through grade 12 students) receiving special education services through Rhode Island public schools. Thirty-four percent of these students had a learning disability, 19% had a health impairment, 14% had a speech/language impairment, 12% had an autism spectrum disorder, 9% had a developmental delay, 6% had an emotional disturbance, 4% had an intellectual disability, and 3% had other disabilities.⁹

◆ Students in grades K-12 enrolled in a traditional public school district in one of the four core cities were more likely to be receiving special education services (20%) than those enrolled in traditional public school districts in the remainder of the state (17%), in public charter schools (15%) or in state-operated public schools (14%).¹⁰

◆ As of June 2024, 74% of students ages six to 22 receiving special education services in Rhode Island were in their regular classroom for 80% of the day or more, 20% were in a regular classroom but for less than 80% of the day, 6% were in a separate school, 1% were in a residential facility, homebound, hospitalized, or in a correctional facility.¹¹

◆ Among students ages six to 22 receiving special education services in June 2024, 64% were male, 36% were female, and <1% identified as another gender. By identified race/ethnicity, 49% were white 31% were Hispanic, 10% were Black, 6% were Multiracial, 2% were Asian, 1% were American Indian or Alaska Native, and <1% were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The majority were low-income (66% eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch) and 15% were Multilingual Learners.¹²

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Table 41.

K-12 Students Receiving Special Education Services by Primary Disability, Rhode Island, 2024

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS	AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER	DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY	EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE	HEALTH IMPAIRMENT	INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY	LEARNING DISABILITY	SPEECH/ LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT	OTHER	TOTAL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	% STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION
Barrington	3,260	59	12	45	97	11	95	62	17	398	12%
Bristol Warren	2,733	54	27	30	89	17	164	114	10	505	18%
Burrillville	1,980	44	26	27	61	15	179	44	10	406	21%
Central Falls	2,438	58	65	14	65	18	187	37	16	460	19%
Chariho	2,909	60	46	13	74	*	167	48	21	438	15%
Coventry	3,982	100	35	48	144	22	229	100	11	689	17%
Cranston	9,974	217	102	93	348	48	553	120	32	1,513	15%
Cumberland	4,757	131	55	42	84	25	231	101	54	723	15%
East Greenwich	2,474	46	47	11	58	14	85	36	*	304	12%
East Providence	5,039	150	73	61	210	30	313	133	16	986	20%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,483	32	18	*	38	*	43	22	*	174	12%
Foster	212	*	*	0	*	0	*	10	*	33	16%
Foster-Glocester	1,317	12	0	*	31	*	47	*	*	109	8%
Glocester	551	*	*	*	*	0	20	40	*	81	15%
Jamestown	387	12	*	*	23	*	20	24	*	87	22%
Johnston	3,028	91	59	20	119	26	219	86	29	649	21%
Lincoln	3,195	92	51	33	97	15	202	65	15	570	18%
Little Compton	204	*	*	*	11	*	20	*	0	50	25%
Middletown	1,922	35	39	36	92	10	118	58	*	397	21%
Narragansett	1,001	13	*	*	30	*	51	21	*	132	13%
New Shoreham	124	*	*	*	11	0	*	*	0	27	22%
Newport	1,816	52	33	36	49	29	159	47	*	413	23%
North Kingstown	3,666	50	38	26	100	10	170	102	17	513	14%
North Providence	3,467	84	54	33	104	28	227	89	15	634	18%
North Smithfield	1,624	27	15	14	36	11	121	46	*	274	17%
Pawtucket	7,654	203	150	68	249	47	604	165	25	1,511	20%
Portsmouth	2,125	41	27	25	89	*	88	54	12	345	16%
Providence	20,099	338	389	219	632	189	1,243	572	94	3,676	18%
Scituate	1,163	18	*	*	32	*	63	55	10	190	16%
Smithfield	2,352	59	30	15	81	*	122	32	*	354	15%
South Kingstown	2,267	49	18	16	89	11	101	37	12	333	15%
Tiverton	1,529	45	21	21	69	13	104	23	*	302	20%
Warwick	7,692	202	179	92	282	44	506	148	37	1,490	19%
West Warwick	3,462	112	73	67	180	32	234	94	16	808	23%
Westerly	2,138	58	34	27	91	11	95	53	11	380	18%
Woonsocket	5,488	171	150	131	323	68	462	218	27	1,550	28%
Charter Schools	11,819	124	142	69	354	40	666	363	18	1,776	15%
Collaboratives	443	*	0	*	*	*	39	*	0	55	12%
State Operated Schools	1,749	13	0	10	42	*	91	*	67	239	14%
Department of Corrections	NA	0	0	*	*	0	0	0	*	NA	NA
Four Core Cities	35,679	770	754	432	1,269	322	2,496	992	162	7,197	20%
Remainder of State	83,833	1,959	1,133	861	2,831	473	4,760	1,882	408	14,307	17%
Rhode Island	133,522	2,867	2,029	1,379	4,506	839	8,052	3,247	655	23,574	18%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Office for Diverse Learners, Special Education Census June 30, 2024. Data do not include parentally placed students. The denominator (number of students) is the "resident average daily membership" (RADM) for grades K-12 in the 2023-2024 school year provided by RIDE. Special education services under the *IDEA* must be provided until an individual's 22nd birthday.

As of 2023-2024, students in DCYF care and those receiving instruction through DCYF operated schools (the Training School) remain enrolled with their home district/the district they were in at the time of entering DCYF care so IEP data on these youth are included in their home district's data. Data about youth with IEPs receiving educational services at the Training School are included in the Youth in the Justice System indicator.

Due to changes in methodology, *K-12 Students Receiving Special Education Services* in this Factbook cannot be compared with Factbooks prior to 2015. Data about preschool students receiving special education services can be found in the *Children Receiving Preschool Special Education Services* indicator.

* Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

Totals of students and percentages of students receiving special education may not sum due to rounding.

The category "other" includes students who are visually impaired, hearing impaired, deaf/blind, multi-handicapped, orthopedically impaired, and/or have traumatic brain injury.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

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References

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Source of Data for Table/Methodology for K-12 Students Receiving Special Education Services

Charter schools include the Achievement First Rhode Island and Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy Networks, Beacon Charter School, Blackstone Academy, Charette Charter, The Compass School, Excel Academy Rhode Island, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, The Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, Nuestro Mundo Public Charter School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Providence Preparatory Charter, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Segue Institute for Learning, SouthSide Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and Village Green Virtual.

State-operated schools are William M. Davies Career & Technical High School, Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, and Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

Collaborative schools are Sheila C. “Skip” Nowell Leadership Academy, Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP), and YouthBuild Preparatory Academy.

References for K-12 Students Receiving Special Education Services

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⁷ Rhode Island Department of Education (2024). *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2023-2024. Retrieved December 16, 2024, from <https://www3.ride.ri.gov/ADP>

⁸ Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2024 four-year graduation rates.

^{9,10,11,12} Rhode Island Department of Education, Office for Diverse Learners, Special Education Census, June 30, 2024.

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References for Student Mobility

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- ²⁰ Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy. (2011). *A revolving door: Challenges and solutions to educating mobile students*.
- ²¹ Heimpel, D. (2018). *Analysis: Rhode Island ESSA case could mean an end to repeated school transfers for youth in foster care*. Retrieved February 23, 2022, from www.the74million.org

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Source of Data for Table/Methodology for Reading Skills

Data is not reported for The Rhode Island School for the Deaf because the number of students tested was less than 10. These students are still counted in the remainder of the state and state totals.

See Methodology Section for more information.

References for Reading Skills

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^{17,18} Rhode Island Department of Education, *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*, 2024.

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Source of Data for Table/Methodology for Math Skills

Students enrolled in state-operated schools, charter schools, and collaboratives are not counted in totals for the four core cities or for the remainder of state, but they are included in state totals.

NA indicates that the school district does not serve students at that grade level.

References for Math Skills

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