

EDUCATION: Special Education

DEFINITION

This indicator reports the percent of children in grades K through 12 who receive special education services because they have a disability.

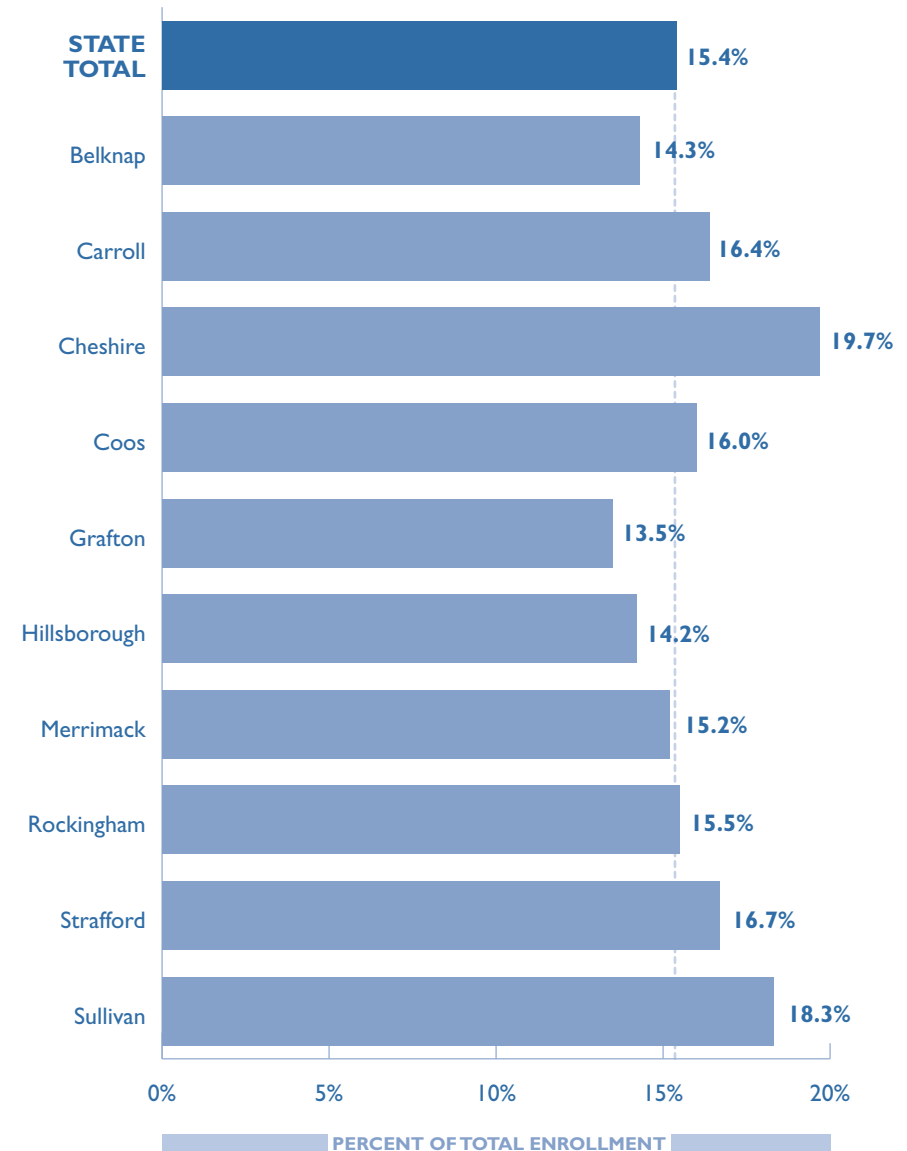
CONTEXT

In 1990 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed by the United States Congress, updating and amending a 1975 law. The IDEA provides for a free and appropriate public education for every child with a disability from birth through 18 or 21 years old, to be delivered in the least restrictive most integrated environment appropriate. Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. A disability may be physical, cognitive, sensory, emotional, developmental or some combination of these.

The IDEA requires that public schools create an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each student who is found to be eligible under both the federal and state eligibility/disability standards. The IEP is the cornerstone of a student's educational program. It specifies the services to be provided and how often, describes the student's present levels of performance and how the student's disabilities affect academic performance, and specifies accommodations and modifications to be provided for the student (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities).

The percentage of children in the U.S. receiving special education grew from 8.3 percent in the 1976-1977 school year to 13.3 percent in the 2000-2001 school year, and then to 13.4 percent in the 2007-2008 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Special Education Enrollment By County, 2009-2010



NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

In the 2009-2010 school year, 15.4 percent of New Hampshire public school children were enrolled as special education students. The percentage of students enrolled by county ranged from a high of 19.7 percent in Cheshire County to 13.5 percent in Grafton County. (see chart on previous page)

The most commonly cited disabilities of children enrolled in special education were specific learning disabilities (see Reference for detailed explanation) and health impairments. Together these accounted for 73 percent of the special education population in the 2009-2010 school year. Boys are more likely to be enrolled in special education than girls, with boys accounting for 66.7 percent of special education students and girls, 33.3 percent.

In the 2006-2007 school year the percentage of New Hampshire public school children enrolled in special education was nearly two percentage points higher than the national average (U.S. Department of Education 2010). The percentage of New Hampshire children enrolled in special education grew from 12.9 percent in 2000 to 13.8 percent in 2008, then grew to 15.4 percent in 2009.

SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

The New Hampshire Department of Education reports special education enrollments by school district. The following methodology was used to estimate enrollments by county. First, each school district with special education students was identified by county. Seven districts with special education students crossed county borders so special estimates were computed for those districts (see methodology in Appendix).

New Hampshire Department of Education. 2010. www.education.nh.gov/data/attendance.htm

REFERENCES

As defined in the federal law at 34 C.F.R. §§300.7 and 300.541, the term "learning disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities. Undated. *10 Basic Steps in Special Education*. www.nichcy.org/EducateChildren

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2010). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2009* (NCES 2010-013).