Educational Environments and Student Performance

How are Pennsylvania Students Doing?

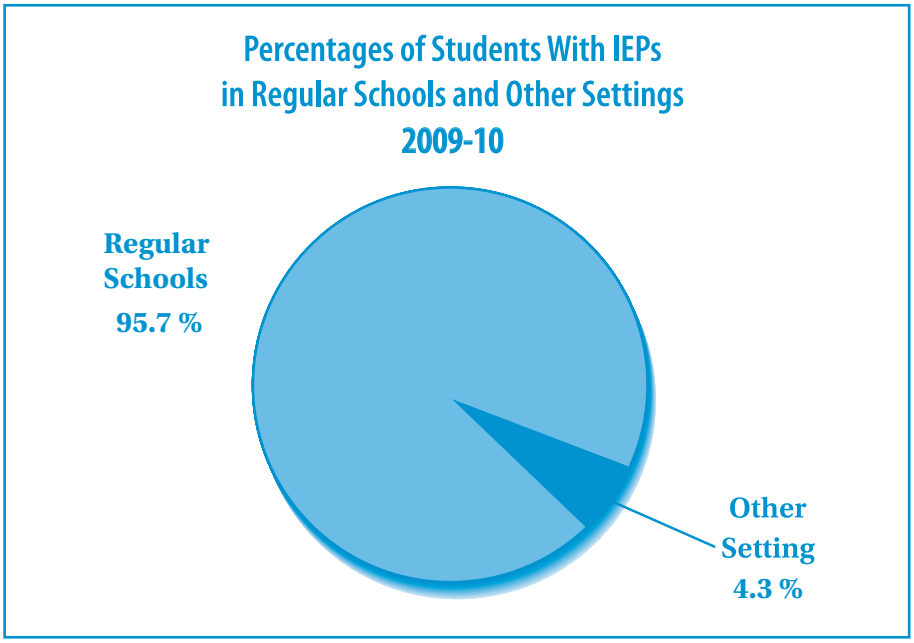
Pennsylvania continues to improve in educating students with disabilities. Every year more students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are educated for more time inside general education classrooms with nondisabled peers.

Educational Environments (see Figure 1)**:**

- The majority of students with disabilities, over 95 percent in Pennsylvania, are educated in general education classrooms. 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 parent(s). 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.

The majority of students with disabilities in Pennsylvania are educated in general education classrooms.

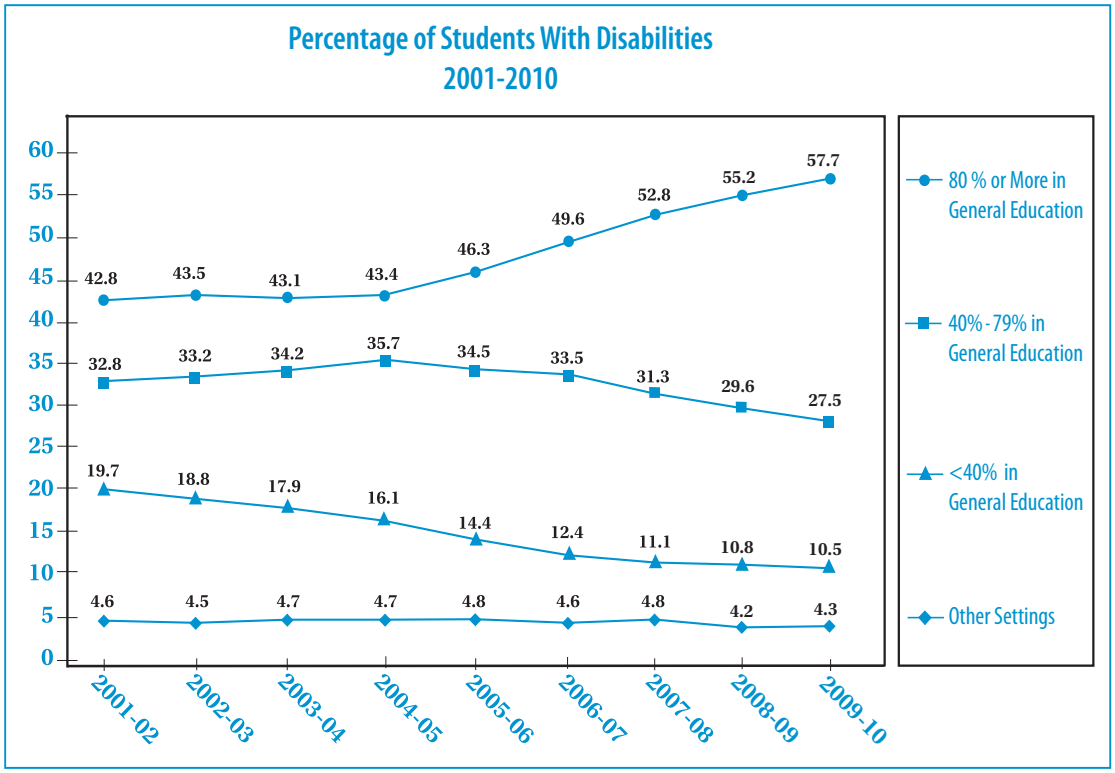
Figure 1



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 general education classrooms in the 2009-10 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 57.7 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 general education classrooms with nondisabled peers.
- Pennsylvania data showed the largest decrease from almost 20 percent in 2001-02 to 10.5 percent of students with disabilities being educated in general education classrooms for less than 40 percent of the school day in the 2009-10 school year.

Figure 2



The percentage of students with IEPs in the most inclusive category has increased to 57.7 percent.

Over the last eight years (2001-2009) Pennsylvania has engaged in focused efforts on inclusive practices training and technical assistance and has seen an increase of almost 15 percent in the percentage of students receiving education in the general classroom setting for more than 80 percent of the school day.

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

The current December 2009 data for Pennsylvania is consistent with states that are comparable in size and population, including: California, Florida, Illinois, Ohio, New York, and Texas.

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; (3) the PSSA-Modified (Reading and Math grades 4-8; Science grades 8,11); (4) the PSSA-Modified with accommodations (Reading and Math grades 4-8; Science grades 8,11); or (5) the PASA.

In the 1997-98 school year, 20,000 students with IEPs were tested, while in 2009-10, 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.

The PSSA-M is a grade-level test. It can be less cognitively complex and shorter than the PSSA; however, students must still perform grade-level skills. Unlike assignment to the PASA, which requires students to take the PASA version of all subject area tests, assignment to the PSSA-M is subject specific. Approximately 15,000 students scored below basic on the PSSA; and with the new PSSA-M, over half scored proficient or advanced.

PSSA-Modified (PSSA-M)

GRADE	% Advanced-M	% Proficient-M	% Basic-M	% Below Basic-M	Number Tested
4	21.2	38.3	35.8	4.8	2,169
5	13.0	38.0	43.4	5.5	2,552
6	9.2	38.9	44.6	7.3	2,700
7	8.1	33.2	50.4	8.3	2,818
8	5.6	35.2	49.2	10.0	3,019
11	5.6	27.6	45.3	21.6	3,539

How Does Pennsylvania Compare to Other States?*

Highlights:

- In 2007, 2008, and 2009, 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 3rd in the number of students with disabilities graduating with a diploma.
- Pennsylvania ranks 7th in the fewest number of students with disabilities dropping out of schools.

* *All data is reported publicly in the 28th Annual Report to Congress (based on 2004 data) on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2005.*

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